THOUGHTS ON THE STATE OF THE NATION: OR, THE REAL SITUATION OF GREAT BRITAIN DELINEATED AND DEMONSTRATED

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Thoughts on the State of the Nation: Or, The Real Situation of Great Britain Delineated and Demonstrated by Anonymous

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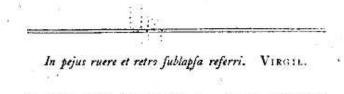
ON THE

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THOUGHTS, &c.

SO fubject is the mind of man to error, on all occafions even where its happinefs is not at all concerned, whatever opinion it efpoufes, that we may not be furprifed if, where its happinefs is actually concerned, it abandons itfelf with a blind credulity to any grateful delution.

Now in this country, it is the fortune of almost every individual, from the popular conftitution of our government, either directly, by himfelf, or indirectly, by his representatives, or by some one or other of the very numerous relations by which we are linked in the political chain, to take some part in the administration of the affairs of the state. Accordingly as these affairs are well, or ill conducted, each man, however

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remote

remote his fiation may be from the fcene of action, derives, or feems to derive fome perfonal credit and advantage, or difcredit and difadvantage. It becomes then, in a manner, the intereft of each man, generally confidered, to affume that the affairs of government are well conducted; fince in doing fo, he confults his eafe, contributes to his happinefs, and gratifies his vanity: and thus, our general propenfity to error is more particularly excited, and called into action, in the judgments which we form concerniou political men, and public meafures.

Need we go any farther than this tendency of the human difpolition, thus particularly excited, to find out the true caufe why minifters, however profligate in their maxims, and ignorant in their meafures, of government, have obtained at all times, notwithftanding the well grounded jealoufy and oppolition of a few individuals, the confidence and approbation of a great majority both in doors, and without; and have been able to fupport themfelves through a long foene of iniquity and abfurdity, until at length fome great public calamity, by an irrefiftible appeal (3)

peal to the fenfes of the people, has forced them against their inclination, into a knowledge of their real fituation?

What has fo often happened before, may well happen again ; we may place the fame confidence in, we may fquander the fame approbations upon, the ministers of the prefent, as we have done upon ministers of a former, day; and the fame repentance may follow. We may pleafe ourfelves with the gay vifions of fancy, and we may fuppole upon the affirmation of those perfons, whose interest it is to deceive us, as it is our intereft in fome fort, fince our eafe and our happinefs are connected with it, to be deceived, that national honour, and importance and profperity, are to be the necessary fruits of their fystem of administration. And this mode of thinking may become fo entirely the fashion, that it fhall be deemed an impertinence in any one who fhall analize the real flate of the country ; who shall compare the prefent, with former, fituations; who fhall obtrude painful truths, and prefume to diffurb and difplace those pleafant imaginations, which

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have fo long had complete possession of our minds.

But whatever impertinence thus underflood, there may be in an endeavour to diffipate a grateful delution, that perfon certainly may challenge fome praife, at leaft from the thinking part, that too fmall part of the community, who a martyr to the public caufe, fhall fubmit to all the fcoffs and ridicule which will not fail to attend him, in an attempt from which his moft fanguine expectations will not authorife him to hope for immediate fuccefs, but which time only, and experience, ever lagging in the rear of things, will juftify him in having made.

The following are a few reflections which I mean to fubmit to the public: Let them take their chance.

It is now more than three years fince the public was first flattered with the certain information, that a fund over and above the annual national expenditure, had been provided by the fuccessful efforts of the minifter, which was to relieve by a continual, and accumulating operation, the almost intolerable

able weight of debt with which this country is oppreft.

Which of us was there, who did not, when this fcheme of national deliverance was unfolded to us in the budget of 1786, hail with acclamations of gratitude, the minifter, who had thus provided for our future fafety? Did any fceptic in politics prefume to doubt of the complete fuccess of the scheme? There was a parliamentary report provided in its favour, in terms fufficiently explicit and firong to convince the incredulous, to determine the wavering, to affure even the confident. Who then could pretend to difbelieve? Befides, the thing itfelf was fo much to be wilhed for, that our very hopes were ready to give it every confirmation, though proofs of any kind in its favour had been wanting.

But alas! time, which unfolds all things, has unfolded the vanity of our flattering expectations; it is true that from 1786, the time when our profpect first broke upon us, down to the prefent time, a period of more than three years, more than three millions have been iffued and applied to the purchafe of flock by the commiffioners, and confedneur/A

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