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T H E

Yorkshire Question,

O R

Petition, or Address :

(Being a short and fair State of the Case; upon the Principles, the Views, the Means, and the Objects of both Parties as confessed by themselves.)

Most earnestly and seriously addressed

T O T H E

C O N S I D E R A T I O N

O F T H E

People of England

Assembled in their several County, City, and other Meetings.

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T H E

YORKSHIRE QUESTION, &c.

IN all public discussion, upon public affairs, it has been usual to guess at the views and objects of those who propose any measure, and of those who oppose it; and to state their intentions, as arguments for or against the measure itself. It very seldom indeed happens, that either party acknowledge their intentions to be what their adversary imputes to them. Hence much difficulty of judging between the competitors for public trust and confidence arises to the people, who are first diverted from an examination of the measure advised, to the probable intentions of the adviser or opposer, and then, a greater difficulty attends the fixing with certainty, what that intention is; neither party, as has been remarked, confessing the motive to be that, which is suggested by his opponent.

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Much

Much benefit is expected, and it is hoped that much indeed will be derived, from the petition of the county of York—from the effect of the resolutions there entered into—and from the watchful, prudent, and well-directed labours of the very respectable committee of that great county. This for the future.

But a very great and diffusive good has already flowed from it. In that meeting, the contending parties have fairly owned their principles; avowed their intentions, and precisely marked their objects. All conjecture as to motives; all inference from the ostensible end to the occult design; every argument from presumeable or probable intention being thus done away—the parties come fairly with their measures and their means before the people, now to be assembled in the several towns, cities and counties of this kingdom; and, thus, that people are enabled to judge with certainty, and to chuse for themselves, without the least dread of being deceived in the nature of the object, or the quality of the means, by which that object is to be attained.

At the Yorkshire meeting two opinions were given—very different indeed; and two measures proposed—absolutely contradictory to each other. Each, however, had its advocates and supporters. All other than a numerical comparison of these shall be here abstained from. That indeed was
 remarkable;

remarkable ; for one party was so small as not to give their measures and doctrines the support or countenance of their own vote. The propositions of the other were carried without a dissenting voice. The first of these *call themselves* the KING'S FRIENDS. The other party was composed of the GENTLEMEN and FREE-HOLDERS of the county ; and each, by their spokesmen, clearly and distinctly avowed their object, and recommended the means by which they proposed to attain it. Let these be stated ; and let the COUNTRY GENTLEMEN, for this time, have the precedence.

The COUNTRY GENTLEMEN, then, by the mouths of *Mr. Wyvill, Mr. Pritchard, Mr. Hill, Sir George Savile, Mr. Stanhope, Mr. Turner,* and several others, represented the corrupt dependence of Parliament as the grand cause of all our misfortunes ; from which dependence and corruption, they insisted, flowed the most improvident and lavish grants of the money of the subject, squeezed from them by the most oppressive taxes ; and charged the misapplication, and profuse squandering of that money, as owing to the neglect, or refusal of Parliament to examine, or, in any wise, controul the expenditure. They represented the undue, already prodigious, and still encreasing influence of the Crown, as the grand corrupter of Parliament : they stated the variety and magnitude of places and emoluments in its gift and disposal,

as the means employed for that corruption; and they charged, that the public money was lavishly applied to continue and forward the very corruption from which it flowed. These were the *evils* and their *causes* as represented and alledged by the COUNTRY GENTLEMEN.

To remedy these was their object. The means proposed by them to attain that object were, to bring the influence of the Crown within some reasonable bounds; and, by removing some of the most apparent and obvious causes of the corruption of Parliament, to restore that body to such a state of purity and health, as might enable it to discharge its function; and dispose it to grant the money of the subject with some degree of caution; and to controul the expenditure with, at least, some degree of care.

Thus far the COUNTRY GENTLEMEN; and to them succeeded the —KING'S FRIENDS.

THE KING'S FRIENDS, then, by the mouth of Mr. SMELT, ——— but here it may not be amiss to make those who are not yet informed, acquainted with Mr. *Smelt*; his *situation* and *connections*.

Mr. SMELT is a gentleman of the county of York, of decent fortune, and of a family sufficiently reputable. In himself, in his private life, not only unexceptionable, but respectable. About eight years since, this gentleman was appointed
Sub-

Sub-Governor to the Prince of Wales, in which office he continued some years; during which time his Majesty paid him most particular regard and attention. So highly was he in the royal favour, that, when the King discharged Dr. Markham (now Archbishop of York) and the late Lord Holderneffe, together with an Oxford scholar, whose name does not occur, from the government and education of the Prince, he earnestly pressed Mr. *Smelt* to remain. From what motive is not well known, but he declined the offer, and even refused, though much pressed, to retain the salary. His Majesty's favour and approbation, so far from ceasing, has every day encreased. He has again been called to the King's presence, and there is not a man in the kingdom, who enjoys so much of the *apparent* confidence of the King at this day; and certainly there is not a man of any rank or condition in the country, who was ever honoured with so much of the private society, and familiar intercourse with his Majesty, as Mr. *Smelt* is at this very time. This account of Mr. *Smelt* is intended to impress on the people the *great authority* with which he spoke; the *certain knowledge* which he had, from long intercourse of his Majesty's *gracious dispositions*, and *princely desires*; and the *habitudes of thinking, reasoning, and wishing*, in which he must have been *quite familiar* at the Queen's House, in

which his Majesty resides, and where the KING'S FRIENDS must of course resort and consult.

From the *bosom* of these,—from the very *interior* of the KING *himself*, MR. SMELT issues to the Yorkshire meeting, and becomes the mouth of *that party*.

Mr. SMELT then affirmed, that all our misfortunes arose from the King's *not* having MORE *power* and *influence* than he has. As a remedy, therefore, he recommended that the *power* and *influence* of the KING should be ENCREASED. The first, he plainly asserted; the second, he directly recommended. The immediate benefits, which he expected from that increase of power and influence, he did not state in words equally precise. But it was impossible to *mistake* him. To remove every possible even insinuation of unfair construction, the people of England are desired to attend to his words, which shall be fairly quoted.* The people will interpret for themselves. These are his words;—

“ The *power* of the crown is by *no means* *exorbitant*; on the *contrary* it wants *greatly* to be *increased*; the King's *influence* is *too little*; his hands want to be *strengthened*, for he is *not able*

* For the further satisfaction of the reader, Mr SMELT'S speech at length is annexed to this address; the whole is worthy of attention.

“to curb the licentiousness with which he is every day talked of in every company, and every street, nor even to restrain the insertion of a newspaper paragraph.” In a preceding part of his speech he said——“The ground of the Petition seemed to be, to curb the influence of the crown, and to prevent the SOVEREIGN from disposing of the revenues granted to him by Parliament.”——It is hardly necessary to add, that he ended by a most earnest entreaty to the meeting to reject the Petition.

After these expressions, thus fairly transcribed from his speech, it cannot be unfair to observe that—to lament an inability to do any particular thing, is to assert that such particular thing should be done, were the power equal to its performance; and that in no form of government whatsoever can any action be restrained, but by the terror of the punishment annexed to its commission. These remarks cannot be so much as cavilled at, to deny their truth, is impossible.

Under the authority then of these remarks (without enquiring what company Mr. Smelt keeps, in which the King is constantly and licentiously reviled) the immediate benefits which Mr. Smelt proposed from the desired increase of the King’s power and influence, are——

First: “That his Majesty would regulate all private, friendly, and convivial society at his
B 4 pleasure;

“ pleasure ; and either repress the freedom of con-
 “ versation intirely, or punish it, when it trans-
 “ gressed such limits as he may be pleased to assign
 “ it.” This is the unavoidable inference from Mr.
Smelt's complaint, that the King is abused in every
 company, and every street, for want, as he asserts,
 of *sufficient* power and influence. It was ridiculous
 to complain of want of power, if it was not intend-
 ed to use the power when got, to remedy the evil ;
 and there is no possible remedy for this evil,
 “ *talking* licentiously of the King in every com-
 “ pany,” but by using the desired power for the
 regulation of *private companies* ; and suppressing
 the freedom, or punishing the inadvertencies of
private, family, friendly, and convivial conversation.
 Another advantage would arise, indispensibly ne-
 cessary to the exercise of this power, and inseparable
 from it, which it is odd that Mr. SMELT should
 pass over in silence — the employment of SPIES !
 The necessity of an whole host of these honourable
 officers is self evident. How otherwise is it possible
 to bring the private discourse of families and friends
 into judgment before the magistrate, and to punish
 those who have transgressed. Without the aid of
 some such, even now, how could Mr. *Smelt* know
 that the King was evilly spoken of, in other com-
 panies than those which he himself keeps ; it must
 be through the ministry of spies that Mr. *Smelt*
 has

has been able to assure us that the King is reviled in every company.

Second Benefit. “ That his Majesty would prohibit all discussion of public affairs, and political controversy in print, even to the insertion of a single paragraph in a newspaper, or punish severely those who shall transgress.”—The same reasoning which arose from the first benefit is applicable to this second ; as, without a *licenser* of the press, that is, without making it criminal by the King’s authority, to publish any thing in print, to convey the smallest information ; or lay any fact, or submit any reasoning to the people through the press, without the *King’s licence first had and obtained* ; and inflicting heavy punishments on those who presumed to do otherwise ;—without this, it is impossible to devise any method by which the King shall be enabled to suppress, or prevent the insertion of such paragraphs as he may dislike, in a newspaper.

Third Benefit. “ That, by such increase of power, the King would be enabled to dispose of the Revenues, granted to him by Parliament, according to his *will and pleasure*, without controul, and without account.” This is the obvious and unavoidable sense of the speech ! Mr. SMELT bitterly lamented that the Petition tended to defeat this power. Let the following expressions taken from his speech be considered, and not even
a sha-

a shadow of doubt can remain. “ The petition tends,” said he, “ to prevent the Sovereign from disposing of the Revenues granted him by Parliament.” The petition neither asks nor implies any such thing. The King now has, and has always had, the disposal of the Revenue; the business and duty of the Parliament was to take care that the Ministers of the King did not divert it from the objects to which they had destined it, and to punish them for such malversation when it happened. This the petition begs the House of Commons to consider again as their duty and business, and to perform that duty. It asks this, and on that head, it asks no more. Again, “ the Petition tended to make the King no longer a *judge of his own benevolence* (with whose money pray?) but to constitute Parliament his Guardians.” Surely Mr. SMELT must have thought the people of this country strangely altered, if not degenerated, when he hopes to alarm them into an opposition to any measure by telling them, that “ it tended to make the Parliament the King’s Guardians”. But, one more of Mr. Smelt’s wishes laid before them, the people will think for themselves. Lest the *Benevolence* of the King should be *stinted*, when the Guardianship of the Parliament was ended;—lest his Majesty might not have *his* Revenues large enough when entirely at *his own disposal*. Mr. SMELT expressed a strong desire “ that *all* WAR TAXES and ESTABLISHMENTS

“BLISHMENTS should be kept to their *full extent* “in times of peace.” This indeed was not quite so well received in Yorkshire. The rest of the Kingdom may perhaps *like it better*, especially when they consider with WHOM Mr. *Smelt* is in the most *confidential intimacy*.

Here, then, O People of England, you have both parties before you, in their own words, with their avowed intentions, with their acknowledged projects; the ends they desire, and the means by which they propose to attain those ends, openly professed. After this, no freeholder, not one of the people, can be at a moment's loss to decide on the part he shall take in the several county and other meetings, now or shortly to be called for the purpose of presenting such a petition as has been voted in Yorkshire. A short recapitulation will remove all doubts.

Whoever thinks that the *power and influence* of the crown is *too little*, and ought to be ENCREASED;

Whoever wishes that the King, so encreased in power, should regulate all *private companies*, and *punish* such *conversation* as he does not like;—

Whoever wishes and desires that the *liberty* of the PRESS should be restrained; a *licenser* established; all *information* to the people, in print, concerning *national affairs*, *suppressed*; and the inserting even a *single* paragraph in a newspaper; without the *King's leave*, severely punished;—

Whoever

Whoever thinks that the Parliament ought to *grant* whatever money the King *asks*, and wishes that the King should dispose of his *people's* money *so granted*, according to his *will* and *pleasure*, without controul and without account ;——

All those, who thus *think* and *wish*, are desired to attend at their respective county, city or other meetings, and there, with the KING'S FRIENDS and Mr. SMELT, support an address to his Majesty for the attainment of such *desirable objects* ;——But

Whoever thinks that the *influence* of the CROWN is already *too great*, and employed to *corrupt* the parliament ;——

Whoever thinks that corrupting the parliament with the *money of the people*, already *granted*, a means to make that parliament *grant more* ;——

Whoever wishes to see a stop put to *unmerited* pensions ; an abolition of *useless* places, and a temperate *reform* of all ;——

Whoever wishes that parliament, made less corrupt, should grant the *people's money* with *caution* and *reluctance*, and see it *accounted for* with *rigorous punctuality* ;——

All men, who *thus* think and wish, will attend at the county or other meetings ; and, with the COUNTRY GENTLEMEN, support a PETITION of the *same kind* as that resolved on in the COUNTY OF YORK.

THE

T H E
S P E E C H
O F

MR. S M E L T,

Lately Sub-Governor to the Prince of Wales, at
the Yorkshire Meeting; carefully taken down
at the Time.

MR. SMELT requested the indulgence of the meeting, and their candid interpretation of arguments, which his want of skill and experience might fail to arrange with judgment, or place in their proper point of view. He said, that as the advertisement to call the county together was signed by many respectable names, he came to York with a confident hope, that their intention was to propose some measures for the promotion of the common cause, and to unite the minds of men in the hour of distress; but that he lamented to find, that, instead of contributing to the support of government, the intention avowed was to divide its strength; for that the ground of the petition seemed to be to curb the influence of the Crown, and to prevent the Sovereign from disposing of the revenues granted to him by Parliament; a measure by which he apprehended the latest posterity might be sensibly affected.

He

He then desired to shew his own consistency, by a detail of the circumstances of his life, and related, that he had early engaged in, and after nineteen years faithful service, retired from a profession, without accepting any reward, or pension, as an illness, not contracted in service, but which had grown up with him from his infancy, had occasioned his desire to resign.

He took occasion here to reflect on the neglected state of the navy, and weak condition of the works at Plymouth, when he was called on in his official character, to inspect them in the course of the last war. During his retirement, of which this city was the scene, he affirmed that he had dedicated his time to the study of our constitution, and other national objects: that while in this situation he received a call to a most important duty, for the faithful though inadequate discharge of which, while in employment, he was well pleased to receive his wages; but that on the conclusion of his attendance upon the Princes, which he resigned from a sense of his own inability, he had declined the offer of an annuity for the remainder of his life; that he therefore once more retired to his own natural and humble situation, whence he was again drawn by the commands of his most gracious master; that whether the stipend he had from that time enjoyed was to be construed into a pension he could not tell, and was now even indifferent, for that from this moment he resigned it; "and now," said he, "I am an independent man."

He then reprobated the petition to the House of Commons, as it tended to make the King no longer the judge of his own benevolence, but to constitute Parliament his guardians; and declared it even illegal for one branch of the constitution to interfere with the operations of another. He affirmed that the power of the Crown was by no means exorbitant; that, on the contrary, it required to be greatly increased: that the King's influence was too little, and that his hands wanted to be strengthened; for that he is not able to curb the licentiousness with which he is every day talked of in every company and in every street, nor even to restrain the insertion of a newspaper paragraph, while the present measure tended to anarchy and confusion, and to snatch
away

away that sacred veil which the constitution had wisely drawn round the Crown, and which only the greatest occasion should remove from before the splendor of Majesty. That such was the delicacy of the legislature, at the time of the Revolution, that the word *Abdication* was a work of three days deliberation, their object being to maintain the immortality of the royal person, a person upon which the law had bestowed not only an exemption from death, but from error; that in this maxim, "the King can do no wrong," the only safeguard of the people is contained, and that from his protection alone their liberty is to be derived; he therefore recommended it to those who were in pursuit of liberty, that they should implore the protection of the King, as by protection and security liberty was to be understood.

He now entered on the comparative merits of the present administration, and those who conducted the affairs of the nation on Whig principles, and hence again deduced the property of giving greater power to the crown. He averred that, in the days of Whiggism, the minister, distinct from the crown, formed a fourth branch of legislature, which had absorbed within itself the power and office of the crown, and that leaving *de jure* royalty to be possessed by the royal person, the party of the minister assumed and exercised the office of King *de facto*. The narrow principles of self, actuated the measures and pursuits of Whigs: hence the complaints of our brethren in Ireland have been fomented, and hence the rebellion in America grew to so stupendous a height, that it was irresistible almost at the first. Lord Chatham, he granted, was formed to glare a meteor in a storm, but by no means to conduct finances in the time of peace; and declared that the present increase of debt arises from that want of foresight, which, in peace, never looks forward towards the exigencies of war; adding, that one of the greatest misfortunes of this country is, that no minister is found sufficiently firm to keep up the taxes on the return of peace to the greatest height of a war establishment: [*here the whole meeting expressed the utmost disapprobation*] for if that were done, provision might be made against the day of danger, and we should not, in the hour of pressing necessity, be obliged to purchase every requisite article at the most

most exorbitant prices : and here recurring to the crimination of Whiggism, he affirmed, that, if the last war had broke out two years after, we should not have had a fleet fit for service.

He then directly undertook to exculpate Government from the charge of having occasioned the calamities complained of, and transferred the blame to the people, whom he called the slaves of selfishness, which descended even to the election of coroners : to them alone he ascribed the disorders of the country. He denied the existence of one patriot. After admitting the possible truth of Lord Orford's assertion, that all men had their prices, he affirmed that if there be a patriot in this country, he is now upon the throne : " The King is not only the greatest and the best, but he was sorry to say, he believed him to be the only patriot in this country." He called to recollection a former meeting of the county of York, and lamented that the assembly present could blow both hot and cold in that room ; for that nine years ago they considered the King as worthy of their respect ; they then called on him to dissolve the Parliament, for excluding a man, whose private character none would be so bold as to vindicate ; whereas, on the present occasion, Parliament is to be called on to restrain the King ; he therefore besought the meeting, by every obligation that could influence the lover of his country, from every principle of public and private interest, from the loyalty and affection due to the most gracious prince, engaged in a war the most just that ever was entered into, to reject the petition, and to seek for the redress of our calamities from means in our own power to carry into effect. Let reformation begin with the body of the people. The principles of electors were corrupt : let them return to virtue, and let them choose for representatives discreet and dispassionate men ; such men as are recommended to their choice by the writ of election. The only ground on which the petition could pretend to propriety, he said, was on an opinion that the King is the servant of the people ; and, now returning to the royal attributes, added, that it is a narrow, a little, and a mean idea : he is not the servant of the people, he is their soul ; he is the soul

the constitution: from him and him alone, the constitution derives its energy; from him alone the operations of the state derive their efficacy: he is the life, the soul, the very existence of the constitution. And here, recommending once more the rejection of the petition, he professed his readiness to join in an address to the throne, expressive of loyalty, confidence, contribution of strength, and co-operation, &c. &c,

F I N I S.

Jan. 15, 1780.

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AND

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