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# MORE REASONS

FOR A

## REFORM in PARLIAMENT

Contained in Letters to the following Persons, *viz.*

To the PRESIDENT of the Society for the Relief and Discharge of Persons imprisoned for Small Debts :

To Mr. JUSTICE ASHHURST, on his Charge to the Grand Jury :

To the SECRETARY of the Association for preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers :

And to THOMAS BULL, in Answer to his Letter to his BROTHER JOHN.

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*“ In a free State, every Man, who is supposed a free Agent, ought to be in some measure his own governor; and therefore a branch at least of the Legislative Power should reside in the whole Body of the People.”*

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L O N D O N :

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THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF CHARLES THE FIRST

BY JOHN BURNET

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

1704

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MORE REASONS

FOR A

Reform in Parliament, &c.

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*To the President or Chairman of the Society  
for the Relief and Discharge of Persons im-  
prisoned for Small Debts.*

S I R,

I BEG leave to trouble you with the sentiments of an individual on the nature and ends of the Society of which you have the honour to be President; and although this letter bears an anonymous signature, I trust that it will not, on that account, have less attention paid to it by your truly humane and patriotic body.

When schemes or plans are suggested (though by an humble and obscure member of the community), which have reason and truth for their basis, and irrefutable arguments for their support, though they should never be adopted, they at least merit notice; and thanks are certainly due to the person who proposes them for the uprightness of his intentions.

I have

I have not the smallest doubt, sir, but it is the ardent wish of your society to do all the good they possibly can ; on this ground, therefore, I shall submit to their candour and good sense the sentiments which will follow in this letter ; and I shall do it with more confidence, as I know from my acquaintance with the constitution, and the experience which I have had in the profession and practice of the common law of this country, for a considerable number of years past, that I am not altogether unqualified for the task ; and I trust I shall prove to them, that instead of applying medicines to the diseased and lingering patient, they may in time be able to remove the disease itself. The existing laws in this country, which authorise imprisonment for debt, are partial, vicious, and ineffectual : they are partial, in as much as the makers and framers of those laws are exempt from their operation ; they are vicious, because they allow individuals to gratify their private malice and revenge, in the detaining their debtors in prison even for life ; and they are ineffectual, by reason, that both creditor and debtor are generally in a worse situation when the debtor is discharged from, than when he first went into prison.

Imprisonment for debt is likewise rendered more oppressive by the very heavy and grievous costs attendant thereon, which very frequently amount to more than the debt, and are often indeed the sole cause of a man's being detained in prison.

The lawyers have in general been supposed to be the sole partakers of this abominable, this disgraceful plunder ; but the fact is, that the government at large, together with subordinate placemen and pensioners, enjoy at least an equal share

share of the emoluments with the practitioners of the law. The enormous stamp-duties which are imposed upon almost every law process ; the preposterous and useless fees of office, for which there is not the shadow of a pretence, and lastly, the more grievous and expensive fees of a prison, are an outrage upon liberty and justice.

But how can we reasonably expect, that laws should be either just or equal, or that evils like those which I have hinted at should be redressed, as long as the people are unjustly deprived of their representation in Parliament. If the representation is partial, so also will be the laws ; if the members are venal and corrupt, then will the laws be not only partial but oppressive : and all the relief which a society like yours can afford to persons under the oppression of such laws, will be trifling and insignificant. Your applications are levelled at the effect, whereas they should be directed to the cause, which, could you remove, the effect would cease : the evil is so deeply rooted, and the system become so depraved and corrupt, that nothing short of a total renovation can possibly produce all those desirable ends, which enlightened and liberal men in general, as well as those of your society so ardently wish for. The only method to obtain that renovation is for the people, of all denominations and description, to unite with firmness and ardour, in patriotic societies, for the purpose of procuring a fair and equal representation in Parliament.

Be assured, that whenever that great and desirable end shall be obtained, your society will have nothing further to do ; the good of the whole will then be provided for by the whole, incontestibly proving the truth of the very  
ancient

ancient maxim, " Omne majus continet in se minus."

With the greatest respect and esteem for the society and the most heartfelt wishes, for the freedom and happiness of Englishmen in particular, and of mankind in general, I beg leave to subscribe myself,

Your very obedient Servant,

*September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1792.*

PHILANTHROPOS.

## LETTER II.

To Sir William Henry Ashurst, one of the  
Justices of the Court of King's-Bench.

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S I R,

THOUGH an humble and obscure individual of the community, permit me to thank you for your recent well-timed address to the grand jury.—Like the wise and judicious proclamation, it will tend to promote that spirit of discussion, and free *enquiry*, which, happily for the people of this country, is gone forth, and which will give them some ideas of the  *blessings*  of our constitution (if we have one). Amongst these  *blessings* , I observe, you (characteristically enough) particularize law, meaning, I presume, law in general, including, no doubt, every species of law which is handed down to us, either by the obscure, uncertain, arbitrary, and equivocal term of  *custom* , or that other, which, though written, is, thank God, no less obscure and uncertain ; and, to the glory of this country, forms a mass of no less than 15 folio volumes—to say nothing of the enormous collections of cases adjudged, and not adjudged, abridgements, digests, reports, vade mecum, dictionaries, grammars, treatises, &c. You, sir, having been brought up to the honourable trade of the law, must, no doubt, feel great uneasiness at the thoughts of its being simplified,  
and

and made intelligible to the meanest capacity (a consequence which would necessarily follow from a reform here) ; but what is most to be regretted by all lawyers, and other true lovers and admirers of our happy constitution is, that in such a case, justice would be more impartially administered, at a much less expence than it now is, and litigation, oppression, chicane, and fraud, the very prominent and pleasing features of the present system, would be annihilated.

As your address seemed to hint at the licentiousness of the press ; and as you, no doubt, mean to pursue the subject further, it may not be altogether uninteresting for you to know, that since the issuing of the proclamation, no less than 130,000 copies of that most infamous and daring libel upon monarchy and aristocracy, called the “ Rights of Man,” written by Thomas Paine, have been bought by the infatuated people of this happy and, who, with grief I speak it, are determined, at length, to read and judge for themselves ! This must undoubtedly be prevented ; what I, therefore, shall most earnestly request of you now, is, that you will, with all the zeal and ability for which you are so remarkable, write a refutation of the work above alluded to—the arguments will soon be controverted by so able a judge as yourself, and you will derive more lasting fame from so extraordinary a performance, than any you can possibly gain from passing sentence on the printers and publishers of the work,

I have the honour to be

Your's &c. &c.

ONE OF THE MULTITUDE.

LETTER

## L E T T E R III.

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*To the Secretary of the Association for preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers.*

S I R,

ALTHOUGH a perfect stranger to yourself, and to the men who compose the association, to which you have publicly announced your name as secretary, I shall proceed to offer you a few observations on the institution. As to who or what the persons are who compose the society, I, for myself, care little about, because I think that every man in the state, although he may have no property, has nevertheless inalienable, unalienable, indefeasible rights, such, for instance, as the right of representation—a right which all men have, but which few enjoy—a right that no man, however base and corrupt he may be, can alienate; for such an alienation would be, according to the eternal and immutable law of justice, *nudum pactum*, and consequently void *in se*. It seems therefore to me, that your society have rather mistaken their ground.—They stile themselves to the public,

“ An

“ An association for *preserving* liberty and property against republicans and levellers.” They at their outset have gone too far ; so far indeed, that I much question whether they have not over-reached themselves. Their eagerness in the good cause in which they have embarked, has tempted them to make assertions which they will find it difficult to prove. I take it to be logically true, that before any man can possibly *preserve* a thing, he must be in the *actual possession* of it—Where then is the liberty which your Association, either collectively or individually, possess? Do they possess it by the payment of exorbitant taxes—the necessity, propriety, or justice of which they have never consented to? If such is the liberty they possess, and such the liberty they wish to *preserve*, how idle and how unnecessary is the object of their Association! for what set of men in the country would dream of depriving them of so valuable a *possession*? As to the secondary object of the Association, viz. the preservation of their *property*, there certainly seems to be something more like a pretence for it, for as most of the property of the Association is to be found in the Red Book in the list of Placemen and Pensioners, it is very necessary, that *such kind of property* should be preserved even *vi et armis*, should the temper of the times require it, and which (by the bye) is not altogether improbable. I cannot but applaud the Association for giving so early a proof of their *patriotism* in the choice of their chairman, a man, who, on account of his possessing immense property, being totally free from aristocratical influence, and not holding any place under the present Government

(though

(though a very virtuous one) is the more to be depended on by the public at large, as well as by those who have thought fit to exalt him into the chair.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

NO PENSIONER.

LETTER

# L E T T E R   I V .

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*The Answer of John Bull to his Brother  
Thomas.*

DEAR BROTHER,

I HAVE received your Letter, entitled, “ One Penny-worth of Truth,” which I think very dear, when I consider the contents. It grieves me much to observe, that your sentiments are totally altered; you formerly used to be a true friend to liberty, but it seems now, Thomas, that you are the advocate, and I fear, the *pensioned advocate* for Despotism: You appear to be much offended at the French, for telling us, “ *All mankind are equal;*” and you say it is a lie—but I say, Thomas, it is true, for all men are equal in their *rights*, and so they are in the eye of the law; but the French have never said, as you have artfully said for them, that all men are equal, or ought to be equal in their properties or possessions, because they know very well that all men are not, and never can be, equal in talents and abilities.

Our father used to tell us, Thomas, that all power was derived from the people, and that no government was lawful that was not founded on their consent; but I am sorry to find that you have deserted these principles, and have adopted the old exploded doctrine, that Kings are the Lord’s Anointed, and hold their crowns independent of the will of the people. If our ancestors  
had

had held this doctrine, there would have been no Revolution in 1688 ; nor would the present family have been upon the throne. Furthermore, Thomas, if you had held this doctrine in the year 1745, your head would probably have been upon Temple-Bar.

Your accounts of French affairs are evidently taken from newspapers, which are notoriously in the pay of their enemies ; but I, Thomas, who have just arrived from Paris, know a little more about the matter ; and it would not be amiss, let me tell you, if you and I, and all the family of the Bulls, were to behave civil to the French, for I am sure they are very civil and hospitable to all of our family in France. According to your ideas the *people* are a mob ; if such is your idea of the *sovereign people*, may I be one of the mob as long as I live ; and I do assert, “ there can be no lawful Government but what the people make.” What you say about Tom Paine is a lie ; he never declared, that when he had made Revolutions against the Kings upon earth, he would try his hand at a *Revolution in Heaven*. That he has made revolutions in men’s minds is very certain ; but it would have done you more credit, if you had refuted the author, and not abused the man. You constantly couple kings with God, and attempt to prove their divine origin from Scripture ; but why did not you give us “ the words of the Lord unto the people, that asked of him a king,” *Sam. i. cap. 8.*—I’ll tell you why, Thomas, because it did not suit your purpose. As to your anointing and your oil, that’s too stale a joke for the present day. I do not wonder at your abusing the Presbyterians, because it is well known you are a high churchman, and (as your letter to me sufficiently proves) a rank tory ; but when you say “ our National  
Debt

Debt, for which we are now paying such heavy taxes, was doubled by the troubles in America, all brought on us from the beginning by the dissenters, there and *here*, you assert a most wicked and malicious falsehood, which the history of the time sufficiently proves; you know very well, or at least you ought to know, that the dissenters uniformly reprobated that war as impolitic and unjust; they maintained, not that kings exist by divine right, but that no people ought to be taxed, but by themselves, that is to say, by their representatives freely and fairly chosen; where then were the representatives of America? Were they to be found in the House of Commons? No; for they represent not one hundredth part of the people of England.\* Were they to be found in

\* At a time when *interested individuals* are confederating with the *sale* view to perpetuate abuses, and to drown the voice of the people in their cry for a Parliamentary Reform, there is a peculiar propriety in reminding the public of the *former* conduct of the *virtuous* and *patriotic* William Pitt.—“ On the Seventh of May, 1783, the day after the call of the  
“ House, Mr. William Pitt made his promised motion respecting the Re-  
“ form of Parliamentary Representation. As the mode of proceeding  
“ by a Committee, proposed last year, had formed one of the prin-  
“ cipal objections against the Reform itself, he thought it more advi-  
“ seable to bring forward some *specific* propositions: these were,

“ I. That it was the opinion of the House, that measures were highly  
“ necessary to be taken for the future prevention of bribery and  
“ expence at elections.”

“ II. That for the future, when the majority of voters for any Bo-  
“ rough shall be convicted of gross and notorious corruption be-  
“ fore a select Committee of the House, appointed to try the  
“ merits of any election, such Borough should be disfranchised,  
“ and the minority of voters, not so convicted, should be enti-  
“ tled to vote for the County in which such Borough should be  
“ situated.”

“ III. That an addition of Knights of the Shire, and of Representa-  
“ tives of the Metropolis, should be added to the state of Repre-  
“ sentation.” He left the number for future discussion, but said  
“ he should propose *One Hundred*.

*Vide Annual Register for 1783,*

the

the House of Lords? No; for they represent none but themselves. Were they to be found in the King? No; for he, according to your doctrine, represents none but God! It is the opinion, Thomas, of all but high churchmen and tories, that if the people of England had been fairly and equally represented in Parliament, the war with America would not have happened, and we should have escaped 140 millions of debt, which would undoubtedly have been a  *blessing* . But how comes it you have been so sparing of the enumeration of the  *blessings*  we enjoy; you have made no mention of the Game Laws, Excise Laws, Tithes, Test Acts, and various other  *blessings* , too numerous to mention at present, but about which I will be more explicit in my next; and shall at present be content with subscribing myself (in the sincere wish for your speedy reformation),

Your affectionate Brother,

JOHN BULL.

F I N I S.

## A D V E R T I S E M E N T

*T H E* foregoing Letters are all of them written by the same Author, under different Signatures, and have already made their appearance in several of the Public Papers; they would not have been offered to the Public, in the shape they now are, had not the Author been solicited to Publish them together, by several of his Friends, whose favourable opinion of them, has been a sufficient gratification to him for his efforts in the great cause of Parliamentary Reform.

1<sup>st</sup> January, 1793.



