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THE  
STATE  
OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM,  
AT THE  
PEACE OF PARIS,  
*November 20, 1815,*

RESPECTING THE PEOPLE; THEIR DOMESTIC ENERGIES; THEIR AGRICULTURE;  
THEIR TRADE; THEIR SHIPPING; AND THEIR FINANCES.

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We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed,  
*but not in despair.—2 Cor.*

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BY GEORGE CHALMERS, F. R. S. S. A.  
AUTHOR OF CONSIDERATIONS ON COMMERCE, BULLION, AND  
COIN, CIRCULATION AND EXCHANGES.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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*HE, who sometimes publishes big books, may seem to have a right to publish a little book.*

*Having communicated the following Statements, in manuscript, to a few friends, who were struck with the efficacy of their information, I was advised to publish them. I hesitated: but seeing that a pamphlet had been circulated at Paris, with some applause, inculcating THE DECLINE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, I no longer delayed to send to the press the irrefragable documents, which evince, that the British Nation is most prosperous in all which constitutes opulence, and power, while it enjoys unricalled glory, as much from its perseverance in a noble cause, as from its valour, and its conduct.*

THE  
STATE  
OF THE  
UNITED KINGDOM.

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AFTER so violent a convulsion in Europe, with its natural effects, a war of two and twenty years' continuance, it is a very reasonable wish, to inquire what has been its real consequences to Great Britain and Ireland, in the genuine sources of their energies, and their wealth.

I.—OF THE PEOPLE.

In every inquiry of this kind, the people are the chief object: whether they have increased, or diminished, throughout so long a struggle, is a question of great importance. During the war of 1756, it was disputed, between Brakenridge and Foster, whether the people had increased, or diminished, and what was their amount? but without any decision. During the colonial war, Doctor Price revived the same question; but he was more successfully opposed; he insisted, that there could not be more than 5,000,000 of inhabitants in England and Wales: his opponents shewed, from very sufficient documents, that there were, in England and Wales, upwards of 8,447,000

souls. These contrarieties of opinion were at length settled by the parliamentary enumeration of 1801, which, in opposition to the doctrine of Dr. Price, found in England and Wales 9,340,000 souls: but did the population continue to increase during the subsequent war? Yes; as the people had continued to multiply during the wars of 1756 and 1776, so did they multiply during the war of 1803; for the parliamentary enumeration of 1811 found, in England and Wales, 10,150,615. The state of the inhabitants of Scotland, at successive periods, gives the same result: in 1801 the enumeration found 1,618,303 souls in that country, the enumeration of 1811 found 1,805,000. The same observation equally applies to Ireland: the population of Ireland, when the Union was formed, in 1800, was supposed to be 4,000,000; by the late imperfect enumeration, in 1814, it appeared that Ireland contained near 6,000,000 of people. It is a fact, then, that the people of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland have increased, during the late long wars, to 17,208,918 souls, and continue to increase and multiply.

## II.—OF THE DOMESTIC ENTERPRIZES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

The best evidence of those enterprizes, together with their extent, and of their increase, is the Journals of Parliament. From this record, we know how many Acts of Parliament have passed, session after session, for making local improvements of every kind, during the last thirty years, of which there have been so many periods of distressful hostilities.

*Acts.*

In the first period of eight years, when the peace ended in 1792, and the first war began, there were passed, of Acts of Parliament, for local improvements . . . . .	750
In the subsequent period of war, which ended with 1801, the number of such laws, for such local improvements, amounted to . . . . .	1,124
In the eight years ending with 1814, the number of such laws amounted to . . . . .	1,632

These enumerations evince clearly three points: the first, that the energy and enterprizes of the people continued to increase, without interruption, during those long periods of warfare; secondly, that the people, making those local improvements, turned their energies upon the improvement of their several districts; and thirdly, that the undertakers of those vast enterprizes found the means, and money, to carry them into effect, in their own industry, their reproductions, and consequent wealth. Ireland, in the mean time, has had her full share of those domestic improvements.

### III.—OF THE AGRICULTURE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

During the present reign, at least 3,500,000 acres of waste, or common land, have been inclosed, and brought into tilth. Of those local improvements, there were 1,591 Acts of Parliament passed, for dividing common lands, for draining wet lands, and for inclosing open lands: those facts alone demonstrate, that the United Kingdom has been much improved in its surface, during the last thirty years; and, consequently, is much more valuable, as a collection

of farms. A Board of Agriculture was meantime established, for ascertaining the state of husbandry in every district; for energizing the husbandmen; for instructing all those who are connected with lands: their reports evince a very improving agriculture every where, within the kingdom; and a very active spirit of improvement, upon better principles, appears to have gone forth in all parts of our country: hence, by a necessary progress, the body of the people, either as land-owners, or occupiers, became more skilful, more enterprizing, and more opulent; of consequence there was more land cultivated, with more knowledge, and more capital: so that from more cultivation, more skill and more capital, thus employed in agriculture, there were more of the products of land brought, every season, to market, from an improved husbandry, at home. But, since the demands of war have ceased, the prices of those products have fallen: this is a natural consequence; as price is always settled by the vibrations of supply and demand; the supply being greater, and the demand less; the prices must necessarily be less. Outcries have arisen in the country, as if our whole agriculture were ruined. Those outcries merely arise, from the mutual complaints of landlord and tenant; of those landlords and tenants, who entered into improvident contracts during the war: there is neither outcry, nor complaint, in those districts, where the landlords did not raise their rents, during the war, when it was idly supposed that rents would rise, without limitation. It does not, however, belong to my inquiry, to enter within the verge of those outcries and complaints. I have demonstrated what I undertook to prove, that the United Kingdom is infinitely better improved, than it ever was before; and of consequence would sell for more: that the lands are every where cultivated with more skill and capital, with more

enterprize and labour; and of consequence must produce much more than they ever did before: it is thus apparent, that our agriculture has prospered greatly, during those long wars.

IV.—OF OUR FOREIGN TRADE.

The next object of inquiry is, whether our commerce has kept pace with the progress of our agriculture, during our long enduring wars. The average of the three years 1755-56-57, shews the amount of the value of our exports, when the war of 1756 began, to have been £12,371,552

The value of the exports, when the war of 1793 began, appears, from the average of three years 1793-4-5, to have been . . . . . 24,753,867

The value of the exports when the war of 1803 began, will appear, from a three years' average, ending with 1805, to have been . . . . . 33,614,902

The greatest year of exports, during the war, was that of 1809; amounting to . . . . 50,301,763

But this vast amount was far surpassed, by that of 1814, amounting to . . . . . 56,591,514

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From the Custom-house accounts, which have been made up to the 10th of October 1815, there is reason to believe, that the exports of 1815 have even surpassed the vast export of the preceding year. Such, then, was the prodigious augmentation of the foreign trade of Great Britain; while the British traders, owing to their capital and enterprize, and to the protection of the British fleets, in some measure engrossed the whole traffic of the commercial world; though the nation was embarrassed, but not obstructed, by the great demands, and smaller supplies

of bullion, owing chiefly to the convulsions of the American countries, and the continental system.

2dly. With regard to the trade of Ireland :—

The value of the whole exports of Ireland in 1701 was only . . . . . £ 779,109

In 1751 . . . . .	1,854,605
In 1801 . . . . .	4,100,526
In 1809 . . . . .	5,739,843
In 1814 . . . . .	7,139,427

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Now, it is quite evident to all, who are capable of reasoning on such subjects, that it required, both in Ireland and in Britain, more people and industry, more capital and enterprize, to export the cargoes of 1809 and 1814 from both, than the cargoes of 1801 and of 1751 : and, whence did Great Britain and Ireland derive all those augmentations of enterprize and capital, of industry and people? The answer must be ; from their own powers of reproduction, under a happy constitution, and a mild government.

## V.

The fifth object of inquiry must be with regard to the shipping, which were necessary for exporting those vast cargoes :—

	British.	Foreign.	The Total.
	<i>Tons.</i>	<i>Tons.</i>	<i>Tons.</i>
The quantity of tonnage, British and foreign, which were required to transport the exports of the years 1755-56 and 57 were, upon an average of those years..	496,254	76,456	572,710
The quantity of tonnage, British and foreign, which were necessary for exporting the cargoes of the years 1793-4 and 5, were upon an average of those years..	1,255,939	262,558	1,518,498
The quantity of tonnage, British and foreign, which were necessary for exporting the cargoes of the years 1803-4 and 5, were upon an average of those years..	1,470,520	589,404	2,059,924
The whole shipping, which transported the great export of 1809, amounted to .....	.....	.....	2,230,902
The whole shipping, which transported the greater cargo of 1814, amounted to .....	.....	.....	2,447,268

It is thus apparent, that shipping were successively found, for transporting these several cargoes, as our trade augmented, from various causes.

## VI.

The sixth object of inquiry must be, what was the whole amount of shipping, which belonged to the British dominions, in the following periods ; as the same were registered, under the directions of law. There were registered

	<i>Ships.</i>	<i>Tons.</i>
In 1786-7 . . . . .	14,143	1,343,473
In 1792 . . . . .	16,079	1,540,146
In 1802 . . . . .	20,568	2,128,055
In 1814 . . . . .	24,418	2,616,965

Such, then, was the gradual but extensive increase of our shipping, since the year 1792; and such their general amount, at the end of 1814.

## VII.—OF BULLION AND EXCHANGES.

The seventh object of inquiry must be, respecting bullion, exchanges, and the collateral questions, arising from these enigmatical topics.

What I published in 1811, on those litigated topics at that period, I see no reason to change: what I wrote was derived from the experience of the commercial world, and from the practice of daily business: what I then foretold has actually occurred. I then said, that what had happened before, as to the price of bullion, and the fluctuation of exchanges, would again happen, when the commercial pressures of the continental system were removed. That system, and its author, are both undone for ever. Commerce, and exchanges, have already begun to run in their usual channels. The exchanges have become favourable; and the prices of bullion have fallen to five per cent. above the mint price of  $\text{£}l. 17s. 10d.$ , though the countries of bullion are agitated with desires of independence. In another country of agitations, the exchanges are, indeed, unfavourable, owing to the decline of prices, in all the products of agriculture. I do not learn that the Doctors in Political Economy have any other prescription for such a disorder, which is not unfrequent in Ireland, than patient perseverance in well doing.

## VIII.—OF THE FINANCES OF THE COUNTRY.

While the inhabitants of the United Kingdom appear to possess in a greater degree than formerly, all the enjoyments of a free, intelligent, and enterprising people, is not THE STATE much embarrassed with debts? Yes: every war, since that of the Revolution in 1688, has left the public more and more in debt. When all those several debts of successive wars were summed up, in January 1786, a debt was found to be due, by the public, of 238,231,248*l.* Mr. Pitt, who then, happily, conducted the affairs of this country, not only made the annual income quite equal to the national expenditure; but, provided a sinking fund of a million, for the gradual payment of that debt. The Parliament, who effected his measures of finance, and the people, who heartily concurred with both, have covered themselves with glory. The sinking fund was strengthened by annual grants of money: it was energized by various measures of finance; and the sinking fund, as its management had been wisely established, was providently applied to its real object; so that before December 1813, the whole of that vast debt was completely paid off, and a surplus remaining in hand of 20,000,000*l.* Here, then, is an example of a very large debt being paid off, by a sinking fund, when conducted under prudent management; and this example is one of the resources of the State. After liquidating that debt, and sustaining the public credit, throughout the pressures of such a war against the nation, and its commerce, there remained, on the 1st of February 1815, a sinking fund of 11,324,760*l.* the sheet-anchor of the State.

But the war of 1793, as it was the longest, and conducted on the largest scale, having other nations to sustain,

has involved the State in larger debts than all our former wars had created. The public, on the 1st of February 1815, owed a funded debt of . . . . . £649,076,905  
 And an unfunded debt of . . . . . 68,580,524

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But to these must be added the debts contracted for the various expences of the year 1815. And then the unredeemed debt for Great Britain, for Ireland, for Germany, for Portugal, and for East-India, will amount to 819,145,385

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For interest thereon . . . . . 29,681,664

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For management thereof . . . . . 294,946

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For the sinking fund . . . . . 14,131,548

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The total annual charge thereon . . . . . £44,294,037

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Another resource of the State is the clearness, where-with the public accounts are stated, and the publicity which is given to the incumbrances, and means of the community.

The people of the United Kingdom, during the reign of King William, could not have moved under the weight of such incumbrances. But, the much more numerous people of the present times, who are better instructed and usefully employed, with an agriculture infinitely superior, with manufactures vastly more extensive and profitable, with a foreign trade, and shipping, beyond all comparison greater, move with ease under such incumbrances. We have seen with what facility, notwithstanding the pressures of war, the people executed such numerous and various works, for the local improvements of their country, which, considering their vastness and utility, emulate the Roman

labours : hence we may infer, that time is one of the resources of the State.

If we inquire from what source the people of the United Kingdom have derived such vast and increasing wealth, we shall find, that it was not owing to conquests, or mines ; but to the perfect safety, which they derive from their salutary laws ; to the energetic industry, which is urged and rewarded by that sense of safety ; to the immense commerce, domestic and foreign, of inspirited people : so that from those causes originate those prodigious reproductions of opulence, which appear, at successive periods, to the astonishment of the world ; and which have induced commercial writers to maintain, that the resources of such a people are *inexhaustible*, while fostered by *circumspection*.









