

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF FAULKNER'S JOURNAL, OF JULY 11TH, 1793

EPIGRAPH. Chief Justice. To punish you by the heels, would amend the attention of your ears, and I care not if I do become your physician.

Falstaff. I am as poor as Job, my Lord, but not so patient. Your Lordship may minister the potion of imprisonment to me, in respect to my poverty, but how I should be your patient to follow your prescriptions, the wise may make some dram of a scruple of, or indeed, a scruple itself.

Falstaff. My Lord, I will not undergo this sneap without reply. You call honourable boldness, impudent sauciness. If a man will make courtesy, and say nothing, he is virtuous. No! my Lord. My humble duty remembered, I will not be your suitor.

SHAKESPEARE, *Henry IV.* Part 2.

SIR: I have seen a publication in your paper, of the 11th inst. in which, as I am told by my friends, and as I myself believe, I am particularly pointed out, and some extracts are given from a paper supposed to be written by me. This publication imports to be a speech delivered by a nobleman of high station in this country; but as such I am not at liberty to consider it. I will, therefore, presume it to be the work of some ingenious personage, who has assumed the situation, and mimicked, with some success, the sentiments and language of that illustrious character; and, in this view, I cannot deny the author considerable merit; there certainly is something in the *manner* extremely well hit off, and which at first imposed upon me completely; however, on looking more carefully, I discovered internal evidence which must, I think, satisfy any reasonable person, that it cannot possibly be the composition of the great

personage, whose name you, sir, have ventured to prefix to it. As a man of veracity, he would scorn to advance, against any individual, a charge of the deepest die, utterly unsupported by any thing like fact; as a statesman, he could not be so foolish as to publish to all Europe, friends and enemies, that a few desperadoes, such as he describes, have been sufficient to subtract the military force of Ireland from the scale of the empire, and to require an army of observation of no less than six and thirty thousand men, (for such is our present establishment,) to keep them in check; as a friend to the independence of his country, he would not talk such nonsense as to state that Irishmen could rebel against Great Britain; and above all, as a man of humanity, as a constitutional lawyer, and as the keeper of his Sovereign's conscience, he never could have uttered the following remarkable sentence, which you have put into his mouth:

"It is the only misfortune of a free Government, that nothing but fool and legal proof can bring such dark conspirators to condign punishment."

Whatever may be the opinion entertained by the anonymous writer of this speech as to my principles, I can assure him that I have a very great deference for even the forms of the Constitution. So much do I respect the seals, in whatever hands deposited, that I will treat even this representative of the Lord Chancellor with due decorum; and I will not carry the war into his territories, nor expose his sophistry, his evasions, or his falsehood, further than is absolutely necessary for my own defence. I wish but to clear myself, which, if I can do, I will leave him to God, his conscience, and the tongue of his countrymen.

The charge against me is, that I am one of a faction, whose object is, in the words of the speech, "to rebel against the crown of Great Britain, by effectuating a separation between the sister countries." And the overt acts which are brought forward to

establish the charge, are a letter, or confidential despatch, said to be written by me; the founding the society of United Irishmen; the establishing the General Committee of the Catholics, on a plan, procured from my friends and associates in France; and, incidentally, by all these different acts of treason against Great Britain, endeavouring to prevent the crown from employing its troops in the restoration of peace, by facilitating the operations of the powers combined against France.

Before I enter into any justification of myself, I beg leave solemnly to protest against the principle laid down by the writer of this speech, whoever he be, that, as an Irishman, I owe any allegiance either to Great Britain or to the crown of Great Britain. My allegiance is due to the king of Ireland; and I would, to the last drop of my blood, resist the claim of any king, and much more of any nation, under any other title, who should presume to exact obedience of me. I confess this is one of the gross blunders, or worse, of the writer, which satisfied me of the forgery of the composition. For, whatever opposition the illustrious character whom he personates might have formerly given to the independence of his country; however strenuously he might have supported the usurpations of England; or whatever grief and anguish of mind he might feel at the reflection that all his virtuous efforts were unsuccessful, I am sure he is too wise to broach such doctrines now. Low as the state of public spirit is in Ireland, I think we would hardly tolerate the old system of British supremacy; and I cannot help here pointing out the gross inconsistency of introducing in a speech, whose object is to reprobate all idea of separation, expressions and sentiments of all others the most likely to create doubts and jealousies between the two countries, by reminding the one of what she has been forced to surrender, and alarming the other for what she had so recently extorted, and scarcely yet secured.

I am come now to the grand charge that I am an advocate for separation, and, on that head, I shall be as explicit as the delicacy of the subject and the circumstances of the times will admit me to be. I beg it may be remembered that I never publicly broached this doctrine at all. Whatever I said upon it was merely my own individual sentiments in a private letter to a friend, which was never intended to be made public, and much less written with that degree of caution which I should have used had I expected it would ever have become, as I learn it did become, an object of enquiry before the Secret Committee of the Lords. Nevertheless, I am so clear as to the spirit with which it was written, that I would, at this moment, answer with my life for its contents; and, indeed, it is at least presumptive proof of nothing very objectionable being found in it, that I have not yet been "laid by the heels for it," as I was once threatened by a great man, who afterwards, however, changed his mind.

I likewise think it is necessary, in order to obviate a charge of confederacy, implied in the publication which I am answering, to mention that this letter was written in Spring 1791, and my being retained in the service of the Catholics did not take place till July, 1792. The date of the letter will likewise account for anything contained in it, favourable to the French Revolution.

I can well conceive such a connection between two countries as would be highly beneficial to both; so much, perhaps, as to double the resources and power which either would have if separate. But it must be a connection of perfect equality, equal law, equal commerce, equal liberty, equal justice. Such a connection, founded on the steady basis of common interest and mutual affection, would be immutable and eternal. No good citizen would have the wish, no turbulent partisan the power, to disturb it; every man in both countries would guard

and defend it, as he would the muniments of his estate. But I can conceive a connection of a very different nature, where the only community is in the dangers, the risks, and the losses, and where the gains and glory are carefully secured to one party only; and I cannot so far divest myself of common sense as to judge of the two systems by the same rule, merely because they are called by the same name.

If Ireland had been a separate and independent nation to this hour, and if England were now, for the first time, to come forward, and say to her, "I think it would be better for us both to be united under one head," with an offer of the connection as it stands, would it be accepted? Would we not answer, that we were as competent to our own government, regulation, and defence, as she was? But, suppose we agreed to accept the offer on certain conditions, such as, that "our common Sovereign should reside here, and she be governed by a Viceroy; that she should surrender her East Indian commerce to us; that our manufactures should be protected by law and hers not," and a few other such, what would England answer? And what is the reason that England should enjoy any one pre-eminence, privilege, or advantage over Ireland, seeing that neither God nor nature have set any mark of inferiority on our soil, climate, or people?

I will know, that change is not made, even from worse to better, without inconvenience; and I am sure no man in Ireland will ever think of the question of separation, unless gross corruption in the legislature of his country, and a continued sacrifice of her interests to England, shall compel him. It is false, to say the people are giddy, and prone to change; they are the reverse. If ever their minds are alienated from the connection with England, it will only result from extravagant misconduct in their own rulers, who, with a mistaken zeal to recommend

themselves to their employer, persist in bending the Constitution and commerce of Ireland under the oppressive weight of British influence. If that shall ever happen, and if the palpable operation of this influence shall force the question upon men's minds, whether they will or not, the true, genuine, and efficient advocates for separation, are those who would ground their own elevation and security on the merit of sacrificing the commerce and independence of Ireland to the monopoly and ambition of Great Britain. These considerations, and the despair I felt of ever seeing the corruptions of this country removed, (all which I trace to the necessity of maintaining an influence ruinous to the interests of Ireland, and only to be supported by such vile means,) first compelled me to entertain, even in idea, the question of separation; a question of weighty and serious import indeed; a question not to be agitated but upon great provocation, nor to be determined on but in the last extremity; for, on the result of that determination depends the fate of one, perhaps of both countries. Serious as it is, it must, however, and will, infallibly, arrive at some period, unless a speedy and effectual check be given to the continuance of existing abuses and corruption.

But perhaps the fact of British influence may be denied. I am happy to be able to select one instance, where it has been exerted *beneficially* to Ireland; which will establish the point. The Catholics of this country applied to their own Legislature, and their own Minister; they were spurred with unnecessary contempt. They applied again, and were again rejected. They then determined they would apply here no more. They assembled and framed a petition to the King, and they sent it by some of their own body to England. What was the consequence? The English Minister, a wise and temperate man, saw they were not to be trifled with. He did not exasperate them by foolish

rhodomontades, nor threaten them with the lives and fortunes of all England. He conceded the point magnanimously, and recommended them, (*that is*, exerted his influence as Minister of England) to his friends here, in a manner so forcible, that, since the miraculous conversion of St. Paul, nothing has been seen on earth to equal it. The claims and merits of the Catholics were all at once discovered, as it were by a Divine interposition; the swords of their ancestors feel from the hands of the Corporation of Dublin; the grand juries were illuminated, and withdrew from the field with their lives and fortunes undamaged; and, even the grave and steady sage, the deep lawyer, and profound politician, whose opposition was most dreaded, and who was reported to have said, and indeed to have sworn, with equal wit and wisdom, that "*by the Eternal God,*" if those fellows ever came to the bar, it should be through the Dock; even he had an immediate revelation, and was, "*Pro pudor!*" converted with the common herd. For the honour of the consistency of that great character, I must admit, he certainly made wry faces, and gulped hard; however, he did swallow the pill, as he has been obliged to swallow some others. Surely, after this, no man will doubt the fact of British influence.

But to return: My theory of politics, since I had one, was this: What is the evil of this country? British influence. What is the remedy? A reform in Parliament. How is that attainable? By a union of all the people. For those three positions, fire will not melt them out of me; I have always maintained them, and always shall. But of this creed, separation makes no part. If it were *res integra*, God forbid but I should prefer independence; but Ireland being connected as she is, I for one do not wish to break that connection, provided it can be, as I am sure it can, preserved consistently with the honour, the interests, and the happiness of Ireland. If I were, on the other hand, satisfied that

it could not be so preserved, I would hold it a sacred duty to endeavour, by all possible means, to break it, even though for so doing, a great lawyer were to tell me "*that I was rebelling against Great Britain.*"

I am not one of those who think, that, by admitting that a measure may lead to separation, we are precluded from further argument. I think the mention of separation is neither treason nor blasphemy. I am sure, no wise Minister will ever let the possibility of that event out of his head. If he does, he will repent it. I can conceive circumstances more ruinous to this country, than even separation; and I will tell the anonymous author, who has assumed the character of a great statesman to vent his own folly, that he had done better in not stirring the question. Public opinion is an uncertain thing, and it is therefore possible, that the investigation may not, in the long run, serve his side of the argument. He has made what was matter to faith, subject to reason; what no man scarcely ventured to lift up his head and look steadily at, is submitted to general inspection and enquiry; and where is the security, that the people may judge in the manner which the author of the speech thinks the right one. I cannot help thinking, therefore, that it would have been more wise, as well as more honourable, if the private correspondence of so obscure an individual as myself had been suffered to pass unobserved. For, when a new doctrine of any kind is broached, it is apt to make proselytes, even by its novelty, and there is no knowing where it may end. Of this I am sure, that, were I Minister of England, the question of separation is one of the last which I would wish to see brought forward to public discussion. Knowing, as I do, the possibility of preserving the connection between the countries, on the easy terms of equal justice to both, I confess I stand amazed at the shallow policy of those who can risk it for little temporary advantages to England and to

themselves. Were it necessary to prove an axiom, it might be shown, that the more Ireland is benefitted, in all respects of commerce and constitution, the more strength does England acquire, and the more is the connection riveted; yet, obvious as it is, I fear, judging at least from appearances, that neither England nor her instruments in this country, are yet aware of the truth of this position.

I have now unwillingly touched upon a question, which I never would have introduced, had I not been forced, by the attack made on myself. I have gone, not as far as I could, but as far as I durst; for I am arguing with a man who has thirty legions. God knows, but in what I have said, I may have unintentionally rebelled against Great Britain; and, if it be so, from some late samples I have seen, I fear I shall meet with very little mercy. If, therefore, my argument be not as forcible as it might, let it be remembered that I am wrestling in fetters, and that my adversary, like Lord Peter, can call in a file of dragoons to support his thesis, and force me to swallow his "*damned brown crusts for mutton*," whether I will or not.

I come now, Mr. Editor, to a confidential despatch from a gentleman "who wears a bar gown," meaning as I am told and believe, myself. When I was told some time ago, that some letter of mine had arrived to the unexpected honour of being made a subject of enquiry, and that the original was said to be in the custody of the illustrious personage whose name you have taken upon yourself to prefix to the paper which you are pleased to call his speech, I became somewhat curious to know what that letter could be, and having learned that, I prosecuted my enquiries somewhat farther. I do recollect very well my writing a letter early in 1791, to a particular friend of mine, which letter enclosed the "*Declaration*" of the first society of United Irishmen in Belfast, of which I admit myself to be the author, and let what

can be made of it. But through what channel it may have passed to the hands of the illustrious character in whose custody I am told it now is, I cannot answer, nor for what mutilations or interpolations it may have suffered on its way. I could wish for my own justification I had the letter; for when I wrote it, I thought it of so little importance, that I kept no copy, nor even made a memorandum of the date.

I am, therefore, obliged to take it on the dubious authority of the author of the speech, and admitting that, I see nothing in its principles which I am disposed to retract; but I would venture to assert, upon memory, for, as I said already, I have no copy, that in the first paragraph quoted, there is an error in the expressions. It is printed thus:

“We have not inserted it in our resolutions, and we have not said a word which looks like separation, although in the opinion of our friends, such an event would be the regeneration of Ireland.”

This is evidently meant to convey something of the idea of a combination or conspiracy, which is utterly false. The declaration and the letter, as I wrote them, were solely my own act. When I had sketched the declaration, I showed it to some gentlemen, whose names I mentioned in the letter, and it met with their approbation. Their names, the author of the speech has not ventured to insert, because he was cunning enough to see that if they were made public, it would blow up his innuendo of a conspiracy into the air; he calls them, therefore, “my associates, some physicians, a barrister, &c.”

Whom he meant by the expression “our friends,” is, I suppose, explained in the next sentence, which runs as follows:

“These are the sentiments of this father of the society of United Irishmen, who has been voted upwards of £10,000 sterling by the Catholic convention, and who struck out for them that plan of election which he received from his friends and associates in France.”

Here are four heavy charges, in as many lines. Of each in their order, and first of the first.

1st. So far as writing the declaration of the first society of Belfast, the first indeed in the kingdom, and being a very early member of that of Dublin, I plead guilty, and I remain, in every syllable I have written, precisely of the opinion I was when I wrote it; I have not one word to offer in justification.

2nd. To the second, I have been voted upwards of £10,000 sterling by the Catholics. I am proud to own it; it is a connection wherein I glory. It is a reward spontaneously voted, for services fairly done, and sacrifices, I will say it, *disinterestedly* made. When I first wrote a little book on the Catholic question, I was not acquainted with one member of their body; that circumstance introduced me to their notice; they retained me in their service, and I served them faithfully. I have received from them an honourable discharge, and I am satisfied. I will further assure the writer of the speech, what he will perhaps find it difficult to conceive, that I think myself a richer, and a happier man with £10,000 sterling, earned as I have earned it, than I should if I were Lord Chancellor of Ireland, with ten times as much a year, and the conviction that I had purchased my wealth and honours, by betraying the liberties and independence of my country.

3rd. The next charge is that I struck out for the Catholics the plan for the election of their convention. This charge, I am heartily sorry, is not true, for were it so, I should have the satisfaction to think I had rendered them a service, in some degree adequate to the benefits and the kindness which I have received at their hands; and I assure the author of the speech that I should not shrink from the honour of being the inventor of the plan, though I were convinced that I might thereby give mortal offence to the illustrious personage who is made, with such

asperity, to censure me, a personage indeed about whose favour, I neither have been, nor am remarkably solicitous.

4th. The next charge is rather more serious. It is no less than I have received the plan, which I am just said to have myself struck out, from my friends and associates in France. There are some charges which admit but of one answer. As I presume that the author of the speech meant to convey an imputation of the deepest dye, I shall give him the only reply he deserves, by telling him his assertion is a gross and malignant falsehood.

And here, if I had any doubt before, I would be satisfied that this same speech could not possibly be the composition of the noble and illustrious personage whose name is so audaciously prefixed to it; for surely that noble and learned personage is infinitely too just to endeavour to affix on an innocent man, whose success in life must depend on his preserving a fair character, who could never by any possibility have injured him, who has not the honour, not even the wish, in the smallest degree, to know him, a charge of so heinous a nature, and, at the same time, so utterly unsupported by the smallest shadow of truth. God knows in those days of gunpowder acts, and alien acts, and treasonable correspondence acts, and convention acts, what may or may not be an act to bring a man's life in jeopardy. It may not be long the "only misfortune of a free Government, that nothing but full and legal proof can bring such dark conspirators to condign punishment." When all ordinary modes of investigation fail, perhaps we may see the rack come in for its turn, and force the unwilling culprit to furnish evidence against himself. There are minds, cruel and cowardly, to whom such a speculation may not be undelightful, and I remember to have read in a book, called the history of England, how a certain Lord Chancellor, (I think his name was Wriothesly) tortured with his own hands, in the tower of

London, a certain Anne Ayscue; (but that was indeed, and the author mentions it as such, rather a violent act.) Thank God we live in times when such things are not. To the "*misfortunes of a free Government,*" a culprit can be convicted as yet only upon full and legal proof, a restraint upon the sallies of a great mind, eager to arrest sedition in its progress, which I do not much wonder the fictitious author of the speech should think extremely hard and unreasonable.

I remember to have lately seen a state paper, in which, by the suppression of dates, by the juxtaposition of remote facts, and the separation of connected ones, something like a plausible narrative was made out, every syllable of which, separately taken, was true, yet, the whole together, as false as the Koran, a mode of composition which the author of the speech has initiated very successfully. For instance, he connect a letter supposed to be written by me in the spring of 1791, when I was not acquainted with a single Catholic, with the formation of the General Committee, which did not meet until Christmas, 1792; and then combining this with the Duke of Brunswick's immortal retreat the autumn of the same year, he infers, that we, the agitators, meaning the Catholics, my friends and associates in France, and myself, had formed, as he has no doubt, a serious design to rebel against Great Britain, and form a Republic connected with France. These are indeed the dreams of the wicked. "*The thief doth fear each bush an officer.*" But what follows on the heels of this alarming discovery, "*that roars so loud and thunders in the index?*" Truly, the cruel lenity of the laws, which again intervenes, and ties up the hands of this friend to rational liberty; unluckily, "he cannot convict in a court of justice the persons concerned in this design, for still, to the eternal disgrace, as well as misfortune of a free Government, "*nothing but full and*

legal proof, can bring such dark conspirators to condign punishment."
Alas! Alas!

But, though this memorable conspiracy, like its brother, the famous insurrection in England, (which has now blazed with such inextinguishable fury for so many months, and no man can yet tell where,) has not been thoroughly defined, or digested, so as to be carried into effect; yet, the authors of it have not been idle. Until they can produce their army of Sansculottes, which is lying, like Mr. Bayes, disguised, in Donnybrook, they amuse themselves piddling with lesser game. They have, therefore, merely "pour passer le temps," totally demolished all credit, public or private, in the country. In the month of August last, says the ingenious and veracious author of this speech, public and private credit were at the highest, public securities above par, and, in November, they had fallen twenty per cent. Private credit fell so low that no man could obtain £100, though specie was never so plenty in Ireland. It appeared in evidence, upon oath, before the Privy Council, that the distress of the manufacturers was owing to the National Guard, and to the United Irishmen. Now all philosophers agree, that no more causes are to be admitted in any hypothesis that are true, and sufficient to explain the phenomenon. I agree with the author of the speech in the fact, but I differ, totally, in the mode of explaining it; and I will not so far imitate him as to give assertion for proof, and authority for argument, for I will support what I say by facts and dates, and, to do so, I must go a little farther back than August last.

The Catholics had, some time before that, begun the elections for their convention, from the beginning to the end of which neither riot, tumult, nor breach of the peace occurred, to the great contristation and disappointment of their enemies. The assizes which usually begin towards the latter end of July, gave

an opportunity to some distinguished characters through the country to marshal their respective grand juries in battle array, and they did so to some purpose. From one end of Ireland to the other, nothing was to be heard but the most outrageous and clamorous attacks upon the Catholics, and their truly respectable chairman. Some cried out the Papists were bringing in the French, and others that they were bringing in the Pretender; some that they would leave us in absolute submission to the Pope, and others that they would plunge us into the horrors of a wild democracy; but all agreed, with a noble disregard to property and existence, which I know not how sufficiently to admire, to stake their lives and fortunes in support of the King, the Constitution, and something which was then called the Protestant ascendancy, but is now become an absolute phrase. All this bustle, and confusion, and rout, and alarm, certainly did create a good deal of uneasiness in the public mind, and some apprehension lest tumults, at least, if not worse, might ensue, for the Catholics proceeded with the cool resolution of men who seemed to be in earnest, and the blustering braggadocios of the grand juries, were, by many, mistaken for the ebullitions of genuine courage, determined not to recede; and, indeed, these idle rhodomontades were countenanced by men who should have known better. I have heard of one illustrious personage who, overlooking the gross impropriety of such a measure, in a Judge, a Peer, and a Minister, attended the meeting of the freeholders of his county, and lent, as far as he could, the countenance of his office to a fulminating declaration against the Catholics, wherein lives and fortunes were lavishly tendered, and the most terrible predictions and menaces held forth, in case they, the Catholics, persisted in the demand of their just rights. All this being so, is it wonderful that moneyed men, being naturally timid and anxious, and seeing three millions of

peremptory Catholics on one side drawn up, and, on the other, so many corporations and grand juries, every man with his life and fortune in his hand, and ready to squander both with the most profligate valour, headed too, by such greater and respectable characters, to whose robes and long wigs they had been accustomed to look with reverence – is it wonderful, I say, if they began to be somewhat uneasy and unwilling to part with their money so fluently as formerly? As to the fall of public credit, therefore, I again agree with the writer of this suppositious speech, but I attribute that fall to the intemperate language and foolish bluster of the grand juries and their prompters, enemies to Catholic liberty, and, by no means, to the National Guards and to the society of United Irishmen. And as to the evidence, on oath, which the aforesaid writer alleges was laid before the Privy Council, I do not, in the least, regard it; because, in the first place, I have no great respect for men swearing to what is merely matter of opinion; and, in the next place, because I, or any man in the community, is as good a judge, in a case of this kind, as the persons so sworn, or the persons who procured them to swear.

But further, the National Guards, as they were called, did not appear until Christmas, (I mean the two or three individuals who did not appear at all.) The stoppage of public credit is stated by the author of this speech to have taken place in November. Now, though I think moneyed men may be very wise men, I do not take them to be absolute conjurers, and, consequently, I say it is much more reasonable to attribute the suspension of confidence to the furious and desperate valour held forth in the manifestos of the grand juries, (one of which, at least, I could from internal evidence, trace to its author,) and to the alarm which such foolish and violent measures created, than to the

appearance of a corps not then in existence, and which was not even thought of till two months afterwards.

But, in God's name, what was the cause of the downfall of public credit in England, where the ruin and destruction has been ten times as extensive as here? I hope the National Guards did not send over a detachment to seize the Bank of England, nor have I yet heard that a committee of the United Irishmen was despatched to fraternize with the citizens of London, to send the Royal family to the Tower, and create a republic upon the model of France. Yet I declare I have seen such monstrous and incredible lies swallowed without enquiry, that I should not be surprised if such reports were firmly believed. The cant of the day is here "the United Irishmen; in England, the Insurrection." And I remember I saw in London, last January, with a mixed sensation of sorrow and contempt, the strange infatuation of the people there; that great city in an agony of fear and terror of they knew not what, until at last they were relieved from their anxiety by the provident care of the Minister, who sunk half a dozen rum puncheons to the bunghole opposite the Tower stairs, and ran a screen of silt deal along the parapet, behind which they were told the King and Constitution were quite safe from the attacks of the French, the Devil, and Tom Paine, and they believed it, and were satisfied.

With us it was not much better. Half a dozen men appeared last Christmas in green jackets. Immediately the alarm was given. The Gauls were in the capital. All parties ran to oppose the common enemy. Government and Opposition flew into each other's arms; they swore an everlasting friendship, and the United Irishmen were immolated as the symbol of their union. The House of Commons presented a most delightful and edifying scene of harmony and affection. Business went on upon carpet ground, for when those gentlemen do agree, as Puff says,

their unanimity is wonderful. The gunpowder bill was passed; the volunteers were disarmed; the people of Belfast were dragooned. What matters all this? It was all to punish the United Irishmen, a race of men who have been much more serviceable to their enemies than to their friends. Now we have a convention bill, still to vex the United Irishmen. Unluckily, however, these acts operate upon the nation at large, full as much as upon this obnoxious society; and, if the liberty of Ireland were crushed and lying at the mercy of an arbitrary Minister tomorrow, the United Irishmen would not be one jot more enslaved than any other men in the community.

See now what comes of all this. In England, the cry of Republicans and Levellers is set on foot by the Ministers, backed with a most alarming insurrection. Where is it? Where is it? Do you ask, says one Minister, do you ask us to reveal the situation of the country to the enemy? If we were to mention *where*, it might have the most ruinous consequences. It is a secret. What, says another Minister, do you ask us to tell what all the world knows? Can any man shut his eyes upon it? It is, alas! but too notorious. There was no standing such authentic and consistent information. All England poured in with their lives and fortunes, and what have they got? A war, the first year of which, indeed the first six months, has produced seven hundred bankruptcies, and the probable end of which no man can foresee.

In Ireland, the cry is, "The United Irishmen," and the nation seems very wisely determined to surrender its liberties to spite that turbulent society. I confess, however, I, for one, cannot see the wisdom of such a procedure. If I were not a United Irishman, I think I would argue with myself, that though they were fools and madmen, that was no manner of reason why I should be a slave, and I would not give the least countenance to an arbitrary law restraining my own liberty, because it happened to affect

theirs also. However, of that the nation is itself the best judge; and it has always been a principle of mine, that if a people choose a bad Government they ought to have it, for I acknowledge no foundation of empire, but their choice.

I cannot help delighting myself sometimes with the brilliant prospects which lie before my country at this hour. I anticipate the halcyon days of rational liberty, when no United Irishmen shall dare to show his face but through the bars of Newgate; when the peaceful slumbers of our statesmen shall no more be broken in upon by the rattling of volunteer drums; when the people shall not meet in tumultuous assemblies, or at all, under colour of petitioning; when the same delightful unanimity which has produced such glorious effects in this session, shall forever pervade our Senate; when no man shall learn the use of arms but the troops, appointed conservators of the liberty of Ireland; when the friends to the constitution, liberty, and peace, having discharged their functions and brought back the public mind, are retired to their own place, and enjoy in silent satisfaction the consummation of their wise and patriotic labours; when no clamorous demagogue disturbs the land with obsolete notions of what he calls liberty; when the newspapers are silent, all, save that over which you, Mr. Editor, so worthily preside; when protected by a force of 36,000 men, every placeman and pensioner sits under his own vine and his own fig tree, and takes his Burgundy in peace. Happy days! These will, indeed, be *golden times* for those who will enjoy them.

But, to be serious. I am very much afraid that that great statesman was right, who said, "we were a people easily roused and easily appeased." We are, indeed, appeased now with a vengeance. Whether we shall ever be roused again, God knows, but in the meantime, we are tied pretty fast with parchment bonds. I will not, however, be guilty of the abominable sin of

despairing of my country. I will hope that the genius of the land will yet rouse, like the strong man, and snap asunder the fetters with which the Philistines have bound him in his sleep. For, let it be remembered, that though Sampson had his eyes put out in his day, and was also brought out of his prison into the House of Lords to make them sport, yet they had no great reason to triumph in the event; for he prayed to the Lord and bowed himself with all his might, and their house fell upon the Lords and slew them, with all that were therein, to the great loss and dismay of the aristocracy of those times.

I have now done, Mr. Editor. There is a great variety of matter in other parts of this composition which I might observe upon, had I not determined to make my reply purely defensive. I know not what may be the issue of even what I have said, but, whatever it be, I must, perforce, endure it, and certainly if any man in power has a wish to wreak his vengeance in security, now is his time, when the public spirit is in a state of the most abject and contemptible prostration, and when it is a crime of sufficient magnitude to warrant any degree of punishment that the person accused is connected with the committee of the Catholics, or a friend to the citizens of Belfast, or, above all, a member of the Society of United Irishmen, three circumstances which I have the fortune to unite in my individual person.

THEOBALD WOLFE TONE.