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ON THE

MORAL STATE AND POLITICAL UNION

OF

SWEDEN AND NORWAY,

IN ANSWER TO

MR. S. LAING'S STATEMENT.

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MR. SAMUEL LAING has within the last four years published two works, one under the title of "*Journal of a Residence in Norway*" (in 1836), the other entitled a "*Tour in Sweden*" (in 1838), which, from their intrinsic merit, or the importance of the countries of which they treat, would not deserve much attention from English readers, if it were not that the *real* object of these two works is very different from what their titles indicate, concealing the intention of descanting on the present European question between the aristocratic and conservative elements of society on one side, and democracy, with its gradual development, on the other side. On this score, the above-mentioned works of Mr. Laing deserve some notice: he has constituted himself the champion of the system of equality of conditions; he has devoted his pen to this social movement, which,

after accomplishing the destruction of feudalism, and conquering kings, will most assuredly not be restrained in its march either by the middling classes or by the rich. Our author is one of those who are ambitious to be numbered among the thousand instruments of destruction, sapping on all sides the foundations of the social edifice, and who are striving towards a goal, unknown to themselves as well as to us, but which, in full reliance on the inscrutable decrees of the Almighty, will, we trust, not lead to the entire dissolution of the beautiful structure of European civilization, erected by the labour of so many centuries, and by such admirable efforts of human genius.

In pursuance of this system, Mr. Laing, with the intention of teaching by examples, presents in the most brilliant light everything in *Norway*, because he considers this country as a *Democracy* (in which he is so far right, that, if *Monarchie entourée d'institutions Républicaines* has ever been realised, it is certainly in Norway); whereas he depicts everything in Sweden in the darkest colours, because he considers that country (right or wrong) to be an *Aristocracy*; but Mr. Laing acts in this system a little like the giant *Procrustes*, who threw his victims on an iron bed, where those who were too long were contracted, and those who were too short stretched, until all attained the exact dimensions of his bed of torture. Thus would Mr. Laing stretch Norway, and curtail Sweden, to make them exactly fit the dimensions of his self-constructed system.

The tendency of Mr. Laing's works requires to be examined also under another point of view, in order that the reader, probably not possessing the materials requisite for controlling the arithmetical statements brought forward by him with astonishing assurance, may not be induced to attach credit to these statements, and to the conclusions drawn from them, conclusions which would apply, not only to the two countries on which he descants, but equally to any other country, and might lead to the belief that neither *education* nor *religion* contributes to the morality of mankind, but that this depends wholly on a nation's political institutions: in the course of his works our author wearies not in his endeavours to prove that there is no salvation for a nation except in the most democratic institutions; it follows, of course, that it is neither *education* nor *religion* that forms the basis of the morality of a nation, but that it is—we suppose nothing less than—a Republic.

In the cursory review which we intend to take of Mr. Laing's work on Norway, we shall find opportunities of correcting the very erroneous opinions which he endeavours to inculcate on the nature of its union with Sweden—a union never thoroughly appreciated, inasmuch as the clamour raised against it by the parliamentary opposition of the years 1813 and 1814 tended to convey the idea that this union would prove detrimental to Norway, and to its liberties; whereas, in fact, Norway has, in every respect, immensely benefited by it.