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LETTER, &c.

12th Dec. 1815.

MY DEAR SIR FRANCIS,

ALTHOUGH the late tour, which occupied me thirteen weeks, was a mere private expedition for my personal gratification, yet, having had the same public object for which you and I, with others, are associated, it may be of use, that certain reflections to which it has given rise, should, through you, as Chairman, be submitted to the Committee.

Taking the work of Parliamentary Reform to have *commenced* with the crude and superficial suggestions of Lord *Chatham*, for "adding to the knights of shires" and shortening the duration of Parliaments," which that popular nobleman on two occasions threw out, namely, in the years 1770 and 1771, when yet scarcely a ray of light had beamed on the subject,* it may be observed, that too many Reformists in the higher circles of society, as if enjoying mental mists and state-twilight, or even political darkness, more than an unclouded atmosphere in the noon-tide lustre of the constitution; have contrived to amuse themselves for *five-and-forty years* with unsubstantial visions, unfounded speculations, arbitrary fancies, dark sayings, and obscure systems; manifesting much more proneness to a surrender of themselves to the misleadings of that treacherous ignis fatuus, EXPEDIENCE, than to the guidance of EXPERIENCE and RECTITUDE.

No wonder, then, that for so long a period they should have wandered out of the limits of Law, or wide of the landmarks of the Constitution; wasting their time and their strength, in and out of Parliament, to no manner of purpose, and without nearing the desired goal a single step! No wonder that their imperfect projects should have uniformly proved IMPRACTICABLE!

At length, however, they have an opportunity of learning that the true mode, the simple means of PRACTICABLE Reform has, by extensive experiences, been made manifest.

Id controversy with aristocratic cavillers, this mode, founded on correct theory, is invulnerable. Among the democratic part of the community, to whom it more particularly appertains, it has no controversy to encounter. If the people any where happen to be tinctured with prejudices inculcated by faction, at

* Touching "a more full and equal representation," in answer to an Address of Thanks on the 1st of June, 1770, he says, "I have thrown out this idea with the just diffidence of a private man, when he presumes to suggest any thing new in a high matter." It is not till the 17th April, 1771, that he touches on another "new" thing, namely, "to shorten the duration of Parliament."—*Almon's Anecdotes*, II. 34.

the mere sight of our three propositions, simple, self-evidently right, and faithful to liberty, those prejudices vanish. Their understandings are convinced, their hearts are attached, and their hands are at the service of their country, as by their eager signatures they show.

Hence *radical Reform*, with "that quintessence, that life and soul of our Constitution, the *annual* exercise of elective power," IS practicable; while none other can be; for without the minds, the hearts, and the hands of the people, to drivel about combating a consolidated despotism, is downright delirium.

Here let us keep in mind that, as an insidious manœuvre for DIVIDING the Reformists, and ultimately to cheat them of their object, a new *triennial* Bill has, at different periods, particularly in 1780 and 1810, been held out as a lure. Nor let us forget that a certain boastful champion of his brethren, the Borough mongers,—a Noble Lord, who fancied he could grapple with the Reformists at "*close quarters*," and who, by letter to me under his own hand, had declared himself averse to "*any steps which might lead in the remotest degree to a Reform in Parliament*," was the very man who, in 1810, threw out that lure; accompanying it with this accurate distinction, that it would be a mere *regulation*, NOT a *Reform*; which undoubtedly is most true.

Let us, I say, keep in mind, let us by no means forget these things; for assuredly when the Faction shall be driven with disgrace from their rotten-borough fortifications, they will retire, as the military phrase it, upon *Fort Triennial*, and there attempt to rally; when, however, they must be taught that that contemptible fortress is as untenable as their *Corse Castles*, their *Castle-Risings*, their *Old Sarums*, or their *Hell-stones*.

Foreseeing the deadly effects from *disunion* that were to be apprehended when our outwitted friend, *Wyrill*, in 1780, within *five short days* after signing, as Chairman, the Memorial of the DEPUTIES convened in the metropolis, proclaiming that "ANNUAL Parliaments are the ancient Constitution of this kingdom, " and the BIRTHRIGHT of Englishmen," had been lured into an actual association for *triennial* Parliaments; the enlightened *John Jebb* and myself, in a Westminster General Meeting on the 6th of April in that year, took our posts, for moving and supporting a rejection of that fatal proposition; when, from the well-known and repeatedly declared sentiments of the citizens, we must have triumphed, had not one, more dextrous than ourselves, played off a manœuvre by which *we* were circumvented, and the *people* entrapped.

On the 11th of the same month, that profound constitutional scholar and pattern of integrity, *Granville Sharp*, with the same foresight and forebodings as those of his two friends, in a Circular Letter to the Committees, entered also *his protest*, and raised *his warning voice* against the vile proposition.

Commenting with force on the strangeness of the insidious project, he justly observes, "that the promoters of this *triennial scheme* have really been the first " offenders against that desirable unanimity which the conference of Deputies " was intended to effect."—"What!" says he, "would you be unanimous " against the ancient legal parliamentary constitution of the kingdom, which the " *triennial scheme* is manifestly calculated to supplant?—You ought never to forget " that the people already have been betrayed by a *triennial* parliament."—"You

“cannot, without notorious *disloyalty*, in the strictest sense of the word, adopt the proposition for *triennial* parliaments.”

How shall we then, Sir *Francis*, characterize this insidious “*triennial scheme*?” Shall we call it a liberticide cup sweetened with a fatal drug, and temptingly presented by mock-reformists, as well as unfortunately recommended by deluded friends already intoxicated? Or shall we account it the poisoned arrow of hostile aristocracy, discharged from the close-borough rampart?

This arrow in its flight having grazed many *commoners*, symptoms of alienation from freedom, of which *their order in the state* is the proper depository, have in time past been violent, but the malignant influence is now greatly on the wane.

When, in speaking of Reformists in the higher circles it was said, ‘too many of them followed the ignis fatuus of *EXPEDIENCE*,’ ample exceptions were implied. There were such. But Truth, although potent and authoritative when at maturity, is yet weak and feeble-voiced in its infancy. During that period it is too frequently borne down by the mobbing clamours of empty ignorance, of bustling self-importance, or of noisy faction.

It not being to my present purpose either to notice those who proved blind guides, or those who dispensed true light, but merely to justify, as well as I am able, my present opinions, as results of no little reflection, and confirmed by a long experience, I am desirous it should be known that I never either accompanied in their wanderings, nor contributed to mislead, such as deviated into wrong courses.

In my first treatise on Parliamentary Reform, published in 1776,—the first that exhibited an arrangement of necessary detail, and which the Duke of *Richmond* spoke of in parliament as the basis of his bill,—will be found the same identical principles, the same practical application of those principles, and the same doctrines for obtaining such a *unanimity in petitioning* as would have the effect of a “*national association*,”* therein expressly recommended, as I at this day maintain, and have shewn to be PRACTICABLE.

By taking our retrospect as far back as the year 1770, which was more than twenty years antecedent to the atrocities of the French Revolution, we expose to indignant contempt the profligacy of the wretches, whose lying lips called the soundest English doctrines French principles.

A concise sketch of *Proceedings* may have its use. They consisted of much literary discussion; of meetings in counties, cities, towns, and popular societies; with the consequent arguments, speeches, resolutions, and petitions; all to one end, namely a reform in the representation of the people in parliament.—To these popular exertions must of course be added a few parliamentary motions and the debates thereupon.

Now, Sir *Francis*, for forming a correct judgment of the course which was taken, those popular and those parliamentary proceedings must be taken in conjunction, and in conjunction considered.

It is then to be remarked, that, for giving effect to any former motion for reform, made by Mr. *Pitt*, Mr. *Grey*, or Mr. *Brund*, the number of Petitions,

* Leg. Ri. of Peo. Vind. p. 197. Second Ed. 1777.

according to my recollection, never amounted to THIRTY: whereas, for giving effect to the motion which you are now soon expected to make, the petitions *already* amount to VERY MANY HUNDREDS, although the work is barely beginning.

There is also this striking distinction attendant on the contrast. Formerly, many of the nobility and great numbers of country gentlemen were *active* patrons of reform. Of such were composed the County Committees which abounded, and which with each other held correspondence. Several associations had taken place; and, moreover, as already adverted to, from the most animated of the counties, cities, and towns, Deputies, according to ancient usage,* had also been twice sent up to the metropolis, to consult on the means of accomplishing the great object: But yet, little light having then beamed on the question, and that little, as not emanating from men of high fame, having been distrusted, the wholesome fruit of petitions speaking a public voice, as already noticed, was lamentably scanty.

At the present time, on the contrary, except in a mere *Hampden* dawning, too faintly gleaming, and here and there a solitary gentleman, we behold not any *active* patronage given by the nobility and gentry to the sacred cause of their country; committees of such men are not now seen; their associations for recovering our liberties are not heard of; but yet, *Petitions at a call spring up by hundreds.*

Methinks I hear myself interrupted by some *nominal* Reformist with this interrogation,—‘ If petitions thus rise at a call by *hundreds*, how happens it that you tell us not rather of *thousands*? To such an interrogator, the answer will be more short than sweet.—‘ Tis because you and others either know not *what you have undertaken*, or you are not *what you profess to be*.’

Had all, indeed, who by their professions and their engagements have laid themselves under *responsibility*, properly sustained their assumed character of Reformists, *Petitions had assuredly by this time poured in by thousands, and tens of thousands.*

The error may have been unintentional; for unreflecting Reformists were in the habit of saying—‘ It is in vain to advocate reform. Had the People wished ‘ it, they would have petitioned. When we shall see this, *then* we will become ‘ active.’ To the like effect, a Noble Duke ten years ago declared himself to me by letter.—His words were, “ I hope and trust the day is not far distant, when that “ most desirable event, a substantial and *radical* Reform in the Representation “ of the People *may* be brought to bear: *In the mean time* let them see the extent “ of their grievances; let them know whence they arise; and let them coolly “ and dispassionately form *their own judgment* upon the best and surest remedy: “ It is at hand, simple, and of easy attainment.”†

My reasoning was somewhat different from that of those who doubted of the People’s feeling, or of their readiness, *properly encouraged*, to express that feeling.

* See Hovedon cited in Lord Carysfort’s Letter to the Committee of the County of *Huntingdon*, p. 15.

† See six Letters to the Marquis of Tavistock, p. 5.

And my inclination did not accord with that of those who studiously or mistakenly abstained from affording such encouragement. The opinion I had previously entertained, has, in two fair cases of experience, each on a pretty large scale, received the fullest confirmation.

The truth is, as those experiences prove, that the soil is abundantly impregnated, but yet, from various causes, Petitions burst not forth *spontaneously*. Among these causes, the most prominent are the five following, namely, 1st, *want of information* as to the grounds of *hope*; 2ndly, *errors*; 3rdly, *diffidence* combined with *FEARS*; 4thly, *suspicion*; and 5thly, above all, *a lack of the sunshine of encouragement*. These require to be separately considered. 1. *HOPE deferred*, maketh the heart sick; and *JUSTICE long denied*, causeth also an irritation of the nerves. ‘What,’ it is asked by some, ‘is the use of petitioning those whom neither reason, nor justice, nor humanity, can influence? Is it not idle to hope that paper petitions will cause the surrender of the iron sceptre of a Power, which bath at its disposal the whole property of the Nation, and at its command the public sword?’

That argument, in a country which had not on its records the events of the years 1215, and 1688, might be unanswerable; as it might also be in a land where it was not known, that for resisting tyranny there is more force in *Justice*, than in the *Bayonet*; more potency in *Truth*, than in *Powder and Ball*; more effect from *Free Discussion*, than from any other *Artillery*; and that at the sight of *Petitions of Right*, truly speaking the NATION’s opinion, the Borough Faction would as easily be persuaded to vote a Radical Reform, as the tyrant John was persuaded to sign Magna Charta.

But yet I acknowledge that much allowance is to be made for error, on the part of men who have received only delusion in place of instruction, injury in place of justice, and whose patience hath been tried beyond its bearing.

2. *ERROR*, however, exists, when it is imagined, that to petition were the act of beggars asking alms, or of sycophants suing for favours; instead of a petition being what it really is, a legal *formule*, whereby an injured People reclaim Rights of which intruders have got unjust possession, and whereby a pillaged and betrayed People demand Justice. A Petition for Parliamentary Reform is, therefore, a constitutional *weapon*, and the best that can be used for beating down lawless usurpation; as the constable’s staff is the constitutional and best weapon for keeping the Peace, or enforcing the Law.

For the removing of *ERROR*, *information* is necessary, and by its friendly communication, men may be pacified into *Petitioners*, who might otherwise become *Bellinghams*; and statesmen may be saved from Pistols, by a timely attention to Petitions. Hence, to promote Petitions is the likeliest mode whereby public commotions, convulsions, and enormities, the effects of oppression, insult, and desperation, may be prevented.

3. *DIFFIDENCE* is a national characteristic seldom surmounted without some *stimulant*; while *FEARS* are of two kinds; the private fear of persons having power to injure the party; and the public fear of some inconvenience which might result from Reform. In a country pretending to freedom, how inexpressi-

bly disgraceful the former to the moral character of those who cause it! What so shameful, so deserving of infamy, as a base use of private power to stab public liberty! A fear of inconvenience to arise from Reform is sheer ignorance.

Is there not here an inviting field for the benevolent nobleman and gentleman, who by merely countenancing honest public spirit, may protect it? Men will be slow to hazard the incurring of infamy, when conscious that the awful eye of patriot virtue, is full upon them.

4. SUSPICION, in these days of defection and apostacy, is become a tree that seems to overshadow the land. Its root is deep; its branches wide. Does any politician ask, how he shall preserve himself from suspicion? The answer is simple. *Be not ambiguous?*

5. AN ABSENCE OF THE SUNSHINE OF ENCOURAGEMENT, the greatest of all causes in preventing Petitions, is among persons of rank and property most easily removable, *by every one who desires to remove it.*

For the honour, then, of our country, be that cause forthwith removed! And who so fit for setting the noble example as those who have associated "FOR PROMOTING A REFORM IN THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE," and to that end have "PLEGGED THEMSELVES TO USE EVERY EXERTION!"*

That such as I have named were causes, why in *Scotland* as well as in *England*, Petitions had not *spontaneously* sprung up, is now ascertained; and in showing by what simple means, and very feeble means, wherever applied, a suffering but diffident People *have been successfully encouraged* to make their voice heard, it is demonstrated by what means—means of most powerful efficacy—the Nation at large may be induced to do the same thing; especially at a moment when it is not in nature to afford consolation or to inspire hope, by any earthly course other than through that Reform for which we stand solemnly "*pledged to use every exertion.*"

A former tour, in a different direction from my late one, had, indeed, still more clearly evinced the ripeness of the public mind for reclaiming lost rights, the absence of which is *slavery and ruin.*

On the late occasion, I had the aid of the Committee's Circular Letter, I had consultations with men pre-eminent for wisdom and public spirit, and conferences with assembled numbers; whereas on the former tour, occupying not one third of the time, in travelling post, forms of a constitutional petition had been merely left in the principal towns, and for the most part with persons never before seen, and my conversations with the intelligent were rare and short.

But by the mere emanation of light from the three propositions constituting our prayer, serving as three ever-burning lamps of political truth, the People, being *convinced*, were animated to act as becomes insulted man, who hath Rights to claim, and Justice to demand.

No longer intimidated by a combination of hostile influences of power, corruption, and terror, they pressed forward with their signatures, and within three

* Hampden Association.

months I had confided to me *four hundred and thirty-three* of their *Petitions*, signed by upwards of a hundred and thirty thousand persons. The number of those petitions afterwards swelled to more than *five hundred*.

With these evidences before our eyes, of the effects produced by a right *practical* conduct, in a private and a humble individual of extremely limited means, whose rapid course made on the map of a country a mere faint line of no dimensions—what would be the results, should a numerous association of persons, whose great property and influence extend over whole regions, deliberately, systematically, and perseveringly, in their several counties, use the obvious means for inspiring a public hope, for collecting a public opinion, and for raising a public voice!

And besides the personal exertions of such men in their districts, to what end do they *unite in a political society*, but that by the force of united counsels and efforts they may do all the public good which *union* is so happily calculated to produce?

Towards influencing the public mind, towards the formation of a right public opinion, towards calling forth a resistless public voice, there is nothing which such a society is not able to accomplish.

In *Scotland* and the *North of England*, the Circular Letter of the Committee our Hampden Association operated most beneficially; and this, not only by its own light, but by making known the existence of a Society of Noblemen and Gentlemen, having for its object the recovery of our Public Liberties. It was to my being a member of this Association, considered as Saviours of their Country, I must attribute the heart-felt satisfaction with which, by all, except those interested in state-corruptions, I was every where received; the great partiality with which I was listened to; and the patriot exertions, in place of the preceding gloom and dejection, which followed.

If, however, the Circular Letter as an incentive operated admirably, another composition had an effect more instantaneous, more extensive, and more effectual. Having thrice passed a few days at a time in a certain Scottish city—the strong hold of a court influence and an unconstitutional tyranny not conceivable by a mere English mind—and seeming at last to be on the eve of a final departure, without a prospect, contrary to all my other experience in *Scotland*, of gathering any fruit, I suddenly resolved to deliver, and did deliver in that city, a LECTURE on the English Constitution.

This LECTURE, containing only the words of sobriety and common sense, yet wrought a sort of miracle. The dead came to life. The lately intimidated Friends of Liberty now firmly looked Corruption, Despotism, and Persecution in the Face; and the people, by thousands, gave their zealous signatures for that reform, on which depends whether we are to be a *nation of Freemen*, or a *nation of Slaves*.—That, in the present anxious state of the public mind, this kind of appeal is thought by others, as well as by myself, likely to make impression, you will see by what a Scotch gentleman of family and fortune said in the letter I lately sent you.—“Our cause has made more converts within these three months, than it had done for the last twenty years. Your plan of a LECTURE was all that was wanted; and where *that* is adopted, our triumph will be certain.”

Having long considered both *Newcastle* and *York* as centres of circles in which

the *triennial* heresy prevailed, I purposed there again, by means of the *Lecture*, to preach the true faith; and this, notwithstanding the discouragement of a recent letter from the former place, to inform me that "the public mind was perfectly torpid to Parliamentary Reform;" and that in the latter, from causes already adverted to, I was aware that a suspended animation of the same nature was the condition of that city.

In *Newcastle* the LECTURE dissipated the Lethean torpor, and gave life to instant petitioning. A LECTURE, in fact, has comprehensive properties, superior to slowly operating literary appeals to, or private conversations with individuals; for it collects a population, it pervades an entire district with a potent sympathy, it galvanizes it to action.

Proceeding from *Newcastle* to *York*, a dangerous illness in my family hurried me thence, allowing me barely time to converse a little with one intelligent friend of public freedom, through whose virtuous exertions similar petitions, in that city and its vicinity, were put in a way of receiving the signatures of men conscientiously attached to the constitution of their country; nor had I been long at home ere it became necessary to send down a farther supply of Circular Letters and petitioning formulæ.

From all my experiences it has invariably resulted, that *triennial* election, having neither wholesomeness nor root, nor any thing better in its support than mere metaphysical subtleties, or far-fetched conjectures, at war with principle and experience; with fact, with justice and liberty; with the English Constitution and common sense; could never for one moment stand in competition with that "BIRTHRIGHT OF ENGLISHMEN, THE ANNUAL EXERCISE OF ELECTIVE POWER."* —The poisoned arrow, however, shall not touch us, provided we keep a good look-out.

In the striking effects of the two above-mentioned tours of a private gentleman, humble in fortune, not supported by his connections, nor aided by influence, have we not a proof of my former position, that prior to these experiences, Reformists had consumed their time in hunting after the *theory* of their system, now for the first time, in a mode and to an extent teeming with demonstrations of rectitude, practically carried into execution? Above thirty years ago, when a member of the Nottinghamshire Committee, Petitions in my district of that county were well signed, but for want of co-operation they came to nought.

It is worthy of observation, that for obtaining objects of high political importance, the minds of too many, from habits induced by a corrupted and thereby disordered system, have become indisposed towards *simplicity*, and addicted to the hunting after circuitous and complex modes of proceeding.

Such Reformists have thus been led into a most fallacious notion, that the learned, the wealthy, and the elevated—all of them peculiarly subject to prejudices against *vulgar popular freedom*—are alone on the subject of Parliamentary Reform worthy to be consulted; forgetting that the political principles of self-preservation, and constitutional duties, would be best taught and best preserved by the *annual exercise of Rights*. A little reflection it is to be hoped will convince them, that it will be our greatest wisdom to labour, by the ways of simplicity, for bringing back this state of things.

* Memorial of the Deputies in 1780, and the Hist. Disser. on Antiq. of Eng. Const. FIRST edition, 7-11.

We very well know that *Harrington*, who in the labyrinth of his learning lost sight of simplicity, that *Nedham*, *Mrs. Macaulay*, and many others, have also favoured the fancy of a *Rotation*. *Harrington's* proposed, "Assemblies are so *trien-nial*, that one-third part falling every year, and another being elected, the Parliament is thereby perpetuated."* What, after all, is this, but complexity in place of simplicity; and letting in by a crooked device, in direct violation of the constitution, the very mischief to be guarded against, namely, a *three years' continuance of power in the same hands*, which were completely to disinherit the nation of its birth-right for a mess of pottage, and even that to be held at the will of Usurpers, holding representative power beyond the period allowed by the constitution. Adverting then to the error of those who, in reforming the English Constitution, seek the approbation of *Aristotle*,† or who found their proposed measures, on the crude and ignorant aphorisms of men in high stations; as well as reflecting on their long-continued wanderings in the crooked and intricate paths of EXPEDIENCE, in a fruitless pursuit of that which the duke of *Bedford* truly tells us is ever "at hand, simple, and of easy attainment," it is to be hoped that the facts now submitted to the Committee, will shortly produce examples and exertions that shall not fail to bring the right practice into universal use and fashion.

The plain doctrine I wish to inculcate cannot be more strongly illustrated than in the language of certain distinguished men. I will begin with the Duke of *Norfolk*, when Lord *Surrey*. On the 28th of October, 1782, in a Nottinghamshire County Meeting, for Parliamentary Reform, his Grace "expressed his warmest approbation of the measure; but the business ought not to rest with their present act; if they did not accompany their *individual signatures* with their most active exertions, they would but partially serve the cause. They must address themselves to their countrymen, inform, persuade, exhort, and use every honest means to give weight to their petition."

"It would be powerfully opposed by some of the most respectable characters; who hitherto had been the fast friends of the People and the Constitution. Whether they were warped by an interest in those *boroughs* which might be affected by the Petition, or by a tenaciousness of certain *speculative notions* which they had ADOPTED, he would not decide. He believed the county of Nottingham had not the sin of one private borough to answer for. He wished it were equally free from all imputation of corruption and vitiating influence."

"The Reform was necessary in a striking view, as not only lords and ministers, and Asiatic plunderers might invade the appropriated Rights of the People; but even a King of *France* might, at the price of 5000*l.* a borough, send Representatives of himself to the Commons House. The practicability of such daring outrages issued from the horrid state of the Representation."—"He praised Lord *Galloway* for the disinterestedness of his conduct, in being superior to the temptation of his borough interest, when the interests of his country called for his support."—"He concluded, by recommending the Petition to their best affections; there was, he said, a spirit and vigour in the Constitution, which would awe even the Legislature on great occasions; and if the PEOPLE with a firm and manly tone, called for JUSTICE, they must OBTAIN IT."‡

* Works, 315. † Ibid, 306, in favour of Rotation. ‡ Wyv. Polit. Pa. ii. 207.

The other speakers to whom I alluded, attended a public meeting on the 17th of June, 1814, when in a discussion on the shameful article of the Treaty which had conceded to *France* a five-years' continuance of the **NEGRO SLAVE TRADE**, they respectively delivered their sentiments. I here speak of *Earl Grey*, *Sir Samuel Romilly*, *Mr. Wilberforce*, and the late *Mr. Whitbread*.

Their doctrines, drawn from Truth and Nature, amounted to this, that in any attempt to obtain from Parliament either right, or justice, or an attention to humanity, *in opposition to the will of the court and its borough faction*, without **UNANIMITY** on the part of the People, **NOTHING** is to be effected; with it, **EVERY THING**.

Assemble, they therefore say, your "*counties*," plead in the "*public assemblies*," reason with your "*friends*," exhort your "*families*," and animate even "*your children*;" let "*the diffusion of your sentiments be universal*;" impress them "*on every individual*;" nor let "*the expression of your feelings be temporary*," but be *persevering*, until they "*become NATIONAL beyond all that is recorded in history*."

"Disseminate *knowledge* on the subject;"—"awake the *feelings* of the Nation;"—"excite *universal disgust* against the *horrid traffic*;"—"stamp it with a character of *infamy*;"—show the occupation of the *slave-trader* to be no less "*disgraceful*" than that of the *house-breaker*, or *pickpocket*."—"It becomes the **NATION** to interfere;" "let Parliament hear the language of a *united and universal People*;" let them "*with ONE VOICE insist upon the COMPLETE ABOLITION*." Every thing *must* yield to "*the united energies* of the inhabitants of this country;"—"their **NUMEROUS PETITIONS** Parliament *could not resist*;"—"the object so supported was certain to be effected." "Obtain the signatures of *every man*" in the country;"—they have but "*to SPEAK and to ACT*," and they would "then restore us to the great and proud situation in which we had once stood."

Sounder sense I never heard. To every word I subscribe. It is the expression of my mind, the feeling of my soul. It contains the essence of necessary advice, that is, '**PETITION, PETITION, PETITION**, unceasingly **PETITION**, 'till crowned with victory!'—Within a space of time almost incredibly short, the doctrine had its effect on *seven hundred and fifty thousand, four hundred and forty nine* of their countrymen, who expressed their own correspondent feelings by **PETITION**.

Now, *Sir Francis*, I should very much like to ask certain of our friends, who, considering they are of the radical school, seem to be somewhat inconsistently fastidious in respect of Petitions, unless persons of their own rank, in whole troops and companies, take post in front,—I should like, I say, to ask these friends of ours, **WHO** were the parties so called on, so encouraged, so exhorted, by *Earl Grey*, *Sir Samuel Romilly*, *Mr. Wilberforce*, and *Mr. Whitbread*, to stand forth by petition, in the common cause of humanity, that an immediate stop might be put to the nefarious traffic in human beings, by a "*complete abolition*" of the **FOREIGN SLAVE TRADE**?—Was theirs an exclusive call on gentlemen of grand-jury qualification, or on freeholders?—Did they even call on those to head and lead the petitioners?—**NO**.

In the common cause of all men, theirs was a common call on all men. For their purpose, it was necessary to collect a force, but not to marshal it. They

had only to shew the *Power of the Country*, from the peer to the peasant, and to call forth its awful voice. Knowing that the *rank and file*, that the *common men*, are the strength of armies, they were too wise for any exclusions in abatement of this strength. They knew that *Waterloo* battles, whether military or political, are not won by mere officers in lace or embroidery; nor by a handful of decorated heroes, covered with stars or grand crosses, with ribbons or nodding plumes; and they acted accordingly.

You have heard, *Sir Francis*, the call they made, and on whom it was made. Can we follow a better example? It was their wish to save from slavery the black men of *Benin*, of *Congo*, of *Guinea* and *Angola*. It is ours, to redeem from slavery the white men of *England*, of *Scotland*, of *Wales* and *Ireland*. If we loudly protest against the buying and selling of STRANGERS, and by *another nation*, under *another government*, shall we not still more loudly protest against the buying and selling of OURSELVES AND COUNTRYMEN? When SEATS IN PARLIAMENT are bought and sold by the ministers of *our own nation*, the servants of *our own government*, all the People, all Law, all Liberty, all Property, are bought and sold. If that man who negociated the Treaty for allowing to *France* a five years' continuance in the sale of Africans, merit, for that act, our just abhorrence, how much more is he an object of our execration, for that treasonable sale of his country, for which, in your place in parliament, you honestly told him to his face that he deserved to lose his head!

Earl *Grey* and his compatriots did not, in this work of petitioning, wait for the *spontaneous* movements of men immersed in the labours of high life and high fashion, who peradventure had employments more congenial with their tastes. Neither did they dream of excluding, in the common cause of man, the signature of the humblest being wearing the form of man. Can we then, I again ask, follow a better example?

We are, however, to keep in mind one material distinction respecting the two different Slave Trades of *Africa* and *England*. In the enslavement of *African Negroes* by *Frenchmen*, under a corrupt *French Court*, not a single Member of either House of Parliament HAD the remotest interest; whereas it is the very head and front of our complaint, that in the enslavement of the *People of this United Kingdom*, under our own corrupt c—— and its faction, a large proportion of both Houses HAVE a direct personal interest, amounting to no less than to an absolute despotic power over our persons and estates. If then, from the mere circumstance of the former being an occasional *court project*, the utmost energy, the most broad-based unanimity was requisite for extorting a solitary vote, how much more, in the latter case, must they be necessary!

By merely writing *Boroughmonger* in place of *Slave dealer*, can we find, in the English language, words more applicable, more strictly appropriate to our own object, than the words I have quoted from the lips of distinguished men,—all of them Parliamentary Reformists on record,—or words of more force, fire, or energy? With them, then, and in their very words, let us unceasingly call on the People, on the peer and the peasant, on landlord and tenant, on manufacturer and artizan, on merchant and porter, on parent, son, friend, neighbour, all, all to “speak with one voice,” declaring that they and their posterity WILL BE

FREEMEN ; to "act with one accord," determined that they and their posterity SHALL NOT BE SLAVES! Let us persevere until the indignant nation, feeling an 'universal disgust against the horrid rotten-borough traffic,'—having 'stamped on it a character of iniquity,'—having 'shown the occupation of the boroughmonger to be equally disgraceful with that of the housebreaker or pickpocket,'—and having thrust in Petitions of Right until these pointed accusations of iniquity prop the ceiling of the Honourable House, from wall to wall, and the conscious culprits, through very dread of suffocation, become just.

Then will the reformed honourables imitate the once-reformed *John*. Then will these best of Boroughmongers eclipse the bright fame of that best of kings, by *granting to God and the People*, a statute worth a thousand Magna Chartas.*

On a former occasion, I told our associated brethren in what way a Quaker Committee of twelve humble men, by an expenditure, within little more than one year of *two thousand pounds*, laid the axe to the root of the FOREIGN SLAVE TRADE.

They shall now, respecting the HOME SLAVE TRADE hear the words of a plain Lancashire manufacturer,—words which, being in unison with the oft-experienced knowledge, wisdom, and generosity of the man, I believed. 'Were it in my power,' said he to me, 'to insure a Constitutional Reform of Parliament by paying down *five thousand pounds*, I would instantly do it, under a full conviction that, *for the interest of my family*, that sum of money could not, in any other manner, be so well laid out.'

Having shown the difference between wildly rambling for our *theory* in the labyrinth of EXPEDIENCE, or tamely taking it from the insidious "regulation" of ARISTOCRACY; having next exhibited the successful *practice* of our work; and having likewise instanced the powerful influence of a personal *Discourse*, in form of a Lecture, which promptly collects a Population, and calls forth a Public Voice, I have said enough.

If, therefore, the HAMPDEN ASSOCIATION shall now fully redeem the "Pledge" it hath deposited with its country, then that country may be saved. That "PLEDGE" once redeemed, then on that "accursed thing,"† the HOME SLAVE TRADE, shall soon be passed an irrevocable sentence of extermination; a sentence which not even a Chamber of Peers of our Borough Pandemonium shall have power to reverse or to avert: no! nor shall they be able, by frivolous admission, deleterious infusion, or insidious "regulation," to undermine and render it non-efficient!

It will now, *Sir Francis*, be seen *why*, on the 4th of last March, I tendered *Fifty Pounds* on opening our Extra Subscription, and the *sort of Fund* I had in contemplation. To the reasoning at that time employed against my tender, I silently submitted, but I still held my opinion. It was said, that, to have the

* "John, by the Grace of God, King, &c. have in the first place *granted to God*, by this our present Charter, that the Church of England shall be free," &c. Rapin, I. 285.

† Joshua, c. vi.

subscription *general*, it should be *low*. A sound argument this, had the invitation been to *the friends of freedom in general*; but in an association so limited in number as ours, by a *low* subscription, nothing *high* is to be achieved.

As *acting* may convince when *arguing* will not, I hope, I have in that way now proved, that I had not formed an erroneous notion of *what* it became us to do, and *how* it was to be done. Had means been furnished, as I had then fondly hoped, Petitions by this time had been tenfold what they are, operating also with a tenfold impetus in generating their like.

The Quaker Committee and its manner of working ought ever to be present to our minds. Its constant question to itself was,—‘*What is necessary to be done?*’ And *IT DID IT*. It did not work by a *low* subscription, nor by a *general* subscription! for in the Committee there were men who had little, as well as men who had much. To do its work, that Committee compassed sea and land; nor ceased until it had laid the axe to the root of the “accursed thing,” against which its generous hand was raised.

It was not for *Fifty Pounds*, that, by an infirm old man with his servant, England was left far behind; that Scotland was traversed from sea to sea; that the traveller visited Greenock and the coast of Ayr; Renfrew and Paisley, Stirling and Alloa; Dumferline, Newburgh, and Perth; Cupar in Angus, Forfar, and Brechine; Crail, St. Andrews, and Aberdeen; that he went twice to Stonehaven, Inverbervie and Montrose; twice to Dundee, Cupar in Fife, and Kirkaldy; twice also to Lanark and Hamilton, thrice to Glasgow, and thrice to Edinburgh; returning into England by the road of Kelso.

Nor did he travel in vain, if he have proved *how* the work we have undertaken *may be accomplished*, provided the bull-dog race of Runnimead Barons have not wholly degenerated into yelping curs, or fawning spaniels; and the game breed of the *Russells*, the *Sidneys*, and the *Hampdens*, be not altogether bastardized into those crowing bullies, the strutting lords of our borough dung-hills.

Long had he laboured for Petitions by corresponding. His very postage in the cause, had for years many times exceeded an ordinary Hampden subscription. This correspondence, however, as experience demonstrates, had rightly instructed him as to the course to be taken.

As like causes produce like effects, it is now apparent that, by a timely application of right means, the all-powerful current of that mighty and majestic river, a **UNIVERSAL PEOPLE**, may be made to take its course through a certain noted House of this our day, which House reminds us of a noted stable of antiquity. So turned, the said river’s resistless flood, and torrent force, could not fail to scour away all abominations, and restore the pristine purity of that House.

Arduous labours must have adequate strength. That of a **HERCULES** could alone cleanse the filthy ox-stalls of *Augeas*. That of a **UNIVERSAL PEOPLE** can alone cleanse those far filthier dens of unclean beasts, the swine-stalls of our *Borough Faction*.

The fruits of first efforts promise a glorious reward for full exertion. The mere Shadow of our Club, reflected from the mirror of the missive, bearing your signature,

*Disastrous omens sheds**On shaken boroughs; and with fear of change**Perplexes Patrons.*

Then let the substance pound with its crushing weight and willing strokes all that stands in the way of that change!

By urgency for present exertion, I intend not to intimate, much less to admit, that if a motion for radical Reform shall not in the ensuing session succeed, the cause is then to be despaired of. Despaired of? NO; NEVER!—But yet, 'tis time the work were done; and when we next “come to close quarters,” success at a single blow ought to be attempted. To that end, it ought to be a *national* blow; for under a blow *nationally* given, instant death must be the Faction's fate.

The wrongs, the evils, the miseries, and, let me add, the *dangers* of one year's loss of time, are unspeakable.

Let our blow have but the force which may yet in a few ensuing months be given it, then, although oligarchic usurpation should chance to survive, yet, much more dead than alive, it could survive only to linger in agony a short season, in terror of that second blow which, from an assurance of victory, must soon follow.

That second blow, with cannon-ball contempt of all fencing, by lying words or profligate pleas, must dash to pieces, must beat down to dust and ashes, the whole rotten-borough fabric, to make way for the restored constitutional edifice.

Yours truly

JOHN CARTWRIGHT.

Sir FRANCIS BURDETT, Bart.

Chairman of the Hampden Committee.







