

VERBUM SAPIENTI:

OR A

FEW REASONS FOR THINKING, &c.

Houses of the Oireachtas

SECOND EDITION

BERNARD SPATZ

THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

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VERBUM SAPIENTI:

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FEW REASONS

FOR

THINKING

THAT IT IS

IMPRUDENT TO OPPOSE,

AND

DIFFICULT TO PREVENT

THE

PROJECTED UNION.

INCIDIT IN SCYLLAM CUPIENS VITARE CHARYBDIM.

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FEW REASONS FOR THINKING, &c.

AN Union of the British and Irish Legislatures has been, of late, so ably discussed, so minutely analysed, and exhibited in such various and opposite points of view, that whether this measure be *intrinsically* eligible, or *intrinsically* the reverse, must, I presume, be, at this hour, abundantly manifest to every intelligent and unprejudiced man. All further attempts then, to elucidate this interesting subject, being thus rendered superfluous, I shall hasten to an exposition of those reasons which have inclined me to think, that however national pride may be outraged by merging the independent

pendent Legislature of Ireland into that of England; however unacceptable, or even mischievous, this project may appear, existing circumstances render an opposition thereto highly imprudent—that such opposition is likely to prove ineffectual at present—that should it be successful, yet the future accomplishment of an Union may not thereby be precluded; and, lastly, that should this opposition be so extensive, so pertinacious, and so well seconded by fortunate combinations of foreign and domestic political circumstances, as to induce a final dereliction of this project, one or other of the two most prominent descriptions of men in this kingdom, may, hereafter, have but narrow grounds for exultation. And, I confess, I am not without hopes, that these reasons which in all likelihood will be hastily and disdainfully rejected as insufficient, by those against whose peculiar interests an Union may appear to militate, yet will have due weight with every unbiassed, liberal, moderate, and unambitious man.

Certain

Certain propositions, though, for the most part, by no means incontrovertible, have made impressions on my mind, which no writer on the subject of an Union, has as yet effaced ; these are : That the prosperity and tranquillity of the British empire is the result, or aggregate, of the prosperity and tranquillity of each of its constitutional parts, that an indissoluble Union of the Legislatures of England and Ireland, must prove eventually, in an eminent degree, either beneficial or detrimental to one or to both of these kingdoms ; that the power of the present administration of England is better confirmed than that of any of their predecessors since the Revolution ; that they are less constrained to suit their measures to the views and interests of particular descriptions of men, than others have, for this last century, been ; that they actually possess the most ample, the most irresistible means for carrying their measures into effect ; and lastly, that no administration would, unnecessarily, provoke, especially in time of war, a Parliamentary

mentary discussion of any great national question, on which there was even a distant possibility of their being left in a minority.

Now, from the single event of the intention of administration to cause an Union to be proposed to the Parliament of this kingdom, having been authoritatively announced, I am inclined to infer, that they have deeply and deliberately investigated the nature and tendency of this complex and momentous measure ; that it has appeared to them, not merely expedient, but pregnant with immense, unequivocal, and permanent imperial advantages; that they have resolved on it, through conviction of its eligibility, not in compliance with the wishes, or to promote the peculiar interests of any faction or description of men ; that they are conscious of possessing the means of carrying it either immediately or ultimately into effect ; and that they are actually assured of the requisite Parliamentary support.

Under

Under such circumstances then, I am disposed to consider an opposition to this measure as highly imprudent. Popular contumacy and popular alienation from government have already produced the most calamitous effects ;

Quis talia fando
Myrmidonum, Dolopumve, aut duri miles Ulyssei
Temperet à lachrymis ?

VIRGIL, En. l. 2.

And so long as the political affairs of this kingdom shall remain in their present posture, I have no hesitation in saying, that it would be altogether inconsistent with the true interest of *any* man, or *any party*, to resuscitate and generalize a spirit of revolt, which however, is the only means whereby an opposition could be rendered at once, formidable and efficacious. But to render an opposition to this measure thus formidable and efficacious, does not appear to me to be very practicable. A majority of both Houses of Parliament will probably support it if introduced. A considerable

number

number of the country gentlemen are prepared to acquiesce in all the measures of Administration, relative to this kingdom. And a great proportion of the armed Yeomanry, especially in the country, will beyond a doubt, approve of an Union, on the single consideration of its being dreaded and deprecated by those who stood neuter during the late perilous contest, and by those who were indirectly concerned in originating it.

Several men of rank, many of address, and many of superior talents, impelled by personal considerations, have it is true, endeavoured, and will endeavour by their writings, discourses and influence, to bring an Union into general disrepute, and to fwell and inspirit the opposition to it so as to create a disinclination on the part of Administration to press it at present; and it is not impossible that their efforts may be attended with success. By the way, they would do well to be on their guard in time,

time against that host of crafty co-operators that actually pushes forward with very suspicious zeal, lest they be hustled and trampled on by it in its progress. But if this measure has appeared to Administration singularly conducive either to the stability, energy or prosperity of the empire at large; and no doubt it has: and if moreover, they find themselves in possession of means fully adequate to its future accomplishment; and no doubt they do; I am of opinion they will not be deterred, by any exertions that the people of this kingdom are capable of making, from employing these means at another and more convenient season.

I do not suppose they will attempt to dragoon us into an Union: this would perhaps, be ill relished by the people of England; and certainly increase the difficulty of governing this kingdom hereafter. But I think it more than probable, that if the British administration be prevented from accomplishing this measure at present,
they

they will at no very remote period, by a skilful employment of the diversified means they possess, by changes of system or a politic management of parties, reduce a very considerable and highly influential part of the people of this kingdom to the sad necessity of supplicating, or at least acquiescing in that measure which they now indignantly reject. I devoutly pray, that no one hereafter may have occasion to say :

Nunc eadem fortuna viros tot casibus actos
Insequitur.

VIRG. En. I. 1.

But I own I am not without serious apprehensions on this head.

Admitting, however, which is by no means likely, that the British Administration, upon taking a near view of the difficulties and dangers incident to the accomplishment of this project, were to be induced to abandon it altogether ; either the system which was acted upon by the government of this

this kingdom anterior to 1779, and that posterior to 1795, will be resorted to and persisted in, or the measures which distinguished the intervening years will be adopted: either a system of corruption, illiberal partiality, national humiliation and rigour will be embraced; or a system of conciliation, concession and national aggrandizement. If the former, parliamentary reformists, republicans and separatists, will have little reason to congratulate themselves on the explosion of the projected Union; if the latter, the appropriate political power of the aristocracy must eventually be prostrated; the revenues of the Church confiscated or divided; the present connection between the sister kingdoms dissolved, and the Constitution overthrown: for from the unrefused concessions on the part of England, and the unannulled political ameliorations of our Parliament which took place in the intervening years to which I have alluded, there are but few and easy steps to the events I have just mentioned; and that

this

this last is more likely to be the case than the first, I infer, not only from the manifest increase of national power, and national self-sufficiency; the manifest increase of popular refractoriness, generated by the pervasion of principles of insubordination; and from the natural and recorded progress of popular discontent: but also from the unremitting and unprecedented ardour with which the projected Union is combated by the Reformists, Republicans, and Separatists of this town, who appear to me to possess a more ample stock of correct information touching the affairs of this kingdom—to be more conversant in general politics—better acquainted with human nature—more given to political research, and consequently more capable of discerning the remote effects of political arrangements and institutions, than the generality of those by whom the government has been hitherto supported.

Dublin, 22d December, 1798.

F I N I S,

House of the Oireachtas

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