CONSIDERATIONS ON THE STATE OF IRELAND

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Considerations on the State of Ireland by William Knox

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WILLIAM KNOX

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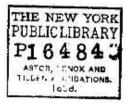
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INTRODUCTION.

IT is the common misfortune of all dependencies of Great Empires, that fuch of their citizens as are able to make their way to administration, feldom return to their native province, or bring the knowledge or influence they have acquired to its fervice. No country feels this misfortune more fensibly than Ireland; for notwithstanding it is no more A 2 than

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than a member of the British empire, its conflitution partakes fo much of a feparate state, that almost the whole of its polity is left to the arrangement of its own domeftic government ; # befides the aptness of men, removed to a distance from the feat of empire; to be fwayed by early prejudices or local attachments, their best calculated projects for promoting the particular intereft of their country must ever run the hazard of being defeated, by clashing with the particular interest of some other member, or interfering with the general and 5 305(g) 193

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and combined interefts of the whole.

To the want of a knowledge of the general and combined intereft of the empire, in those who have had the direction of the affairs in Ireland fince the Revolution, may in a great meafure be ascribed the flow progress Ireland has made in population, cultivation, commerce, and wealth, compared with other parts of the British dominions.

It is not my prefent purpole to point out inftances in proof of

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of this affertion, but there is one fo ftriking and obvious, that I cannot help mentioning it.

In the 19th year of the reign of James the 1ft. the whole number of white inhabitants in all the British colonies in North that part America amounted to no more than 4000, at which time Ireland contained a million; yet with fuch a prodigious start we have seen Ireland, in a little more than a century, overtaken by America, and in some particulars surpassed; for it is beyond controvers, that until her late imprudence in exciting the jealous,

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jealoufy, and provoking the refentment of Great Britain, Britifh America was nearly as populous as Ireland; her people were better fed, better clothed, better lodged, and more happy ; the had more thipping, more trade, and more credit; and during the whole time laboured under more reftraints from Englifh laws than Ireland did, with foil much lefs fertile, and a climate neither fo temperate or falutary. But altho' the continual migrations of the people might have theyn our rulers that there was fomething doing in America,

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rica, that made Irifhmen prefer it to their own country; it never occurred to them to enquire what that was. No member of the Irifh legiflature ever thought of reading a colony act of affembly, or looking into their conflitutions or forms of government, or acquiring a knowledge of the nature of their trade, the regulations it was fubject to, or the privileges they enjoyed; and it would not be hazarding much to affirm, that not a fingle volume of the laws of any one of the feventeen colonies on the continent is, or ever was,