

**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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In pejus ruere et retro sublapsa referri. VIRGIL.

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THOUGHTS, &c.

SO subject is the mind of man to error, on all occasions even where its happiness is not at all concerned, whatever opinion it espouses, that we may not be surprised if, where its happiness is actually concerned, it abandons itself with a blind credulity to any grateful delusion.

Now in this country, it is the fortune of almost every individual, from the popular constitution of our government, either directly, by himself, 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 his station may be from the scene of action, derives, or seems to derive some personal credit and advantage, or discredit and disadvantage. It becomes then, in a manner, the interest of each man, generally considered, to assume that the affairs of government are well conducted; since in doing so, he consults his ease, contributes to his happiness, and gratifies his vanity: and thus, our general propensity to error is more particularly excited, and called into action, in the judgments which we form concerning political men, and public measures.

Need we go any farther than this tendency of the human disposition, thus particularly excited, to find out the true cause why ministers, however profligate in their maxims, and ignorant in their measures, of government, have obtained at all times, notwithstanding the well grounded jealousy and opposition of a few individuals, the confidence and approbation of a great majority both in doors, and without; and have been able to support themselves through a long scene of iniquity and absurdity, until at length some great public calamity, by an irresistible appeal

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

What has so often happened before, may well happen again ; we may place the same confidence in, we may squander the same approbations upon, the ministers of the present, as we have done upon ministers of a former, day ; and the same repentance may follow. We may please ourselves with the gay visions of fancy, and we may suppose upon the affirmation of those persons, whose interest it is to deceive us, as it is our interest in some sort, since our ease and our happiness are connected with it, to be deceived, that national honour, and importance and prosperity, are to be the necessary fruits of their system of administration. And this mode of thinking may become so entirely the fashion, that it shall be deemed an impertinence in any one who shall analyze the real state of the country ; who shall compare the present, with former, situations ; who shall obtrude painful truths, and presume to disturb and displace those pleasant imaginations, which

have so long had complete possession of our minds.

But whatever impertinence thus understood, there may be in an endeavour to dissipate a grateful delusion, that person certainly may challenge some praise, at least from the thinking part, that too small part of the community, who a martyr to the public cause, shall submit to all the scoffs and ridicule which will not fail to attend him, in an attempt from which his most sanguine expectations will not authorise him to hope for immediate success, but which time only, and experience, ever lagging in the rear of things, will justify him in having made.

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

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

able weight of debt with which this country is oppressed.

Which of us was there, who did not, when this scheme of national deliverance was unfolded to us in the budget of 1786, hail with acclamations of gratitude, the minister, who had thus provided for our future safety? Did any sceptic in politics presume to doubt of the complete success of the scheme? There was a parliamentary report provided in its favour, in terms sufficiently explicit and strong to convince the incredulous; to determine the wavering, to assure even the confident. Who then could pretend to disbelieve? Besides, the thing itself was so much to be wished 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 prospect first broke upon us, down to the present time, a period of more than three years, more than three millions have been issued and applied to the purchase of stock by the commissioners, and conse-