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A

LETTER

TO

THEOBALD MCKENNA, ESQ.

OCCASIONED BY A

PUBLICATION,

ENTITLED

A MEMOIRE ON SOME QUESTIONS

RESPECTING THE PROJECTED

UNION.

BY JOHN HAMILTON, ESQ.

Divide & impera.

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A
L E T T E R

TO

THEOBALD M'KENNA, ESQ.

OCCASIONED BY HIS MEMOIRE, &c.

SIR,

YOUR memoire on some questions respecting the projected Union between Great Britain and Ireland, &c. is, I believe, the third argument that has appeared to endeavour to reconcile this kingdom to the measure of a legislative Union, and is written in a stile and with a temper so very different from the two first, is so apparently calculated to seduce men by the temperate and rational allurements, you hold out to them of moderate national rank and certain domestic securi-

ty, that you evidently build your hopes of success on the acquiescence of the most uninfluenced and respected part of the community.

You have attempted this with an exterior of candour, which bears so strong a semblance of reality, that had I not felt that your foundation were so evidently unsubstantial, I should have been led to doubt whether your talents have not undergone a temporary suspension, whether the enormities of the crimes we have just passed through may not have made you the victim of timidity without your perceiving it. But a more close observation of your memoir convinces me that it may lead to a division of the public mind, fatal in the extreme, and though I do not accuse you of having lost your national feelings, I give you credit for the best motives in your endeavours to seduce your countrymen from the operation of theirs.

But though the vicious cruelties of which we have just beheld our countrymen guilty, are to you and to me equally sources of disgust and shame,—yet something has taught us to seek different modes of recovering the national character.—You at once surrender the Irish as not susceptible of reform from within, and in the outset propose the radical cure of amputation, by removing for ever the great domestic cause of irritation*.

* Page 1.

By this I understand you to mean the parliament, to it you attribute all our ills, our dissensions, and our calamities, and to infer that our want of energy arises from our complexity of constitution.

When you attribute all these evils to our parliament, you must either allude to some universal principle of mistaken legislative conduct, or some distinct instance of error and unsteadiness, connected with some particular political subjects, that have of late been the object of agitation in this kingdom.

That the former of these did not lead to the late rebellion, to me appears satisfactorily from the description of persons by whom it was promoted, but still more so from that of those by whom it was put down.—Had a general odium towards the legislators of this kingdom kindled an opposition to its acts, you would not have had so far to seek for its latent springs and sources.—You would soon have descried the abettors among the better ranks of society; and not have been driven to an almost chemical process, before you could trace its movers and their motives.

That the political subjects latterly agitated here were not the cause of it, you fairly argue and I readily admit. I accuse no religion of ascendancy in rebellion. Though I trace the fury and the savage barbarities of Wexford to religious animosity,—yet I do not assert or think
that

that originally they were sworn in to a religious warfare,—but you will allow me to say that their passions were inflamed, and their exertions prolonged by religious awe and persecuting animosity, that sectarial antipathy led to inhuman barbarities, and sufficiently evinced to the rational mind that Ireland was not then so devoid of bigotted animosity as to render it a country, the police of which ought to be surrendered either to the association of the lower order of people, or the bare terror of the bayonet of the mercenary.

My mind suggests a very different species of cure,—the calamities which you so justly deplore, I attribute fundamentally to causes exterior, and I neither confine them to the parliament nor to religious feuds,—they arose in my mind from the intrigues of a power, aiming at the destruction of Great Britain, and were facilitated by the erroneous governing principle infused into our cabinet, by that power to which you are so solicitous, we should altogether surrender ourselves. But I conceive it belongs to ourselves, and to ourselves alone, to create and establish our means of security.—Regeneration is a principle universally inherent, allowed to exist throughout all nature. Would you deny to your country alone the universal recuperative faculty? or would you voluntarily and gladly extinguish it?

You

You say * that Union in the abstract, does not strike you with that assemblage of horrors, &c. I will freely own, that in the abstract horror may be too strong an expression. But if it should prove unnecessary, unprofitable, and dangerous, 'tis enough without presenting more hideous features. You talk of conditions in the abstract also—and again I admit, that in the nature of things two countries may be so situated as to allow of the consideration of conditions; but 'tis not fair to argue in the abstract, and found thereon a principle that should govern us. You must shew me that as we now stand, in the existing circumstances, it must be most eminently serviceable, and the benefits not otherwise attainable, for unless you do so, there is one short answer to all your positions. Independence is preferable to dependence—independence can procure us all we can desire, and therefore must be retained.

You next proceed to argue, that our liberty may be as secure under the superintendance of an imperial as a domestic legislature †. But here again your attachment to first principles leads you into an error—for you forget the cardinal distinction between the liberty of an individual, and the liberty of a state. You indeed, by your subsequent definition of personal liberty, shew that you build your reasoning thereon—your reasoning on this part of the subject I shall not

* Page 1.

† Page 2.

controvert, but I contend, that it contains no argument whatsoever, applicable to the present case. I do not fear that the Union will subject us to an annihilation of Magna Charta, or an unnecessary suspension of the Habeas Corpus act. These are rights that are common to all his Majesty's subjects, and the English are interested in the support of them equally with ourselves. But there are many subjects on which an equality and reciprocity of privilege are not so uninteresting to England, the regulation of trade is a subject on which the people of Great Britain have been hitherto very solicitous to prevent our being placed on an equal footing, and the proportion we are to bear of public expenditure is becoming so, the rank we now hold in point of trade was obtained against their wishes, and has been retained with an eye of envy—of envy principally existing among the English mercantile interest, amongst whom the minister must ever raise his loans, and to whom he must ever partially incline. These are subjects, that without pretending to much penetration, I can discover many grounds to form a conjecture, that the rights of the Irish nation may not be as secure under an imperial legislature; and therefore I shudder at the surrender of our domestic one.

While America was subject to Great Britain, I never heard that any national infringement of the personal liberty of the colonial inhabitant was complained of—the English constitution was

extended

extended that scarcely civilized people, but the national rights were not so readily allowed by the imperial legislature; they thought the Colonies were fit subjects for national depression, to promote the national elevation of the mother country, and by proceeding on that principle, they drove them to a rebellion, which ended in American independence. Before 1782, Great Britain, I may say, legislated for us, and before that time our personal liberty was well secured, but our trade was not; there the rivalry stepped in, and you may have seen that the bankers and merchants of Dublin have attributed our unprecedented progression in prosperity, not to the impartial laws of the formerly rejected, but now intended imperial legislature, but to the wisdom of our newly obtained domestic and self-interested parliament*.

When you talk † of erecting an independent government on every ten square miles of Europe, forgive my saying, you descend below any title to notice. If there is one so frantic Politician in this kingdom, to him let your reasoning apply; but I conceive the finger of nature in general points out the line of demarcation. Though in continental situations this may better admit of controversy, yet even there a chain of mountain or large rapid river satisfies all but inordinate ambition; but surely our insular situation might

* See Resolution of Merchants of Dublin.

† Page 3.

have protected us from the sarcastic line of argument you resort to. Had the most eccentric of the French Directory, at the moment of the greatest elevation of the Republic, applied your reasoning to England, and founded on her comparatively small extent of territory a claim to imperial legislation, even the enthusiasm of republicans would have smiled; yet, believe me, I do not conceive the idea more extravagant than yours.

You next proceed to argue* that our imperial rank will receive an accession from the surrender; how you mean to prove this I confess is a matter of some mystery. I have heard indeed an argument held out to induce the borough proprietor to accede to the measure, that one seat in the parliament which represented three kingdoms was equal in value to three in a parliament representing one; how true that calculation may be, and what effect your position will have on them, I leave to their consideration; but, if you seriously mean to argue that Ireland inseparably connected with the crown of Great Britain, and possessed of an independent legislature, will raise its estimation in the eyes of Europe as a kingdom by becoming a province, with the power of contributing one-sixth to the representation of Great Britain, I feel that you will have but few to support you. As well might a mighty lorded interest attempt to persuade an independent country gentleman, that

* Page 4.

by surrendering to him irrevocably the votes of an inferior interest, the power of making leases, the choice of tenants, nay, the modifications of family settlements, he would increase his prosperity and respectability, from being assured that his tenantry should always form a part of the lord's interest at the election.

You next tell us †, that laws we do, and ever must receive from Great Britain; but here again your general position furnishes an argument of which you make use, but which when examined radically fails in its application. You forget that situated as this country and Great Britain are, there must exist an imperial general code of laws, as well as a national and local one. When you say that we must ever receive laws from Great Britain, had you added the word, *imperial*, every man must have acquiesced; but when you speak generally, and include local appropriate regulations, every Irishman should dissent. It is to me equally paradoxical that Ireland should *force* imperial laws on Great Britain, as that she should *compel* us to obey her most probably unjust regulating edicts relating to our domestic arrangements, not obviously clashing with general imperial advantage, though possibly opposite to her distinct emolument. Here the rivalry of trade occurs, and here we require a legislature of our own to defend our infancy, and check and expose their power and intrigue. Here our local

† Page 4.
B 2

broils may call, in our equally imperfect system of police, for laws that in a country so matured may be received with disgust. I defy the information of a British parliament to provide against every exigency of the latter; and I much doubt whether they will ever satisfy this kingdom that they are disinterested in their decision on the former.

Suppose that previous to the first appearance of our late unhappy rebellion, we had been represented in the British House of Commons by eighty Irish members. We have seen with what struggles the bills for the suppression of seditious meetings were carried through the legislature in that country. Had the innovations on the received freedom of discussion in that kingdom, and the extension of the treason law as confined to Great Britain, been accompanied with our system of insurrection laws as relating to us, had the minister then introduced a bill for subjecting to death in any part of the dominions regulated by the parliament he then addressed, a man who took an oath to conceal a secret however treasonable, for enforcing magistrates to exact all the enormities of the execrable Corfew, and for transportation without a jury condemnation, how triumphantly would an English opposition have resisted such innovations! Not smarting under the circumstances that justified them, he could never have been convinced of their necessity; he would have told the kingdom that their being enacted for the correction of our people was but introductory to their
 their

their institution as the scourge of them; the English might have recoiled at the prospect of such a superaddition to the innovations introduced among them; the minister would have submitted to a distant, in preference to an imminent evil; we should have been sacrificed to the selfish or the generous effusions of Englishmen, and our rebellion have arrived at an irresistible maturity, before we had power to oppose or investigate it.

Here is an instance where our social existence might have been lost, from the want of conviction coming home to the understanding of the representative; but the danger is still stronger when the conviction comes *too home*. Suppose, that previous to the peace, we all so earnestly desire, the measure of an Union should be completed. Suppose, as we all earnestly desire, that peace should open new sources of British speculation and of British trade, that our present Mediterranean superiority should lead to connexion beyond the Straits of Gibraltar, that we have hitherto been unable to form; should the mercantile power of Great Britain strongly urge the exertions made for our present Premier during the variable contest that now opens to so glorious a termination; should she with energy represent the efforts made by Great Britain, and without exaggeration represent the obstruction offered by our rebellion;—do you think that every minister would feel himself bound to exert his usual influence to prevent national attachment to themselves, and national aversion

aversion from us, from operating as it might on the English parliament, in securing some little trifling pre-eminence that might with their *capital* be every thing? Would the knowledge of our representatives avail against it? Or would this nation feel they were equally dealt with? I fear not—I may be mistaken, but I am sure I argue truly as to men and to nations, as far as history affords example; and I sincerely hope my country may never make an experiment with example against them. I fervently pray she may never suffer even England to legislate for her internally, nor ever offer to legislate for England imperially.

The feelings which have dictated the observations I have just concluded, afford a decisive answer to the next paragraphs of the memoir, I say the next, for I pass over the proofs of the utility of cultivating the English connexion with every reasonable assiduity. Every man acknowledges the inseparability of the connexion, and we agree in the common position, that it is only *how* it is to be most cemented that is now to be considered. It is advanced * that we are, if not legally, certainly effectively pledged to support the credit of Great Britain. Every argument produced from this I admit to be unanswerable, and I admit your position, with this addition, *in proportion to our means*: but, Sir, *that trifling addition*, to my comprehension involves the whole of the distinction between an imperial and an internal *national*

* Page 6:

legislature. I think we are the best judges of our means, I trust we shall never be illiberal, but we are too much in our infancy to bear up against extravagance. I can foresee, in the complacency and indolence of a British parliament, an absolute surrender of the question of *Irish finance* to the budget proposal of the premier. I can foresee the difficulties and the danger of the premier to lead to improvident and unnatural imposition; but I can foresee no means of redress: an impeachment would prove abortive, opposition rebellion; but I cannot foresee that a domestic legislature with a minister of our own would admit of a proportion much beyond our means. The Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer would not pledge himself for an Irish remittance he was not sure he could raise. He could not be sure of one beyond proportion; if he exacted beyond bounds he is responsible to ourselves for the mistake, and will be less liable to be guilty of one. Let not then the opponents of the Union be taxed with unwillingness to assist Great Britain, to contribute the utmost of their means to support her naval glory; they only ask to have a power of securing and amending the contributory system, of judging of its equality, and of apportioning its burthen.

You next * proceed to awaken our ardour to the connexion between the two kingdoms. Were you addressing the miserable hordes of deluded rebels, who have acted upon the principles of

* Page 7.

French attachment, your reasoning might apply, but it has been my lot to participate military labour with you during the struggle between the French and Irish parties in this country,—and I feel myself authorized to ask you, do you think that the respected and momentous power of this country, even counting it numerically, needs your stimulating rehearsal of British power, to rouse and instigate their zeal for British connexion? I thought every man I could deem worthy of association acted upon the conviction of it.—I remember the enthusiastic struggle that drove men, till then almost effeminate in their habits, to manly exertions, incredible and unexampled.—I saw the gouty honorary members of our yeomanry body, forget their inability and carry arms with those by whom they had been excused, and with vigour and energy that seemed supernatural;—and I thought that French repulsion, and British connexion, were the secret springs of animation that wrought so powerfully and so successfully. I saw the British auxiliary force arrive amidst the plaudits of our city,—and every door opened with amplified Irish hospitality for their reception.—I saw in every man that true interchange of connexion, that the mutual danger and the mutual assistance led to—and I attributed it to that cause.—I saw it in you equally with others,—but I did not attribute it to any partiality to the sister nation *, nor to your wish

* Page 9.

to convince me that an Irish catholic is susceptible * of the glory of the British empire.—I admit your memoire glows strongly with that partiality,—And I doubt not its sincerity, while I attempt to expose the false conclusions it has suggested.

You talk next † of the popular questions in which you say had the parliament been so constituted, as to have followed the minority into the popular notion of the day, there would have been an end of, &c. &c. If you mean by this a panegyric on the constitution of our parliament, I am in no manner bound to controvert you,—but I would ask you, have parliament hitherto preserved the connexion? With one solitary exception there has not been an instance of any thing leading to the reverse—that exception was the regency, an occurrence very explainable on almost constitutional grounds, but which a condemned omission of our fœderal connexion rendered possible.—How many instances have we had of co-operation? If you really fear separative measures on imperial subjects, I have already ceded the point to Great Britain, but I own I do not see the proneness to separation in our legislative bodies, that should deter the general minister from cordial co-operation with us, or that any circuitous or complex ‡ mode of proceeding, opposes our unanimity on questions of im-

* Page 10.

† Ibid.

‡ Page 11.

perial importance.—You talk of our independent government taking orders from a power we do not recognize, and for remedy recommend us to adopt that power as our sole governing medium, and thereby secure permanent settlement,—thus you argue that the power which now agitates us, through a domestic legislative, would, through a foreign, cloath us in the comforts of industry. Can a power of such omnipotence be so unpropitious as to require a selfish participation of our government, or resolve that otherwise we shall remain deprived of the means of industry? If she does, she has some sinister scheme to forward, and I deprecate the surrender to her ambition.

You next * proceed to argue that from want of capital, our commercial concessions can achieve nothing, and that nothing can induce foreign capital but a change of manners, which change of manners cannot be effected but by a great change of constitution. I shall, when we come to talk of police, endeavour to prove that a Union would destroy what little police we have, and that thereby the introduction of foreign capital would be repelled. But let me here endeavour to controvert your positions by denying the facts you build upon. If you say that our prosperity has not increased since the year 1782, you are the only man in the kingdom that thinks so. If the increase of civilization, extension of ma-

* Pages 12, 13, 14.

manufacture, the progress of the fine arts, were ever rapid almost to a miracle in any country, they have been in this. It is within my own observation to have traced the gradual remedy of our disorders, viz. wealth and industry, advancing with a rapidity scarcely to be paralleled.—Ask the northern merchant, Did the different manufacturing towns of the counties of Armagh, Down, &c. supply the *quarterly fairs* with linen cloth, previous to the year 1780, as abundantly as they now do their *weekly markets*? How many considerable market towns have been established through the province of Ulster since that period, that are weekly exhibitions of the most animating industry, and produce weekly diffusions of wealth and comfort to the peasantry, throughout almost the whole of that comfortable district? Is it not spreading with a rapidity that more than satisfies, that astonishes? I have been told, that it is scarcely five years since the linen manufacture was hardly known in the county of Cavan, and that at this moment, almost every cabin enjoys the fruits of it. If you have formed your ideas from your own observation, Did you consider the eastern part of Ulster, a year before the breaking out of the deplorable rebellion, inferior in the comfort and industry of its inhabitants, to the most industrious parts of England? Agriculture, I admit, has not arrived at so much perfection, manufacture is not yet so general, but the improvements in the former must come down from the Superior,

and there the absentee is to blame ; the great extent of the latter must wait for a population proportionate, and all the capital of England could not force us to get on beyond a certain pace, which though I do not argue that we have kept up to, yet I contend for it we were sufficiently rapid to satisfy every moderate speculatist.

Your observations * on the deficiency of our present or improved commercial system, through the want of a superior jurisdiction to decide upon the breaches of the agreement, are, in my mind, sceptical indeed ; but, supposing that it is impossible for two countries, each possessing a legislature of their own, to regulate their Trade upon the basis of equality and sound policy—let me deprecate this monstrous proof of your avowed partiality for Great Britain, when you recommend her Legislature as the impartial jurisdiction to judge of her own possible aggression, and of our possible innovation.—It is the first time I ever heard a political speculatist advance that the more powerful nation was the impartial judge for the inferior to look up to, to decide questions relating to the rival trade of both.—Surely, the first ingredient in every satisfactory jurisdiction must be impartiality ; either we are likely to be rivals or we are not ; if we are not, we need no superior jurisdiction to appeal to ; if we are, I deprecate the surrender of every thing to the more

* Page 15.

powerful country—her decision, though just, could not produce satisfaction.

You next talk of Scotland—This subject has been so much and so ably handled in many of the publications since this question has been agitated, that I certainly shall not insert what must be an extract from them—I shall only observe cursorily, that I do not see that an Union would remove our religious broils, (of which hereafter) and that I do not wish to see the peace of this country obtained through half a century of rebellion. Indeed, I undertake to assert, and I hope to prove, that if every gentleman of property and of sense in this kingdom would exert his influence as he ought, that one-fifth of that time without any unnatural revolution, would be enough to do away all that was dangerous of religious animosity, and to raise this kingdom to real rank in the eyes of Europe.

I have heard, indeed, from respectable authority, but yet have been compelled to doubt, that some of our Catholic brethren have been induced to accede to the measure, merely as they avow, because the Orangemen oppose it.—When a mind becomes so malignant as to be ready to surrender eternal privileges to gratify temporary resentment, to rivet its own disability and humiliation, barely to cast some degradation on an opponent whose bounty had scarcely ceased to flow towards it—I deem its opinion to have lost all title to public respect; but I cannot be easily persuaded

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ed that men possessed of such feelings are considerable in point of number—I no more believe that the whole Catholic Body is so impregnated with envy, than I do that as a religion they promoted the rebellion.—However, it is vain to disguise that much of that spirit has escaped in your arguments*.—You reason on it, because you have heard of it; you are, I know, incapable of possessing it, and I hope there is no man, who, on reflection, would be actuated by it.

You will give me credit for my observations on the Orange Lodges, when I assure you that I am not an Orangeman, and that I sincerely hope no exigency of times will ever require me to become one.—But in saying so, my objection goes much more to the general evil tendency of political clubs, containing religious exclusion, than to the particular principles on which the Orange Societies are founded, as far as I can learn from their declarations and their conduct.—The Orange institution has as yet been of short duration, it had its commencement in the North, at a time when religious animosity and republican spirit united to render the Protestant the victim of a short-lived and unnatural coalition between the Dissenter and the Catholic.—It was at first an union or principle of self-defence, it afterwards broke out into acts of retaliation, not to be defended I admit; yet I do not see why the entire of the offence should be visited on the Protestant;

* Page 16.

I feel convinced that the political society called Defenders led the way, and that every degree of opprobrium visitable on the Orangemen as the continuers of a club, is also attributable to the Defender as an original promoter of an opposite one.—It was a considerable time before the distinction reached the metropolis. And when did it arrive at any alarming degree of consequence here? at a moment when the most deep-rooted system of anarchy and cruelty had broken out into a rebellion that threatened immediate destruction to the Constitution as established by King William, and was then raging with all the fury religious enthusiasts could inspire, to the certain destruction of every Protestant, for that was a sufficient crime, and to the avowed annihilation of every thing Orange in the land*.—Now, Sir, do not attribute to me any of the epithets you are so lavish of, when I say that I do not consider the extension of that body at that time an unnatural event; their first principle, as well as I can learn, was the defence of royalty—so far they were commendable and useful; to disseminate that principle at that moment among Protestants of every age, education, and degree, was a most useful and commendable duty; the next principle was Protestant self-defence—I ask you, was

* It is a fact, that in the County of Wexford, a debate took place between some rebel captains, whether a house should be destroyed or not, when a plunderer in his search discovered a pair of Orange hand screens, whereupon it was forthwith ordered to be demolished.

there

there not a great deal of Protestant danger to justify such a principle of association? Nay, I ask you farther, had the rebellion extended much farther and been conducted with the same religious barbarity wherewith it was carried on in Wexford, must not every Protestant in the kingdom have fallen into the Orange Society, and have separated himself from the Catholic? By the merciful interposition of Providence, the rebellion was checked, and I think much merit is attributable to those who had temper and good sense to resist the baneful system of political associations; but I do not attribute to those who did not all the venom, or any part of the spirit of revenge you so liberally bestow on them.

You * say that the spirit of revenge lingered after victory, and that they claim a dominion over their fellow-subjects—You pass over in silence the spirit of revenge that raged amidst the Catholics during the conflict, and on what do you ground your charge?—I should have expected from your candour when you charge a body (among whom certainly some of the most respectable members of the community are enrolled) with revenge and love of power, that you would have adduced some examples to support you;—they have openly again and again disavowed every thing like religious persecution; they have published extracts from their regulations, tending to satisfy the Catholic, that unless he is an enemy to his country, they bear no enmity towards him.—

I know,

I know, indeed, that many acts of atrocity have been attributed to the Orange party spirit, but I know also, that many of these have been explained to me as not involving at all the question.— I do not feel any conviction that the Orange Lodges may not celebrate King William's birthday as I do myself, as the anniversary of an event that established civil and religious society on principles of wisdom, toleration, and liberty; they may drink King William as a John Wesley, but they say they do not—you have given us no proof that they do—they have published resolutions breathing toleration—you have not shewn any to the contrary, or produced examples of persecution.

I have been led so far into an investigation of the origin, principles, and conduct of the Orangemen, not from any wish to be understood as approving of their principles, but from a desire to convince the Catholic that they are not so objectionable as you and many others represent them, and to endeavour to establish this position, that the man who would concede to the projected Union on the principles either of alarm from, or enmity towards the Orangemen, is possessed either of shameful timidity, or of ten-fold the malignity he would attribute to them—To dread their power, is to mock the government under which we live; to concede our everlastingly irrecoverable independence from the dread of a power controlled by the government, of about three

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years

years duration, and which, from the nature of its institution, must dissolve with the circumstances that led to its formation, would be an act of equal intemperance with that of your committing suicide to relieve you from a temporary and naturally healing wound.

But without pretending to much penetration, I can readily discover a very insidious scheme at the bottom of all this abuse thrown out against a particular body of the Protestants. A pamphlet which came from unquestionable authority*, has endeavoured, strange and incredible as it may appear, to kindle anew the seeds of disunion between the Protestant and the Catholic. It has talked to the Catholics of their numbers and their disabilities, and with much address endeavours to silence the Catholic opposition, and to deter the Protestant from the repugnance it was natural to expect he would express, by informing the parties that "Great Britain is not pledged upon any specific principle to support one * sect more than the other, nor debarred by any tie from assisting the Catholic." Much has been made of this assertion, to endeavour to convince the Catholic that under an Union his claims would be more likely to be attended to. You assist the government in the effect they wished that observation to make upon the Catholic, by feeding their animosity against the whole Protestant body, and explaining the improbability of their

* I mean the one generally attributed to Mr. Cooke.
attaining

attaining their object from them, by painting the bigotry of the Orange Lodges. But let not the Catholic be seduced by the writer of that pamphlet; let him take into his consideration the concluding sentence of the paragraph from which the words above quoted are an extract, viz. “but if Ireland was once united to Great Britain by a legislative Union, and the maintenance of the Protestant establishment were made a fundamental article of that Union, then the whole power of the empire would be pledged to the church establishment of Ireland.”

But it may be whispered, for it will not be more openly declared, that the maintenance of the Protestant establishment may not be made an article of the Union; that if the Protestants oppose it, and the Catholics consent, Great Britain is bound by no tie, not to support the Catholic in preference to the Protestant. If you possessed the same real love for the Irish Catholic that your publication appears to breathe, you would have told them, as I do, that hopes founded on such principles will end in a fleeting and imaginary vision. Let the Catholic look to the political history of Great Britain during the period of the present minister's power, and he will see a system of government that ought at one view to convince him of the fallacy of such expectations. Has he seen repeated efforts to repeal the test acts rejected on solemn debate, and does he remember the principles whereon they were refused? Does he know that state as-

cendancy in its fullest extent was then as strongly
 relied on, as at any period our history can afford?
 Does he remember the efforts of episcopal zeal to
 support it, seconded and confirmed by almost the
 whole nation? And does he look to a reversal of
 that entire system, as the price of his acquiescence
 to this degrading measure? The man who tells
 him so to hope is his worst deceiver.—Let him look
 thro' the same period and trace the Irish history—
 What will he there find? a system of concession
 and conciliation—a change in his situation, ex-
 tensive and emancipating, every disqualification
 seriously injurious, removed, none but a few dis-
 abilities, rather of ambition than reality, remain-
 ing. This amelioration how obtained? from a
 Protestant parliament, moved, promoted, and
 secretly impelled by Protestant members, a vast
 number of most powerful families pledged to en-
 deavour to have the system continued, addresses
 procured and voted by Protestants declaratory of
 national fellow feeling and affection, men of ho-
 nor and of talent their decided friends. Will he
 look to the parliament of a nation so disposed and
 so proved as his merciless enemies, and assist in
 the annihilation of it out of pure envy, thereby
 sealing the eternal continuation of those disqua-
 lifications that, as matters now stand, he has every
 reasonable prospect gradually to be relieved from?
 If he does, he becomes a victim to the intrigues of
 his enemies, and the folly of those he esteems his
 friends, and on so important a subject I can only
 repeat

repeat the prayer of a celebrated Irish character now no more *: “ that the God of Truth and of
 “ Justice who has long favoured him, and has of
 “ late looked down upon him with such a peculiar
 “ grace and glory of protection, may assist him
 “ against the errors of those that are honest, as
 “ well as against the machinations of all that are
 “ not so.”

I do not mean to accuse you of being a dupe to such schemes, much less to attribute to you any of the malevolence I think such principles contain; But, I merely state that when you look to the Orange Lodges of this kingdom as a permanent obstacle to the removal of the Catholic disabilities, you attribute to them a systematic connexion, and a degree of weight, that they by no means appear to me to be entitled to. Why were they not in existence to impede the concessions already made? because they were made before the rebellion had discovered religious fury, or before the personal aggression on the northern Protestants. You tell the Catholic † “ that the Orange men do
 “ not feel their importance, that they overlook
 “ that they supply almost entirely the labouring
 “ and industrious classes in society.” I conceive the Orange men in their foundation to have speculated upon a full consideration of their importance rather than their impotence. I look to it as much more grounded in personal defence than political intrigue. I never heard of any Orange resolution

* Mr. Flood.

† Page 19.

tending to prevent further extension of privilege to the Catholic body ; and I venture to prophesy that so soon as this country shall be delivered from the seeds and the impressions of the rebellion wherein we have been and are still engaged, when personal insecurity shall have ceased to render social intercourse unattainable, when Irishmen of every description by mutual intercourse shall have ceased to dread each other, you will find our national feelings return to that state of harmony that you and I may remember, and then in my comprehension will the distinction and the order of Orange-men gradually and quickly be dissolved ; and should the evils attendant upon such societies which you so justly detail, find any increase in the speed of their removal from your observations thereon, I assert it will afford equal pleasure to me as to you.

You are ingenuous in one part of your memoir. You say you consider the Union more eligible by the system of police to which it leads, than on any other consideration. I do not know a better recommendation any measure can carry with it, than its leading to a good system of police. But, it is on this ground that you and I most materially disagree, for I consider the hopes of a compleat and general police as utterly destroyed by the measure ; and as I ground the absence of British capital principally on the want of police, whereon you lay so very powerful a stress,

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it is fair that I should with some anxiety endeavour to establish my position.

If I understand the principle of a sound and well regulated police, it consists of many parts, and a co-operation of a number of gradations of rank : it requires a resident gentleman independent in his property, dispassionate in his feeling, influencing a surrounding yeomanry of respectable and comfortable establishment, who employ with him the labourers of their district, to whom he ensures justice and protection, and among whom he enforces subordination, honesty and sobriety by example, and, if necessary, by terror. It is in the last stage that I look for the assistance of the police man ; but you seem to look for him in the first. My system appears to me to ensure a circulation of property in the spot from whence it is procured, an example of moderation, urbanity and justice, a set of men zealous to emulate it, and a still inferior set obeying it at first, but gradually admiring, adopting and embracing it. Your system appears to be from first to last a system of terror, and a police regulated not by principle but by the bayonet. We have been latterly forced perhaps to assist in compelling obedience by force, but while I admit and deplore the necessity, I abjure the establishment of it as a permanent principle of government ; and yet I confess it is the only one an Union will suffer me to look forward to.

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When I say so, it is evident that I feel convinced that the system of police I would recommend, would be for ever removed from our hopes by the Union. Of my system the resident Irish gentleman is the first mover; of him I think the Union would inevitably deprive us, there can be no system of internal police of which he must not of necessity be the main spring. It is not to the rapacious agent, or to the temporary and grinding middle tenant, I can look for either example or popularity. They, as birds of passage, look only to the moment, and care not whether their objects are effected by the bayonet, or by voluntary compact,—not so the permanent holder, his interest looks not only to the passing scene, but to the succeeding; every improvement in agriculture and civilization, holds forth permanent immoveable amelioration, from him both must flow, and without him neither will increase. We have seen the effects of residence and example, polishing and enlightening every corner of our isle. We have seen ourselves horridly cast back to barbarism. We behold the men of fortune, our best hope for reformation, balancing between a return and an eternal separation, and we are asked to cast into the adverse scale, the eternal surrender of our parliamentary rights, and with that the eternal assurance of their separation and indifference, nay, their detestation. Perhaps you may doubt that the measure of an Union would ensure the removal of the Irish gentleman. I confess I do not feel that much is necessary to be said on that
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part of the subject. Human nature, in my mind, affords the best argument. We have found that an imperial court, and a numerous legislature, with the influence and anxiety attendant, have proved very unequal to counter-balance even such attractions, as the so very subordinate a circle as our absenteees have moved in in Great Britain has held out; the court and its appendages, may well be considered as the *sun* of our system. Our subordinate and inferior luminary, even as it has been illuminated, has found it hard to preserve a respectable number of attendants. It was found more profitable to be a satellite attendant upon the first mover, than a planet annexed to the secondary, but when you deprive us of all our cherishing and attractive rays, I fear our disk will become truly unilluminated and opake.

And at what moment are our powers of attraction to be annihilated?—Is it when civilization triumphed, when subordination was acknowledged, when agriculture had been progressively improving, when a peaceful and happy residence of six or seven summers had attached the lord to his soil; or when the establishment of a number of manufactories under his protection, and possibly with his pecuniary assistance, had rendered his continuance necessary and delightful? Or is it when he has scarcely ventured to visit his mansion, when every tree in his plantation has presented a concealment for an assassin, when his house

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has been the receptacle of military defenders, and his residence perhaps the country village nearest his mansion, where alone he could sleep in safety? Must it not be allowed that to persuade our men of property to live with us now, we ought to be super-endowed with accumulated means of conciliating their residence, and not be called upon to surrender all their consequence and rivet their alienation?

How difficult we shall find it, even situated as we are, to reconnect the orders of society in this kingdom, is a melancholy reflection.—Our higher ranks, from the various aggressions they have either sustained personally or been witnesses to, loathing and viewing with fear and abhorrence those with whom they were accustomed to interchange the necessary duties of society,—while the lower order of people, either from actual habit or the frequency of public crimes, considering as trivial those offences, which, before they became familiarized to, they hardly thought possible, and living in actual intercourse with those who commit them, whom formerly they would have driven from their district,—How tedious and laborious will it be to reunite them—and without a reunion how is the country to become civilized or endurable? Leave the Irish peasant now to his own meditations, and compel him to be decorous by bare dint of power, you will but condense and confirm those principles of barbarity and outrage, that as yet are but slightly imprinted,

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ed, but which on every opportunity will break forth with reanimated force. But if by virtuous example, and the efforts of interested philanthropy, you cast a shame upon their vices, the native character may still throw off the newly introduced vices it is yet but acquiring; and the reformation that is the result of conviction, and moral feeling, may become lasting and worthy of our confidence. What a different prospect then does our country present, when we contemplate the absence, and the residence, of our men of property?

You labour much * to prove to us, that the removal of the remaining catholic disqualifications is a matter of pure justice, that it will have the effect of reforming the national character, but that it is incompatible with the existence of Orange Lodges, and the present state of our politics.—The difference between you and me on this subject, as to the essential point, is very immaterial. I abhor religious distinctions as much as you do. I hold the Catholic Loyalist in as high estimation as you do. I admire his ambition, I feel for his vexation, when he sees others passing to rank in the state by means from whence he is excluded.—But I do not hold the Orange Lodges as possessed of all the religious acrimony that you do;—and if they were, I deny their ability to counteract the Government, the Catholic, the Dissenter, and the Protestants who are not Orangemen, in their schemes of extension of catholic privi-

* Pages 29, 30.

lege whenever it can be judged expedient. You say, the rebellion has furnished the Orange-men with arguments against the catholics, and you shew most satisfactorily that the rebellion should not impede the progress of their cause. I perfectly concur, and call on you for equal candour, to a position of mine, that though the rebellion is not an argument against the catholics fundamentally and permanently,—Yet it is a temporary bar to any great constitutional change. It has placed the country in a situation that requires the best exertion of every man in the state, to be directed to one object, the public peace. Catholic privilege is a question of awful importance, the antecedent arrangements are numerous and difficult. Their burdens are neither heavy or intolerant, they ought hardly yet to have recovered from the joyous feelings, that recently removed restrictions must have created in them, and though I am not one of their body, I venture to assert in opposition to you, that the mass of the Catholics are impressed with feelings of affection towards the mass of the Protestants, and I do most sincerely and disinterestedly recommend to them to rely on such feelings, as the surest means of obtaining their grand object,—they have the best grounds for such reliance in the patriotism and liberality of this country at large—in the certainty that such a measure must precede the true glory of this kingdom, and they possess the best and most impressive earnest, in the
concessions

concessions already made.—Should they look to an Union for the means of it, certain must be their disappointment. By the removal of the Parliament, the great object they now aspire to will be placed for ever beyond their reach.—It will prove, I assert, their truest wisdom, to unite with the Protestant to defend the Constitution—They cannot fail, and at no distant day, to become partakers of it.

This is a moment, I may say, of mental ferment—'tis difficult to find any man capable of cool reflection.—Should the Catholic madly acquiesce in the proposed constitutional surrender, in the hope of participating in the English Legislature, I have already endeavoured to prove that his hopes must be fruitless—let us then look a little forward—Will this become a country for the residence of Protestants? They are now possessed of a great proportion of the wealth of the country; as such, with an additional increase of Catholic consequence, obtained against their will by an unconstitutional violation of the rights of every Irishman, will many of them be likely to remain? If not, the proportion of Catholics must necessarily increase, and with that, their restlessness under the present Church Establishment, which you admit ought not to be altered*. When the public mind has recovered from its fever, the Catholic, increased in his national proportion, rankling under the continuance of Church Ascendancy, admitted to no share in the

* Pages 29, 30.

miserable shadow of representation that will absorb all the patronage of the Crown in this kingdom, will be apt to feel the addition of national degradation to his own religious inferiority.—He will lament that he assisted in the removal of that Parliament, from whom he had received the means of acquiring that wealth that has led to his ambition and his disappointment—He will feel disgust, that the means he looked to for the gratification of his favourite objects, have proved the eternal barrier to his attaining it—He will feel with increased disgust, that the whole was but a scheme for subjecting his country to a foreign tribute, scarcely appearing to be voted by its representatives.—The kingdom then, almost wholly Catholic, will spurn at the tributary connexion with a nation wholly Protestant; and then, indeed, will the Catholics, in a body, look to a separation; then will every thing that has lately passed before our eyes, be reiterated with accumulated *vigour*, *but with falsified* opposition, while our unhappy country may sink beneath the calamity, so low as hardly to be worth contending for.

I seriously consider this measure of an Union, if carried, as the certain foundation of future attempts at separation that will involve us in endless civil wars, and subject us to incessant attempts by intrigues and false hopes to countenance French connexion.—Look to the political history of the world for the last thirty years, and try

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if the public mind has graduated towards slavery, or freedom—How individual was public exertion in America to shake off the yoke of foreign power—How zealous was the fruitless and lamentable struggle of the Pole to preserve the connexion and independence of his country—How vast is the power by which the conquest is retained—How immensely disproportionate were the numbers of the invading French army to the possible exertions of the valiant Swiss—How honourable their opposition even to a Republican Union,—How truly grievous their lot. But these exertions afford me abundant grounds for one assertion, that formed as the public mind now is, imperial concession is not at this moment a wise foundation for federal connexion.

You appear to me * as desirous of impressing on the public mind, that whatever share of interference religion has had in the rebellion was attributable to the Catholic inferiority, which, as you hint, had vilified his mind.—This furnishes me with one observation as to the propriety of agitating the public mind at this moment by the discussion of the Catholic question.—What are the disqualifications from which the Catholics have been relieved since the year 1778, or I think I should rather ask, what is left that the Catholic peasant can complain of? Have the various immunities to which he has been advanced, made

* Pages 26, 27.

no impression on him? Have they induced no gratitude, no pride, no self-importance? Has the effect of the constitutional prerogative that he has but once exercised already escaped from his mind, or does he think that he has possessed it from beyond the time of memory? If he is so instructed, if he is taught that all he has obtained is immaterial, and can be persuaded yet to be guilty of acts founded in bigotry and persecution, he must be filled with a degree of ignorance, that never will admit the introduction of such generous sympathies as ought to precede final constitutional participation.

And the instance you adduce fortifies me— You say that when the Orange Societies made their appearance, the Catholics saw a mysterious association, and therefore sought for arms—I say if they did so, they were ignorant and ungrateful—Had they looked to the Government for protection, they would have found it there—Had they looked to the Protestant for explanation, they would have found assurances that must have produced satisfaction, and in many instances, perhaps, co-operation; but Catholics like those of Wexford, who were induced to acts of unparalleled cruelty, by way of retaliation, forgot the Protestant Acts which had so recently benefited them—they yielded to the old instigation of religious vengeance, and as far as their numbers went, disgraced their body; such men, you must admit, deserve not imperial participation.—

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When one partial act of mystery can counterbalance years of open and courted fraternity, the mind cannot be said to be in a state fit for general affiliation.—If gradual concessions do not as gradually do away antipathies that ought to be obsolete, no man can argue for equal participation.

I have said that a moment of popular ferment is unfit for discussion of important state subjects, and with that feeling I cannot help expressing much displeasure at the very inflammatory language* with which a writer of your professed moderation treats the remaining disqualifications of the Catholics in temporal matters, for the spiritual you give up, and that too with an admission in the midst of them, “that it is idle, considering “ the number affected by them, to treat of them “ at this day as a very oppressive burthen.” That opinion is in my mind too universal for you to combat, yet why do you accompany your admission of it with declarations that “ people meet “ the affected superiority of a neighbour in daily “ superciliousness of look and gesture, and in all “ the ordinary offices of intercourse,” and with saying “ that the assertion, that by the law of the “ land I am your superior, is calculated to create “ controversy and pique;” and you! then accompany the proofs of the restlessness of Protestant superiority by the insertion of an Orange stanza that could only influence minds as vulgar as that of the composer of it. After the advances made

* Pages 29, 30, 31, 32.

towards a good understanding between these religions you conceive so strong in their rivalry, after the gradual progression towards equality conceded from the one to the other, with no oppressive burthen remaining, is it good sense to recur to such stale and common-place observations, or to insert such a paltry reviling? Is it that you fear the Catholic body are too near an Union with their Protestant fellow-subjects? I am sure it is not, for I believe you heartily wish to promote it; but I must without ceremony say that I consider such observations at this time to admit of most dangerous consequences. It is pretty well understood that the measure of an Union is not to be forced against the wishes of the people, and it is equally well understood that a great majority of the Protestants are against it. If the government are as desirous of obtaining it as I believe them to be, (trusting with perfect reliance on Mr. Pitt's conviction of the importance of it to himself) I know no means of furthering it so obvious as to secure the acquiescence, or even the indifference, of the Catholic. And how can such a scheme be better promoted than by rekindling their animosity towards the Protestant, by endeavours to shew them that their interests are distinct, that it will level at once such supercilious superiority, and involve them both in one common degradation. Such arguments may for a moment create a pause, but they contain too much fallacy to remain long with any operation; and I foresee that
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the detection of the insidious object held out will animate the opposition to the measure, and unite the whole kingdom in one universal burst of indignation and rejection.

After recounting a variety of causes, which, as you conceive, led to the failure of the Catholic question, and which, whether they did or not, appear to me wholly inapplicable to the present subject, you proceed * to say, "that the train
" of evils you have laid down are not within the
" competence of the Irish parliament to rectify." I really am at a loss to discover throughout your memoir what train of evils you allude to. You confine your observations generally to the Catholic question, on which you have dilated with considerable force of argument, but I think it ill directed and ill timed. You endeavour to infuse into the Catholic the inadmissibility of his claims through the medium of the Protestant, and most particularly describe the parliament as the place of all others where he must make it with least hopes of success; and the only manner your observations can apply to the question you propose to treat of is, by your endeavours to reconcile to the Catholic the removal of a body hostile to his advancement. A publication tending to raise such sentiments would have been wholly unexplainable, had you not avowed your partiality for Great Britain, and if the public mind had not required some unnatural subject to create a

* Page 38.

division, for without shewing the Catholic some extraneous ground to induce his concurrence, he must naturally be led to join the Protestant in his detestation of the measure.

I have already thrown out many grounds to induce the Catholic to confide in the Protestant, as the sure means of his attaining the removal of such disqualifications as can be dispensed with, without the surrender of the spiritual ascendancy. How many men of experience, ability, and consequence in this kingdom stand pledged to the measure at all times? How many more have dissented, not from general principles, but from temporary motives, who have argued in concurrence with the received opinion of many able statesmen, that great political changes should proceed gradually: that to level at once all religious distinctions in a state, would be to make an experiment, the issue whereof might be fatal? Has the amount of the concessions already made been considerable, and the progress of them rapid? Will not the religious dissension, while it exists, be an inconceivable drawback on the prosperity of the country? Will it admit of our ever venturing to engage in any national object that may require universal coincidence of will and of action? Will not intercourse and social communication break down the prejudices which stand in the way, and will not the general advantage to the country press the matter forward, and carry it into effect, in spite of prejudice or party? How
numerous

numerous and irresistible are the grounds whereon the Catholic should stand with certainty for the full attainment of his wishes, as matters now are? But how equally irresistible will be the obstacles he will have to encounter after the proposed change? You tell him that there are “extravagant accumulations of sovereign powers in the hands of a few men,” which must stand forever in their way. If there are such accumulations, let the Catholic examine the principles of those in whose hands they are placed, and let him learn that many of them stand pledged to the attainment of his object. Let him with dispassionate reflection view his interest as it stands in the nation, and he will see that his political situation must acquire gradual increase; but how will it be lost in the scale of the empire, when he parts with that parliament, of which alone he can ever be a partaker, and of which his body now constitute a majority of the electors. Let him discredit every speculatist who tells him that parliament are incompetent to his admission.

If you intended any allusion to the rebellion and the causes of it, which you would argue that our parliament are incompetent to remove, I must beg to express my most unqualified dissent. I think this is one of the most prominent features where the superiority of a domestic to a foreign parliament is discoverable. Look to the code of laws calculated to meet every step in the gradation of rebellion, and which though unable to control

trol the unbounded exertions of our secret enemies, yet were of the utmost advantage in checking and opposing it. Look to the report of the Committees of both Houses. See the evidence they waded through, written and unwritten: could the developement of a mystery of such complication have taken place in any other country, or by the investigation of any other parliament? Surely matters of this nature require the prompt decision and the accurate information of a legislative body acting on the very spot where the evil exists.

I should have expected that a writer who seems to have the success of the measure so much at heart as you do, would not have confined his arguments in support of it to a short catalogue of evils to be removed, and totally omit any persuasive observations, grounded on advantages to be conferred.—Perhaps you tried it, and having found, after deep research, that every attempt at argument, grounded on advantages to be conferred, ended in a circle, you very prudently relinquished that very operative mode of conviction; and it would, in my mind, be equally prudent in every writer on that side of the question to follow your example.—Indeed, the most warm advocates for the measure, confine their promises on that side of the subject to two points, extremely desirable I confess, viz. internal peace, and external commerce; but I own I have heard
 little

little to seduce me to consider either of them as likely to be improved by it.

As to the promotion of internal peace from the measure, I have already mentioned the subject, and endeavoured to argue that it would be much more injured than improved by it.—As to commerce, I certainly am unequal to go into the detail of the subject, but there are a few thoughts that have occurred to me, as to the general probability of our being benefited by the change, that I shall here subjoin.

The great and leading objection to the surrender, in a commercial point of view, arises from the degree of rivalry that already exists between the two kingdoms on that subject, and that is likely to encrease as we get forward in prosperity.—The opposition of the British merchants to the propositions of 1785, which were of so inconsiderable consequence as to be rejected by this kingdom, is one example worth a thousand, to satisfy us of their attachments to their own interest.—Indeed, the general character of the British merchant, the first for enterprize and knowledge in every branch of trade with every corner of the globe, is known to be as universally established for intrigue and exclusion;—add to this, the immense difference between us in point of capital—Will you attempt then to argue, that it is safe to surrender our still infant manufacture, and far from matured trade, to the actual control of men elected and influenced by the English

lish merchant.—Though in every branch of legislation the concession might be desirable, the danger attendant upon this would, in my mind, be a very sufficient counterbalance—this is the great source of our prosperity—it is by this that we are to attain to that rank, and that wealth, that nature seems to have pointed out as our portion, from our situation and our internal resources; and it ought not to be hazarded for any transitory gratifications, supposing them even to exist.

But how is the great increase of trade to be promoted—Is it argued that Ireland is situated upon the map so advantageously, as that she might become a kind of emporium for the entire of Europe to resort to for the purchase of West Indian commodities?—In my apprehension not—she contains admirable materials for success in the promotion of manufactures of various kinds, and will certainly arrive at population to make use of every advantage she possesses; but to talk of foreign imports, all I would ask for her would be, that she might arrive at the exclusive carrying and importing all the materials necessary for her consumption, and for her manufacture.—England now, with little exception, enjoys the carrying trade for both kingdoms—through her we obtain most of our sugars and West Indian articles.—I should hope, indeed, that we might soon obtain that by ourselves; but I have not the vanity to aspire to be the carrier of West India product for England, or the channel through
which

which she will receive it.—Let every man, therefore, who talks of encrease of commerce, *be assured that* the diminution of consumption may not counterbalance any advantage the measure holds out; and the diminution, I should fear, would be immense, when I consider that every absentee who leaves this kingdom draws with him at least one artizan, and every artizan, perhaps, six working mechanics.—How this will operate a few years will evince, with, I dread, most melancholy proof.

My last observation is grounded on a supposition, that our commercial system is capable of being amended by concessions from Great Britain—Whether it be or not, is for those who are versed in the subject to decide—from every thing I have been able to learn on the subject, our commercial rank needs not, indeed is not susceptible of, much improvement; but admitting that it does require some alteration, and that Great Britain is willing to purchase our legislative surrender by a grant of commercial immunity; it does not, in my mind, follow that we would be prudent in accepting of the terms.—The benefit derived to our trade may perhaps be counterbalanced by the injury sustained by our private security; the want of the latter may annihilate the means of taking advantage of the former; but, above all, let every Irishman consider—Has not nature entitled us to as free a trade as Great Britain.—You are eloquent and forcible in your
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reasoning

reasoning upon the equality of the Irish Catholic and Protestant, and triumphantly say, “this world was made for Cæsar*,” but your admitted partiality for Great Britain has blinded your discrimination as to the equality of the English and Irish character, for you seem to me to consider the equality of mankind, and the equality of nations, as subject to very different modifications. For my part, I think better of Great Britain, than you with all your predilection appear to me to do, for I look forward with hope, to the removal of every jealous restriction, if any exist—in the certainty that our increased connexion will lead to increased affection,—but should it not, I still am against “bar-tering constitution for commerce,” feeling perfectly contented with the gradual advance we have latterly made in trade and prosperity, and which ever increases in its rapidity during its progress.

It is said and appears to be relied on, that parts of this kingdom are likely to be much benefited in a commercial point of view by the projected Union,—and the the manly opposition made by Dublin, is sought to be frittered away by insinuations, that the interested feelings of its inhabitants, on account of the probable injury the metropolis would sustain, was the true cause of it. This argument admits of one objection that tells

* Page 32.

very strongly against the measure to every part of the kingdom, viz. the injury to the metropolis.—Our rank amongst nations in point of civilisation is still below mediocrity, our manners admit of still considerable improvements, and the fine arts, I may say but lately introduced, have a vast journey indeed to travel, before they will arrive at an honourable maturity. It is by a metropolis of considerable extent, that the continuance of their progress among us can be secured. Will a deserted and tumbling city induce amongst us resident artificers of eminence, or teachers of experience,—Will the stage, that great improver of taste, and corrector of morals, already so much on the decline, ever rear its head in a city deprived of its court and its wealth?—Let not then a selfish hope of advancement hazard the prospect of refinement among us, but let every man feel impressed with the opinion of a profound philosopher*,—“that the ages of refinement are both
“the happiest and most virtuous.”

There is another observation I would address to the merchants of the south, to whom I must be already understood to have alluded—which is, that a change of the direction of public trade can be no argument for the measure. If one part of the country is injured as much as the other is improved, there is little national feeling annexed to the man, who would for partial im-

* Mr. Hume.

provement, surrender general independence.— Besides, let the idea I have hinted on the subject of consumption be taken into consideration, and let the southern merchant calculate whether even supposing that the destruction of the trade of the metropolis would ensure the whole of it to center there, the advantages might not be counterbalanced by the general decrease of consumption, and whether he would not on the whole find his situation at least not bettered by the measure.

There is a temporary argument against the measure, which strikes me with a degree of force that would render it criminal to pass it over.— I have stated that in my apprehension, the first moment of cool deliberation after the measure is carried, would present this province to Great Britain, composed of discontented Protestants, disappointed and betrayed Catholics, and degraded Dissenters.—The emissaries of the French republic found in this kingdom, notwithstanding the loyalty it shewed, a melancholy number of our people whose discontents made them fit objects for their schemes. What increase this measure might produce, I tremble to reflect on. If this country, with the zealous ardour of the yeomanry, and the love for the constitution they evinced, afforded to France such means of attacking the power of Great Britain, as with a view to it alone, to induce her to break off the negotiations at Lisle; with what accumulated force of argument will Mr. Tone's successor at
a future

a future conference, recommend a repetition of the experiment among a nation, almost to a man discontented, and having no constitution to inspire the inhabitants with a renewal of their ardour? I say, France must be frantic, not to yield to such argument; and that the measure will lead irresistibly to a repetition of invasion, and the prolongation of a war, that has so severely fallen on every description of British subjects, though attended with unusual traits of glory.

Your concluding argument *, appears to me to afford but little ground, to diminish the natural aversion we must conceive to the adoption of the measure.—You talk of the urgent interest of the Imperial Government, of the necessity of her bringing forward all the energies of its remaining territory; and when you talk of the necessity of universal action against France,—You tell us, that “her power must so terrify
“ the British minister, as to shield us from in-
“ justice and partiality.”—If nothing but an interested motive can ensure us a kind policy, it is not prudent to concede every thing to a tribunal so self-devoted. Every hour will not equally press her, and enforce her to be just—in the moments of continental quiet, she might commercially annihilate us; and I like not the omnipotent power, that requires necessity as the governing principle to lead to its justice; attached,

* Page 41.

connected, and devoted, as we are, to one common fate,—must we surrender our interest to insure our protection? Is our national importance so trivial, that without an Union the policy of England would be justified in being unkind,—I should hope she felt differently. Indeed, we have examples that she does. The dependance of our parliament was long a bone of contention between the two kingdoms, the removal of the cause silenced the dispute,—How many supporters had Great Britain during the rebellion of 1798,—that had the constitution remained as it was in 1781, would have been at best passive? It is not good policy to create anew a stumbling block, that has already been the subject of so much political antipathy. We now truly participate the British constitution, and would hazard every thing in its defence. But if you remove the source of our exertion, the effect of it may become in-operative, by possibility repugnant.

The reasons that I have offered, make me with much decision reject the discussion of the subject of an Union. It is a subject that appears to me to be fraught with internal danger, and external injury, and to call for an awful revolutionary surrender, without any equivalent, or in any point of view, a substantial consideration. Discussing it as a native of this country, it must be considered I feel a national prejudice, that may subject my opinion to the objection of interested consideration,—Yet, I have endeavour-

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ed to divest myself of false and senseless pride, to view the subject in every shape of projected benefit ; and I have found it impossible to trace one solid advantage, that can arise to the kingdom from the measure. The disadvantages and dangers to which it subjects it, to my comprehension are manifold, and therefore, I feel myself sheltered from the charge of endeavouring to rouse in my countrymen a false pride, when I address them by the general term of Irishmen, and call upon them as one people, that hope to coalesce and to form a powerful nation, the pride and sinew of Great Britain,—to speak forth regardless of distinction one voice, and to tell the empire with one unanimous declaration, that they feel, respect, and will maintain their freedom.

If this appeared to me to be the language of separation, I would be the last man in the state that could give it utterance ; but most fervently do I declare, that in no one point of view do I consider the Union more deplorable than in its tendency to a separation. One question it would seem might afford a proof of this, Has the connexion since 1782 been loosened or cemented ? If my countrymen will attend to the language of that day, how forcibly does it apply to my opinion. Let it be remembered, that when the concession of Irish independence was avowed from the throne, the first emanation of Irish gratitude, and which was received with delight by the empire

pire was, that “ gratified as we were, we did
 “ assure his Majesty that no constitutional ques-
 “ tion between the two nations would any longer
 “ exist, that could interrupt their harmony; and
 “ that Great Britain, as she had approved of our
 “ firmness, so might she rely on our affec-
 “ tion *.”

Here was a parliamentary declaration voted by many of our present representatives, that the removal of constitutional disqualifications must lead to national cement and co-operation. Surely the recorded tranquil opinion of such men, at a moment of national triumph, must weigh more in the opinion of Irishmen, than the heated, if not timid conception the present moment might lead to. But we are not left to the bare decision of Irish feeling on the subject, for we have a recorded declaration of the British Cabinet, pronounced by a nobleman, whose abilities now contribute to the government of the united empire, that must silence clamour, and render doubt shameless. We were addressed through our legislative bodies, at the conclusion of that memorable session, by his Grace the Duke of Portland, in the following words: “ The great and consti-
 “ tutional advantages you have secured to your
 “ country, and the wise and magnanimous con-
 “ duct of Great Britain, in contributing to the
 “ success of your steady and temperate exertions,
 “ call for my congratulations on the close of a

* Address to the King, voted Monday, May 27, 1782.
 “ session,

“ fession, which must ever reflect the highest ho-
 “ nour on the national character of both king-
 “ doms.”

“ It must be a most pleasing consideration to
 “ you to recollect, that in the advances you
 “ made towards the settlement of your constitu-
 “ tion, no acts of violence or impatience have
 “ marked their progress. A religious adherence
 “ to the laws confined your endeavours within
 “ the strictest bounds of loyalty and good order.
 “ Your claims were directed by the same spirit
 “ that gave rise and stability to the liberty of
 “ Great Britain, and could not fail of success,
 “ *as soon as the councils of that kingdom were in-*
 “ *fluenced by the avowed friends of the constitu-*
 “ *tion.*”

“ Such a spirit of constitutional liberty com-
 “ municating itself from one kingdom to the
 “ other, must naturally produce that reciprocal
 “ confidence and mutual affection, of which we
 “ already begin to feel the most salutary effects.
 “ A grateful zeal and generous ardour have
 “ united this whole kingdom in the most cordial
 “ and vigorous exertions, which promise effect-
 “ ually to frustrate the designs of our common
 “ enemy, and to re-establish and secure the glory
 “ of the whole empire*.”

* Speech from the Throne, Saturday, July 27, 1782.

Here is the language of an English senator, the congratulatory address to both kingdoms, on Irish emancipation. He has first told *us* that the advantages we then gained called for congratulation; that the conduct of Great Britain in ceding to our exertions was wise and magnanimous, and that *the session must for ever reflect the highest honor on both kingdoms.* May no subsequent one by the annihilation of the immunities we then obtained, reflect the reverse!!

He next commends our temperate conduct during the struggle, and tells us, that we were actuated by the same spirit that give rise and stability to the liberty of Great Britain; that *when the British councils were influenced by the avowed friends of the constitution; that the cause of Irish liberty could not fail of success;* thus asserting that Irish liberty then formed a principle of the British constitution.

He then assures you, *that the spirit of constitutional liberty communicating itself from one kingdom to the other, must produce confidence and affection.*—How baneful may the struggle against slavery prove?—How injurious its example?—Could his Grace have foreseen the present moment, and have wished to furnish this country with an opinion against the measure, he could scarcely have conveyed more interesting truths than these few strong sentences contain.

HE LASTLY TELLS YOU THAT THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONCESSION UNITED THE KINGDOM,

DOM, AND ESTABLISHED THE GLORY OF THE
EMPIRE.

Should it prove the hard fate of our present Chief Governor, to address us on the 27th of May 1799, when he may unfortunately be compelled to exercise his official duty in the House of Peers, by giving the Royal Assent to the Bill of Union, if he wishes to rank as a prophet, he will accompany our subjugation with a speech the critical reverse of that delivered at our glorious emancipation.

But I should trust that event is not to be dreaded—surely “our temperate and steady exertions” will have as much avail at all times in *retaining* a Constitution we possess, as they had at that time in obtaining the concession of one we did not. But that such exertions would now be successful, admits of no doubt. It is our peculiar good fortune that the British Councils must now be influenced by the same spirit; that the wise Senator who gave us here that solemn admonition, to revere our Constitution, then newly acquired, is now the Secretary of State for the Home Department in Great Britain, and will unquestionably prove the truth of the adage, that

Cælum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.

May our patriotism, good sense, and loyalty, give Great Britain on this occasion, a second opportunity

portunity of commending "our steady and
"temperate firmness" in support of our rights,
and may every subsequent transaction worthy
being recorded in history be a prominent proof of
"our affection."

F I N I S.





THE Gentleman to whom this Letter is addressed, is requested to consider it as proceeding solely from the writer's wish to prevent *religious divisions* from operating so as to induce any class of his countrymen to be actuated at this moment by *prejudice*, to which, in his conception, the Memoire on the projected Union very forcibly leads.

He will also, should he deem it worthy of perusal, and light upon any expression that conveys to him a symptom of improper warmth, rest assured that it is directed to his arguments *only*, and accept the writer's apology.





