



129

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L E T T E R

TO A

M E M B E R of the C L U B,

I N

ALBEMARLE-STREET.

[Price One Shilling.]

A
L E T T E R

T O A

M E M B E R of the C L U B,

I N

A L B E M A R L E - S T R E E T.

I, bone quò VIRTUS tua te vocat; I, pede FAUSTO.

HOR.



L O N D O N :

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A
L E T T E R
T O A
M E M B E R of the C L U B,
I N
A L B E M A R L E - S T R E E T.

My dear Sir,



Thank you for communicating to me the agreeable news of your admission into a most honourable Society.

The characters of men, of young men in particular, being in great measure collected from the company they keep, you have grounded a presumption in your favor, from your steady

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adherence to your old friends. I have no doubt, that you will persevere in thinking and acting with them, whilst they appear to you as upright, as you have hitherto had reason to think them.

But you will meet with various attempts to shake your Constancy. Your Friends will be misrepresented, and you may be terrified or dissuaded, according to the state of your own mind, or the Temper of the Seducers.

As you know my Sentiments too well, to suspect me of any design to discourage you, I will venture to state the dangers you may incur, from your entrance into this Association; but I should not do full justice either to you or myself, if I did not, at the same time, place before your eyes the dangers you will escape.

The name of a CLUB, is in itself not very formidable. You know, there are many in this town, of which you might have been a Member, without the least Offence to the Persons, who will be disgusted at seeing you a Member of this. You might have been admitted into some, from which your Reputation could hardly have escaped unblemished, were they not honoured with the names of persons, of pure Characters, in high Offices.

You might have found in those Societies much of that sort of Mirth, which is apt to delight and inflame the minds of young men; and you might have seen it carried on, under the
Sanction

Sanction of men, distinguished in public by their Decency, who have passed the Prime of their years, and only attend such Meetings, with the harmless view of feasting their Imaginations with the Recollection of a vicious youth.

Such Societies subsist even in these Virtuous times, and no man's fortune in life appears to have been obstructed, nor his Eminence of Station disgraced, by his Continuance among them. He may be as radically and avowedly vicious, as nature, perhaps, has formed him, without any real danger to his Ambition, provided he has the official Talent of appearing, upon occasion, most eagerly and scrupulously virtuous.

But a Club, erected with a view to unite men in the Preservation of the Constitution, cannot fail to offend, and the greater necessity you may plead for such Union, the more reason you have to expect, that you and your Company will be misrepresented, and, if possible, disgraced and ruined.

The word CONSTITUTION comprehends that happy mixture, which distinguishes our Government from every other. Whilst this subsists in any degree, it will, from the admirable texture of it, have some appearance of Stability; the Underminers of it, therefore, will boldly deny apparent dangers, and fix the charge of FACTION upon the best intentioned men. You, among the rest, must expect to be represented as a FACTIOUS man, joined in a Confederacy, which is supported by false Alarms, and tends only to gratify the ambitious Views of the Leaders.

You

You have, doubtless, heard and read declamatory language of this sort. But you have also, perhaps, from the same quarter, heard things, which very much justify your Alarms.

Have not the Power and Prerogative of the CROWN been needlessly and officiously magnified, in Print as well as Conversation, beyond the Example of any Period since the Revolution ?

Has not the ARISTOCRATICAL part of our Constitution, which, 'till lately, was thought an essential part, been depreciated, not only as if it were usefess, but as if the natural Weight and Consequence of Great Families were a Nuisance, and were become the more so, from the known public Merits of those Families ?

AND has not the DEMOCRATICAL part of our Constitution been treated so very contemptuously, that, if the language of some Orators had any weight, the best founded Popularity would in time be thought a real Disgrace to an Englishman ?

You must have been frequently a Witness to this, for I know of no one, who has not ; and the very Charge of a REPUBLICAN Spirit, against your Friends and you, which is every day thrown out, without reserve, is a sufficient Mark, what sort of Spirit actuates your Accusers ?

Can they with any Face, unless they entertain Ideas of Monarchy, which they dare not yet avow, accuse of Republicanism

nism the Men, who have supported Monarchy for such a number of years? If they agree with you in a Zeal for the illustrious House on the Throne, under the Limitations of Magna Charta, the Revolution, and the Act of Settlement, they are not less Republican, than you, and the Term is impertinent, as a Term of Reproach. Treat it as what it is, or if ever it should stagger you, recollect yourself, and put them to shame, by fairly comparing your own Intentions with theirs, the Integrity and Services of your Friends, with the Character and Pretences of their Accusers.

I know your Delicacy so well, that I am apprehensive, another of their Charges may make a deeper Impression upon you. They pretend, upon all Occasions, that the whole Opposition is a Struggle for Power and Places, and that, nothing else being meant, the present Clamours will subside, upon the first Change of Hands.

You are obliged to them, for confessing so strongly the Expediency of a Change of Hands. But let me beg you to consider a little the Weight of this Charge. Your ample Fortune and disinterested Spirit sufficiently refute it, with respect to you; and I may truly deny it, with respect to most of your Friends. There are few of them, who might not have surfeited either Ambition or Avarice, had those been their ruling Passions. Their Enemies know, that their bare passive Compliance with things, which they could not approve, would have *secured*, and, in many Cases, have *improved* the Situation they were in.

How then can it be truly said, that the sole Objects of the Struggle, on their Part, are Power and Places, merely as things beneficial to them? I appeal to a Comparison of their Names, with the Names, whom they oppose, whether it be a matter indifferent to the King and the Public, in whose hands the Power and Places are? To suppose it a matter indifferent, is treating important Stations, as if they were merely *lucrative*; and the men, who consider them in no other light, do indeed act up to their opinion, when they obviate Comparisons invidious to them, by propagating this Doctrine of Indifference.

I hope you will not be discouraged by such an objection, from such a quarter. Your Independency is sufficiently known, and you have a happy disposition, which would make you as independent, with a much inferior fortune. Being thus constitutionally qualified for the public Service, I wish you honourably called to it, in conjunction with your Friends. Your Conduct in Office will shew, as theirs has shewn, that the Public is safe in your hands and theirs, for Power and Places are not temptations to you and them, to contribute towards a Change of the Constitution.

We hear frequent Lamentations concerning the divided State of the Nation. Some ingenious men are quite pathetic on the Subject. You may chance to be melted by Complaints, of the Cruelty of involving an amiable young Prince in trouble and distraction, during the Infancy of his Reign. You may hear of the Anarchy, to which popular Discontents may lead, and to enforce these Terrors, you may be personally alarmed with
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the Dangers of Anarchy to every man, who has either Property or domestic Happiness to lose.

I have heard many florid things of this kind said, but must acknowledge myself to have heard them with a callous Indifference, knowing how grossly they are misapplied, and how common it is to deprecate Opposition, by the same sort of Pleas, in a different state of things. Supposing his Majesty were far advanced in years, as we hope and wish he may live to be, would not Expostulations of the same kind avail his then ministry?

“ Consider, they would say, the venerable Age of our Sovereign. Will you plant thorns upon his Pillow, and deny him the Repose, which the meanest of his Subjects may securely enjoy at the Eve of Life?”

Or, supposing his Majesty were arrived at a middle Age, blest with Health and Vigour, then an Opposition might be told; “ What! would you weaken the hands of your Sovereign, in the fullness of his Manhood, in the proper Season for Counsel and Action, and bring down upon him the Cares and Sorrows of Age, which are always but too attendant upon a Crown, without the aid of a declared Opposition to public Measures?”

You see, that this Argument will suit every part of his Majesty's Life, and every Opposition against his Ministers. It is therefore an exceptionable Argument, and it is particularly exceptionable in this Country, where the Constitution distinguishes
between

between the King and his Ministers, and supposes no Opposition to public Measures to be an Opposition to the Crown. It would be quite impertinent in me, to give you Assurances of the Affection and Zeal of your Friends for his present Majesty. If you knew it less perfectly than you do, yet you might be sufficiently assured of it, from the Nature and Manner of their Opposition to the present Ministers.

Indeed, I blush at the Proflutations, which I hear repeatedly made of the King's name. It is not only urged, as a logical and political Argument for the merits of his Servants, but it is enforced upon us as a moral Argument for passive Obedience to Them. No Libeller can insult or hurt his Majesty more sensibly, than such Advocates; and, if it be true, that his great Name has been made use of in a premature Canvass for an Election, which we hope is distant, and which, from the nature of it, as well as from the Character of the Electors, should be particularly independent and free, I shall want Words, to describe, with Safety, the Nature and Extent of so high a Crime and Misdemeanor.

The Argument drawn from the dangers of Anarchy, to shew the mischievous tendency of your Association, is likewise one of those Arguments, which may be applied, with equal Propriety, to different times. In the Reign of Charles the Second, we may suppose the public Discontents to have been louder, than they now are. He had favourite points to carry, and he had Instruments, who would stick at nothing to carry them for him. Might not his Advocates, and probably they did, attempt to disgrace

grace the Opposition of that time, by every possible Misrepresentation ; and, among the rest, by foreboding Anarchy to the Nation, as a natural consequence of a strong Opposition to Power ?

An Argument, which proves too much, is ill adapted to the point, which it is intended to prove ; and I have too good an opinion of your Understanding, to imagine you capable of being deterred from the Cause of your Country, by the meer Bugbear of Anarchy, which seems, if I have any Skill in Prognostication, to be at a much greater distance from us, than its opposite Extreme, which I hope is at a very great distance from us. I know all the dangers and demerits of Licentiousness, and am not afraid of any Consequence, which may be drawn from confessing them ; for I know, that your Friends and you are not licentious.

But still your Meeting is called a *Conspiracy*, and, I doubt not, that there are learned Gentlemen, who may pronounce it illegal. They would be puzzled indeed, to fix any Illegality upon the natural Acts of Eating and Drinking ; but may there not be found some Book of Reports, from which a Distinction may be drawn, between those Acts themselves and the Intention, with which they are performed ? *QUO ANIMO* is it, that you dine at Wildman's ?— Take heed ; there are Sages, who may discover a Plot in the very nature and quality of your Food.

But when I consider your Numbers, as well as your Characters, I cannot think you seriously alarmed at this Charge. Conspiracies are formed and conducted in Closets and Cabinets.

D

Your

Your Meeting is in the Eye of the World. The End and Design of it is well understood, and you may securely defy the Vigilance of Spies, as well as the forward Activity of Prosecutors.

Yet upon these several Charges, futile as they are, it is possible, you may hear some indirect Menaces grounded. Your Fortune cannot be threatened. You never had a Place to lose, else I might venture, without Disrespect to you, to affirm, that you would have lost it long since. But your Character may be attacked various ways.

You may be told, "that it is always imprudent to provoke powerful Enemies; that the Credit of your Understanding has suffered enough already, by your Refusal of the Offers, which have been made you, it being quite ridiculous, not to embrace, upon any terms, an advantageous Offer." But the world being at present divided in opinion on that subject, you may, perhaps, survive the Charge of Folly and Stupidity.

There is another way of affecting you more sensibly, by searching for some Flaw in your Morals. How are you sure, that a keen and active Enemy, whose Interest may suffer by your Conduct, or be promoted by your Ruin, may not detect something, which you might wish to conceal, and that open Profligates may not triumph in the Discovery, that there was, perhaps, an hour of your Life, in which you were not perfectly virtuous? This is only a possible Danger, for I do not gather it from any thing, that has hitherto happened; but I may fairly pre-

presume it from your known Opposition to some Men, whose Talents qualify them most for that species of War, for which an honest and generous Enemy is unprepared.

However, I would not have you be alarmed even at this Danger. Your Reputation will subsist upon your general Character, and if you have had your Foibles, you have relinquished them. I wish every man could truly boast as much, and demonstrate it by something more solid than an occasional assumed Sanctity of Countenance.

Thus the Dangers before you are of a very trifling nature, and you will find them amply compensated by the comfortable Consideration of the many dangers of a different kind, which you have escaped, by the Consistency and Uniformity of your Conduct.

You will not have the trouble of embarrassing yourself and the Company you keep, with disagreeable Apologies, which always leave an Impression of something wrong. You would have made those Apologies with the Eagerness of an uneasy, agitated mind, and might have been exposed to the frequent Mortification of seeing your most valuable Friends receive them with a silent Coldness.

You have not changed your Principles, nor deserted your Family, nor deceived your Benefactors and Friends. Look about among the Men, whom you oppose, and you will find very few, who can lay their hands upon their hearts, and say as much for them-

themselves. You are engaged with the same Friends, in the same Cause, and rest your Expectation of Success upon the most honourable ground, the Goodness of your Cause.

What a Labyrinth of Self-contradictions, Palliations, Subterfuges, Evasions and Fallacies do you escape ! The times have unhappily produced all these from Persons, who would have passed through life with Credit, had it not been their misfortune to survive a day of trial.

It is, in the next place, no small Consolation to you, that you keep better Company, than you would have kept, under a different Conduct. I mean not with respect, either to their Rank, or their private Characters, for they appear to me only as public men ; and it is your happiness to converse with better public men ; with men, whose Conduct you are not obliged to defend, because it needs no Apology ; with men, who love you, not for the hard Service, of acting in defiance of yourself, upon the hard terms of persisting in the Approbation and Support of more and more hard Services of the same kind, but for the gallant Sacrifice of an immediate Interest of your own to your Ideas of general good, and to your Attachment to the Friends, whose Zeal for general good is known and attested by Millions.

But Conversation with the Gentlemen of that side would have been only a transient difficulty. The Dullness of some might have compensated for the Profligacy of others. There is something much more shocking to an ingenuous Pride like your's, in a Connection with Men, who would have left you not a Taste of the most valuable sort of Liberty.

You

You know, with how much Violence they have proceeded against Persons, who have dared to differ from them in Opinion or Action. Indeed it was astonishing to see, how patiently this was borne by other men, who stood in like manner exposed to their Power. It had more effect, than public Executions commonly have, for it deterred the rest from the like Exercise of Liberty.

Men are no longer proud of being MEN, which they might be upon very reasonable terms; but they are proud of their Luxuries and Ostentations, and in order to gratify this, they stifle the Emotions of a better Pride. They are content to be KICKED in one place, provided they may have the supreme Delight of STRUTTING in another. The figure is rather coarse, than unnatural, for some things have happened, very similar to it, within all our Memories.

I can easily conceive, that your Continuance under such Circumstances would have been *short*, but I should have been sorry to have seen your mind contaminated by that spurious Prudence, without which you must have fallen into *immediate* Disgrace. Had you been weak enough, to give way at once to a self-evident Truth, you might have been an honest, but you would not have been an useful Man.

The plain Proposition, that two and two make four, notwithstanding there is something like a Conviction upon most minds of the Truth of it, must not have been so deeply impressed upon your's, as to resist occasional Considerations of Prudence.

E

Very

Very few would in direct terms oppose it, but, if it came from the Club in Albemarle Street, Reasons might be alledged, why it should not be abruptly assented to, and some specious Arguments might be brought by those Knaves in disguise, called Candid men, to prove it better for the good of the whole, that such a Proposition should be left untouched.

If you had been prevailed upon, to become thus prudentially indifferent to the clearest Truths, the Loss of your Character could not have been concealed, without diverting the Attention of the world to your former Friends, by some Aspersions of their Characters, in the way of Invektive or Ridicule. Had you been above such an Expedient for your own sake, yet it might have been expected from you, for the benefit of a Cause, which needs such Methods of Support.

Is there a Man, who has eminently distinguished himself by Services, which can never be forgotten, and has he been as intractable, as very great and honest Men commonly are, you might have had the hard task imposed upon you, of undervaluing his Services, against your own Opinion, and against the Sense of almost all the habitable part of the Globe.

You must have magnified the Expence, at which his Services were conducted; you must have regretted the Unanimity, which plunged us into so enormous an Expence; you must have drawn a Veil over the Glories of your Country, and have inscribed on that Veil the State of the Account, by which it might appear, with all the precision of Arithmetic, that every Subject of Great Britain is perhaps five Pounds the poorer for the Honour of his Country,
and

and the splendid Pre-eminence of the British name over the Face of the Earth.

Is there another Man, who carries his Notions of public Liberty as far, as the Constitution of this Kingdom will permit them to be carried, and has the Courage to assert, in his judicial Capacity, that a Freeman is not a Slave ; and have the People in general rashly applauded so bold a Declaration : it would have been your hard Lot, to suppress your inward Approbation of the Man, and to concur in any little Endeavours to censure his Conduct. You must have imputed it all to foreign Motives, such as a Factious Spirit, or a vain desire of Popularity, and you must perhaps have gone so far, as to have pointed him out, as a Black Man, whom it is the concern of every Briton as well as Roman to shun.

This painful Drudgery, which would have been imposed upon you, of thus labouring to fally the brightest Characters, would have been aggravated by the cruel necessity, of unsaying all that you have formerly said ; of hearing your former Friends either pleasant or grave upon the subject of your Inconsistency ; and of gradually sneaking from the acquaintance of Persons, whose Integrity of Conduct must have excluded them from your Friendship.

Could the Tyrants of Sicily have inflicted greater Torments upon a good Mind, than these ? It is evasive to say, that they would not have been inflicted upon you. They would not have been inflicted upon you by any written Law, or perhaps by any
verbal

verbal Directions ; but you would have found by the degrees of Confidence, with which you would have been treated, the difference between keeping your private Friendships sacred, and freely sacrificing them to the Will and Pleasure of the Men, to whom you had devoted your public Conduct.

I almost tremble at the mere Imagination of seeing you enlisted under such Banners, and congratulate you upon the Spirit, with which you have disdained to act against your Opinion, against your Friends, and against your Country. I am far from insinuating, that every Individual of the Party you oppose proceeds to the most odious Extremities. They are not all eloquent, nor all under an equal necessity to rush into the hottest Services. Nor would I be thought to censure the Conduct of any Persons in Assemblies, to which I do not belong. My Observations extend no farther, than to the men, whom I have occasionally seen and heard in mixt Companies, where I have, at a single view, discerned the side, to which every man was engaged, from the real Honesty, or the prudential Subtlety, or the affected Candour, or the avowed Profligacy of his Conversation.

But after all the Encouragements I have given you, one difficulty still remains, in which your Adversaries seem to triumph. They tell you, that your Success is very improbable, and that you will be divided amongst yourselves, whilst their hands are strong and united. It seems very strange to affirm, that men, who have but one disinterested point in view, Public Good, approach more naturally to Discord, than Men, who have much Spoil in their hands, and are said to be rather rapacious.

But

But their hopes of your Division are at length defeated; you have convicted them of an Error in Judgment, by your present Association, and if you wait with very little patience, they will satisfy you, where the genuine Seeds of Discord lie.

How long you may be obliged to keep up your Opposition and Vigilance, is not easy either for you or them to foresee; but I may flatter you with a certainty of Success, when I look back at what has happened to an Association, neither so strong in Numbers, nor so respectable in Characters, nor so laudable in its Object. You have seen a Body of Gentlemen, professing a Principle quite out of date, treated by the rest of the world as mere Humourists, deserted by almost every Member of their Society, who had Talents to recommend him elsewhere, yet subsisting in a Body for a long Course of years, by the mere Dint of pertinaciously adhering to their first Principle; and at last accomplishing almost all they wished, and, which is wonderful, accommodating their obsolete Principle itself to a different Object, and to modern times.

You cannot do all, that they have done, but you may be taught by them, who have been such experienced Opposers, to carry your Point, by UNION and PERSEVERANCE. You may be also taught by them, to expose yourselves to the Power of your Enemies, as seldom as possible. There was something in the nature of their Principle, which rendered them suspicious; but they have had the Caution to evade Prosecutions, and the luck to outlive all suspicion; and are now fallen into times, when their Opinions,

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nions,

ions, which were heretofore thought absurd at best, have assumed the Air of Law, and good sense, and even of Merit.

Is it possible, that the Principles, upon which you act, which you dare avow, which no Man dares very openly to contradict, should be for ever under a Cloud? It would baffle all History and Experience, and all Speculation about the natural tendency of Truth and Right to prevail. Appearances will sometimes contradict all these, but you know, that even They are not quite adverse to you, for you may observe, upon all Occasions, One Appearance, which will more than counterbalance the Exultation of your Enemies. They glory in standing upon their Precipice somewhat longer, than Nature intended they should. It is your Comfort, that you stand upon firm Ground, supported by the Constitution of your Country, and by the disinterested Approbation and warmest Wishes, of a greater MAJORITY of your Fellow Subjects, than ever interested themselves in the Cause of any Party.

I am, &c.

F I N I S.

