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The Works of George Lord Lyttleton

Lyttelton, George <Lord>

London, 1774

XXV. Archibald, Earl of Douglas, Duke of Touraine - John, Duke of Argyle and Greenwich, Field Marshal of his Britannic Majesty's Forces.

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DIALOGUE XXV.

ARCHIBALD, earl of DOUGLAS, duke of Touraine.

JOHN duke of ARGYLE and GREENWICH, field marshal of his Britannic majesty's forces.

ARGYLE.

See Buchan.
Rerum Sco-
ticarum,
l. x. p. 338.
A. D. 1424.

YES, noble Douglas, it grieves me that you, and your son, together with the brave earl of Buchan, should have employed so much valour, and have thrown away your lives, in fighting the battles of that state, which, from its situation and interests, is the perpetual and most dangerous enemy to Great-Britain. A British nobleman serving France appears to me as unfortunate, and as much out of his proper sphere, as a Grecian commander, engaged in the service of Persia, would have appeared to Aristides or Agefilaus.

DOUGLAS.

In serving France, I served Scotland. The French were the natural allies to the Scotch; and, by supporting their crown, I enabled my countrymen to maintain their independence against the English.

ARGYLE.

The French indeed, from the unhappy state of our country, were *ancient allies* to the Scotch; but that they ever were our *natural allies*, I deny. Their alliance was proper and necessary for us, because we were then in an *unnatural* state, disunited from England. While that disunion continued, our monarchy was compelled to lean upon France for assistance and support. The French power and policy kept us, I acknowledge, independent on the English, but dependent on them; and this dependence exposed us to many grievous calamities, by drawing on our country the formidable arms of the English, whenever

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it happened that the French and they had a quarrel. The succours they afforded us were distant, and uncertain. Our enemy was at hand, superior to us in strength, though not in valour. Our borders were ravaged; our kings were slain, or led captive; we lost all the advantage of being the inhabitants of a great island; we had no commerce, no peace, no security, no degree of maritime power. Scotland was a back-door, through which the French, with our help, made their inroads into England: if they conquered, we obtained little benefit from it; but, if they were defeated, we were always the devoted victims, on whom the conquerors severely wreaked their resentment.

D O U G L A S.

The English suffered as much in those wars as we. How terribly were their borders laid waste and depopulated by our sharp incursions! how often have the swords of my ancestors been stained with the best blood of that nation! were not our victories at Bannocbourn and at Otterbourn as glorious as any, that, with all the advantage of numbers, they have ever obtained over us?

A R G Y L E.

They were: but yet they did us no lasting good. They left us still dependent on the protection of France: they left us a poor, a feeble, a distressed, though a most valiant nation. They irritated England, but could not subdue it, nor hinder our feeling such effects of its enmity, as gave us no reason to rejoice in our triumphs.—How much more happily, in the auspicious reign of that queen who formed the Union, was my sword employed in humbling the foes of Great Britain! with how superior a dignity did I appear in the combined British senate, maintaining the interests of the whole united people of England and Scotland, against all foreign powers, who attempted to disturb our general happiness, or to invade our common rights!

D O U G L A S.

DOUGLAS.

Your eloquence and your valour had unquestionably a much nobler and more spacious field, to exercise themselves in, than any of those who defended the interests of only a part of the island.

ARGYLE.

Whenever I read any account of the wars between the Scotch and the English, I think I am reading a melancholy history of civil dissensions. Which-ever side is defeated, their loss appears to me a loss to the whole, and an advantage to some foreign enemy of Great Britain. But the strength of that island is made compleat by the Union; and what a great English poet has justly said in one instance, is now true in all:

See Shake-
spear's Hen.
IV. Par. 5.

"The Hotspur and the Douglas both together

"Are confident against the world in arms."

Who can resist the English and Scotch valour combined? When separated, and opposed, they balanced each other: united, they will hold the balance of Europe. If all the Scotch blood, that has been shed for the French in unnatural wars against England, had been poured out, to oppose the ambition of France, in conjunction with the English: if all the English blood, that has been spilt as unfortunately in useless wars against Scotland, had been preserved, France would long ago have been rendered incapable of disturbing our peace, and Great-Britain would have been the most powerful of nations.

DOUGLAS.

There is truth in all you have said.—But yet, when I reflect on the insidious ambition of king Edward the First, on the ungenerous arts he so treacherously employed, to gain, or rather to steal, the sovereignty of our kingdom, and the detestable cruelty he shewed to Wallace, our brave champion and martyr; my soul is up in arms against the insolence of the English, and I adore the memory of those patriots, who died in asserting the independence of our crown and the liberty of our nation.

ARGYLE.

A R G Y L E.

Had I lived in those days, I should have joined with those patriots, and been the foremost to maintain so noble a cause. The Scotch were not made to be subject to the English. Their souls are too great for such a timid submission. But they may unite and incorporate with a nation they would not obey. Their scorn of a foreign yoke, their strong and generous love of independence and freedom, make their union with England more natural and more proper. Had the spirit of the Scotch been servile or base, it could never have coalesced with that of the English.

D O U G L A S.

It is true that the minds of both nations are congenial, and filled with the same noble virtues, the same impatience of servitude, the same magnanimity, courage, and prudence, the same genius for policy, for navigation and commerce, for sciences and arts. Yet, notwithstanding this happy conformity, when I consider how long they were enemies to each other; what an hereditary hatred and jealousy had subsisted, for many ages, between them; what private passions, what prejudices, what contrary interests, must have necessarily obstructed every step of the treaty; and how hard it was to overcome the strong opposition of national pride; I stand astonished that it was possible to unite the two kingdoms upon any conditions; and much more that it could be done with such equal regard and amicable fairness to both!

A R G Y L E.

It was indeed a most arduous, and difficult undertaking! The success of it must, I think, be thankfully ascribed, not only to the great firmness and prudence of those who had the management of it, but to the gracious assistance of Providence, for the preservation of the Reformed religion amongst us, which, in that conjuncture, if the Union had not been made, would have been ruined in Scotland, and much endangered in Eng-

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land.

See Hooke's
Letters, and
Lockhart's
Memoirs.

land. The same good Providence has watched over and protected it since, in a most signal manner, against the attempts of an insatuated party in Scotland, and the arts of France, who by her emissaries laboured to destroy it, as soon as formed; because she justly foresaw that the continuance of it would be destructive to all her vast designs against the liberty of Europe. I myself had the honour to have a principal share in subduing one rebellion designed to subvert it; and, since my death, it has been, I hope, established for ever, not only by the defeat of another rebellion, which came upon us in the midst of a dangerous war with France, but by measures prudently taken in order to prevent such disturbances for the future. The ministers of the crown have proposed, and the British legislature has enacted, a wise system of laws, the object of which is to reform and to civilize the Highlands of Scotland; to deliver the people there from the arbitrary power and oppression of their chieftains; to carry the royal justice and royal protection into the wildest parts of their mountains; to hinder their natural valour from being abused and perverted to the detriment of their country; and to introduce among them arts, agriculture, commerce, tranquillity, with all the improvements of social and polished life.

D O U G L A S.

By what you now tell me you give me the highest idea of the great prince, your master; who, after having been provoked by such a wicked rebellion, instead of enslaving the people of the Highlands, or laying the hand of power more heavy upon them (which is the usual consequence of unsuccessful revolts), has conferred on them the inestimable blessings of liberty, justice, and good order. To act thus is indeed *to perfect the Union*, and make all the inhabitants of Great-Britain acknowledge, with gratitude and with joy, that they are subjects of the same well-regulated kingdom, and governed with the same impartial affection, by the sovereign and father of the whole commonwealth.

A R G Y L E.

The laws I have mentioned, and the humane, benevolent policy of his majesty's government, have already produced very salutary effects in that part of the kingdom; and, if steadily pursued, will produce many more. But no words can recount to you the infinite benefits, which have attended the Union, in the northern counties of England and the southern of Scotland.

D O U G L A S.

The fruits of it must be, doubtless, most sensible there, where the perpetual enmity between the two nations had occasioned the greatest disorder and desolation.

A R G Y L E.

Oh Douglas—could you revive and return into Scotland, what a delightful alteration would you see in that country! All those great tracts of land, which in your time lay untilld, on account of the inroads of the bordering English, or the feuds and discords that raged, with perpetual violence, within our own distracted kingdom, you would now behold cultivated, and smiling with plenty. Instead of the castles, which every baron was compelled to erect for the defence of his family, and where he lived in the barbarism of Gothic pride, among miserable vassals oppressed by the abuse of his feudal powers, your eyes would be charmed with elegant country-houses, adorned with fine plantations and beautiful gardens; while happy villages or gay towns are rising about them, and enlivening the prospect with every image of rural wealth! On our coasts trading cities, full of new manufactures, and continually encreasing the extent of their commerce! In our ports and harbours innumerable merchant ships richly loaded, and protected from all enemies by the matchless fleet of Great Britain! But of all improvements the greatest is in the minds of the Scotch. These have profited, even more than their lands, by the culture, which the settled peace and tranquillity, produced by the Union, have happily

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given

given to them: and they have discovered such talents in all branches of literature, as might render the English jealous of being excelled by their genius, if there could remain a competition, when there remains no distinction between the two nations.

DOUGLAS.

There may be emulation without jealousy; and the efforts, which that emulation will excite, may render our island superior in the fame of wit and good learning to Italy or to Greece; a superiority, which I have learnt in the Elysian fields to prefer even to that which is acquired by arms.—But one doubt still remains with me concerning the Union. I have been informed that no more than sixteen of our peers, except those who have English peerages (which some of the noblest have not), now sit in the house of lords, as representatives of the rest. Does not this in a great measure diminish those peers who are not elected? and have you not found the election of the sixteen too dependent on the favour of a court?

ARGYLE.

It was impossible that the English could ever consent, in the treaty of Union, to admit a greater number to have places and votes in the upper house of parliament: but all the Scotch peerage is virtually there, by representation. And those who are not elected have every dignity and right of the peerage, except the privilege of sitting in the house of lords, and some others depending thereon.

See the act
of Union,
art. 23.

DOUGLAS.

They have so:—but when parliaments enjoy such a share in the government of a country, as our's do at this time, to be *personally* there is a privilege and a dignity of the highest importance.

ARGYLE.

I wish it had been possible to impart it to all. But your reason will tell you it was not.—And consider, my lord, that, till

the Revolution in sixteen hundred and eighty-eight, the power vested by our government in *the lords of the Articles* had made our parliaments much more subject to the influence of the crown than our elections are now. As, by the manner in which they were constituted, those lords were no less devoted to the king than his own privy council; and as no proposition could then be presented in parliament, if rejected by them, they gave him a negative before debate. This indeed was abolished upon the accession of king William the Third, with many other oppressive and despotical powers, which had rendered our nobles abject slaves to the crown, while they were allowed to be tyrants over the people. But if king James, or his son, had been restored, the government he had exercised would have been re-established: and nothing but the Union of the two kingdoms could have effectually prevented that restoration. We likewise owe to the Union the subsequent abolition of the Scotch privy council, which had been the most grievous engine of tyranny; and that salutary law, which declared that no crimes should be high treason or misprision of treason in Scotland, but such as were so in England; and gave us the English methods of trial in cases of that nature: whereas, before, there were so many species of treasons, the construction of them was so uncertain, and the trials were so arbitrary, that no man could be safe from suffering as a traitor. By the same act of parliament we also received a communication of that noble privilege of the English, exemption from torture; a privilege, which, though essential both to humanity and to justice, no other nation in Europe, not even the freest republics, can boast of possessing. Shall we then take offence at some inevitable circumstances, which may be objected to, on our part, in the treaty of Union, when it has delivered us from slavery, and all the worst evils that a state can suffer? It might be easily shewn, that, in his political and civil condition, every baron in Scotland is much happier now, and much more independent, than the highest was under that constitution

See Robert-
son's History
of Scotland,
li. p. 69—72.

See act for
rendering the
Union of the
two king-
doms more
entire and
complete, an-
no regine
Annæ sexto.

See act for im-
proving the
Union of the
two king-
doms, anno
septimo Annæ
regine.

See Robert-
son's History
of Scotland,
l. viii. and
Hume's Hi-
story of
Charles II.
c. 7. and
James II. c. 1.

stitution of government which continued in Scotland even after the expulsion of king James the Second. The greatest enemies to the Union are the friends of that king, in whose reign, and in his brother's, the kingdom of Scotland was subjected to a despotism as arbitrary as that of France, and more tyrannically administered.

D O U G L A S.

All I have heard of those reigns makes me blush with indignation at the servility of our nobles, who could endure them so long. What then was become of that undaunted Scotch spirit, which had dared to resist the Plantagenets in the height of their power and pride? could the descendants of those, who had disdained to be subjects of Edward the First, submit to be slaves of Charles the Second, or James?

A R G Y L E.

They seemed in general to have lost every characteristic of their natural temper, except a desire to abuse the royal authority, for the gratification of their private resentments in family quarrels.

D O U G L A S.

Your grandfather, my lord, has the glory of not deserving this censure.

A R G Y L E.

I am proud that his spirit, and the principles he professed, drew upon him the injustice and fury of those times. But there needs no other proof than the nature and the manner of his condemnation, to shew what a wretched state our nobility then were in, and what an inestimable advantage it is to them, that they are now to be tried as peers of Great Britain, and have the benefit of those laws which imparted to us the equity and the freedom of the English constitution.

Upon the whole, as much as wealth is preferable to poverty, liberty to oppression, and national strength to national weakness,

so

See Hume's
History of
Charles II.
c. 7.

See the act of
Union, art.
23.

so much has Scotland incontestably gained by the Union. England too has secured by it every public blessing which was before enjoyed by her, and has greatly augmented her strength. The martial spirit of the Scotch, their hardy bodies, their acute and vigorous minds, their industry, their activity, are now employed to the benefit of the whole island. He is now a bad Scotchman who is not a good Englishman, and he is a bad Englishman who is not a good Scotchman. Mutual intercourse, mutual interests, mutual benefits, must naturally be productive of mutual affection. And when that is established, when our hearts are sincerely united, many great things, which some remains of jealousy and distrust, or narrow, local partialities, may hitherto have obstructed, will be done for the good of the whole united kingdom. How much may the revenues of Great-Britain be increased by the further increase of population, of industry, and of commerce in Scotland! what a mighty addition to the stock of national wealth will arise from the improvement of our most northern counties, which are infinitely capable of being improved! The briars and thorns are in a great measure grubbed up: the flowers and fruits may be soon planted. And what more pleasing, or what more glorious employment, can any government have, than to attend to the cultivating of such a plantation?

D O U G L A S.

The prospect you open to me of happiness to my country appears so fair, that it makes me amends for the pain, with which I reflect on the times wherein I lived, and indeed on our whole history for several ages.

A R G Y L E.

That history does, in truth, present to the mind a long series of the most direful objects, assassinations, rebellions, anarchy, tyranny, and religion itself, either cruel, or gloomy and unsocial. An historian, who would paint it in its true colours, must

must take the pencil of Guercino or Salvator Rosa. But the most agreeable imagination can hardly figure to itself a more pleasing scene of private and public felicity, than will naturally result from the Union, if all the prejudices against it, and all distinctions that may tend, on either side, to keep up an idea of separate interests, or to revive a sharp remembrance of national animosities, can be removed.

DOUGLAS.

If they can be removed! I think it impossible they can be retained. To resist the Union is indeed to rebel against nature. —She has joined the two countries, has fenced them both with the sea, against the invasion of all other nations; but has laid them entirely open the one to the other. Accursed be he who endeavours to divide them.—*What God has joined, let no man put asunder.*

The three following DIALOGUES are by another hand.

DIALOGUE XXVI.

CADMUS — HERCULES.

CADMUS.

DO you pretend to sit as high on Olympus as Hercules? did you kill the Nemean lion, the Erymanthian boar, the Lernean serpent, and Stymphalian birds? did you destroy tyrants and robbers? You value yourself greatly on subduing one serpent: I did as much as that while I lay in my cradle.

CADMUS.

It is not on account of the serpent I boast myself a greater benefactor to Greece than you. Actions should be valued by their utility rather than their éclat. I taught Greece the art of writing, to which laws owe their precision and permanency.

You