The History of Mademoiselle de Beleau; or, the New Roxana, The Fortunate Mistress, afterward Countess of Wintselsheim. Published by Daniel De Foe. And from Papers found since his Decease, it appears was greatly altered by himself; and from the said Papers the present Work is produced. 12mo. 3s. bound. Noble, &c. 1775.

Few novels are better known than the story of the Lewd Roxana; which, we see, is ascrib’d to the famous De Foe. It is not improbable that this is really one of Daniel's productions; for he wrote books of all kinds, romantic as well as religious; moral as well as immoral. History, politics, poetry; in short, all subjects were alike to Daniel. The versatility of this man's genius procured him the admiration of the age in which he lived; but the breed of De Foes has so much increased, of late years, that hundreds of them are to be found in the garrets of Grubstreet, where they draw nutrition, propagate (novels and pamphlets), and rot: and nobody minds them.
An Essay, containing a few Strictures on the Union of Scotland with England; and on the present Situation of Ireland. Being an Introduction to De Foe’s History of the Union. By J L De Lolme, Adv. 4to. 3 s. 6d. sewed. Stockdale, 1787.

This work consists of two parts, though not so divided. The first part gives a plain, concise, perspicuous view of the relative state of England and Scotland, from the time of Edward the First to the Union under Anne, in 1707. This part is written entirely by Mr De Lolme, and is a most excellent introduction to the history of that Union by De Foe. But the reader who expects to find Strictures on that Union will be disappointed. The second part relates to Ireland, and is written partly by Mr De Lolme and partly by another hand. The introductory Historical Sketch of the State of Ireland, from the first invasion of that country by the English under Henry the Second, till the beginning of the late Rockingham administration, is likewise written by Mr De Lolme. It deserves the same character for brevity and perspicuity with the former; and it will be read with pleasure by every impartial inquirer, who wishes to gain a distinct notion of the political situation of Ireland during the period above mentioned; as such a distinct view of that subject is no where else, that we know of, to be found. What follows (near one fourth part of the book) by another hand, gives us a view of the procedure respecting the Irish propositions, and subsequent events; with many observations tending to recommend an incorporating union between Great Britain and Ireland. We have here, also, quotations from several authors who have pointed out the expediency of the same measure.
The Editor of this valuable work has prefixed to it a Life of its Author; a man well known in the literary and political world. Mr De Foe was born about the year 1663, and died in 1731. He passed through a great variety of fortune, and met with difficulties and ill-treatment not only from the party which he opposed, but also from that which he espoused. This, indeed, was really honourable to him: a sincere friend as he appears to have been to the cause of liberty, civil and religious, he could not always concur in the measures and principles of those who professed at least to be prosecuting the same design. By this means, like many other worthy persons, he often fell under the censure of those with whom he appeared to be united. Several instances of this kind are here enumerated, in his own words. We insert, as a testimony in his favour, the following short passage from his Appeal, in which, with independence and modesty, he disapproved of the intemperance (as he thought) adopted by Government, in 1714, contrary to the original purpose of George I: “It is, and ever was, my opinion, that moderation is the only virtue by which the tranquillity of this nation can be preserved; and even the King himself (I believe his Majesty will allow me that freedom) can only be happy in the enjoyment of the crown, by a moderate administration: if he should be obliged, contrary to his known disposition, to join with intemperate councils, if he does not lessen his security, I am, persuaded, it will lessen his satisfaction. To attain the happy calm, is the consideration that should move us all; and he would merit to be called the nation’s physician, who could prescribe the specific for it: a conquest of parties will never do it; a balance parties may.” Such, adds the Editor, was the political testament of De Foe; which it had been happy for Britain, had it been as faithfully executed, as it was wisely made.

De Foe was not only a writer, but also a great projector, in the reign of King William; which he styles a projecting age. Several of his schemes are briefly mentioned, and whether they were seriously attended to or not, certain it is, we are informed, that “when he ceased to be a hosier (which he had once been), he was, without solicitation, appointed Accountant to the Commissions for managing the duties on glass.” He is chiefly known as an author: his Robinson Crusoe, which has passed through seventeen editions, and has been translated into other languages, will still preserve his memory; but his distinguished sphere, or that to which he principally applied himself, appears to have been policy and trade.

“It is no easy task,” says the Editor, “to ascertain the value or the titles of many of our Author’s writings, if we except those which he corrected himself and published in his lifetime. His poems, whether we regard propriety of sentiment, or sweetness of numbers, may, without much loss of pleasure or profit, be resigned to those who, in imitation of Pope, poach in the fields of obsolete poetry for brilliant thoughts, felicities of phrase, or for happy rhymes. De Foe’s ecclesiastical pamphlets may be relinquished to the perusal of those who delight in ecclesiastical polemics. But his tracts, political and commercial, the lovers of that liberty, which he ably defended; and the friends of that trade, which he liberally explained, must wish to see rescued
from oblivion, and republished without the contamination of matter, less engaging and instructive. Dryden and his contemporaries had brought dedications into disgrace by the fulsomeness of their flattery and the servility of their style. The dedications of the present day have absurdly run into the contrary extreme. But the writers, who are permitted to dedicate their works to royal patrons, ought to peruse De Foe’s dedicatory epistles to King William and Queen Anne, wherein they will find dignity of sentiment and delicacy of praise, conveyed in language, at once elegant and instructive: his Dedications of The History of the Union of England and Scotland would alone justify this remark.”

Beside the Dedications, this work of De Foe’s is introduced by an ample Preface relative to the French invasion of Scotland, in 1707, which, says he, had it succeeded, “bad fair for tearing up the very foundation of our constitution, and restoring, not only tyranny and arbitrary government, but even Popery itself.”

The work itself consists of:

A general history of Unions attempted in Britain
A view of the state of affairs in each kingdom, prior to the treaty in Queen Anne’s reign
An account of this treaty as it was conducted in London
A farther account of its procedure in Scotland
Minutes of the Parliament of Scotland, with observations thereon (which form a considerable part of the volume)
Exact copy of the Act of Ratification of the treaty of Union, as it was passed in the Parliament of Scotland, with the Exemplification thereof from England, as it stands recorded in Scotland, by order of the Parliament there

to all which is added, an Appendix, containing an account of transactions subsequent to the Union, with a great variety of original papers relative to the subject.

The work appears, to us, to be not only of the instructive, but even of the entertaining kind: the style is different from that of the present time, but by no means unpleasant. To those readers who wish for information concerning memorable events relative to their own country, this volume will, doubtless, be acceptable, as contributing both to their amusement and improvement. A large and very good Index is added. The Introduction, by De Lolme, &c. has been published separately.
It would be a curious subject of investigation for any acute observer, (who is not too much hurt himself, to be able to trace the dark policies of human conduct with coolness;) to inquire why it should be the cruel fate of most of those whose pens have been employed in the service of the public, to have justice studiously withheld from their characters, till they are beyond receiving any benefit from it; and when the men have sunk under anxieties, neglect, and injurious treatment, perhaps their memory, some time or other, receives the full payment of applause, with all the interest due on it! Threescore years after the death of the ingenious and well-informed Daniel De Foe, a gentleman, “during a period of convalescence,” amuses himself in writing his life; and has taken laudable, and we think successful pains, to rescue his memory from undeserved obloquy. All this is so far well; and Mr Chalmers, we doubt not, enjoys the conscious pleasure peculiar to good minds, in performing a generous act: but living merit can derive very little comfort from the instance.

De Foe, with great abilities, extensive knowledge, and a ready pen, living in troublesome times, became a busy controversial writer: he steadily supported the Whig interest, but could not (and what considerate honest man can?) go all lengths with his party: therefore, while he provoked the hatred of the Tories, he could not gain the entire love of the Whigs; and between both, his character has been transmitted to us under various misrepresentations. Mr Chalmers has, with industrious and commendable zeal, traced every circumstance, as well as the distance of time would permit, to set his character and conduct in a true light; which, as we have observed above, he has happily effected; and, in particular, has satisfactorily vindicated his *Robinson Crusoe* from being a piracy of Alexander Selkirk’s papers. At the close, is given a list of De Foe’s numerous and undoubted writings, and also a list of other publications imputed to him. This *Life* was prefixed, a few years since, to the quarto edition of De Foe’s *History of the Union*, for which see our Review, Vol. LXXVII, p. 459; and this octavo publication, though it is sold separately, is handsomely printed, to be prefixed to Mr Stockdale’s new splendid edition of *Robinson Crusoe*: of which further mention will be made in a future article.