

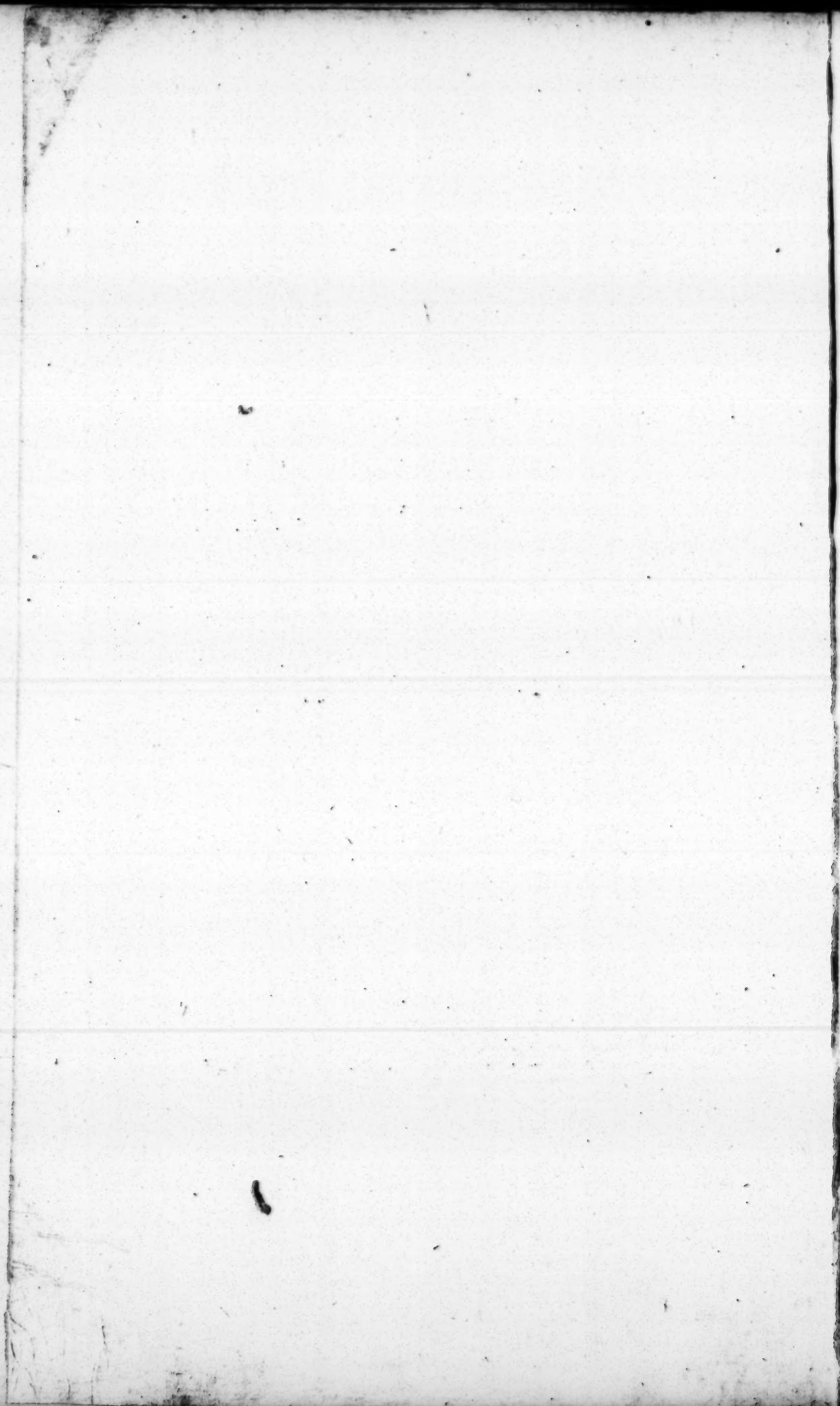
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1855. 5. 10.

RIGHTS OF IRELAND ASSERTED,
IN THE
LETTERS
OF
OWEN ROE O'NIAL.

(Price, — Thirteen Pence.)

1771



LETTERS

OF

OWEN ROE O'NIAL.

ESTO PERPETUO.

The expiring wish of the famous Father PAUL to his country.

REMEMBER,

THE HAND OF FATE IS OVER US, AND HEAV'N
EXACTS SEVERITY FROM ALL OUR THOUGHTS:
IT IS NOT NOW A TIME TO TALK OF AUGHT
BUT CHAINS OR CONQUEST; LIBERTY OR DEATH.

CATO.

WHO'S HERE SO BASE, THAT WOULD BE A BONDMAN?

IF ANY, SPEAK; FOR HIM HAVE I OFFENDED.

WHO'S HERE SO VILE, THAT WILL NOT LOVE HIS
COUNTRY?

IF ANY, SPEAK; FOR HIM HAVE I OFFENDED.

BRUTUS.

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OWEN ROE O'NIAL

TO

THE MEN OF IRELAND.

LETTER FIRST.

IF ever there was a moment of time big with the very fate of any nation, the present is that moment to Ireland. If ever there was a moment when to interpose with the energy of soul and body, became every individual of the state, who has an understanding to perceive, an heart to feel, and an arm obedient to his will, the present is that moment to Ireland. Not presuming then upon my own wisdom, but thinking it now no presumption to offer my private opinion, and, in the name of the nation, to call upon others to give their's in correction or support, I take up the pen with the boldness of a freeman, nor shall I finally lay it down, till the object appears to me either attained or unattainable ; till I see freedom established, or must lament its extinction, convinced that boldness will be not only unavailing to the state, but fatal to the individual. Sunk as is England, unhappy as Ireland has been ever since her connection with England, in this one respect, at least, each of them enjoys a portion both of dignity and happiness,



pines,—*the liberty of the press, that censurate of the people, yet remains unviolated, for juries yet are judges.* In their breasts lies that construction of malice which constitutes the illegality, as it does the guilt of words or of actions. We have the whole field of enquiry before us, and we may question the propriety of tolerating the *existence* of those powers, whose bare extent to question was once, I may say, admitted a blasphemy. The Magistrate is now beginning to be sensible, that the actions alone of men are his proper object, for they are unequivocal, objects of sense, and may be restrained or punished by the laws; but that opinions scorn his coercion, and, even where their tendency is dangerous, come not under his cognizance, till the action follows the opinion, and the law is *equally* infringed. He has besides learned from experience, that to punish the propagator of an opinion, is indirectly to own its truth, and its likelihood to make converts. Should, for instance, some visionary say to the world, that a great King imperial, born of an illustrious race, a race invited to the glorious task of confirming and establishing liberty in a country that more than once had risked its all for the obtaining of it, should he assert that he understood better the construction of a fly-trap than the law of nature and nations; that he had more the obstinacy of a mule than the perseverance of a man; more of the low mischievous cunning of a natural, than of the aspiring aim, the steady dignified wisdom of a philosopher; more of the infatiable rapaciousness and sullenness of a tyrant, than the enlarged and well directed zeal, the glowing benevolence of a patriot King:—If, I say, some visionary, or some hireling scribler, should tell us that such a creature *existed*, and bore the name of King, would a sensible loyalist be in wrath with the pretended portrait, or could the minister but smile? It is not in nature! would exclaim the former: The latter would calmly reply, *we know it to be false.*

If then, my countrymen, I am absurd; contempt both from you and the minister will be my portion and my punishment. If what I offer be reason, it cannot be a libel. If, galled by the severity of truth, the minister would listen to the suggestions of an imprudent revenge, the sound of his first step will be a *watchword*. Ye are **MEN**! I will not insult you by instruction.

There is a timidity in politics, as in every other art or science, which, like timidity in common life, stifles in conception all grandeur of design, robs resolution of its hue, enterprize of its pith, and must end in inaction, if not ignominy and remorse.

He who sets himself down, and weighs every possible accident that may thwart his design, and where much good is promised, allows himself to be terrified at every appearance of evil, such a man may live harmless in a solitude, but he has not virtue for society. Let him retire to a cell! he was not made for action,—he may be sainted by superstition, but a spirited reformer will expunge him from his calender.

There is no occasion in which this timidity will be more evident than in times big with event, or on the eve of revolutions. It is in such cases often amiable, I was going to say respectable. It then behoves every man to weigh deeply before he decides. It behoves him to consult the sensibility of his heart-strings, before he takes a step that may rend the tenderest of them asunder. It behoves him to consider well the value of his object, and to compare the probability of attaining it with the danger of the experiment. A thousand things it behoves him to consider, and long, very long, must he be toiled in painful uncertainty, before even firmness can take courage, or decision can decide.

Let us then pause, weigh, and consider our situation, as well in ourselves as with respect to others.

Let

Let us consider *the crisis*. But when we have weighed and considered, the goal is before us: our part is firmness.

That the situation of Ireland is capable of improvement, that it is not exactly such as the warm imagination, the benevolent enthusiasm of a *Plato*, a *More*, or a *Montesquieu*, would have formed in his dreams of perfection and happiness, we have not a bankrupt trader, a half naked peasant, or a starving manufacturer would have the courage to assert. We have however reason to be satisfied with our bankruptcy, our nakedness, and our famine, since *Manchester* and *Glasgow* are satisfied with them, since the *Lords of England* are *content*, and the Commons have joined in declaring them *constitutional* and *rightful*. But they have not yet denied us the liberty of *thinking*. I propose then to enquire, as a matter of mere philosophic curiosity; first,—Whether in the present posture of affairs, it is probable that Ireland might recover her Independence? and secondly,—Is independence worth contending for?

It may seem odd, that I do not first consider the value of the object before I am at the trouble of enquiring into the probability of attaining it. But, besides that there are fewer persons with whom the latter can be a matter of doubt, it would be of little importance to enquire whether a certain change would be advantageous, if the improbability of effecting it almost amounts to *the impossible*. Were I to institute an enquiry, whether it would be useful to man to have power over the elements, I believe I should be able to find few fellow adventurers in the speculation. But if I begin by enquiring if such power could possibly and easily be obtained, the very novelty of the subject might perhaps procure me a hearing.

Before I enter upon these questions, I must beg leave to premise, by way of lemma, or introductory argument,

argument, a principle upon which I intend to build much, and which I shall therefore beg leave particularly and minutely to discuss.

The principle is this,—that political bodies, whether sole or aggregate, whether composed of one person or a multitude, act uniformly from the narrowest kind of selfishness, and are totally incapable of a steady or uniform principle of generosity. The observation may be farther extended to individuals, (though no body politic) who from their situation have been under the necessity of acting more from political than moral motives. Morality is felt. Politics must be studied. The conscience of the man is natural. That of the politician artificial. The habit of reasoning only, is not favourable to feeling. The habit of being cunning is not favourable to strictness of principle. In general then we cannot expect politicians to be either generous or just. To see how collective bodies will be most likely to act towards each other, but little pains are necessary. All persons are sufficiently selfish, but few are in any degree generous. The affections of most people are as domestic as their charity, so celebrated by Swift. “They scarce ever travel abroad.” They end where they should begin—*at home*. Some however can feel for the little community to which they belong. A few for their country. But how many are they who are born for the universe? Shuffle these men into communities, and then will it be asked, if communities can be supposed capable of generosity? Can the majority be supposed either generous or just? Take the matter as between an individual of one nation, and the body of another nation, can it be supposed that the few attachments which he can have with a few of that other nation, to the majority of whom he must be at best very indifferent, will overcome the force of selfishness, and that he will divide his favours among a million, because he has a friendship for one? Even the generous

nerous are not displeased with gratitude, but here the obligation is scarce felt by an individual of the obliged, and the merit is lost in the number of obligers. There will be few favours, and gratitude will scarce exist.—But will this individual be as little likely to injure as to serve a nation? I cannot think so. Selfishness is eternally in-arms, while benevolence often sleeps on her post. In a thousand acts of injustice the individual will be sheltered and even applauded by the multitude of his associates. Fear of disgrace, which alone perhaps keeps him honest in private life, will make him dishonest in public. A palpable injustice will be lawful policy. Political villainy will be love to his country. The honest man will often give up his private conscience to his sense of duty to the state. The same sacrifice will be pretended to by the villain. If such will be the probable line of conduct which an individual of one nation or community will observe towards another nation, what must one nation expect from another? “Are not the chances, nay the certainties, of coldness, unsteadiness, injustice, and inhumanity, increased almost to infinity?” The unlearned in arithmetic would be astonished at the amount of the combination. The steps of nations have been ever planted in selfishness, marked with injustice, and may be traced in blood. Their monuments are desolation. Their glory is the stain of humanity—Let us compare facts with reasoning. They will confirm it to a miracle!—“And first as to individuals, who have been politicians by necessity or choice.”—Most Catholic Kings have they not been the encouragers of heresy? Has never Presbyter ruled with the pride of a self-created bishop? Did never reformer pull down the spiritual crown of the pope, that he himself might wear it as part of his own, or enjoy its power under lank hair or a night cap?—God’s vicegerents upon earth have fomented rebellion against princes. Despots (those steady friends to the peace, good

good order, and subordination of society !) have in the dominions of others sown the seeds of anarchy ; or, what seems much more unnatural, those whose mean ambition rendered them enemies to equality, and who could have wished freedom had but one neck, if they had held the sword, these men have planted, fostered, and protected Republicanism. Can *Guatimozin* himself even in the generous ardour of his zeal and the fire of his consuming indignation, can he restrain a tear for the weakness of humanity, when he relates what I am obliged to add, that he whom no allurements could shake, no dangers could dismay, who brightened by difficulties and gained lustre from defeats, who refused the proffered sovereignty of his country, and treated with contempt the support and friendship of her enemies, who, rather than see her ruin, could have embraced with a great despair “ Death—in the last ditch of his country,”—that he, even he of *ever glorious memory*, in answer to the petitions of his new subjects, *whom policy made it necessary to cultivate*, could declare with the cold blood of an assassin, his deliberate intention of *ruining* the Irish woollen manufacture, that the English might *profit* by it ? could declare, in effect, that he would wrest the morsel from the mouth of *famine*, to give another provocation to the fated appetite of *gluttony* ? Can you believe this, my countrymen ?—It is a fact, if there be truth in history, if the records of England be not all as false as some of them are disgraceful !—But heroes have been men ; there have been individual villains in all ages. Nations will afford us a more amiable prospect. They cannot, as one man have conspired the ruin of virtue and liberty ! they cannot have been so corrupt as to bid defiance to shame ! They cannot have been so foolish as to show an example of tyranny, that might one day be turned upon themselves !—

I grant there is a difference between nations and individuals. The difference is great. *Individuals* have been often and uniformly generous; *nations never*. Their uniform principle is *policy*, either real or supposed. Unless this is understood, their conduct will appear a chaos of inconsistency. But what will seem extraordinary is, that those nations who enjoyed most liberty themselves have been ever the greatest tyrants of others, and the provinces of a despotic King have generally been treated more kindly than those of free states [Hume]. The reason is, that in a free state, every man is in a degree one of the *government*, and few men in power like to part with it. Most are willing to abuse it. The proud cannot bear spirit in others, and there are more men of pride than of dignity. To a despotic King all his subjects are pretty equal, provided they pay him his taxes; and if his government is rather mild, the provinces will share it. The free citizen of a free state will hardly put *his* subjects in the province on a footing with himself, their Lord and Governor in his capital. Common interest, and even common calamity, unites the provinces subject to despotism. They have but one master to satisfy or guard against—opposition of interests disunites the Lords of a free state from their subjects in the province. These have as many masters as there are men in the superior state, and each would be satisfied, every individual would stalk in the mockery of fancied Majesty. Every individual would enjoy *his* revenues and his taxes: every individual would propose *his* laws and *his* restraints—and all restraints would be salutary. The cry of every individual is *unconditional submission!* and the subject nation has no hope but in the impotence or subjection of its masters.

But to facts.—Athens the brave, the civilized, the polite, the lettered and the wise, she who defended the liberties of Greece at Marathon and Salamis,

Iamis, how long was she the tyrant of Sicily, and how cruel was her tyranny !

The world has seen those who for their own country despised death and were suppliants for torture, [Regulus] who in their own city " could brook the infernal devil as easily as a King." even those has the world seen impose upon other nations a multitude of tyrants, each of them more insolent, more inhuman than a single one.

England sat by a tame unconcerned spectator while Corsica was sold by a republic and deluged with blood by a monarchy. That same monarchy is now protecting the revolted colonies of England, whose tyranny forced them into a republic. She is protecting a republic the very contrast of herself in manners, opinions, religion, prejudices, and spirit, while those who took from a king [Alfred] their boast, that " they were free as their own thoughts, and who have sacrificed kings themselves at the altar of freedom ; they have driven Indians from their own woods, through zeal for civilization, christianity, and justice, have carried others into captivity,—because their complexions darkened under a fiercer sun, and are now carrying fire, sword, and scalping-knife into the country of their brethren, because they thought the leading-strings of an infant an incumbrance to a man ; because they could not be grateful to them for the retailed gifts of nature, be in love with poverty, and in raptures with slavery.

If honesty, an inbred steady principle of honesty, were to be expected from any nation, it might surely be looked for in one that was ignorant of the use of money ; in a nation, three hundred of whose citizens, headed by a King, devoted themselves for their country, and repulsed the millions of Xerxes ; in a nation where all the weakness of the woman and the mother fled at the name of traitor, [the mother of Pausanias] and he was no longer a son who was no longer a citizen. Yet the *Spartans* have had their

Helotes, and the English HAVE THEIR IRISH!
 Were the blood-hounds or the barbed arrows of the Spartan more severe or more keen to the body, than are the insults of the Briton to the mind? Boys hunted the Helotes: **THE IRISH ARE THE SCOFF OF FOOLS!**

OWEN ROE O'NIAL.

LETTER SECOND.

SUÆ quisque faber fortunæ est, is one of those truths which the experience of ages has handed down as a proverb.

What is true of every individual must be so of nations—"Their fortune must depend upon THEMSELVES."

It is a truth well worthy the deep consideration of Ireland—I have, in my former letter, endeavoured to convince her by reasoning, and an appeal to historical facts, of what she should long ere this have learned from experience; that whatever justice or generosity exists among individuals, it is vain to look for it in the mutual intercourse of *nations*. Their principle is policy.

It is time for *Ireland* to take thought for herself.

That Ireland hath been, and *is*, subordinate to, and dependent on the imperial crown of Great Britain, and that the King's Majesty, with the consent of the Lords and Commons of Great Britain in Parliament, hath *power* to make laws to bind the people of Ireland*, is a truth too melancholy to admit contradiction. That it of right "*ought*" to be so, was reserved for the modesty and good sense of an En-

* 6 Geo. I. ch. 51

glish parliament to assert, and would therefore be a *blunder* in Irishmen to deny.

That no nation can by conquest, or by any other means, acquire a right of perpetual dominion over another ; that no consent or contract, however express or solemn, can bind posterity to their injury ; that no prescription or length of time can sanctify oppression ; that little deference is due to names imposed by the oppressors upon the act of assuming rights unalienable in their nature, and only overborne by force, or overlooked by folly ; these are propositions which I shall not attempt to enlarge upon. Time, with most minds, gives a sacredness to error : enquiry then bears the name of impiety : but the idols of one age are trampled under foot in another, and the prejudices which once required a *Locke* to remove, are in these days but themes to the schools.

I shall not then war with the dead ; nor shall I offend the delicacy of *an English judge*, by doubting the propriety, or disputing the *omnipotence* of *an English* act of Parliament. That would be “to oppose my private *Irish* judgment to public *English* authority *.” And, in so plain a case, the opposition “must be virulent and factious †.” *Authority* must be ever in the right ! The demand of **MAGNA CHARTA** was but a successful rebellion ; the Reformation was an impious *defection* from the church ; and the author of Christianity was an heretic and a traitor ! Ireland then, by *right*, ought to be, nay more, for ever must be, subordinate to the sovereign legislative Parliament of Great Britain. I acknowledge it ! my reason is a strong one ; she thinks so herself ; and who dare deny the competency of her judgment ? She thinks herself formed by nature an humble attendant upon England. She crouches un-

* 6 George I. ch. 5.

† See Blackstone's *Comment.* book 4, p. 50, Irish edition.
der

der what she calls necessity. Her loyalty dares not form a wish for the preservation of her crown in the house of Hanover, united with the separate independency of her own legislature: because she looks upon that wish as hopeless. The very thought, *to her* seems madness! the attempt, *she apprehends*, would be ruin!

I owe a deference to the general opinion, and shall submit to it; yet as all sound judgment on this question, can only be built upon experience, it seems not unreasonable to enquire, were it but as matter of speculation, into the fate of other countries, which having been nearly in the same situation with Ireland, endeavoured to mend their condition. One advantage will certainly result from the enquiry, which cannot fail of proving acceptable to a people, who have hitherto appeared more delighted with their fears, than with any other feelings of the human heart. It will lead us, by the consideration of our *superior* resources, to estimate *infallibly* the quantum of national punishment, likely to be superadded to our present burdens, by our *masters*, the Parliament of Great Britain, for the efforts of this day, when their leisure and security shall permit them to turn their thoughts to us. In proportion to our superior power of resisting, will the means be of preventing, in future, the possibility of the operation of such a resistance.

A late respectable writer (*Guatimozin*) has already enumerated the natural advantages of Ireland. It appears that she possesses within herself, or immediately within her reach, almost every advantage that nature or situation can give, or that is necessary to make a nation rich, great, and happy.

A climate of the finest temperature, a soil of most extraordinary fertility; mines that encouragement might convert into sources of national industry and national superiority; seas that teem with fish; harbours numerous, safe, commodious, and well situated

ed for commerce ; and, to conclude, a people with capacity for every thing, and who want but *leave* to acquire habits of industry as persevering as spirited.

These are the *natural* advantages of Ireland. How few nations can boast so many and so great ? Compare her rank and consequence in the world, with what these advantages might entitle her to.—Enquire then whence arises the difference, and thank England, if you can, for the generosity of her protection !

Are either the United Provinces, or Switzerland, to be compared to Ireland in natural advantages ? I cannot think they are. The former is but one-third, the latter only one half her size. Ireland is an island, and such an one as I have described ; rich in climate, soil, mines, and harbours. Switzerland is in the heart of the Continent, and is poor in all these,—the latter she cannot possess at all.—The Dutch States are joined to the Continent ; their shore is dangerous from its flats ; does not afford them a single good harbour ; and the frost binds up their commerce during a considerable part of the winter. I need not mention the fish which the lakes of Switzerland afford. The fisheries of Holland lie upon *our* coast.—They enjoy more from their unchecked industry, than we from nature and the protection of England. The Dutch have no mines. The Swiss don't work theirs, except for their necessary instruments of war and agriculture. Neither Holland nor Switzerland produces corn for half their inhabitants. In the latter half the harvest produced by a stubborn soil is often destroyed by storms, and but part of the remainder is allowed by the climate to ripen.

The Swiss may be said to have neither commerce nor navigation, since the latter they have only on their lakes, the former is concerned wholly in necessaries.

Of the timber of the Swiss I need not speak. They can have no navy, nor do they require one. As to Holland, the spongy produce of her marshes is use-

less.

less in trade or navigation. Her navy must be purchased by industry. Ireland may be as industrious as Holland, but she requires it less. She may raise a navy at home, if she cannot with more advantage bring materials from abroad. The climate of Switzerland may make an hardy race of soldiers or husbandmen, but to a nation that would aim at more than a penurious existence, it cannot be a subject of envy. The climate of Holland, marshy in its soil, and intersected by so many stagnated canals, is not wholesome. Some of their towns are formed on the soil left by the stagnation of rivers. In others the solid foundations of the earth seemed to have forsaken them, and they laid new ones. The sea threatens to overwhelm them. They oppose it with mounds, which require a continual repair, and dream not of danger, though the failure of a bank would give them a second deluge.

Labour and industry are in Holland necessary.—They cannot otherwise exist. This, it is true, will keep them laborious and industrious. But what they are from necessity, other nations may be from nobler motives, and Ireland sets out from a point which in Holland it required the labour and industry of years to gain.

Holland must be a drudge, as she subsists on the wants of other nations, and these, we know, are mostly artificial. She is their factor and carrier. She may suffer from their caprice. She must languish in their ill-humour. Their industry, or even frugality, would starve her. Ireland is more independent. She can subsist by her internal resources, though the world should refuse her either commerce or employment. She is rich in herself. Nature that made her an island, and gave her fertility, qualified her equally for absolute independence, and unlimited intercourse with other nations. She can subsist without other nations. She can trade with them to mutual advantage.

Such

Such are the natural advantages of Holland and Switzerland, and such are they compared with Ireland. America I shall briefly consider hereafter. Each of the former is surrounded by powerful empires. Each of them was once oppressed by all the rigours of slavery. Each of them burst her shackles, and baffled the most inveterate attacks of enemies whose power seemed to approach them with the irresistability of fate.

Holland, inferior to Ireland in every natural advantage, and equal to but a third of her in size, threw off the yoke of the most powerful Monarch then in Europe.—The firmness and courage which she displayed, will appear incredible to those who are un-acquainted with the power of enthusiasm. The seven provinces we are speaking of surmounted every difficulty—they thought they could defend themselves. The ten other provinces, says Voltaire, would have a *foreign Prince* to *protect* them, and are in slavery to this day.

One Prince [Henry the IVth of France] to whom they applied for assistance, was himself engaged in civil wars, and yet totter'd on his throne. The extreme caution of another, [Queen Elizabeth] in foreign enterprise corresponded but ill with her magnanimity and resolution in domestic affairs; and from the reprimands she was daily giving to her House of Commons, for presuming to judge of the duty they were called to, she seemed little likely to tempt the wrath of a powerful tyrant or turn abettor of rebellion. The succours received by the States were accordingly for a long time feeble and clandestine. To obtain open assistance from Elizabeth required a longer struggle: and even the offer of their sovereignty. But before any assistance had been received by the States, they had gotten possession of what Doctor Johnson calls "the choice of evil."—Their darling object liberty. The very women had formed regiments

for the defence of their cities ; and, rather than again fall under the hated tyranny of Spain, the dykes and sluices had been opened, and the very Peasants, says Hume, had been active in ruining their own fields by an inundation,—They preferred the mercy of the waters to that of tyrants.

These same people have since withstood the most formidable attacks of a Monarch who thought his power equal to universal empire. They have supported themselves with more than equal honour against the combined fleets of France and England. They have swept the channel of England, and their insults in the Thames have carried consternation to the capital.

In little more than half a century from the time, at which, unprepared as they must have been, they first ventured to take up arms against Spain in defence of their liberty, they beat one of her formidable Armadas *. They obliged it to take shelter in the Downs under the English flag. They retire—for a reinforcement ;—they resolve—that the fleet of England shall no longer protect their enemy ; they return to the charge ; and the Spanish navy in its flight received from them a blow which at this day, after near a century and an half, it has not fully recovered.—A few years more, *assisted by a few more defeats*, softened the obstinacy of Spain. She acknowledged the independence of the States †, and in twenty years after they protected her provinces against France. ‡

The Swiss, now that they are free, are more secure from attacks, than when they were dependent. They are defended by their mountains and the barrenness of their country, by their poverty, by their valour, and by the mutual jealousies of the

* The Duke of Alva left the Low Countries in the year 1574.—They beat the Spanish Armada in 1639.

† Treaty of Munster, 1648. ‡ Triple alliance in 1668.

neighbouring empires. A partition is not easily agreed upon, and none will consent to their becoming an accession to the power of another, if such an accession were practicable. But it must be confessed that of all the advantages I have mentioned, their valour alone, at the time they threw off the yoke, seemed most in their favour.—The enemy had possession of their country. The balance of power was then less understood, or less attended to, and their poverty and commercial insignificance must have been feeble inducements to the protection of their neighbours. Accordingly they had to work out their own liberty, and above three centuries elapsed before the House of Austria acknowledged their independance*.

I believe there are few will deny that America has already established her independance. She would not come over and prostrate herself at the feet of England, so England, with the magnanimity of a conqueror, appointed ambassadors to her by act of Parliament. Upon England's condescending "to treat with armed rebels," they refused to treat with England. They had procured *friends*, and they preferred them to *masters*.—For the situation of America in the beginning of the contest, hear her own unexaggerated description. "Without arms, ammunition, discipline, revenue, government, or ally, almost totally stript of commerce, and in the weakness of youth, as it were, "with a staff and a sling only," she dared, "in the name of the Lord of Hosts," to engage a gigantic adversary, 'prepared

* They took up arms in the year 1308.—Their independance was acknowledged in 1648, by the treaty of Munster, the same by which Spain acknowledged the independance of the United Provinces.

It would be singular enough if the same period which establishes American independance, shall be found to have destroyed the usurpation of the British Parliament over the legislative rights of Ireland.

at all points, boasting of his strength, and of whom even mighty warriors were greatly afraid."

When to this enumeration of difficulties, which, one is tempted to think, requires little addition, we subjoin the following ; that these colonies were not more disunited by distance of place, than by difference of opinion, manners, spirit, religion and government ; that they were so disunited in all these, that it seemed the dream of a dotard to think of connecting them in one interest, or of bringing them to co-operate, if they could be convinced that their interest was the same ; that they were exposed to the navy and arms of England on their sea-coasts, to the incursions of Indians (perhaps too justly enraged) on their rear, and, in some provinces, to the more dangerous insurrections of their domestic slaves, whose dispositions to revenge must have been expected to burst on their more immediate oppressors ; when all these particulars, I say, are considered, besides those which America herself has enumerated, I think scarce any nation on the earth should absolutely despair.

Let us consider the present situation of Ireland.—I need scarce say that there is not a maritime power in Europe to which her alliance would not, in itself, be an object of emulation. What then would it appear to the enemies of England ?—If Ireland should ask their protection, would they require to be sounded at a distance, or to be assailed by preparatory arguments and leading propositions ? Would they think it *prudent* to act as they did by America, to stand by, cool spectators of our struggle, till they judged how far we should be able to persevere or be likely to succeed ? or, if they determined to assist Ireland, would they be obliged to have recourse to art in order to deceive a credulous minister, and to mask their intentions until they could declare them with safety ? No, my countrymen : Distant propositions, preparatory arguments, negociation, art,—all these

are

are to us unnecessary ! Conviction has long been confirmed. Their resolution is already taken. Their arms are already in their hands. They have crossed the Atlantic for their own interest and for the humiliation of England. Will a few leagues terrify them when their scheme is so near arriving at almost un-hoped-for perfection ? They were then at peace, yet they engaged in war. They are now at war, will they not *carry it on* ? The sole question with them at present must be this : Will they *choose* to visit us as enemies, or as friends ? For visit us they probably will.—Will they attempt a conquest to which they are probably unequal ; or will they choose the easier road, and offer an *alliance*, which will have every real advantage to be expected from *dominion*, without the danger of an unsuccessful attempt, or the inconveniencies and hazards of the most successful execution ? Will they not offer an alliance such as their good sense has been content with from America, and which they have thought worthy of supporting by a war with England ? such an alliance as, from its liberality, it will be the interest of the other European powers, at least, by a tacit acquiescence, to support ? An alliance that will not contribute more to the weakening of an haughty adversary and the disappointment of an insatiable monopolist than to their own regal power, aggrandisement and glory.

And here, my countrymen, occurs an awful pause ! What inducements hath British policy suffered to take root in the hearts of Irishmen, to enable them to resist such necessary and proffered protection. None, my friends ! Loyalty, the fairest flower that can ornament the bosom of a Prince, finds in Ireland is happiest soil.—Personal attachment to the King of Ireland, and his illustrious house, is the cord which binds us to our burden, and furnishes to a British people the occasion of loading us without bounds or mercy. Had we as little attachment

ment to the House of Hanover as Scotland, or Manchester, we had long since in despair implored the protection of other powers, for so long as the "Parliament of Great Britain can bind us in all cases whatsoever," the worst that could happen to us would be to change our masters *. The word is not my own. It is by an English Judge and commentator directly applied to the situation of this kingdom and its subordination to England by right of conquest.

But has England learned nothing from her late experience in America? Will she for ever trust to our loyalty alone, and will our King for ever leave us at the mercy of a British Parliament? As to the English people the power of God has been displayed to them in vain. They seem to have revived the age of miracles, and to have left the Egyptians at a distance. All that should have inspired them with awe, humility, and wisdom, seems but to have darkened their understandings and hardened their hearts! But let it be our duty, my countrymen, to consider the crisis and profit of it! Let us adore that

* It may be seen by Blackstone, b. I. p. 100. what an English lawyer thinks the *necessary* consequence of *all* dependance upon *England*! We are bound by *every law* she, in her wisdom or wantonness, *thinks proper* to prescribe. We shall soon, I suppose, be on a footing with those slaves of the Romans who were *bound to the glebe*, or *soil*.—England will *think proper* that we should not *depart* from the *soil*, but be transferred with it by *deed, roll, or indenture*. This will save us a multitude of disputes about *our property*, for we shall then, like the Roman slaves, become perfect *things*, and cease to be *persons*. The English prints will then afford entertainment to those who can relish it. If any of us are missing from our *balls* or *lumber-rooms*, we shall be *advertised* for, and described, as "LOST, STRAYED, STOLEN, OR MISLAID."—We shall be taken *damage feasant*, (perhaps *rider* and all!) and if we happen to die of cold and hunger, in an *open pound*, it will be at the suit of *the owner*!—O Ireland! Ireland! Dost thou retain one spark of feeling, to make the oppression of thee a *crime*?

wonder-working God, who in the intoxication of our oppressors has laid the foundation of our relief, and who in the miscarriages of British tyranny beyond the Atlantic, has taught Irishmen the practicability of their own emancipation from the authority of an usurping English Parliament.

But WE ARE NEARER *to* ENGLAND. I hear my countrymen lament it,—and often have I lamented it myself!—Yet, (indulge me, my countrymen, while I explain my paradox!) ON THAT VERY PROXIMITY DOES THE WEAL OF IRELAND DEPEND.

We are near to England; but we are near to *assistance* also. The Atlantic rolls not between us and England; but neither does it roll between us and *her* enemies. These enemies are on the way. Before the wind changes they are here. Our proximity to England is to us, in the present posture of affairs, what the distance of America was in the beginning of the contest, to her. The latter was a barrier against Britain; the former is a bridge for her foes. In this respect then we are equal to America. We have however an advantage from our proximity, which she never can derive from her distance. It is a PERPETUAL GUARANTEE against the oppression of any self-created protector. It is perpetual, because it depends not on the policy or caprice of kings or of nations. It is fixed in the nature of things.

America might have been ruined by the treachery of France, or she may yet fall by Congress, as England has done by a Parliament.

Let Ireland be subject to her own legislation only, and one might venture to say she is free for ever. Her situation and size fit her for that moderate degree of strength and power which is most likely to be permanent.

Let these things be weighed, and perhaps that man could not be acquitted of presumption who would venture to point out another spot upon the globe, to which Ireland should now wish to be removed.

From

From this proximity of England, I would deduce **THIS TRUTH**, which I wish to be engraven on the heart of every Irishman: **ENGLAND is the ONLY power that CAN either enslave us FARTHER, or KEEP US AS WE ARE.** And this is the important moment when our own firm constitutional resistance will derive additional support from the dread of her enemies, towards shaking of the shackles of an usurping English people.

But, unless we entertain for each other a mutual and general confidence, unless we lay aside all rancour of prejudice on account of distinctions either political or religious, or attempt such a relief from those shackles would be only to solicit confusion.

There are, however, many instances of states differing very much in religion, and yet united in strict civil confederacy and union. Scarce six of the Cantons of Switzerland are Protestants, the seven remaining are Roman Catholicks; and, what seems a little extraordinary, the greater number of the Roman Catholick Cantons are democratical, that of the Protestant cantons aristocratical in their government. In the United Provinces the majority of the people are either Presbyterians or Roman Catholicks, and tho' Presbyterianism is the established religion, yet the toleration or connivance which all sects meet with from the government, has produced a general moderation and peace, and, in its natural consequences, has added power, grandeur, and stability to the state. The state of Pennsylvania is equally various in its religion. The laws of this province are more liberal than the spirit of any other provinces. They give no preference to any sect. They tolerate all sects. All sects are therefore not only peaceable but content. Most of the other states of America, so firm in their union against England, are scarcely more opposite than they are inveterate in the several prejudices and opinions which they carried with them from Europe. In short, from all the facts

we

we can collect, our uniform conclusion must be,— that that nation is most likely to be great, powerful, and happy, which finds political and civil moderation necessary to its very *being*. Where there are no sects or parties, I may venture to say there cannot be sense, science, liberty, or commerce. Where, from circumstances internal or external, different sects are nearly ballanced in power, the laws must be moderate, and the spirit of the laws will become the spirit of the people. The nation will be in harmony within itself, and that moderation and good sense which will distinguish it in its internal government and policy, must characterise it in its conduct towards other nations.

It is very sensibly observed by a Roman Catholic Priest *, in a late Address to those of his own persuasion in Ireland, that “conquerors, (and, let me add, traders and politicians) are of no religion.” The English established popery in Canada. The French entered into alliance with Presbyterians in North America, and, I dare say, would have done the same if their Deity had been the sun or a serpent, an onion or a monkey. The Dutch, it is said, tread upon the cross at Japan, and the English make alliances with Moors and with Indians.

The French are, perhaps, even in religion, as liberal a nation as any in Europe. I judge not of them by their creeds, confessions, or articles of belief: God forbid that I should judge by these alone of the hearts or understandings of any people upon earth, who have public creeds, confessions, or articles! These are not always formed by the wisest or most religious people of a nation. The wisest and most religious are generally better employed. I judge of the French nation by the general conduct of the people: and I believe it will be owned that they are more liberal to Englishmen, than Englishmen are

to them. The absurdity of supposing that even conquerors would make violent alterations in private property, and involve themselves in the perplexed disputes and antiquated claims of families, that have suffered by forfeiture, has been well exposed by the Reverend Divine just mentioned. Were the question indeed between two pretenders to the crown, the case might be different. He who succeeded must reinstate some of his adherents, and gratify others. This must be done at the expence of the opposite party. But a conqueror, who is not able to crush the subdued nation at a single effort, will think himself happy in prevailing upon the people to remain quiet as he found them. He will make no alteration which he can avoid; he will avoid every alteration which can disgust or displease. What then is to be expected from even a powerful protector, that offers independence to a nation so divided into parties that no one of them has power to crush the others, supported as they would be, by the nation that formerly enslaved them? I say that, in this case, we might expect such a moderation as would overrule every petty distinction or jealousy, and would unite the nation by COMMUNITY OF INTEREST. To make an alteration in the established religion, or to deny to all denominations of Protestant Dissenters that toleration which they at present enjoy, would be the madness of folly. Those we speak of are neither fools nor madmen.

The Roman Catholicks, might, with justice indeed, expect a more compleat toleration. But it would require peculiar delicacy to grant this without offending those Protestants who at present enjoy but a toleration themselves. The interference of Roman Catholic protectors, conscious of the prudence their situation required, must be of the most temperate kind. The alterations made would be gentle, gradual, and rather the effect of an insensible alteration of opinion and removal of prejudice, than

than an act of force or power in the slate.—And, from the co-operation of all these causes, I am inclined to think there would *naturally arise* a mildness of government, and a benevolence of toleration which is unknown to the laws of any other country in Europe, and which enthusiasm itself has scarce dared to think consistent with the littleness of human nature.

But whatever may be the natural dignity and strength of Ireland, or whatever advantages she might derive from the present posture of affairs, there are some who cannot readily give up their attachment to the people of England, or think themselves justified in resisting them in their present state of misfortune, while there are others who yet dread her power, and tremble at her name. To the former I shall speak more particularly hereafter, and hope to shew that we are not bound by any ties of duty, gratitude, or honour, to remain in subjection to the parliament of England.

At present I would address myself to the latter.—That the power of England is not yet an imagination I readily will own.—Great even yet is the power of England, and great is the memory of her glory! but her glory lives but in memory, and the fine news of her power are withered.—Exhausted and foiled by America, whom, in the hour of her insolence, she treated with a contempt that would have robbed victory of its honour, but has covered defeat with aggravated disgrace, returning reason can suggest but one consolation for her folly;—that something yet remains for madness to squander, that there is yet a remnant which penury may save. The arbitress of empires may yet exist among nations! the patrons of nations may yet be an *huswife*!

There was a time when the world and the *Roman Empire* were synonymous terms.

There was a time too when the very name of Rome kept the Provinces in awe, tho' she could

scarce have defended her walls.—England has fallen by her own weight which she wanted wisdom to balance. Those days are past in which her history went hand in hand with romance.—*France* has struck terror into **HER CONQUERORS**, and has shaken the throne of **HER King**! *The English Channel* has become a term of mockery. It has seen the Navy of England in its **FLIGHT**! The navy of England has left her coasts to be insulted! That the navy of England was able to secure the *protection* of a *Port* has, to a sovereign of England, become a theme of congratulation!

While England *thus* protects *herself* need I ask what protection she is likely to afford to *Ireland*? If we remain by her bad policy in our present impoverished state, can she protect us from the arms or insults of her enemies?

Have we not men in arms already? Men whom England, and the slaves of England, would long ere this have disarmed, had they dared to do so! Men whose spirit they now affect to approve, because they find their approbation is indifferent to them! Men whose spirit must obtain a momentary protection, and to whom a very little time will render protection unnecessary! Men who may yet teach England that the soil of their own country benumbs not their courage; that it is not on the plains of Flanders or America alone that **IRISHMEN** can **CONQUER**!

The subject, my countrymen, has risen upon me. I have (I hope you will think unavoidably) been led into some details. My indignation, upon other occasions, I have found it difficult to repress. You will consider the design, and pardon any involuntary failure in the execution. But, before I take my leave for the present, allow me to ask one short question:

Shall

Shall we trust to other nations for a *temporary protection*, which (judging from human nature, and their particular line of conduct) I aver it to be equally their interest and their inclination to give, and the bounds of which, as I have endeavoured to prove, they *cannot* exceed; or, shall we depend to eternity on the generosity of a nation who has shewn herself as incapable of generosity as of justice, and whose folly has disabled her from performing the duties of either?—She thunders forth the mandates of her **OMNIPOTENCE**; but, is her *providence* so particular, so watchful, so active, and so benevolent, that we should leave to her more than the God of Nature demands for himself,—that we should leave *agency* to her, and address her but in *prayer*? Is the night of religious superstition passed away, and must that of political idolatry usurp the rightful vicissitude of day? Our night of both has been sufficiently long? but the sun of England, in whose meridian beams our feebler light was lost, is now set,—perhaps, for ever: and the Hesperian star of *America*, which set with England, for a time, is now risen, a *Lucifer* to light us into day. It has moved, 'till it is vertical in glory, and points to **OUR POLITICAL SALVATION!**

OWEN ROE O'NIAL.

LETTER THIRD.

YOU have heard, my countrymen, the speech of the Minister! You have heard it, and I hope it has sunk deep into your hearts, and added fervour to that loyalty which is *now* the only cement of the empire, and which the consistency of Ministers has therefore laboured to destroy!

You

You must also before this have been acquainted with two political *phenomena* which this age has produced.—Some of our Irish common-law Judges detest so much all *English importations**, that they will not, on a *constitutional* question, admit a single construction that is *liberal*! But there is a second to which the first is as nothing. A CHANCELLOR of Ireland, an *Englishman*, entertains such a regard to the *Irish Laws* (in their present state of *purity*) that he will not venture even to judge of them by *equity and good-conscience*! Nay, where his Sovereign has been *unguarded* in approving of *exactions* not the *most constitutional*, he will *correct* his Sovereign thought speaking from the Throne.

Lest, however, so rare an instance of integrity should be offensive to the Minister, I would beg leave to offer for it a very simple apology.—His Lordship is *keeper of the King's Irish conscience*.—He knows the *heart* of his gracious master, and that, if he erred, it was *but in words*!

But to return to the Speech, (from which it may be doubted, if I have really digressed) I could wish, my Countrymen, that, by connecting those parts of it which are, accidentally, thrown at the greatest possible distance, you would collect its beginning and end, its sum and spirit. For there you will see that the *trade and commerce* of this kingdom are objects too “great and important” for an *Irish Parliament* to deliberate on, till the *general tranquillity* is restored, and *England* can *assist* her, in the deliberation, by *her Parliament and army*! But you will see, at the same time, that it would be very proper to give *serious* attention to the *Protestant Charter Schools* and the *Linen Manufacture*; the regulation of these being *wise, necessary, and above all, domestic*:—they relate not, it is acknowledged, to your

* See Lord MANSFIELD's decisions.

dear

dearest interests, but, to compensate for this defect, they "will not *impede* your efforts"—(as an attention to "great and important objects" might do)—by calling down upon your heads *the injured omnipotence of ENGLAND*.

Such, my Countrymen, is the marrow of this elaborate and truly ministerial production! I should have passed it over, as I would do all productions that are intended to have as little meaning as possible, lest the meaning they have should be discovered to be a bad one. But amidst its laboured inconsistency, and in the conduct of its official supporters, there appears so much of the genuine spirit of English tyranny, of a tyranny that relents not at our loyalty nor our poverty, and pays a *measured* deference to our spirit, that I thought I could not chuse a more proper introduction to my proposed letter on the **INDEPENDENCE of Ireland**.

A sensible, and, I believe, a very honest Member of the English Parliament, (Sir Cecil Wray), after giving a description of our manners and situation, concludes with telling us, that "he has little hopes of our **RUIN** being prevented."

A late most able and spirited writer observes that "the constitution is now reduced to a state in which **NO PUBLIC BENEFIT** can be obtained but by the collective body of the people." If this cannot be doubted, the question is only concerning the *mode* and *object* of the interposition.

If any public benefit can be obtained, or if our ruin can be prevented, it must, I think, be by one of these three measures. By a **UNION** with England; by **ASSOCIATIONS** to consume our own manufactures, and to learn the use of arms; or by throwing off **ALL DEPENDENCE** upon the people and Parliament of England, disclaiming all political connection with the latter but through our common Sovereign, and protecting for the future our **seperate**

separate rights as Irishmen and as men. These ultimately resolve themselves into the following question, "is independence worth contending for?" If any thing *short* of independence will prevent our ruin, or obtain such a public benefit as should content the collective body of the people, to aim at independence would be either villainy or madness. I shall therefore consider each of these measures separately, and with perfect freedom. If the laws allow not such freedom, they must be sensible of their own weakness, and *we* should be equally so. To tolerate such laws is to solicit their farther corruption. If, in Ireland, and in the opinion of Irishmen, it is become treason to *our Sovereign*, to add to his dignity by making *HIS PEOPLE free* I have lost all idea of *loyalty*, and as I have lived a traitor, a traitor I must die. If it is at present, in Ireland, and in the opinion of Irishmen, a *public crime* to *think too well of one's country*, it will soon be scarcely *possible* to commit a crime in this country. Ireland will soon have neither *government* nor *men*!

The late Mr. Hume, in one of his political essays, I think, has said of Ireland, that "it is an enslaved nation, the *individuals* of which are free." If the individuals of a nation are free under the government, they must be very unreasonable individuals if they are not content; for the government is nothing to them but as it procures them this freedom. But I will not scruple to affirm that the observation is a *contradiction in terms*, and one of those contradictions, which are but too apt to mislead the inattentive, and to be abused by the designing. The *individuals* of Ireland compose the *nation* of Ireland. The nation is enslaved—yet the *individuals* that compose it, are *perfectly free*!

A body is composed of parts or particles; the *whole* has a certain quality, (of slavery) yet not a *single particle* of that body has a *portion* of that quality! This seems *mighty* philosophic; and yet Hume was a *materialist*! I do not think, however, that

that he believed in an *infallible church* composed of *fallible individuals!*—That Ireland is enslaved, few who know its situation can doubt, but to those who do, the course of the subject will furnish proofs but too incontestable.—Her people then, as individuals, *cannot* be free.

As to the English constitution itself, (that boasted model of perfection and incorruptibility!) its *modern history* will, to most people, I believe, appear stricture sufficient.—If *perfect*, it could not have been corrupted.—If it did not *admit* mal-administration, it could not have been so ill administered.

The prophecy of Montesquieu is already fulfilled.—The legislative power of England is become *more corrupt than the executive*. Thro' that corruption the executive *commands* the legislative, and, in effect, they are *one* ;—this is nearly the description of despotism! yet I allow that even forms are sometimes *material*—The Grand Signior may take off the head of his subject—“ but he cannot force him to drink wine !” Could he do *every thing*, his power would be intolerable.—An English King cannot tax his subjects without the consent of their Representatives, who must at the same time tax *themselves*, nor can he take away the life of a *single* individual unless convicted by *his Peers*. But he can *induce* the Representative to untie the purse of the nation, and he may unsheathe the sword of war, which may involve the half of his subjects in ruin, and expose the other half to the invading sword of the enemy.

When Sir William Blackstone, [B. 1, 336] after a formidable enumeration of the *real* powers of the King, through influence, the standing army, and the perpetual revenue, tells his countrymen, almost in so many words, that their *chief* dependance is on the *personal character* of their King, it is not entirely a compliment paid by the courtier; it is a

truth extorted from the lawyer, and which the courtier would *palliate**.

If such be the government of England, what must we say of that of Ireland?—Montesquieu doubts whether a *slave* be capable of a single virtue. What then must be the virtue of a *nation* that is enslaved? *Honour* may support the individual, but the abjection of a nation is infamy indeed! When this abjection is once established, a virtuous, independent and spirited *individual* is, if I may be allowed the expression, one of the miracles of nature! Corruption in a *dependant* nation is the very malignity of corruption. In passing through a multitude, and through the servants of servants, instead of being filtered, it acquires successive contamination.

In this kingdom the power of chusing Representatives in Parliament, the *only* public and constitutional exertion of liberty in which *the people* are allowed to bear a part, is, under English government, reduced to this. It is the liberty of chusing *the men* who shall betray us, or act as mourners to the ceremony.—It is a gloomy picture, my countrymen, if that can be called a picture which is almost all a shade. In drawing it I have felt as variously as the man who retraces the character of a friend of whom the world thought meanly, because misfortune, that exposed his vices, cast a shade over his virtues.—The days of *your* misfortunes,

* After the *enumeration* abovementioned, Sir William struck, as it should seem, by the terror of it, tells us how much, till half a dozen helpless *possibilities* shall happen, “ it will be our *especial duty*, as good subjects and *good Englishmen*, to guard against its influence—and, *above every thing*, to hope that we may long, very long, continue to be governed by—our *present Sovereign*—who, in all his *personal acts*, has shewn such veneration for our free constitution,—and will therefore never harbour a thought—detrimental to public liberty.”—Thus does *public liberty* depend upon *the virtue of a King!*

my countrymen, have been out-numbered by the insults you have suffered!

But a change is at hand! “ every man will bring you a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold.—Your latter end will be more blessed than your beginning!”

But *how may these things be?* by a UNION—by ASSOCIATIONS—or by INDEPENDENCE?—I feel the whole weight of the subject, and it is the consciousness that I am so far not unworthy of it, that urges me to undertake a question under which I should otherwise despair.

The author of the letter to the people of Ireland, which I lately mentioned, has on the subject of a union thrown into a very few pages what might furnish an ordinary writer with matter for a volume. a few of them I shall repeat, since it is difficult to add to them. I may perhaps endeavour to illustrate some of them, and to this purpose I hope the observations just made, will somewhat contribute.—

The first leading and comprehensive observation upon a union, one indeed that makes all others appear almost unnecessary, is that by it we lose our own legislative assembly, and take the readiest means of destroying the only one that shall remain of the empire. Already, God knows, there is little occasion to add to the corruption of the British Parliament! Yet what must we expect, if we pour into it such another “ uniform and potent body of corruption” as has flowed from *Scotch Representatives*!

We have now some slender ties upon the fears, at least, of our Parliament. We should then have none. Our present Absentees, “ men as dependant on the Minister, as they are independant of the people,” are not more likely to be incorruptible than the deputies of Scotland. “ Upon the ruins of (what *remains* to us of) national consequence

and publick sentiment, we should have a few individuals, insignificant in England, ingrossing the powers of Ireland, jobbing away her interest, never residing with her people, and, of course, ignorant of her condition, and unawed by her resentment."

That no representation could essentially serve *Ireland*, may be collected from this; that her number of deputies being necessarily small in proportion to those of England, even if not corrupted, they would be overpowered, in every question between the two nations.—

The tyranny which England now indulges against Ireland, contrary to every principle of the constitution, she would then display in *apparent* conformity to it.—Even a union could not make her feel for Ireland as she does for her own most insignificant village.

We are by nature her rival, and, in some respects, I may even say, her superior. Our *quota*, or proportion, of taxes must be *fixed*. Can any man then be so bigotted to the idea that *political generosity* exists, and exists in *England*, as to suppose she would encourage her rival *much* beyond what would enable her to pay that quota of taxes? But, allowing England to be generous to us, at present, must she not soon hate us with as much cordiality and as much justice, as she now does Scotland? The conduct of the nation and her representatives would justify it.—Nations will not return *good for evil*, however usual that may be with individuals;—In this situation, is there a noble scheme in agitation for the improvement of manufactures, the opening of communications between different parts of this kingdom, the convenience or extension of trade?—Is an inland Canal to be cut, a Colliery to be promoted, a Quay, a Mole, or Dock to be built,—is it wished to improve or put in a state of *defence*?

defence any of those harbours which open to the world, and have capacity to receive it?—Immediately an host of petitions are opposed,—or the Minister is threatened with an insurrection—perhaps raised by *himself*—The scheme drops;—or it is procured by means the most disgraceful or most ruinous. Jobbing is seldom gratuitous—Compliments must be returned. The empire suffers. They suffer who receive justice as a *favour*. At any rate their spirit is destroyed, for they feel their dependence and their impotence.

When to this consideration, so sufficient in itself, we add a number of others and none of them inconsiderable. I think there are few who will see cause for a moment's hesitation.

Such are the incumbrances England would lay upon our infant commerce, a burthen supposed too heavy for the maturity of hers; such too is the vast encrease of absentee-interest in her deputies to England, and their connections: in our nobility, and all others possessed of large landed property; in the votaries of pleasure, who now spend part of the year in Dublin, but would then follow the legislature and the deity to London; while our manufacturers must be so far unemployed, agriculture, so intimately connected with manufacturers, must suffer; the tenantry must groan under rack rents and agents. Such in consequence of the proceeding, would be the **RUIN OF DUBLIN**, without any very essential or comparative advantage to the other parts of this kingdom, all which of would be proportionally deserted, unemployed, or injured.—Such is the remitting of the revenues to England, with the supernumerary expences, making a great part of revenue; with a land-tax an entirely new one, and inseparable from an union, and all the other indefinite and ruinous payments; so that Ireland would be a country consisting of merchants, lawyers,

lawyers, revenue officers and peasants, annually remitting to England the produce of trade, land and revenue."

We come now to consider the effects of **ASSOCIATIONS**: and here, though I should allow the writer so often quoted that all the advantages he expects, or all the nation has a right to *demand*, would accrue from them, if rigidly adhered to, yet I cannot help thinking that the Associations themselves will shortly melt away, unless they have a farther object than merely *the freedom of TRADE*, or what is generally called "the *defence of our island*." I mean not to depreciate Associations. They were a "measure of necessity," and they are now as necessary as ever. I mean not to depreciate the merit of those friends to their country, whose generous indignation and zeal first convinced her of their necessity. If there is a spirit now in Ireland, and if that spirit is likely to continue; if Ireland is not sunk beneath *hope*,—it is due, under Heaven, to the spirit and abilities of those who first roused her from that sleep which seemed as the sleep of death. But I still must think that Associations are but a *first step* which should lead to *the final one*; or, to express myself more clearly, that the object *hitherto* proposed by them being insufficient, that is, not aiming at the *root* of the disease, they will not only be unequal to its cure, but perhaps occasion a relapse that may be inveterate or mortal.

"*FIRMNESS alone can SAVE us.*" For the opinion *England* entertains of our firmness, consult the Speech of the Minister. Is it not temporizing and equivocal in every sentence? Does it not applaud and condemn, flatter and insult us in a breath?

Look to the government of England! Look to her government over us. Look to our people suffering under both these; then tell me who *can*, that while these *exist*, our Associations can be *lasting*.

The

The same radical fault in our present constitution, which rendered Associations *necessary*, will, while it continues, *defeat* them. They will be sapped as the constitution was destroyed. The same power which renders abortive all barely "internal resolutions of individuals," will gradually undermine our "written covenants ;" and I do not think a single argument can be used to prove the necessity of these last, that will not demonstrate that even *they* will not bind —— *if the power of the English Parliament over this country shall continue.*

In all the Associations there is a *condition* either expressed or necessarily implied. We associate, *during the time that England shall continue* her unjust, illiberal, and impolitic restrictions, &c. Were it otherwise, we should but imitate the conduct we condemn.

But *who* shall determine *when* England has *ceased* to be unjust, &c? *When* she has taken off a *sufficient* number of those restrictions? *When* the people of Ireland *ought* to be content for the *present*, and should accept her *promises* for the future? *Who* is to determine all these points? *Every individual for himself.* Are the subscribers bound *expressly* to wait the decision and concurrence of the *majority*? I believe there is no instance of it, and if there were, it would be nugatory. In all voluntary Associations, where there is not a *power* established to *keep* men to them, (which power, though formed upon the free-est principles, must, to be effectual, be in a degree arbitrary,) the Associators will judge how far the *majority* itself, whom they bound themselves to obey, adhere to the *primitive intention* of the Association, or what they will call *the spirit of the constitution.* This spirit will be what every individual conceived it to be at first, conceives it now to be, on maturer reflection, or *abuses* to conceive it, for motives known to himself. Some may for

a while

a while be retained in the crowd by indolence, by shame, or want of spirit ; but when once a few break through the rules, and give their reasons with plausibility and boldness, especially if the multitude feel any inconvenience from their virtue, or those who draw off, gain any advantage by their cessation,—*the written covenant of all degenerates into the internal resolution of each individual.*—How forcible that is we have heard powerfully explained ! Kings who trusted too far to an oath of allegiance, in which the condition perhaps was not expressed, but is, of necessity implied, have found that *they could do wrong*, and their subjects *redress* it. If the people take not the hint, the wrong that *is* done they may be unable to redress.

The two ways by which we can enforce the covenant, will, I think, scarcely bear a close examination. We may “ agree never to vote for, but ever against such persons as refuse to *sign*.” But when those who sign, *may* have plausible reasons for *drawing off*, and few can judge of their sincerity ; and when those who are to judge are little more likely to be sincere than the men whose conduct they examined, and perhaps have imitated, what becomes of “ the people’s balance in the (present) constitution,” or where, especially in the beginning of the period, is the *great* benefit of the Octennial Bill ? Are we not again and again betrayed, and do we not again and again *return* our betrayers ? None want *their* sufficient reasons for their conduct, whatever it is ; nor do any want people to whom *their* reasons are sufficient. *Where the GOVERNMENT is corrupt, ALL are too much alike.*

The second method of enforcing the covenant will turn out as ineffectual. “ We may publish the name of the draper and mercer who refuses the covenant, and persists to import, and we may agree never more to deal with him.” But drapers and mercers are of no country or party. The body of them

them will go with the croud, and leave the custom of the *virtuous few* to the *virtuous mercer*; a custom very edifying and very profitable to both parties! Suppose, however, what is not very probable, that we shall not be flattered out of our Associations by some paltry consideration; suppose that our Associations will stand the shock of authority, and the undermining of influence. Will England grant us the *advantages* of an union unless we submit to the *burthens*? We shall probably excite her obstinacy; (for her obstinacy *may* be excited!) cordiality between the nations will be gradually diminished; our present government may be rendered still worse by obstruction, no scheme being on foot to *improve* it; the nation, uncertain of its interests, and unsteady in its wishes, will be exposed to its enemies at home and abroad; and it will either be teized into an union, attacked with advantage by foreign enemies, or driven, at a more unfavourable time, into an attempt at independence. If it appears then, that, of the only three means by which the people can interpose to prevent their *ruin*, a union would be almost in every view ineligible, and that the most lasting Associations, while the power of the English Parliament over this country shall continue, will be far from affording us effectual and compleat relief; we are driven upon *independence*, as "*a measure of necessity*." The *alternative* is legislative INDEPENDENCE OR RUIN.

I might here, my countrymen, close the argument.—It is already compleat. If we can trace all our misfortunes, the destruction of our liberty and the failure of every public scheme, to *the power of England* and our unfortunate connection with her, we must throw off her power and abjure her connection, before we can either be free or happy.

Still, however, a few scruples may remain with some, and to enumerate a few of the advantages of legislative independence will not only shew its own intrinsic value, but evince still farther its superiority

to all that can proceed from the most plausible union, and all hitherto proposed from the most effectual association.

I begin with the first and most comprehensive advantage ;—that, in effect, which will give rise to every other. Instead of being allied, or inseparably united to the interests of an old empire, tottering under a decay of nature, hurried on by her vices, we should enjoy in our own renewed constitution all the soundness, virtue, and vigour, of youth. That worst of all corruptions, introduced by the worst of all tyrannies,—that of the corrupt Parliament of a superior and degenerate nation,—would be removed. The interest of the governors and of the people, now so opposite, would be reconciled. We should be our own governors, for the nation would be free to pursue her own interest under her sovereign, who would be more free to indulge her. Public spirit would shake off the despair of centuries. Public virtue would have an object, and private virtue, the virtue of the people, would at once be the spring, the effect, and the cement of the government.

I have endeavoured to shew that our peculiar situation, being divided internally by difference of religion, and being equally near to *oppression* and *protection*, must naturally produce a government of the very mildest form, and whose first and ruling principle must be *toleration*. How far this would contribute to the happiness, greatness, and stability of the state, as it would afford an asylum and encouragement to arts, industry, and virtue, let the former errors of France, the prudence and industry of Holland, and the great and amiable virtues of Pennsylvania, unfold and enforce unto the minds of all who have hearts to give fair play to their understandings !

A consequence of our legislative independence, and of the youth, wisdom, and moderation, of our government, would be our being unconcerned in the

the wars of any other nation, from which we reap much danger and loss, but no possible profit, no possible honour: and we should be neither tempted nor inclined to enter into any ourselves.

In every unhappy necessity of that should defend ourselves; we should b^d do so both by land and by sea, inf^d exposed and defenceless by th^d and, we c prepared to, us into danger, and bein^d lead of being left as a favour the *alms* of *the* who had brought

We should hav^d s obliged to acknowledge checked by th^d our superior.

England. *as a free and universal trade, un-*

attende^d as mistaken jealousy, or real rivalry, of

te^d All parts of the nation would be equally

ed to by a legislature that had an equal in-

*est in all parts, and that would be native, resi-
dent, uncorrupted, and unfettered. It is here to
be remarked, that from the very nature of trade,
which is an exchange of the superfluities of one na-
tion for the wants of another, England is the last
country on earth with whom Ireland can trade to
advantage, and Ireland is the last country upon
earth whose *trade alone* can be an object to England.*

*The spirit of trade is a spirit of equality. It is e-
qually inconsistent with a spirit of monopoly or reve-
nue. Now the produce of England and Ireland is*

*the same. There can be no trade *between* the na-
tions that does not arise from the inferiority of
industry or skill in *one* of them, and in trading with
other nations they are rivals. The inferior nation*

*must then be oppressed in exact proportion to her
comparative advantages. Hence we may account
for the freedom of Ireland under English govern-
ment before trade was understood, and the la-
boured discouragement which her industry has in-
variably received since its progress in Europe.*

Trade assumed a new face in Europe, from the discovery of the passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope. This happened in the reign of Henry the 7th, and in his reign, through the influence of his Viceroy, Sir Edward Poynings, Ire-

land gave up her *independence* by giving up *the proposing* of laws, which, in every free government, belongs to *the people*. They who give up one important right will see others usurped. Ireland then submitted to the trammels of England, and, as might be expected, she has not only worn them ever since, but they have been regularly and unconstitutionally increased.

The justice of England ended where her *interest* commenced. Her injustice will end but with her *power*.

From the independence of Ireland which will afford an object, scope, and field, for arts, industry, and genius, we shall not only secure the residence of our great men, who will find that residence both agreeable and necessary to their interest, but we shall acquire that *name* of which we are not barely deprived,—but which heightens the insolence and insults of our tyrants. England now shines with light borrowed from her satellite.

“ There is a *spirit* in man as well as an understanding ! ” They are equally inspired by the Almighty, and he who suffers his spirit to degenerate, as much as if he allowed his understanding to be corrupted, dishonours his Creator by his disfiguring his image.

Has the Almighty stamped folly upon the forehead, or written *coward* upon the heart of an *Irishman* ? Is he an ass, that he should crouch under every burden ? or a stone, that he should be insensible to insult ? — Are *Englishmen* gods, that we should worship them ? Shines there a glory round them, before which the face of an *Irishman* should be hid.

Seldom, my countrymen, (and *never* in the seat of our slavery) have we met them upon equal terms ; — but when we did, I trust we have not been disgraced ! — Our unhappy exiles, victims to her policy, have proved that there is a day of retribution, of which the wisest are not aware. They have proved

proved that those may avenge their country whom their country has proscribed, or whom the policy of its tyrants has rendered it unable to support.

If they themselves think us inferior to them as men, whence is it that they restrain our industry, by the usurpation of their Parliament?—And whence is it that our industry has sometimes overcome all restraints? Whence is it that they deceived us into an inequitable exchange of a manufacture in which we excelled, for one of which we were totally ignorant, and when we acquired superiority in the new one, robbed us of the poor produce of that inequitable bargain?

Whence is that they thought *they* must suffer from *our* freedom, and robbed us of MAGNA CHARTA, the common gift of nature, confirmed to us by our King?—Whence is it that they support their usurpations by violating every principle of the constitution, trying us *twice* for the same offence, and depriving us of tryal “ by our country and our peers”?† Whence is it that they think our industry can thrive under *every restraint*, and that they not only load us with pensions to their hirelings, but hand us over to the plunder of their needy Lords, and despicable adventurers?—When all these questions are answered, I will ask another.—By what tie of *gratitude or honour*, are we bound to remain subject to *the people of England*?—

Yes, my Countrymen, we owe them all the gratitude which injuries and insults can inspire! They *know* our force, and their art has been exhausted to make us appear contemptible both to others and to ourselves.

Are we not chronicled in all *English Abstracts of the Times*, as *blunderers and blockheads*? Do we ever appear upon their stage but to divert their *mighty-nesses*, by absurdity, and to tickle their hot vanity

†. For offences against the *Woollen Act*. 10 and 11. William III. See a commentary on this extraordinary act in the letters of *Caufidicus*.

by self-complacent comparison? Have we courage? It is the courage of a brute. Sense? It is the slightly half-considering sense of a madman. Generosity or feeling?—They are untinctured or unrestrained by a single principle of morality.

The *Gentleman*, that character which marks the *man*, and which is stamped with the uniform and universal currency of ages and of nations.—that character has never yet been attributed to an *Irishman*! Meanness submits to the imputation. Good-Humour keeps up the jest. Its authors, however, are half-disposed to believe it (they have too much reason in our poverty of spirit!) and the *enigma* of the stage and of jocularity is as *established* and as absolute as the Court of a VICEROY. Those who have not dignity at home must expect contempt abroad.—Ye, who have travelled, say, which of you had the courage to announce yourselves as *Irishmen*.

But, we need not be surprised at the insults received by those whose passiveness seems to court them. Other nations meet the same fate from English *justice* and *generosity*. They allow not gallantly to a foe, and for *rival* they have scarce in their language other name than that of *natural enemy*. Let us appeal to the same brief chronicle—the *stage*—to us apply. We shall there see, that *stage* of each country throw into an English character a few oddities and eccentricities, if they make him extravagant, or *outre*, in his love of liberty and contempt of authority, they still give him the superior qualities that command the admiration of the understanding and the enthusiasm of the heart. The English never introduce a Frenchman, but to flatter the spleen of their pride, to entertain their galleries, or to heighten the brutal prejudices of their mob. They ornament his mind with every thing that is ludicrous in vanity, mean in cowardice, and truckling in avarice, and on his person and dress they exhaust caricature.—The French give the English all the firmness, spirit, and dignity of the *man*. The English confer

confer upon the French all the meanness, mischief, and mimickry of the *monkey*.

If then, my countrymen, we have the feelings of men, and will not be insulted as slaves, if we aim at having a rank, a character, a *name* in the world, let us re-assume them in the face of the world! *Who* are they that shall oppose us?—Is it our sovereign? It cannot be! He knows his interest; he remembers that we are **LOYAL**; he remembers that we **ALSO ARE HIS PEOPLE**.—Is it the People or the Parliament of England? They dare not.—The prophecies of those generous individuals, who cried out against the excesses of the nation, will at length have gained some credit by their completion. If they should not—but I cannot make a supposition that would be absurd and unnatural!

Shall we sacrifice our own great interests, the great interests of posterity, the first born, the gifted, of every age, of every art, of every science, at the altar of that idol England? Shall we aim at an unmerited, an unprofitable, a ruinous generosity, or shall we, by taking care of **OURSELVES** at present, make it **POSSIBLE** for us one day to be generous to *others*.—even to her who never was just to us? Shall we continue the slaves of a sinking nation, and, as such, infected to the very heart with her vices, but incapable of her virtues, —or shall we, by one noble effort, throw off the dead weight upon our virtue and happiness; and encourage every seed of greatness, which so long has lain unvigorating under a load of fertility, or which every wind has wafted to the soil of our oppressors? Could we, by joining England in her struggle with misfortune, prolong her hour of liberty and virtue, the world might gain by a friendship which no nation ever yet has exhibited, and *we* should be *justified*. But her fullness of time is come. We cannot prevent *her* sinking. Shall we allow her to grasp *us* in her dying convulsion, and pull us with her to the bottom?

bottom? When her very breath is pestilence, her touch is death, shall we, with the absurdity of a Turk, refuse to change her atmosphere for a purer, and cling to disease and to corruption, as if *folly* were virtue, *presumption* piety? We shall not, my Countrymen! Our eyes are opened, our spirit is risen, and our representatives have caught a portion of the flame! They no longer can be satisfied with "TEMPORISING EXPEDIENTS!" They will strike at the root of the disease, not attempting to skin and film the ulcerous part," will they leave the nation still a prey to *the rankness of corruption*! Their opportunity is glorious, and their prudence will embrace it! They will not leave the PEOPLE to consider THEIR OWN DIGNITY, nor lay up for themselves the vain and mortifying regret, of being unable to *govern* those whom they wanted spirit to lead.

TARQUIN having murdered the father and brother of the first BRUTUS, took him into his care, and, in kindness to his innoffensive simplicity, or in pity to his folly, seized for his use, the lands and revenues of his family. BRUTUS was the standing jest of the Court. Boys, dunces, dotards, aimed their dull, pointless shafts at him. If he allowed himself a retort, its *finesse* gave surprize, but excited no suspicion. It was the bolt of a *fool* shot by accident? He repressed his indignation, and bade his mighty soul lie still: the time was yet unripe. At length accident gave the word. The dagger of Lucretia produce that effect, which poetic fancy has given to the spear of Ithuriel. "The fool started into a hero! His smothered indignation burst forth like a torrent. They tyrants had scarce time to be amazed. They were swept from their seats; and A NATION OF SLAVES BECAME A NATION OF HEROES!

OWEN ROE O'NIAL.



