

Defoe Daniel

**And What if
the Pretender should
Come? Or Some...**



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**And What if the Pretender should
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of the Advantages and Real
Consequences of the Pretender's
Possessing the Crown of Great Britain**

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Содержание

AND WHAT IF THE PRETENDER SHOULD COME?	5
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	8

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and Real Consequences of the Pretender's
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AND WHAT IF THE PRETENDER SHOULD COME?
OR SOME CONSIDERATIONS, &c

If the danger of the pretender is really so great as the noise which some make about it seems to suppose, if the hopes of his coming are so well grounded, as some of his friends seem to boast, it behoves us who are to be the subjects of the approaching revolution, which his success must necessarily bring with it, to apply ourselves seriously to examine what our part will be in the play, that so we may prepare ourselves to act as becomes us, both with respect to the government we are now under, and with respect to the government we may be under, when the success he promises himself shall (if ever it shall) answer his expectation.

In order to this it is necessary to state, with what plainness the circumstances of the case will admit, the several appearances of the thing itself. 1. As they are offered to us by the respective parties who are for or against it. 2. As they really appear by an impartial deduction from them both, without the least bias either to one side or other; that so the people of Britain may settle and compose their thoughts a little in this great, and at present popular, debate; and may neither be terrified nor affrighted with mischiefs, which have no reason nor foundation in them, and which give no ground for their apprehensions; and, on the other hand, may not promise to themselves greater things from the pretender, if he should come hither, than he will be able to perform for them. In order to this we are to consider the pretender in his person and in his circumstances. 1. The person who we call the pretender; it has been so much debated, and such strong parties have been made on both sides to prove or disprove the legitimacy of his birth, that it seems needless here to enter into that dispute; the author of the Review, one of the most furious opposers of the name and interest of the pretender, openly grants his legitimacy, and pretends to argue against his admission from principles and foundations of his own forming; we shall let alone his principles and foundations here, as we do his arguments, and only take him by the handle which he fairly gives us, viz., that he grants the person of the pretender legitimate; if this be so, if the person we contend about be the lawful true son of King James's queen, the dispute whether he be the real son of the king will be quite out of the question; because by the laws of Great Britain, and of the whole world, a child born in wedlock shall inherit, as heir of the mother's husband, whether begotten by him, as his real father, or not. Now to come at the true design of this work, the business is, to hear, as above, what either side have to say to this point. The friends of his birth and succession argue upon it thus, if the person be lawfully begotten, that is, if born really of the body of the queen dowager, during the life of King James, he was without any exception his lawful son; if he was his lawful son, he was his lawful heir; if he was his lawful heir, why is he not our lawful king? Since hereditary right is indefeasible, and is lately acknowledged to be so; and that the doctrine of hereditary right being indefeasible, is a Church of England doctrine ever received by the church, and inseparable from the true members of the church, the contrary being the stigmatizing character of republicans, king-killers, enemies to monarchy, presbyterians, and fanatics. The enemies of the birth and succession of the person called the pretender argue upon it thus, that he is the lawfully

begotten, or son born really of the body of the queen dowager of the late King James, they doubt; and they are justified in doubting of it, because no sufficient steps were taken in the proper season of it, either before his birth, to convince such persons as were more immediately concerned, to know the truth of it, that the queen was really with child, which might have been done past all contradiction at that time, more than ever after; or at his birth, to have such persons as were more immediately concerned, such as her present majesty, &c., thoroughly convinced of the queen being really delivered of a child, by being present at the time of the queen's labour and delivery. This being omitted, which was the affirmative, say they, which ought to have been proved, we ought not to be concerned in the proof of the negative, which by the nature of the thing could not be equally certain; and therefore we might be justly permitted to conclude that the child was a spurious, unfair production, put upon the nation; for which reason we reject him, and have now, by a legal and just authority, deposed his father and him, and settled the succession upon the house of Hanover, being protestants.

The matter of his title standing thus, divides the nation into two parties, one side for, and the other against the succession, either of the pretender, or the house of Hanover, and either side calling the other the pretender; so that if we were to use the party's language, we must say, one side is for, and the other side against, either of the pretenders; what the visible probabilities of either of these claims succeeding are, is not the present case; the nation appears at this time strangely agitated between the fears of one party, and the hopes of the other, each extenuating and aggravating, as their several parties and affections guide them, by which the public disorder is very much increased; what either of them have to allege is our present work to inquire; but more particularly what are the real or pretended advantages of the expected reign of him, who we are allowed to distinguish by the name of the pretender; for his friends here would have very little to say to move us to receive him, if they were not able to lay before us such prospects of national advantages, and such, views of prosperity, as would be sufficient to prevail with those who have their eyes upon the good of their country, and of their posterity after them.

That then a case so popular, and of so much consequence as this is, may not want such due supports as the nature of the thing will allow, and especially since the advantages and good consequences of the thing itself are so many, and so easy to be seen as his friends allege; why should not the good people of Britain be made easy, and their fears be turned into peaceable satisfaction, by seeing that this devil may not be so black as he is painted; and that the noise made of the pretender, and the frightful things said of his coming, and of his being received here, may not be made greater scarecrows to us than they really are; and after all that has been said, if it should appear that the advantages of the pretender's succession are really greater to us, and the dangers less to us, than those of the succession of Hanover, then much of their difficulties would be over, who, standing neuter as to persons, appear against the pretender, only because they are made to believe strange and terrible things of what shall befall the nation in case of his coming in, such as popery, slavery, French power, destroying of our credit, and devouring our funds (as that scandalous scribbler, the Review, has been labouring to suggest), with many other things which we shall endeavour to expose to you, as they deserve. If, we say, it should appear then that the dangers and disadvantages of the pretender's succession are less than those of the house of Hanover, who, because of an act of Parliament, you know must not be called pretenders, then there will remain nothing more to be said on that score, but the debate must be of the reasonableness and justice on either side, for their admittance; and there we question not but the side we are really pleading for will have the advantage.

To begin, then, with that most popular and affrighting argument now made use of, as the bugbear of the people, against several other things besides jacobitism, we mean French greatness. It is most evident that the fear of this must, by the nature of the thing, be effectually removed upon our receiving the pretender; the grounds and reasons why French greatness is rendered formidable to us, and so much weight supposed to be in it, that like the name of Scanderberg, we fright our very children with it, lie only in this, that we suggest the king of France being a professed enemy to the peace and

the liberty of Great Britain, will most certainly, as soon as he can a little recover himself, exercise all that formidable power to put the pretender upon us, and not only to place him upon the throne of Great Britain, but to maintain and hold him up in it, against all the opposition, either of the people of Britain or the confederate princes leagued with the elector of Hanover, who are in the interest of his claim, or of his party. Now, it is evident, that upon a peaceable admitting this person, whom they call the pretender, to receive and enjoy the crown here, all that formidable power becomes your friend, and the being so must necessarily take off from it everything that is called terrible; forasmuch as the greater terror and amusement the power we apprehend really carries with it, the greater is the tranquillity and satisfaction which accrues to us, when we have the friendship of that power which was so formidable to us before: the power of France is represented at this time very terrible, and the writers who speak of it apply it warm to our imaginations, as that from whence we ought justly to apprehend the impossibility of keeping out the pretender, and this, notwithstanding they allow themselves at the same time to suppose all the confederate powers of Europe to be engaged, as well by their own interest, as by the new treaties of barrier and guarantee, to support and to assist the claim of the elector of Hanover, and his party. Now, if this power be so great and so formidable, as they allege, will it not, on the other side, add a proportion of increase to our satisfaction, that this power will be wholly in friendship and league with us; and engaged to concern itself for the quieting our fears of other foreign invaders; forasmuch as having once concerned itself to set the person of the pretender upon the throne, it cannot be supposed but it shall be equally concerned to support and maintain him in that possession, as what will mightily conduce to the carrying on the other projects of his greatness and glory with the rest of Europe; in which it will be very much his interest to secure himself from any opposition he might meet with from this nation, or from such as might be rendered powerful by our assistance. An eminent instance we have of this in the mighty efforts the French nation have made for planting, and preserving when planted, a grandson of France upon the throne of Spain; and how eminent are the advantages to France from the success of that undertaking; of what less consequence then would it be to the august monarchy of France, to secure and engage to himself the constant friendship and assistance of the power of Great Britain, which he would necessarily do, by the placing this person upon the throne, who would thereby in gratitude be engaged to contribute his utmost in return to the king of France, for the carrying on his glorious designs in the rest of Europe. While, then, we become thus necessary to the king of France, reason dictates that he would be our fast friend, our constant confederate, our ally, firmly engaged to secure our sovereign, and protect our people from the insults and attempts of all the world; being thus engaged reciprocally with the king of France, there must necessarily be an end of all the fears and jealousies, of all the apprehensions and doubts, which now so amuse us, and appear so formidable to us from the prospect of the power and greatness of France; then we shall on the contrary say to the world, the stronger the king of France is, the better for the king of England; and what is best for the king, must be so for his people; for it is a most unnatural way of arguing, to suppose the interest of a king, and of his people, to be different from one another.

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