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SOME OTHER
THOUGHTS
ON A
PARLIAMENTARY REFORM;
IN REPLY TO A LATE PUBLICATION,
ENTITLED,
"THOUGHTS ON A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM."

L O N D O N:
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MDCCLXXXIV.

SOME OTHER THOUGHTS

O N A

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

THE *great object of a Parliamentary Reform, I take to be this*, to curb that monstrous and universal venality that has so long undermined the health and vigour of our famous Constitution; that has pervaded all orders of men, from the First Lord of the Treasury to the Pot-boiler in his Borough; and is now arrived at that strength and maturity, that, under the patronage and protection of Mr. Soame Jenyns, it dares to stalk abroad at noon day, with a profession to corrupt all ranks and degrees of the State, and to laugh all Public Virtue out of the Kingdom!

(4)

The Gentleman has, for this purpose, divided his Argument into two heads, namely, *What are the most likely means to obtain a Parliamentary Reform? And what are the probable consequences of it, if we should be able to obtain it?*

The first article I shall leave very much as I find it, not being inclined to waste much time in the refutation of all the obstacles and impediments that a fertile and happy imagination may be able to throw in the way of a Reformation, it honours with a very marked and malicious aversion; nor in defending many visionary Plans that have been suggested in its favour, by its over zealous admirers. They have undoubtedly, in the enthusiasm of their adoration, sometimes overlooked the

(5)

the impracticability of their most favorite schemes; and it would be uncandid not to confess, that the Gentleman has truth and argument on his side, when he exposes and ridicules them. But if it should appear that the Gentleman himself is not less an enthusiast, in a cause not so good; and that he defends his idol corruption, with a zeal as intemperate as inspires them for the virtue they worship; it may possibly be thought, that his censure does not become him.

I do not esteem myself concerned to point out the means by which a Parliamentary Reform may, with the greatest probability of success, be undertaken and accomplished. I own I am not startled with any great difficulties, much less do I apprehend any impracticability in the pursuit.

(6)

purfuit. I have, besides, an entire reliance in the Minister whose promise is engaged to the Nation to promote it, and in the measures he will take for that purpose: He unites the rare felicity of enjoying the Confidence of the King and of the Country, and therefore cannot be unable to keep his faith with it. I shall not presume to interfere with his work, by any suggestions of mine; but I believe I may venture to certify the Author of the Pamphlet, that he will neither establish Annual Parliaments, nor the method of voting by ballot, nor the right of universal suffrage in all persons, but lunatics and criminals: Of all these absurdities, I am persuaded he is as well convinced, as if he had quitted the busy scene of Parliament, for the contemplative marshes of Botolpham!

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(7)

And I will take it upon me to aver, that he will not prefer any scheme for its *utter impracticability!*

It is the Second Position upon which the Writer of the Pamphlet has decided so unfavourably for the interests of Liberty, and the honour of Mankind, that has occasioned me to draw my pen in their defence. The Gentleman's opinion is this: "*He is firmly convinced, both by reason and long experience, that no alteration in the mode of Election, nor in the Electors themselves, would produce any change in the Elected.—That five hundred and fifty men, assembled together, will always act alike.—That it does not signify by what means they come there, that they must always split into Factions, and prefer their own interests, or that of their Party, to their Country's:—*

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And, to sum up the whole, if any man should be unreasonable enough to murmur at such a Parliament, he has the satisfaction of being authoritatively informed, that he has Hobson's choice, and, *that if he cannot shift with such an one, he must have none at all.*

If this be the truth, it certainly is not worth our while to promote our romantic Reformation; and they are no better than madmen, who defend *the innumerable schemes for it, presented to the Public by real and pretended Patriots.* The Gentleman is pleased to inform the Public, what he means by real and pretended Patriots; and it is very happy he has thought proper to do so; for he has thereby given them a clue to unravel whatever is dark or mysterious in his book. *They are those,* says he,

(9)

he, who have more honesty than sense, and those who have more sense than honesty. They who have less honesty than sense, are often, it must be acknowledged, pretended Patriots, and indeed it would have been extraordinary if the Gentleman had been mistaken *in this matter*; but when he comes to the definition of a real Patriot, I am afraid he is not quite so accurate, or so happy. He probably bestowed more time and attention in the consideration of the first, in obedience to that divine rule of the Philosopher, *ἰσθὲς σεαυτοῦ*; and neglected that of the second, in compliance with another, which advises a Cobler to confine his criticisms to his profession. Real Patriots are *not* such, I believe, as have more *honesty than sense*; nor do I think it any defect of *sense* to be a

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Real Patriot; but Mr. Jenyns says, that real Patriots are therefore fools-- it is a great authority, for Mr. Jenyns is *no fool!*

But to return to the enquiry, whether all Parliaments must eternally, and of necessity, be corrupt. We are assured of it upon great and solemn authority; and unless we can contradict it, and overturn it, we must give up our cause, and renounce those flattering illusions that have deceived and bewitched us so long. We must no more indulge the fond conceit, that the evils which have plunged this unfortunate Country into her present calamitous and disgraceful condition, were not of necessity eternal; but that by collecting and exerting the good sense and virtue that remained amongst us, we might reasonably

(11)

reasonably hope; once again to behold a Parliament, composed of such men as should be superior to those base and sordid temptations and interests, that have for so many years tainted and corrupted them, to the loss of our best and dearest dominions abroad, and to the planting of universal mistrust and unhappiness at home.

Never surely was so bold and unhappy a truth ushered into the world, with so much authority, and at so important a time. Dr. Benjamin Franklin's Book may perhaps seduce a few of the weak, the weary, or the wicked amongst us, to quit their native country, and change the modes and the scene of that misery they will never avoid; he may prevail with the needy and the discontented to exchange their abode and their governments, for the de-

(12)

farts and the anarchy of America ; he may win a few speculators in Trade, and export an unhappy artificer or two to New York or to Philadelphia : But the doctrine of Mr. Soame Jenyns will, I think, if it should meet with credulity like his own, remove at once all the wisdom, all the integrity, and all the property of his country ! For who that is wise, will stay to struggle with necessitated and fatal evils, and unchangeable immorality and corruption ? Who that is virtuous will partake in it, submit to it, or behold it ? And who that has property will sacrifice and devote it ?

It is hard to guess the Gentleman's intentions, in making public this alarming discovery ; but I protest I do not think it possible to devise a greater bugbear to frighten

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(13)

us out of our wits, and out of our country. For my part, the only reason that could keep me in both of mine, is the better disbelief and total denial of every sentence, word, and syllable contained in it ; with which I cannot but unite the most cordial contempt, and, I think, honest abhorrence of men who are neither ashamed, nor afraid, to prostitute their splendid abilities to the diabolical purpose of rivetting upon their country the general chains of venality and corruption ; who dare to bid a nation despair of all integrity and virtue in its Legislature for ever ; and set themselves maliciously to mock at the very little virtue they cannot reason out of the world. I profess I think it atrocious, and shall entertain the worst opinion of profelytes of fourscore, all my life for it !

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The Gentleman next tells us, *That an Independent Parliament, in the language of the present times, is one, the majority of which would oppose any Administration.* I do not pretend to be so well acquainted with the language of the present times as he is, who does indeed speak that language with great fluency and elegance; which is not to be wondered at, if my information be right, who have been told, that he never spoke any other; and that whether it were the vogue to speak Court or Country, Whig or Tory, the Honourable Gentleman always spoke the language of the *present times*. It is therefore with great deference and submission that I presume to assure him, that in the language of the present times, an Independent Parliament does *not* mean any

(15)

any such thing.—Do you really think it does, Mr. Jenyns?

I will take the liberty of stating my idea of the meaning of an Independent Parliament; and will afterwards add a few words, to shew that there is no physical impossibility of the existence of such an one.

An Independent Parliament is an Assembly of the Delegates of the Commons of the Realm, fairly and freely chosen by *them*, to speak *their* voice, to give *their* proxy, and to defend and promote *their* interests. If it can be supposed, that such an Assembly were impartially chosen by the People themselves, and that the Right of being Represented was lodged where it ought to be, not in the hands of small and packt Corporations, nor descendible or saleable with the property of individuals; if, in

(16)

in fact, that Reform had taken place which we look for, and which Mr. Jenyns supposes, no doubt, for the pleasure of shewing that the honestest men in the world need nothing but the suffrages of their fellow-citizens in their favour, to become complete knaves directly; and if we had really a Parliament chosen by unbought Electors, it is reasonable to presume, that the People would choose able men, virtuous men, and men of property; and equally reasonable to suppose, that such men, so chosen, would neither sell or betray them to the ambition of a Minister or the caprice of a King. That they would not, under the base influence of avarice, become slaves to a Secretary of the Treasury; and that being attached to no interests but theirs who sent them, they would
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(17)

not lift under the banners of Faction, to distress or betray them: That they would not pour out the blood and treasure of their Country, to comply with the folly or obstinacy of one Minister; nor vote away the Charters and Property of Commercial Companies, and the just Rights of the Crown, to gratify the avarice or ambition of another. Such men, I say, would be Independent, because they would have nothing to hope or to fear from a Minister; which is the true test and criterion, as I take it, of *Independence*. But while such is the mode of Elections, and such the persons who Elect, those profuse and profligate Gamesters, or Asiatic Plunderers, can outbid the abilities or the virtues of uncontaminated characters, drowning and destroying, in the distribution of money, and propagation

(18)

pagation of immorality, all local interest, all hereditary attachment in Counties.—While one man buys a seat, like a ticket in a Lottery, in a spirit of hazard and adventure, and another in that of Prudence, to protect him from his creditors, it can hardly be, but that we must have such Parliaments as we have long seen, and do yet deplore. And now, to give the Gentleman a reason for the “faith that is in us,” I will tell him, the Nation does repose a Confidence in the Wisdom and Virtue of the Minister, to exclude such persons as these. Whether by an Incapacitating or an Extending Bill, it leaves to him—and I think it impertinent to interfere in his Work. But this I am convinced of, that it were better to have no Parliament at all, than such an one as the Gentleman would

(19)

would entail upon us and our posterity. I augur better for them and us, from the spirit the People have demonstrated upon the Dissolution of the last Parliament. They have something explained *their* idea of the word *Independence*, in almost universally and unanimously rejecting such Members as had become *Dependent* upon an infamous Conspiracy to seize the Wealth of the East, which would indeed, had it met with success, have verified the Gentleman's prediction of the corruption and dependency of all future Parliaments for ever. And from their interpretation of this *contested word*, I take a good omen, of what sort of persons a Parliament might be composed, that should really be chosen by those whom all Parliaments, however chosen, do pretend to represent.

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But in case of our success, the Gentleman assures us, that we cannot act wiser, than by leaving a little of the old leaven for the fools and the rogues. It is a happy conceit, that self-interest is to be left, for a star to steer by, for all those in the House of Commons, who want either judgment or conscience.— These kind of people generally go with the stream, and therefore, methinks, are not in much danger of losing their way, though their star and their compass should be taken away from them; especially, as, in my poor apprehension, they could not fail by a worse; for, as nothing can be more doubtful than what their interest is, they who wanted Judgment, would be perpetually splitting and foundering on the rocks upon the left hand of the
Speaker's

(21)

Speaker's Chair, while they who wanted Conscience, would be constantly wind-bound in the harbour on the right.

The next thing I come to is extremely momentous and novel; it is a refutation of an inveterate, but foolish opinion, that has long prevailed, to the great impediment of all Parliamentary business. An opinion that Parliaments, according to the spirit of our Constitution, ought to be *Independent*. What makes this error more pernicious is, that whether by misapprehension, or misrepresentation, it has been adopted as a fundamental truth, by all persons, of whatever party, I think, that have written, or at least been read, upon the subject. This vulgar and absurd error is refuted in the following manner:—*An Independent*

(22)

pendent House of Commons is no part of the English Constitution; the excellence of which consists in being composed of three parts, mutually dependent upon each other.

Mr. Soame Jenyns, one would have thought, did not need to be told the meaning of the word *mutually*. Mutual Dependence is actual Independence—And it might be presumed, that Gentleman pretty well understood the difference between the Dependence of Great Bodies upon one another, and the mean and personal Dependence which may affect those that compose them; and instead of contributing to that mutual dependence, which is indeed the chief excellence of the English Constitution, operate in such a manner as to overthrow the reciprocity of dependence, by enslaving one of them

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them to the other two, or to either of them, through the venality and treachery of a Majority in one of them. But to take the argument in his own way, I do affirm, that Mutual Dependence, is actual Independence; and that if one of these three Powers should, from some defect or vice, ever become more dependent upon either, or both of the others, than they in return are upon it, that Power is indeed become absolutely *dependent*. And this is one cause of complaint against the present Constitution of the House of Commons; for it is believed in the world, and I think many times acknowledged in the Gentleman's Book, that the House of Commons is become extreme corrupt; nay, he pledges his reason and experience to prove it must always continue to be so.

(24)

fo. For my part, I have a great opinion of his experience; in that way I believe, no man has had more; but for his reason, I profess, I should have entertained a greater, if he had not informed me, that it does not persuade him, that ten men are more easily corrupted than ten thousand.

We are next told, that it was an *Independent* Parliament that in the last century murdered King Charles I. annihilated the House of Peers, and established the worst species of Democracy that was ever established.

I protest, I am sorry to differ so much with this Gentleman about matters of fact and history. In speculative opinions, I have a source of comfort; whenever I have that misfortune, that will not, I am afraid, be of any advantage to me in the present

(25)

present circumstance: For in those, one always perceives two sides; and one can scarcely differ from him, more than he is obliging enough to do from himself, which is extremely well-bred in him, as, whether the Minister is *with* him, or *against* him, one may always have the pleasure of having him on *one's side*. But in matters of fact, there is a stubbornness that will not, I am afraid, allow of his usual pliability and politeness; and I have an anxiety, lest a direct denial of his assertion in this case, might engage him against me, *upon his own side of the Question*. However, I will take courage to say, that the Parliament that perpetrated all the mischiefs he mentions, was so far from being an *Independent* Parliament, that it was more

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Dependent than any Parliament that ever was, not excepting the last; and that it was *dependent* upon an Army, which is the very worst species of *dependence* that can be; and that every *Independent* Member had seceded from it; and that it did not consist of a third part of its number, the rest having been violently expelled or excluded.

A numerous assembly is undoubtedly always influenced by something or other, and Dragons, Griffins, and Pamphlets themselves, are not more creatures of the Imagination, tho' some be created by Poets, the other by ignorant and designing Politicians, than an uninfluenced House of Commons.—But men are influenced sometimes, it may be hoped, by good and honest motives,

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(27)

as well as by fordid and base ones; and if it be true, what is asserted, that *Parliaments have ever been influenced, and that by that means our Constitution has so long subsisted*, it is, I imagine, owing to that circumstance alone. But, says the Gentleman, *they are seldom, very seldom bribed to injure their Country, because it is seldom the interest of the Minister to injure it.* I am happy in a discovery, which must give pleasure to all sincere lovers of their Country, that is, *all those who have more honesty than sense*, and beg leave to congratulate the Author upon it. Some such discovery was certainly necessary to gild the Pill of perpetual Corruption; and I would undoubtedly advise all those who have credulity to swallow it, to make use

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(28)

of this envelope, which will make it more palatable, and fit easier upon their stomachs. But what credit the Gentleman deserves for purifying the Minister, at the expence of all the Representative Integrity of the Nation, I will leave to those who are better skilled in such nice disquisitions, to determine. But *the great source of corruption is, that they will not serve it for nothing.* My Creed is something different, even in this more plausible particular; for I hold, that there have not been more than one or two Ministers, that have ever swayed in the Country, but what have found it for their interest to injure it, and have done it accordingly; and that one great source of corruption is, that Parliament will not suffer them to injure it for nothing,

(29)

thing, which bears doubly hard upon the Nation; for the Minister who would make a tyrannical Law, or an unnecessary War, is often, by this means, obliged to precede it with an oppressive Tax; and the product of the Tax is expended in the House of Commons, to insure a majority for the imposition of two.

The next assertion is equally flattering, and may be applied to the same purpose, the sweetening the bitter dose of perpetual Corruption and Venality. *Men, says the Gentleman, get into Parliament, in pursuit of power, honours, and preferments, and till they obtain them, determine to obstruct all business, and distress Government. But happily for their Country, they are no sooner gratified, than they are equally zealous*

(30)

lous to promote the one, and support the other. Very happily for their Country, indeed, there is only one very trifling objection, which is, that it is not *true!*

Bad men alone do get into Parliament with such pursuits; they set themselves up to sale to the highest bidder, who is indeed generally, but not always the Minister; for such men are sometimes hired to oppose good Ministers, as well as to defend bad ones, and will use their voices and their votes, with as much alacrity, to decry wise measures, as to promote criminal or absurd ones. Being therefore become *his* property *who* has bought them, they generally continue to injure their Country for his interest, as before they impeded all business for their own. And it
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(31)

does not need much argument, I think, to prove, that few men are bribed for any other purpose than to injure their Country; for few men will lay out their money to do it any good, unless, indeed, that absurd set of men who have more honesty than sense, and are therefore called *real Patriots*. And if these had been a numerous, or a powerful set of men, it is probable the Gentleman would not have thought proper to treat them so cavalierly.

I am now arrived at the end of the Pamphlet, if I except one single assertion, “ That it was under Par-
“ liaments not better than these, that
“ this Country attained the summit
“ of power, wealth, honour, and
“ dominion, which might all have
“ been preserved, if the means of
“ Influence had been sufficient to
“ satisfy

(32)

“ satisfy the demands of Ambition,
 “ and the hunger of Faction.”
 The allusion is, no doubt, to the
 American War; and effectually it is to
 be lamented, that no snug Sinecure,
 or Patent Place, could be found out
 for *General Washington*, or *Dr.*
Franklin; no lucrative Contract for
 Messrs. Hancock and Adams, who
 would, I have no doubt, have been
 better worth gaining over to the side
 of the Minister, than Mr. *Richard At-*
kinson; and who, I am equally
 confident, might have been had at
 a cheaper price for the *Nation!*

But if it is possible to suppose the
 Gentleman to be serious, and that
 he really imagines, that the cor-
 ruption of Parliaments has in any
 shape contributed to the power,
 wealth, honour, and dominion of
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(33)

this Country, I will beg leave to
 ask of him, how he can account for
 that universal diminution of Wealth
 and Power, that dismemberment of
 Empire, and almost total loss of
 honour, that for twenty years to-
 gether, this Country has incessantly
 suffered, under Parliaments as corrupt
 as any reasonable speculatist could
 desire?

“ But even now, (pursues he) if
 “ we will compare our situation with
 “ that of other Nations, we shall find
 “ reason to be contented. We have
 “ Peace and Plenty, though we have
 “ too much Oratory, too many Taxes,
 “ too much Debt, and too much
 “ Liberty. Our Persons and Pro-
 “ perty are secure, and the Laws
 “ very justly, though not very
 “ cheaply administered.”—As to

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Oratory,

(34)

Oratory, Debt, and Taxes, undoubtedly we have enough of them; and as to Liberty, it must be confessed, we often abuse it; and, perhaps, never more, than when we tell the Legislature they are a parcel of Knaves, and must forever continue to be so, notwithstanding any Reformation that may be made among them; and as to the dearness of Law, I do not, for my own part, lament it exceedingly: It is as cheap, I think, as Mr. Jenyns's Pamphlet; and the extravagance of both their prices may, perhaps, prevent much mischief, in only permitting such persons to be cheated as can afford it.

In one point I have the happiness to agree with him, that *we have a King better than we deserve*; but must beg leave to differ with him
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(35)

in respect of our Parliaments, who are worse, I am convinced, than we *can possibly deserve*, till we are all profelyted to that humane and philanthropic opinion, that Real Patriots are, therefore, Fools.

F I N I S.

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This Day is Published,

STOCKDALE'S EDITION
OF
SHAKSPEARE;
INCLUDING,
IN ONE VOLUME,
THE WHOLE OF HIS
DRAMATIC WORKS;
WITH
EXPLANATORY NOTES,
COMPILED FROM
VARIOUS COMMENTATORS.

Embellished with a striking Likeness of the AUTHOR.

“ Nature her pencil to his hand commits,
“ And then in all her forms to this great Master fits.”

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