

The History of Suffrage 1760–1867



ROUTLEDGE


The History of Suffrage 1760–1867

Edited by
Sarah Richardson



ROUTLEDGE


HISTORY OF SUFFRAGE
1760–1867

Volume 1



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

HISTORY OF
SUFFRAGE
1760–1867

Volume 1

Edited by
Sarah Richardson

General Introduction by
Anna Clark and
Sarah Richardson

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2000 by Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 4RN
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

First issued in hardback 2019

Copyright © Taylor & Francis 2000

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

BRITISH LIBRARY CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

History of suffrage, 1760–1867

1. Suffrage – Great Britain – History – 18th century
 2. Suffrage – Great Britain – History – 19th century
- I. Clark, Anna II. Richardson, Sarah
324.6'2'0941'09033

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

A catalogue record for this title is available from the Library of Congress

ISBN 13: 978-1-1387-6101-8 (hbk) (Vol-1)

*Typeset by
Techset Ltd.,
Gateshead*

Publisher's Note

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this book but points out that some imperfections from the original may be apparent.

CONTENTS

Volume 1

Acknowledgements	xi
Note on Copy Texts	xii
General Introduction	xiii
<i>Reflexions on Representation in Parliament</i> (1766)	1
S. Jenyns, <i>Thoughts on a Parliamentary Reform</i> (1784)	48
Extracts from <i>Letters to the Volunteers of Ireland</i> (1783)	75
J. Almon, extracts from <i>Political Register</i> (1768 and 1769)	167
E. Burke, 'Mr Burke's Speech to the Electors of Bristol' from <i>Mr Edmund Burke's speeches</i> (1774)	237
J. Burgh, extract from <i>Political Disquisitions</i> (1774)	246
T. Day and A. Fletcher, extracts from <i>Political Papers</i> (1794–5)	308

CONTENTS

Volume 2

<i>Address of the London Corresponding Society</i> (1793)	1
W. Playfair, <i>Inevitable Consequences of a Reform</i> (1792)	12
G. Philips, <i>The Necessity of a Speedy and Effectual Reform</i> (1792)	38
[G. Tierney], <i>The State of the Representation of England and Wales</i> (1793)	63
N. M'Leod, <i>Two Letters from Norman M'Leod</i> (1793)	102
<i>Facts, Reflections and Queries</i> (1792)	117
W. Knox, <i>A Letter to the People of Ireland</i> (1792)	160
<i>General Meeting of Catholic Delegates</i> (1793)	186
<i>Address from the Society of United Irishmen</i> (1794)	194
W. Roscoe, <i>A Letter to Henry Brougham</i> (1811)	207
<i>Address of the Reformers of Fawdon</i> (1819)	222
<i>Leeds Reform Meeting</i> (1819)	229
C. Phillips, <i>Address to the Electors in The County of Sligo</i> (1818)	253
F. Burdett, <i>The Plan of Reform Proposed by Sir Francis Burdett</i> (1809)	260
[T. Harral], <i>The Distresses of the Times</i> (1817)	287
<i>The Smithfield Parliament</i> (1819)	305
The Hermit of Marlow [P. B. Shelley], <i>A Proposal for Putting Reform to the Vote</i> (1817)	307

CONTENTS

Volume 3

J. Walsh, extracts from <i>Popular Opinions on Parliamentary Reform</i> (1831)	1
W. Carpenter, <i>An Address to the Working Class</i> (1831)	65
Extract from <i>The Speech of Lord Brougham</i> (1831)	82
Extract from <i>Letters to a Friend</i> (1831)	119
W. Cobbett, extract from <i>Cobbett's Manchester Lectures</i> (1832)	130
G. Grote, extract from <i>Essentials of Parliamentary Reform</i> (1832)	155
A. Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, 'Wellington's Speech on the Reform Bill' (1831)	221
<i>The First Batch</i> (1832)	232
Junius Redivivus, <i>What the People Ought to Do</i> (1832)	260
<i>Every Man his Own Law Maker</i> (1835)	306
Extracts from <i>Election Broadsides of 1832 from Edinburgh</i> (1832)	343

CONTENTS

Volume 4

C. Wetherell, <i>Speech against the Municipal Corporation Bill</i> (1835)	1
G. Grote, <i>Speech on the Ballot, February 1838</i> (1838)	7
G. Grote, <i>Speech on the Ballot, March 1837</i> (1837)	22
G. Grote, <i>Speech Moving for the Introduction of the Ballot</i> (1833)	36
S. Smith, <i>Ballot</i> (1839)	75
<i>Rights and Condition of Women</i> (1841)	120
H. Francis, Lord Teynham, Extract from <i>How it Must Work</i> (1833)	142
<i>Dialogue between Mr. Doubtful and a Radical</i> (1839)	180
A. McKay, <i>Electoral Districts</i> (1848)	184
Extract from <i>The End in View</i> (1848)	223
H. Reid, extract from <i>What Should be Done for the People'</i> (1848)	227
B. Disraeli, <i>Speech on Mr. Hume's Motion on National Representation</i> (1867)	238
J. Hume, <i>On Parliamentary Reform</i> (1850)	270
<i>Parliamentary Reform. The Educational Franchise</i> (1853)	285
Scrutator, <i>A Few Remarks on the Ballot</i> (1857)	303
J. S. Mill, extract from <i>Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform</i> (1859)	316
A Norwich Operative, <i>A Word to the Masses</i> (n.d.)	363
A Norwich Operative, <i>A Voice from the Millions!</i> (n.d.)	378

CONTENTS

Volume 5

R. Lowe, Extracts from <i>Speeches and Letters on Reform</i> (1867)	1
B. Disraeli, <i>Speech on the Reform Bill</i> (1867)	49
<i>The Final Reform Bill of Earl Russell</i> (1866)	78
E. Baines, <i>Speech of Edward Baines</i> (1864)	85
W. E. Gladstone, 'Speech on the Bill of Mr. Baines', from <i>Speeches on Parliamentary Reform</i> (1866)	106
G. C. Brodrick, 'The Utilitarian Argument Against Reform', from <i>Essays on Reform</i> (1867)	131
A. V. Dicey, 'The Balance of Classes', from <i>Essays on Reform</i> (1867)	157
C. H. Pearson, 'On the Working of Australian Institutions', from <i>Essays on Reform</i> (1867)	176
An Old Colonist, <i>Universal Suffrage in Australia</i> (1867)	203
E. Beales, <i>Speech of Edmond Beales</i> (1865)	226
<i>The Yorkshire Reform Conference</i> (1862)	237
C. Bradlaugh, <i>Reform or Revolution</i> (1867)	292
E. Jones, <i>Democracy Vindicated</i> (1867)	301
<i>Reform Meeting in the Guildhall</i> (1866)	322

CONTENTS

Volume 6

G. J. Holyoake, <i>A New Defence of the Ballot</i> (1868)	1
T. Perronet Thompson, <i>Catechism on the Ballot</i> (1860)	9
J. T. Ball, Extract from <i>Extension of the Franchise</i> (1872)	36
C. Buxton, <i>Self-Government for London</i> (1869)	62
J. E. Fitzgerald, <i>The Native Policy of New Zealand</i> (1862)	85
M. G. Fawcett, <i>Fitzjames Stephen on the Position of Women</i> (1873)	120
E. M. Lynch, <i>A Few Words on Women's Suffrage</i> (1873)	132
<i>Meeting of the London National Society for Women's Suffrage</i> (1873)	142
Justitia [Mrs H. D. Pochin], <i>The Right of Women</i> (1855)	159
<i>Edinburgh Branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage</i> (1868)	191
<i>Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage</i> (1869)	199
<i>Women's Suffrage: Great Meeting in Edinburgh</i> (1871)	213
F. W. Newman, <i>A Lecture on Women's Suffrage</i> (1869)	234
F. O. Morris, <i>The Rights and Wrongs of Women</i> (1870)	250
Ninon [Anna] Kingsford, <i>The Admission of Women to the Parliamentary Franchise</i> (1868)	274
Index	312

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors and publishers would like to thank the following libraries for their permission to reproduce the texts included in this edition: The British Library; The London Library; The University of London Library. We would also like to thank The British Museum for permission to reproduce *The Smithfield Parliament* (© Copyright The British Museum).

NOTE ON COPY TEXTS

The following extracts are reproduced in facsimile

In order to fit texts comfortably to the pages of this edition, certain liberties have been taken with the format of the original: occasionally right-hand pages have become left-hand pages (and vice versa) and text from consecutive pages has been fitted onto a single page. Page numbers in this edition refer to Pickering & Chatto page numbers. Readers wishing to consult the passages in the original are referred to the headnotes which appear immediately before each text.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Franchise in Britain, from the Ancient Constitution to the Second Reform Act

The expansion of the franchise in Great Britain traditionally has been told as a Whiggish story of the inevitable march of liberal principles. However, parliamentary reform in Britain happened in a much slower, hesitant, and uneven fashion. Many scholars depict the various reform acts as the outcome of political manoeuvring, rather than a philosophical commitment to popular participation. But reform acts had unintended consequences; every expansion of the franchise undermined the philosophical basis for limiting the vote to a few.¹ Therefore, competing political principles can be discerned in the debates over franchise reform. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reformers drew upon John Locke's liberalism, Thomas Paine's radicalism and Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism, while conservatives justified the old system with the notion of 'virtual representation'. The idea of the 'ancient constitution' remained a common thread in many debates about the franchise, interpreted in very different ways by conservatives and reformers.² However, the ancient constitution was a myth which simplified the complex historical evolution of the franchise.

The Old System

The origins of the franchise date back to the birth of Parliament in the thirteenth century. From the beginning, Members of Parliament (usually two) were returned for both the English and Welsh counties and for a number of boroughs. The county franchise was wide and inclusive, early evidence suggesting that every free inhabitant of the county could participate in the election of knights of the shire.³ However, parliaments passed a series of measures in the fifteenth century to define the county electorate and to tighten up the process and conduct of elections. These included the landmark Forty-Shilling Freeholder Act of 1430, which decreed that county electors should be those who were resident in the shire and worth forty shillings per year from free tenements within it, thus ensuring the franchise was

based upon land-ownership rather than residence. The Act was passed in part to ensure that the gentry were elected by those of equivalent or near-equivalent status.⁴ However, the county franchise remained relatively extensive and functioned as ‘a mustering of the community’.⁵

Borough franchises were never uniform and were based upon a variety of principles including residence, property ownership, payment of taxation, possession of freeman status, membership of a corporation or a combination of these. There appeared to be a certain randomness about which boroughs returned MPs from the thirteenth century onwards: some tiny villages were enfranchised whilst more substantial towns remained without their own representation.⁶ The variety of franchises in the boroughs, debates about the definition of ‘freehold’ in the counties, the ‘customary’ nature of the franchise and the fact that voters were not registered meant that the electorate was always a nebulous, indistinct and unfixed section of the community. Inflation in land prices and the unchanged nature of the county franchise meant that the electorate steadily increased during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Estimates of the total electorate before the Civil War have been placed as high as 300,000 or between 27 and 40 per cent of the adult male population.⁷ However, the opportunity of exercising a vote remained remote as contests were rare until the Restoration.

The seventeenth century was one of ‘rapid electoral development’ and, as contests became more common, procedures were established; electoral practices became fixed; and the king and Commons established a right to intervene in electoral disputes.⁸ For example, in the decades before the Civil War the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge gained two Members each, three new boroughs were enfranchised and sixteen restored, mostly by resolution of the House of Commons. Parliament was concerned to grant wide franchises, in part to balance the influence of the monarch, so between 1621 and 1628 all boroughs were created with scot and lot or household franchises.⁹

The Civil War witnessed unprecedented debates about the state of the representative system with Leveller pamphlets providing manifestos for change. The Putney debates between the Agitators and Cromwell’s government expounded arguments for and against the franchise which were reformulated in the decades leading up to 1832 and into the late nineteenth century.¹⁰ The Agreements of the People foreshadowed subsequent debates by emphasising a two-pronged approach for change: a broader electorate and a more

representative distribution of constituencies. It is unclear exactly how broad the Levellers intended the electorate to be, for some documents include women and servants whilst others call for an adult male franchise. There were also disagreements about the redistribution of constituencies, with Leveller pamphlets arguing for the transfer of seats from decayed boroughs to the counties and to London, Ireton's counterproposal giving representation to mercantile interests in boroughs and the Rump Parliament considering a plan for equal electoral districts.¹¹ The practical changes eventually introduced by Cromwell were more conservative and included a property based franchise; a reorganisation of the Commons incorporating Members representing Ireland and Scotland; a redistribution of seats; and the enfranchisement of Manchester, Durham, Leeds and Halifax. After the Restoration, parliamentary representation resumed its traditional form, but the franchise and the electoral process were subjected to closer scrutiny than before the Civil War.

The Eighteenth Century

It has been argued that in the early eighteenth century there was a brief period when the electoral system in England and Wales flourished as never before.¹² The electorate was both numerous and vigorous. Perhaps as many as twenty-five per cent of the adult male population possessed the vote: a potential electorate of up to half a million men.¹³ The growth of the electorate during this period outstripped the increase in the English and Welsh population.¹⁴ Although there was unevenness in the distribution of the electorate, Geoffrey Holmes has argued that there were few substantial towns unrepresented by MPs in this period. The voters residing in towns that did not return their own Members were able to influence the returns of the county MPs.¹⁵ More important than the number and distribution of electors was the fact that they were able to exercise their votes regularly because of the number and frequency of contested elections. The Triennial Act of 1694 ensured that there was a general election at least every three years. Between 1679 and 1716 there were sixteen general elections with around a third of seats going to the poll on each occasion. Virtually every constituency was contested at least once in the period. The renewed vigour of the electorate after the Glorious Revolution may also be attributed to the fact that there was a greater awareness of who could and who could not vote. Legislation in 1696 had obliged returning officers to

take a copy of the poll at elections held under their jurisdiction and produce it on request. Therefore, for the first time lists of those who voted could be scrutinised and qualifications discussed.

The voting qualification in English counties remained the possession of freehold property valued for land tax at forty shillings per annum. However, recent research has demonstrated that the qualification could be interpreted broadly by contemporaries and included tenants who held leases for lives, annuities, rent charges and mortgages based on freehold property.¹⁶ Despite the introduction of a freeholder's oath and the need to have forty shillings a year above all charges, the depreciated level of forty shillings led to many being able to vote. In this way the distinction between bad votes and poorer voters may have become blurred. The customary nature of the franchise made it difficult to determine exactly who could and who could not vote and evidence from petitions lodged in cases where elections were disputed has demonstrated the fact that a wide range of people were turning up to vote in county elections including those 'which were only Hospital-men, and received Alms; others who were under Age, or had purchased their freeholds within a year'.¹⁷ The clergy had also been given the right to vote in parliamentary elections, swelling the number of forty shilling freeholders in county electorates by perhaps as many as ten thousand.¹⁸ The total number of electors varied from county to county, ranging from 20,000 voters in Yorkshire to 800 in Rutland.

There was a wide variety of borough franchises and the addition of local customary practices means that it is impossible to define a 'typical' borough voter in eighteenth-century England. The major categories of borough franchises were the inhabitant householder boroughs, freemen or corporation boroughs and the burgage boroughs.¹⁹ The householder boroughs included the quaintly named 'potwalloper' boroughs (literally those who, as lodgers, boil the pot) and the scot and lot boroughs. The franchise could thus be open to all adult male householders or to those inhabitants paying taxes. The freemen boroughs included some where voting was restricted to resident freemen only; others where honorary and nonresident freemen were also allowed to vote; some where freemen and freeholders were allowed to vote; or freemen and inhabitant householders. In corporation boroughs the right of voting was confined to members of the town's corporation. All corporation boroughs were 'closed' or rotten boroughs and in none did the electorate rise above sixty. A burgage was defined in Beatson's

Parliamentary Register as 'one undivided and indivisible tenement, neither created nor capable of being created within time of memory, which has immemorially given a right of voting'. The voting qualification was thus attached to property and not to people. If one person owned more than one burgage property, proxies were able to vote on their behalf. This was also the case where the owner of the property was a woman or a minor and thus ineligible to vote. There were also the two university boroughs of Cambridge and Oxford where the franchise was vested in masters and doctors of arts of those universities.

It should be noted that the sex of voters was not determined by law and the fact that many borough and all county franchises were based on property ownership meant that there was a measure of ambiguity surrounding women's – especially widows' – participation in elections. Although there are instances of widows presenting themselves at the poll to vote there were usually protests and 'customary' practice was invoked in order to justify the disqualification of their votes. In the case of burgage boroughs by the eighteenth century the practice was developed of widows transferring their right to vote to a male.²⁰ The legal complexities of the issues concerning women and voting was illustrated by the case of *Olive v. Ingram* considered by the King's Bench in 1738.²¹ The case concerned the election of a woman, Sarah Bly, to the post of sexton in a London parish with the support of women members of the congregation. Her election was disputed by the loser, John Olive. The Chief Justice who presided over the case broadened its remit to explore the instances of women occupying public office and voting in local and even parliamentary elections. The case was decided in favour of Sarah Bly but the decision was based upon the fact that the office was of minor significance and was a private rather than a public trust. Although this judgement closed off the opportunity for women to vote in parliamentary elections, in a host of other minor local offices and in private trusts and companies women could and did exercise their right to vote.²²

The franchise in a number of boroughs became more restrictive in the eighteenth century, although some boroughs managed to broaden it. The Last Determinations (Amendment) Act in 1729, ensured that the committee of privileges and elections 'could decide and determine ... the nature of the franchise in a constituency after a disputed return'. This had the effect of reducing local customary claims for the vote as the committee almost always tightened up the qualifications for the franchise, a trend which had begun in the late

seventeenth century. However, the Act did not stop claims for the broadening of the borough franchise from vocal local communities and there were a number of successes.²³

Wales returned MPs for twenty-four one-member constituencies. The franchise for the twelve Welsh counties was the forty shilling freehold. The borough electorates were of a reasonable size and the right to vote was vested in inhabitant scot and lot, corporation or freemen voters.

In Scotland and Ireland the franchise was generally more restrictive.²⁴ In Scotland, the electoral system was adapted from that in use before 1707 in the Parliament of Scotland and the franchise remained unaltered. The county franchise was restricted to freeholders possessing land 'of old extent' valued at a minimum of forty shillings per annum. 'Of old extent' referred to land valued according to the ancient valuation in place in medieval times. The implications of this were that by the eighteenth century only men of substantial property and those who held land from Crown were enfranchised. Even so, in no Scottish county did the electorate exceed 200 men. With the exception of Edinburgh, Scottish burghs were combined in groups of four or five to elect one MP. Every burgh council elected a delegate, and delegates of each group met together and elected the MP. Each burgh took it in turns to act as the returning burgh. In Edinburgh there were thirty-three electors who were members of the city council, forming a self-perpetuating oligarchy. Overall, only one in 100 could vote, producing an electorate of about 2,000.²⁵

Ireland possessed a separate parliament before the Act of Union with England in 1800. Both the parliament and the electoral system were patterned closely on the example of England. Three hundred MPs were returned to the House of Commons, a mixture of borough and county representatives. The county franchise was the forty shilling freehold. There were freemen, corporation, potwalloper and freehold borough franchises. In addition, Trinity College, Dublin returned two Members. The Irish Parliament was closely controlled by Westminster, and until the Octennial Act of 1768, general elections in Ireland were held infrequently. Parliaments lasted for the life of the sovereign. Catholics were also barred from voting until 1793. Irish borough constituencies were closely controlled by the Protestant aristocracy and there were a number of acts passed tightening up electoral procedures, culminating in a law of 1795 which established a residential qualification was for all voters.

In general, historians have taken their cue from contemporary writers on the eighteenth-century electorate and emphasised its unsavoury, corrupt and restrictive nature in the decades before 1832. The Whig historians of the nineteenth century painted a bleak picture of corruption and venality in the unreformed electoral system. In the early twentieth century, Sir Lewis Namier viewed electoral politics as a measure of the power of aristocratic landlords and patrons. Even those writers who argued that there was a representative electorate in the first years of the century have been dismissive of the Hanoverian voters.²⁶ These historians have based their assertions on a range of evidence. Firstly, that legislation including the Septennial Act (1716) and the Last Determinations Act (1729) strengthened the power of the Whig-dominated Parliaments over the electorate. Secondly, that after 1716 the electorate increasingly became irrelevant. This was due to a number of factors including the decreasing number of contested elections (from 1741 to 1807 for example, only in 1774 did the number of county contests reach double figures); the astounding growth of the population in certain areas of the North and the Midlands which meant that an increasing number of substantial (as well as poorer) members of the community were not in possession of the vote; and the enduring nature of the traditional institutions of crown, aristocracy and church which effectively by-passed public opinion. As a proportion of the adult male population, the electorate contracted from 23.9% in 1715 to not more than 14.4% in 1831.²⁷ A third point charts the extension of patronage, both public and private, which stifled any independent opinion. Finally, the behaviour of the voters themselves has been brought into question. At best they are seen as deferential to the political persuasion of their employers and landlords and at worst they are viewed as corrupt, venal and open to intimidation.

These assumptions have been challenged, most notably by Frank O'Gorman and John Phillips who have sought to rehabilitate the unreformed electorate, asserting that it was a vibrant and important part of the political landscape before 1832.²⁸ Their arguments rest on the diverse nature of the eighteenth-century electorate, which could be regarded as a strength as well as a weakness. In many boroughs, the electorate spanned the occupational and economic spectrum, with tradesmen and craftsmen a substantial proportion. Thus they accept that the electoral system was partly controlled by local elites, but argue that this was achieved with difficulty and required extensive organisation and financial input. The voter-

patron relationship was a complex and reciprocal one.²⁹ They closely analyse electoral behaviour and argue that the large turnouts when elections were contested, the strength of party voting and the loyalty of experienced voters demonstrate a mature, politically informed electorate. Lastly, they use the widespread, popular contemporary debates on the representative system, the growth of print culture, and an enduring tradition of political independence to claim that electoral politics became an increasingly active and participatory experience.³⁰

Movements for Reform in the Late Eighteenth Century

Efforts for parliamentary reform in the eighteenth century tended to founder on a fundamental conflict between parliamentary reformers and radicals. Parliamentary reformers, drawing upon the ‘country’ opposition and classical republican traditions, were mainly concerned with ensuring the independence of the electorate by combating bribery and ministerial influence, disenfranchising corrupt boroughs and redistributing seats, rather than with extending the franchise itself. They celebrated the voter whose landed property gave him the independence to resist the blandishments of corruption, and whose Protestant religion provided a bulwark against despotic popery. Calls for an actual extension of the franchise were rarely if ever heard.³¹ However, from the 1760s onward, radicals organised ‘the people’ outside of Parliament to add to the attack on corruption the demand for a significant extension of the franchise: a more fundamental transformation of the constitution.

Radicals such as James Burgh and James Almon began to develop theories of household representation, which replaced the notion that representation should be based on property. They asserted that in the ancient constitution all taxpaying householders could vote. As Goodwin argues, this represented a significant break from the traditional republican idea that only property made men independent enough to vote.³² The equation of taxation with representation acquired greater force when American colonists protested against the Stamp Tax because they were not represented in Parliament. Burgh also contributed to the idea of an association movement to press for reform.³³ These ideas translated into action when Parliament overturned John Wilkes’s election for Middlesex in 1769, on the grounds that he had been outlawed for seditious libel. In a few constituencies in the late 1760s and 1770s, voters

petitioned or demanded that their candidates press for an extension of the franchise to all inhabitant householders.³⁴

Radicals attempted to gain support in Parliament from the Rockingham Whigs, but this alliance failed. Lord Chatham may have been influenced by republicans such as Thomas Hollis in the 1760s, and even suggested in 1770 that one member each be added for the counties, but his motion did not pass.³⁵ The Rockingham Whigs advanced reform propositions to gain advantage from a political situation in turmoil, and their political philosophy was not based on expanding the suffrage, but on curbing the power of the crown by reforming the budget and diminishing corruption. In fact, Edmund Burke famously articulated the theory of virtual representation when he told Bristol voters in 1774 that Members of Parliament spoke for the nation, rather than particular constituencies.³⁶

By 1779–80, however, reform revived in the shape of the Association movement, but tensions over the scope of reform persisted. While landed gentlemen dominated the Yorkshire movement, the Westminster Committee in London endorsed universal manhood suffrage.³⁷ In 1780, the Duke of Richmond, inspired by the Society for Constitutional Information, moved to procure a more equal representation in Parliament on the basis of a ‘natural, unalienable, and equal right to vote’, but as he spoke, the Gordon riots erupted around the Houses of Parliament, discrediting his motion.³⁸ By the early 1780s, the younger William Pitt also put forth some more moderate reform proposals, mainly to add extra seats rather than to increase the representation, but even these motions failed and Pitt turned against reform.³⁹ Despite this failure, the Association movement had asserted the principle of associating and expressing opinions outside of Parliament.

The Association movement also inspired demands for franchise expansion in Ireland. The Irish Volunteer movement originally focused on demanding legislative independence for Ireland, but by 1782 began to demand the elimination of borough patronage and the enfranchisement of Protestant leaseholders worth ten pounds a year.⁴⁰ However, in 1783–4, such motions were defeated, for parliamentarians feared that the Volunteer movement was escaping elite control. By the 1790s, agitation for reform intensified on the extra-parliamentary level, but reformers divided on the extent of the franchise, the secret ballot, and the question of Catholic votes. In response to the threat of an alliance between reformers and Catholics, the British government pressured the Irish Parliament into

granting the franchise to Catholic forty shilling freeholders in the counties, although they still could not sit in Parliament. The boroughs largely excluded Catholic on certain technical and customary grounds. Furthermore, Protestant landlords impelled their Catholic tenants to vote in their interests.⁴¹ More radical reformers formed the United Irishmen and believed that only universal suffrage and Catholic enfranchisement could solve Ireland's problems.⁴² After the failed 1798 uprising, the British united Ireland with England by the 1800 Act of Union, which abolished the Irish Parliament but gave the Irish 100 Members of Parliament in London, elected with a somewhat reduced borough representation.

The Association movement had also sparked a Scottish reform movement. In the 1770s, smaller landowners began agitating for electoral reform in order to preserve their representation from being swamped by the 'fictitious' franchises created by great landlords.⁴³ And by 1782, a burgh reform movement emerged, comprised of the 'middle ranks' and wealthy men of the cities who were frustrated at their total lack of representation.⁴⁴ A parallel but separate and weaker movement called for reform of the county franchise. But given the oligarchic control over Scottish representation in Parliament, neither the burgh nor the county reformers could succeed in reforming Scottish politics.⁴⁵

Tensions intensified between reformers and radicals in the era of the French Revolution. Members of Parliament such as Flood and Grey introduced motions for reform of Parliament in 1790 (Flood), 1793 and 1797 (Grey), asking for corrupt boroughs to be disenfranchised, the resulting seats redistributed to unrepresented boroughs and counties, and the franchise to be extended to leaseholders, copyholders, and sometimes householders.⁴⁶ Flood claimed that a moderate parliamentary reform would avert, rather than threaten, revolution.⁴⁷

Thomas Paine's notion that rights should be based on reason, rather than property-owning, household status, or taxation, provided a more radical rationale for universal manhood suffrage. A very few radical reformers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, George Phillips, Thomas Spence and Thomas Cooper, took Paine's argument to its logical conclusion and suggested that the franchise be extended to women.⁴⁸ The 1790s were also notable for the autonomous participation and organisation of working men in reform efforts, such as the London Corresponding Society.⁴⁹ The failure of Grey's 1793 parliamentary reform impelled radicals to resort to a national convention in Scotland, but in the era of the

French Revolution their efforts seemed too dangerous, and the government cracked down harshly, especially in Scotland.

Early nineteenth-century radicals tended to see the middle classes and the working classes as the productive members of society, unjustly excluded from political power by a parasitic aristocracy. In 1809, Sir Francis Burdett introduced a motion to replace traditional constituencies with equal one-member districts elected by those freeholders, householders and others who were subject to direct taxation in support of the poor, the church and the state.⁵⁰ This motion therefore revived the principle of representation derived from taxation. Immediately after the end of the Napoleonic wars, however, radicals organised a mass movement for universal manhood suffrage, rejecting Burdett's focus on taxation as a qualification for the vote.⁵¹

In the 1820s, interest in parliamentary reform revived among philosophers such as Jeremy Bentham and James Mill and politicians such as Lord Russell. Instead of universal manhood suffrage on the basis of natural rights, they proposed much more limited reforms to make government more responsive and efficient.⁵² In 1822, Russell unsuccessfully introduced a moderate reform bill for the redistribution of seats to enfranchise the great commercial and manufacturing towns.⁵³

The 1832 Reform Act

Jonathan Clark has argued that the repeal of the Test and Corporations Acts of 1828 and the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 signalled a sudden and fatal collapse in the self-confidence of the political and religious establishment leading the way open for wide-ranging political reform.⁵⁴ The Act not only demonstrated that reform was an achievable goal but it also heralded the failure of the Tories, who had been the party of government for over twenty years. Others have argued that far from indicating a collapse of the power of the elite, the Reform Act was an assertive measure designed to contain the challenge of new social groups.⁵⁵ These views, however, underplay the importance of the diverse collection of intellectual and popular groups that had agitated for the political change for decades before 1832. By 1830, the death of George IV, the onset of economic depression and the formation of the London Radical Association and the Birmingham Political Union (which were the inspiration for a range of other reform groups throughout the country) influenced the change in the political mood.

The first draft of the Reform Bill indicates both the extent and the limitations of the influence of the contemporary debates on the nature of the constitution. In general, the ideas of responsible citizenship were accepted but concepts of natural, universal rights were rejected, in favour of the status quo. The reform had to be extensive enough to satisfy public opinion but was to be based on property and existing franchises in order to appease vested interests in Parliament. The redistribution of seats, rather than the increase in the electorate, was the major feature of the draft bill. The committee was also in favour of the secret ballot, although this was never introduced to the commons.

The bill had a hazardous journey through Parliament and the pressure of public opinion was a crucial factor in its eventual enactment. In 1831, Parliament was dissolved and an election was fought on the principles of reform. Throughout the country politicians were brought face to face with public demands for reform and the resulting Whig landslide demonstrated the fact that the issue could no longer be sidestepped. Even so, Grey had to threaten the Lords with the creation of peers and accept the amendment of Lord Chandos in order to get the Act passed by the upper house. Ultimately, as O'Gorman has argued, the Reform Act was 'not democratic, it was not theoretical, and it had everything to do with political realities'.⁵⁶

The Reform Act abolished 56 borough constituencies and reduced a further thirty from two MPs to one.⁵⁷ These seats were redistributed, roughly equally, between new borough and county constituencies. New seats were also created in Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Both English and Welsh boroughs and counties now possessed standard franchises. The county franchise remained at the forty shilling threshold set by the Act of 1430. The borough qualification became a uniform £10 household franchise. However, the uniform nature of both franchises was complicated by the fact that the 'ancient rights', customary voters remained in borough electorates and that the Chandos clause had introduced voting rights for tenants and leaseholders holding land worth £50 per annum.

The Act had the effect of increasing the number of voters by about forty-five per cent. In England and Wales around eighteen per cent of adult males possessed the franchise. In Scotland, the Reform Act had dramatic effects. There were over eighteen times as many electors after 1832, although a far smaller proportion of the population could vote than in England and Wales. The average burgh electorate was over 1,000 voters, ensuring that Scottish

burghs remained largely independent. The counties were smaller and thus continued to be controlled by substantial landowners.

In Ireland, the Reform Act had less impact than the Catholic Emancipation Act. In 1829, the county franchise was raised from forty shillings to ten pounds, reducing the county electorate from 216,000 to 37,000 voters, because of the fear that Catholic emancipation had changed the nature of the Irish electorate too extensively. However, the 1832 Reform Act added a £10 leaseholder franchise in the counties, increasing the county electorate to 60,597, and increased the borough electorate slightly.⁵⁸

In many ways, the Reform Act measures which modified the conduct of elections had more profound implications for the constitution than the redistribution or franchise clauses. The polling period was reduced from two weeks to two days; the number of polling places was increased, aided by the subdivision of counties which meant that voters no longer had to travel to the county town to vote; and a register of electors was established. Nonetheless, Charles Seymour argued that corruption worsened after 1832.⁵⁹

The 1832 Reform Act has clung on to its epithet 'the Great Reform Act' despite a vigorous pummelling from twentieth-century historians.⁶⁰ The debate centres around whether the Act ushered in a new dawn for the early nineteenth-century electorates or whether the strong elements of continuity between the old system and the new reduced its importance. Gash, for example, argued 'there was scarcely a feature of the old unreformed system that could not be found in existence after 1832' and O'Gorman has asserted that far from reforming the system, the architects of 1832 attempted to make the new political order as like the old one as possible: 'one electoral system disappeared and gave way, then, to one remarkably like itself'.⁶¹

Most notably, the traditional opinion that the Reform Act ushered in the primacy of the middle classes in the nation has been challenged.⁶² Recent analyses emphasise the enduring nature of aristocratic power; in these studies, the Reform Act is a mere tool, furnishing the established elites with the means necessary for their survival.⁶³ The aristocracy obviously retained their power in the spheres where they had influence; to argue that aristocratic control disappeared overnight would be a deception. New proprietary boroughs – such as Huddersfield – were established, as the old ones were being disenfranchised. The new voters adopted the procedures and rituals of the old; the patrons echoed the techniques of control and the people followed the path of popular electoral participation discovered by their forefathers.

R. J. Morris, in contrast, has argued that the continuation of patrician influence should be placed alongside the triumph of the new independent boroughs where the middle classes were able to establish their own institutions to counterbalance the social power of the rural aristocracy.⁶⁴ In this interpretation, the aristocracy were forced to change their behaviour to take into account this new force in British society and politics, rather than merely absorbing the middle class into their own ranks. Yet James Vernon asserts that the success of the Whig politicians in incorporating the middle classes into the political nation was a retrogressive step, slamming shut the portals of power to the mass of the population and stifling ‘a radical libertarian tradition’. Vernon also highlights the fact that the Act assigned the franchise to ‘a male person’ for the first time as a sign of women’s withdrawal from politics.⁶⁵ However, recent work has thrown doubt upon this withdrawal, for women’s engagement was both widely acknowledged and highly contested. The first petition for female suffrage was presented to Parliament in 1832 and leading radical politicians, such as James Silk Buckingham, supported the cause.⁶⁶

The number of men participating in elections was much greater after 1832 than before, even though the proportion of the voters to the total population increased only very slightly after 1832. However, the lack of contested elections before 1832 meant that the number of voters who actually had the opportunity to exercise their vote was much smaller than those nominally possessing the franchise. The benefits of registration which were inaugurated by the Act meant that for the first time it was possible to calculate accurately the size of the electorate. Derek Beales has demonstrated that over three times as many people voted in 1832 as in the earlier period.⁶⁷ This effect was even more striking in Scotland and Wales. In 1830 there had been no Welsh contests and only 239 people had voted in Scotland.

This notion of electoral participation can be augmented if turnout figures are compared before and after the Reform Act. Registration procedures encouraged high turnouts. Registration also positively encouraged qualified people to consider themselves as voters and gave substance to the hitherto shadowy notion of an electorate. Voters were clearly aware of their right to vote and political parties and canvassers could, if they so wished, pursue reluctant voters and ‘encourage’ them to come to the poll. Turnout rates were often above ninety per cent in the 1830s and remained extraordinarily high compared with contemporary expectations of around seventy per cent.

The Reform Act ushered in a period in which, almost universally, partisan voting was the norm. One commentator has even claimed that 'reform quickly destroyed the political system that had prevailed during the long reign of George III and replaced it with an essentially modern electoral system based on rigid partisanship and clearly articulated political principle'.⁶⁸ Split voting grew increasingly uncommon after 1832, and partisan voting in all types of constituencies, not just those where party conflict was especially strong, dominated the electoral scene. Voters began to develop enduring loyalties to particular political parties and repeat their choice of party at each election. This is in marked contrast to elections earlier in the eighteenth century when the so-called 'floating vote' was an unstable and often decisive factor in elections.⁶⁹

The decades after the 1832 Reform Act revived theoretical debates about the franchise and the process of elections. The 1835 Municipal Corporations Act provided one practical focus for these debates and the enfranchisement of ratepayers was too close to the idea of household suffrage or even universal suffrage for many conservatives. However, it disenfranchised the few women who had voted in local elections in boroughs (although single and widowed women could still vote in some poor law vestry elections).⁷⁰ As with the 1832 Act, the implications of municipal reform proved more threatening in theory than in practice. By 1851 only eighteen cities and boroughs had taken advantage of the Act and established reformed corporations. Those corporations that existed retained restrictive electorates. It was not until the passage of the Small Tenements Act, which allowed for the enfranchisement of occupiers even if they did not pay their rates in person, that the municipal electorate became representative.⁷¹

The Chartist movement objected to the exclusion of most working-class men from the 1832 Reform Act and claimed universal manhood suffrage on the basis of natural rights, the ancient constitution, and social and economic grievances. Their People's Charter demanded universal manhood suffrage, abolition of property qualifications for Members of Parliament, payment of Members, annual parliaments, equal electoral districts, and the secret ballot. Although the first draft of the People's Charter had not distinguished between male and female universal suffrage, the qualification was tightened because it was argued that an adherence to female suffrage would retard the general movement for increased political rights. This proved to be an ongoing debate within the movement.⁷²

The Chartists rejected the narrower household franchise, bringing themselves into opposition with many middle-class radical politicians who supported other aspects of the Charter. For example, George Grote introduced an annual measure for secret ballot from 1833 to 1841. Efforts to extend the franchise were introduced in the Commons after 1839; the most notable was Joseph Hume's proposal for household suffrage, the ballot and equal electoral districts in 1848. More successfully, a Corrupt Practices Act was passed in 1854 which gave precise definitions of corrupt practices, including bribery, and assigned penalties for those found guilty. It was not until the 1850s that the front benches of the two major parties began to consider the possibilities for further reform. Russell introduced three bills in 1852, 1854 and 1860 and Disraeli introduced one bill in 1859. However, these measures were distinguished from those introduced by the radicals because their main principle was to retain the existing property franchise rather than replace it with a household qualification or universal suffrage.

The Second Reform Act

The Second Reform Act extended the suffrage to most male householders in borough constituencies. Historians generally explain the passage of the Second Reform Act as the result of complex and confusing manoeuvrings for advantage between Gladstone and Disraeli. However, contemporary debates centred around how and whether the working classes should be incorporated into the constitution.⁷³

As labour unions grew more moderate and disciplined, concentrating on the exclusive interests of skilled working men and co-operating with Liberals on issues such as municipal reform, the prospects for franchise extension improved.⁷⁴ Gladstone and his Liberal supporters therefore formulated a moral vision of citizenship and the nation which could unite working men and the middle classes into the People, instead of what he perceived as the Conservatives' adherence to a class-divided society.⁷⁵ He introduced his Reform Bill extending the franchise to urban male working-class householders by arguing that they were 'the fathers of families' and 'our own flesh and blood'.

However, according to Charles Seymour, Gladstone's 1866 bill was carefully calibrated to ensure that while it would increase working-class representation, the middle class would still predominate. Gladstone's bill would have reduced the voting

qualification in the boroughs from £10 to £7, and enfranchised lodgers who paid an annual rent of £10, who were expected to be middle class. In an important shift, Gladstone would have also weakened the link between taxation and representation by doing away with the clause that insisted that voters must be ratepayers, because landlords paid the rates of many tenants (known as compounding the rates).⁷⁶

Gladstone's bill, however, failed, technically on the point of whether property should be assessed on rateable value or actual rent, but also because of substantial opposition on its principles from Conservatives and even Liberals such as Robert Lowe. Some feared that the working class would upset the balance of different interests in the House of Commons.⁷⁷ Utilitarians such as J. Roebuck and R. Lowe denounced the notion that men had a 'natural right' to vote; instead, they must prove their fitness for this privilege.⁷⁸

Although the working-class organisations had not focused on reform during the early 1860s, they and their allies regarded the rejection of Gladstone's 1866 bill as an insult, and started to agitate more strenuously for reform.⁷⁹ They argued that they deserved the vote because of their property in skill.⁸⁰ They organised mass meetings and when they were forbidden to meet in Hyde Park in 1866, a minor riot ensued.⁸¹

Of course, Disraeli did not introduce his Reform Bill because of the riots, or even out of principle; rather, he eventually manoeuvred it through Parliament on the basis of political advantage. Yet the mass agitation of working-class artisans and middle class reformers did play some part in the impetus for reform, as F. B. Smith argues, though Maurice Cowling disagrees.⁸² Both Liberals and Conservatives were forced to accept a bill which went further than they had desired, making working-class voters the majority rather than selectively enfranchising respectable artisans. Disraeli introduced a bill which would have expanded the borough franchise but also allowed a dual vote for wealthier property owners and professionals. These 'fancy franchises' were stripped away in committee, however. In the end, the final bill gave the vote to practically all rate-paying male householders in boroughs, but, as a compromise, also to lodgers renting rooms worth ten pounds a year.⁸³ Due to pressure from Gladstone, Disraeli had been forced to accept an amendment prohibiting the compounding of rates (the payment of local taxes by landlords) and substitute the personal payment of rates; this was to ensure that voters had to earn their privilege through paying taxes. But the personal payment of rates

was impractical; tenants revolted against this provision, so in the end, the requirement that voters be ratepayers was dropped, and the link between taxation and representation disappeared on a technicality. In the end, four main franchises existed in the boroughs: ten pound occupation, household and lodger, plus the remaining ‘ancient right’ franchises pre-existing the act. In the counties, the electorate was increased to a lesser extent by a £12 occupation franchise and a reduction in the lease and copyholder qualification from ten pounds to five pounds.

The Reform Act for Scotland resembled that for England.⁸⁴ The Irish county franchise had already been doubled in 1850 and the Irish Reform Act, passed reluctantly by Disraeli in the face of Fenianism, only reduced the borough qualification from eight pounds to four pounds while ‘the county franchise was maintained at the 1850 level of twelve pounds’. This Act basically enfranchised most borough ratepayers, though still excluding ‘the very lowest’, and increased the borough electorate from 30,955 to 45,625.⁸⁵

The impact of the Third Reform Act was to add 1,119,226 men to the United Kingdom electorate, nearly doubling it, and making the working class the majority of voters.⁸⁶ However, many working class artisans and miners in urban districts of counties still could not vote, as well as, of course, agricultural labourers. Many working men complained that the Act did not go far enough.⁸⁷ The Third Reform Act did not do away with the problem of corruption and intimidation, although the increased size of constituencies made bribery more difficult and expensive. The Secret Ballot Act of 1872, however, went far in ensuring the independence of voters.⁸⁸

Women’s Suffrage

The agitation around the Reform Act inspired feminists, already active for married women’s property rights and educational opportunities, to campaign for the vote.⁸⁹ In the campaigns for women’s suffrage in the 1860s and 1870s, however, they tended to espouse a rather conservative rationale for the vote on the basis of single women’s property holding and historical precedents. Organised in the Kensington Society, they wrote a petition for James Stuart Mill to present to Parliament.⁹⁰ On 20 May 1867, Parliament actually debated, but rejected, Mill’s motion for women to be included in the Representation of the People Bill on the same basis as men (i.e. single women householders). The women’s suffrage movement grew, nonetheless, with committees all over Britain.

In the 1869 Municipal Franchise Act, however, Dr Richard Pankhurst was enable to insert a clause preventing the Act from extending the franchise only to male occupiers, on the grounds that women ratepayers had long enjoyed the vote in local government. The next year, therefore, women could vote for, and even serve on school boards, although in 1872 the courts decided that married women could not vote in local elections because of the doctrine of coverture. The first woman poor law guardian was elected in 1875, but women could not run for office in local government until 1907.⁹¹

Agitation for women's suffrage continued, and the first women's suffrage bill was introduced in 1870. It did pass its second reading, and was debated in 1871, but was rejected in committee, under pressure from Gladstone, who also pressured MPs to reject the 1872 bill. However, the biggest push came in 1873, when the Household Franchise Bill was introduced to give the agricultural labourers in the counties the vote bestowed on borough inhabitants by the Second Reform Act. Jacob Bright unsuccessfully moved an amendment to enfranchise single and widowed ratepaying heads of households.⁹²

Conclusion

The failure to enfranchise women demonstrated the limits of constitutional change. The franchise in Britain was always a privilege, not a right. The 1832 Reform Act incorporated middle-class men into the constitution but retained aristocratic power. The Second Reform Act was shaped by the notion of enfranchising 'deserving' working men, but even after the Reform Act of 1884 a third of adult men lacked the vote. Nonetheless, the Second Reform Act had introduced the principle of numbers which slowly led to almost complete universal suffrage in England, Wales and Scotland by 1928.

*Anna Clark,
University of Minnesota*

*Sarah Richardson,
University of Warwick*

Notes

- 1 John Freeman and Duncan Snidal, 'Diffusion, Development and Democratisation: Enfranchisement in Western Europe', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 15 (1982) pp. 299-329.

- 2 J. G. A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge, 1957, New York, 1967); J. Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815–1867* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 295–330.
- 3 E. and A. G. Porritt, *The Unreformed House of Commons*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1903), vol. I, p. 20.
- 4 E. F. Jacob, *The Fifteenth Century, 1399–1485* (Oxford, 1961), p. 415.
- 5 J. E. Neale, *The Elizabethan House of Commons* (London, 1949), p. 27.
- 6 M. McKisack, *The Parliamentary Representation of the English Boroughs During the Middle Ages*; J. Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform 1640–1832* (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 1–2.
- 7 Derek Hirst, *The Representative of the People? Voters and Voting in England under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 19–25, 105.
- 8 Contrast Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, p. 191 and M. Kishlansky, *Parliamentary Selection: Social and Political Choice in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 12.
- 9 Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform* and J. Plumb, 'The Growth of the Electorate in England from 1600–1715', *Past and Present*, 45 (1969), pp. 90–116.
- 10 Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, pp. 21–3 and K. Thomas, 'The Levellers and the Franchise', *The Interregnum*, ed. G. E. Aylmer (London, 1972).
- 11 For details, see V. Snow, 'Parliamentary Reapportionment Proposals in the Puritan Revolution', *English Historical Review*, 1959, pp. 409–42.
- 12 See particularly G. Holmes, *The Electorate and the National Will in the First Age of Party* (Kendal, 1976) and W. A. Speck, *Tory and Whig: The Struggle in the Constituencies, 1701–1715* (London, 1970).
- 13 Holmes, *The Electorate and the National Will*, p. 15 and F. O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History, 1688–1832* (London, 1997), p. 39. It should be noted, however, that precise figures on the size of the electorate are difficult to obtain in an age before voter registration. Calculations are made using both the 'voterate', that is the number of electors turning out to vote, and the turnover of voters from one election to another.
- 14 W. A. Speck, 'The Electorate in the First Age of Party', *Britain in the First Age of Party. Essays presented to G Holmes*, ed. C. Jones (London, 1987), p. 46.
- 15 Holmes, *The Electorate and the National Will*, p. 15.
- 16 S. W. Baskerville, P. Adman and K. F. Beedham, 'The Dynamics of Landlord Influence in English County Elections, 1701–1734: The Evidence from Cheshire', *Parliamentary History*, 12 (1993), pp. 126–42 and R. Hall, 'Political Persuasion: Politicians and the Electorate in Yorkshire County Elections, 1708–42', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Coventry, 1997).
- 17 Yorkshire petition of 1734 cited in Hall, 'Political Persuasion', p. 146.
- 18 Speck, 'The Electorate in the First Age of Party', p. 46. For the influence of the clergy in elections see S. W. Baskerville, 'The Political Behaviour of the Cheshire Clergy, 1705–52', *Northern History*, (1987) and R. Hall and S. Richardson, *The Anglican Clergy and Yorkshire Elections in the Eighteenth Century* (York, 1998).

- 19 For more precise information on the nature of the franchise see the volumes of the history of Parliament: R. R. Sedgwick, *The House of Commons, 1715–1754*, 2 vols (London, 1970); L. Namier and J. Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754–1790*, 3 vols (London, 1964) and R. G. Thorne, *The House of Commons, 1790–1820*, 5 vols (London, 1986).
- 20 Hirst, *The Representative of the People?*, p. 18 and Elaine Chalus, 'Women, Electoral Privilege and Practice in the Eighteenth Century', *The Power of the Petticoat: Women in British Politics, 1760–1860*, eds Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (Basingstoke, forthcoming).
- 21 H. L. Smith, 'Women as Sextons and Electors: King's Bench and Precedents for Women's Citizenships', *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition*, ed. H. L. Smith (Cambridge, 1998).
- 22 Susan Staves, 'Investment, Votes, and "Bribes": Women as Shareholders in the Chartered National Companies', *Women Writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 259–78.
- 23 F. O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: the Unreformed Electoral System of Hanoverian England 1734–1832* (Oxford, 1989), p. 13. See, for example, W. A. Speck, 'Brackley: a Study in the Growth of Oligarchy', *Midland History*, 1975, pp. 30–41. For successes, see O'Gorman, p. 279.
- 24 For information on the Scottish and Irish electoral systems see Porritt and Porritt, *The Unreformed House of Commons*, vol. 2.
- 25 M. Dyer, *Men of Property and Intelligence. The Scottish Electoral System prior to 1884* (Aberdeen, 1996), p. 24; M. Dyer, 'Burgh Districts and the Representation of Scotland, 1707–1983', *Parliamentary History*, 15 (1996), pp. 287–300.
- 26 See, for example, Porritt and Porritt, *The Unreformed House of Commons*; L. B. Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (London, 1929); Holmes, *The Electorate and the National Will*; Speck, *Tory and Whig*; J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688–1832* (Cambridge, 1985).
- 27 O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 179.
- 28 O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties* and J. A. Phillips, *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England, 1761–1802* (Princeton, 1982).
- 29 F. O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in Unreformed England, 1760–1832', *Journal of Modern History*, 56 (1984), pp. 391–429.
- 30 Recent research has emphasised the existence of a vital and active urban political culture after 1715. See, for example, N. Rogers, *Whigs and Cities: Popular Politics in the Age of Walpole and Pitt* (Oxford, 1989) and K. Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715–1785* (Cambridge, 1995).
- 31 Rogers, *Whigs and Cities*, pp. 250–4; Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*, p. 50.
- 32 A. Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: the English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), p. 52.
- 33 Goodwin, *Friends of Liberty*, p. 54; C. H. Hay, *James Burgh, Spokesman for Reform in Hanoverian England* (Washington DC, 1979).
- 34 H. T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 1995), p. 40; this was also an issue in the 1776

- elections in a few constituencies in Ireland; R. B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760–1801* (Oxford, 1979), p. 293.
- 35 Goodwin, *Friends of Liberty*, p. 38.
- 36 Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*, pp. 60–2.
- 37 Dickinson, *The Politics of the People*, p. 229.
- 38 G. Meadley, *A Sketch of the Various Proposals for Constitutional Reform in the Representation of the People, introduced into the Parliament of Great Britain, from 1770–1812* (London, 1812).
- 39 John Horne Tooke, *A Letter on Parliamentary Reform, Containing the Sketch of a Plan*, 2nd edn (London [written 1782]).
- 40 In general, see R. B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution*; also *A Letter from his Grace the Duke of Richmond to Lt Colonel Sharman, Chairman to the Committee of Correspondence appointed by the Delegates of forty-five corps of Volunteers, assembled at Lisburn in Ireland, with Notes by a member of the Society for Constitutional Information*, 3rd edn (London, 1795 [written 1783]); *A Collection of the Letters which have been Addressed to the Volunteers of Ireland on the Subject of a Parliamentary Reform, by the Earl of Effingham, Doctor Price, Major Cartwright, Doctor Jebb, and the Rev. Mr. Wyvill, with a letter of the Rev. Mr. Northcote* (London, 1783).
- 41 T. Hoppen, *Conflict and Conformity: Ireland since 1800* (London, 1995), p. 50.
- 42 James Kelly, 'Parliamentary Reform in Irish Politics', *The United Irishmen. Republicans, Radicalism and Rebellion*, eds David Dickson et al (Dublin, 1993); Jim Smyth, *Men of No Property* (Dublin, 1997); McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism*, pp. 362, 380; Goodwin, *Friends of Liberty*, p. 421.
- 43 J. Dwyer and A. Murdoch, 'Paradigms and Politics: Manners, Morals, and the Rise of Henry Dundas, 1770–1784', *New Perspectives on the Politics and Culture of Early Modern Scotland*, eds J. Dwyer, R. A. Mason and A. Murdoch (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 237.
- 44 Archibald Fletcher, *Memoir Concerning the Origin and Progress of the Reform Proposed in the Internal Government of the Royal Burgh of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1819).
- 45 Dickinson, *Politics of the People*, pp. 121–3; Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*, p. 110; G. S. Veitch, *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform* (London, 1964 [1913]), p. 243.
- 46 'Debate on Reform of Parliament', *Parliamentary History of England* (London, 1818), vol. 33, p. 650.
- 47 Goodwin, *Friends of Liberty*, p. 117.
- 48 Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* ed. Mariam Kramnick (Harmondsworth, 1978 [1792]), pp. 127–54; George Phillips, *The Necessity for a Speedy and Effectual Reform in Parliament* (Manchester, 1792), p. 12; Thomas Cooper, *Reply to Mr. Burke's Invective* (London, 1792) quoted in Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought* (Boston, 1989), p. 124; Thomas Spence, *Something to the Purpose* (London, n.d.); *The Cabinet* (Norwich: 1793), vol. II, p. 44.
- 49 Goodwin, *Friends of Liberty*, p.192.

- 50 *The Plan of Reform proposed by Sir Francis Burdett*, 2nd edn (London, 1809).
- 51 J. R. Dinwiddy, 'Sir Francis Burdett and Burdettite Radicalism', *History*, n.s., 65 (1980), p. 21.
- 52 James Mill, 'Essay on Government', *Utilitarian Logic and Politics*, eds J. Lively and J. Rees (Oxford, 1978), p. 79; Jeremy Bentham, *Catechism of Parliamentary Reform* (London, 1812).
- 53 *Substance of the Speeches of Lord John Russell on Moving Resolutions on Reform of Parliament on May 9, 1821 and April 25, 1822* (London, 1822), p. 73.
- 54 Clark, *English Society*, p. 409.
- 55 See, for example, D. C. Moore, *The Politics of Deference* (Brighton, 1976).
- 56 O'Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century*, p. 366.
- 57 For details of the 1832 Act, see Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform*.
- 58 K. Theodore Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832–1885* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 1–5.
- 59 C. Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales: the Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise, 1832–1885* (New Haven, 1915).
- 60 N. Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel* (London, 1953); O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, pp. 384–93; and Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 31.
- 61 Gash, *Politics in the Age of Peel*, pp. x–xi and O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties*, p. 392.
- 62 Bagehot, cited in J. Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857–1868* (London, 1966), pp. 1–2.
- 63 Moore, *The Politics of Deference* and P. Mandler, *Aristocratic Government in the Age of Reform: Whigs and Liberals, 1830–1852* (Oxford, 1990).
- 64 R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: the Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds, 1820–1850* (Manchester, 1990).
- 65 Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, pp. 46–7.
- 66 See, for example, K. Gleadle, *The Early Feminists* (Basingstoke, 1995); Gleadle and Richardson, *The Power of the Petticoat*; and E. J. Yeo, ed., *Radical Femininity. Women's Self-Representation in the Public Sphere* (Manchester, 1998).
- 67 D. Beales, 'The Electorate Before and After 1832: the Right to Vote and the Opportunity', *Parliamentary History*, 2 (1992).
- 68 J. A. Phillips and C. Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Act of 1832 and the Political Modernization of England', *American Historical Review*, C (1995), pp. 411–36. See also J. A. Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behaviour, 1818–1841* (Oxford, 1992).
- 69 For these arguments see Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs*.
- 70 B. Keith-Lucas, *The English Local Government Franchise* (Oxford, 1952), p. 165.
- 71 M. Taylor, 'Interests, Parties and the State: the Urban Electorate in England, c. 1820–1872', *Party, State and Society. Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820*, eds J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (Aldershot, 1997), p. 61.

- 72 D. Thompson, *The Chartists* (London, 1984) and A. Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (London, 1995).
- 73 Anna Clark, 'Gender, Class and the Constitution: Franchise Reform in England, 1832–1928', *Rereading the Constitution*, ed. James Vernon (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 239–43.
- 74 Vernon, *Politics and the People*, p. 321.
- 75 Hansard Parliamentary Debates, vol. 182, 3rd series, 12 March 1866, cols 56–60; also H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone 1809–1874* (Oxford, 1986), p. 140. For Gladstone's moral vision, see Boyd Hilton, 'Gladstone's Theological Politics', *High and Low Politics in Modern Britain*, eds M. Bentley and J. Stevenson (Oxford, 1983), p. 30. For class conflict versus the notion of the People, see P. Joyce, *Visions of the People. Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848–1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 49; K. McClelland, 'Masculinity and the Representative Artisan in Britain, 1850–1900', *Manful Assertions: Masculinity in Britain since 1800*, eds M. Roper and J. Tosh (London, 1991), p. 84.
- 76 Seymour, *Electoral Reform*, p. 249.
- 77 Henry Rich, MP, *Parliamentary Reform. What and Where*, 2nd edn (London, 1848); *Reform Bill* (London, 1859).
- 78 R. Lowe, *Speeches and Letters on Reform* (London, 1867), pp. 48, 36.
- 79 M. Finn, *After Chartism* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 238–52.
- 80 Stefan Collini, 'The Idea of "Character" in Victorian Political Thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 35 (1985), p. 31; Moore, *Politics of Deference*, p. 433; *National Reformer*, 16 September 1866; *Beehive*, 20 October 1866.
- 81 See F. B. Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge, 1966); Frances Gillespie, *Labour and Politics in England, 1850–1867* (Durham, NC, 1927).
- 82 Smith, *Making of the Second Reform Bill*, p. 142; Maurice Cowling, *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution. The Passing of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge, 1967).
- 83 'Representation of the People Act, 1867', *The Nineteenth Century Constitution, 1815–1914: Documents and Commentary*, ed. H. J. Hanham (Cambridge, 1969), p. 273; R. Harrison, *Before the Socialists: Studies in Labour and Politics, 1861–1881* (London, 1981), p. 99; J. Davis, 'Slums and the Vote, 1867–90', *Historical Research*, 64, 155 (1991), p. 387.
- 84 For Scotland, see Dyer, *Men of Property and Intelligence*, p. 100; J. B. Nicolson, *An Analysis of the Scotch Reform Act, 1868* (Edinburgh, 1868).
- 85 Hoppen, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832–1885*, p. 32.
- 86 Smith, *Making of the Second Reform Act*, p. 236.
- 87 W. Hayes, *The Background and Passage of the Third Reform Act* (New York, 1982), p. 16.
- 88 For the ballot, see B. Kinzer, *The Ballot Question in Nineteenth-Century British Politics* (New York and London, 1982).
- 89 For a comparison of feminist and working men's claims for the vote, see Clark, 'Gender, Class, and the Constitution'.

- 90 H. Blackburn, *Women's Suffrage: A Record of the Women's Suffrage Movement in the British Isles* (London, 1902), p. 56.
- 91 Lucas, *Local Government*, p. 166; P. Hollis, *Ladies Elect. Women in English Local Government 1865-1914* (Oxford, 1987).
- 92 Blackburn, *Women's Suffrage*, p. 107.

SELECT SECONDARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beales, Derek, 'The Electorate Before and After 1832: the Right to Vote and the Opportunity', *Parliamentary History*, II (1992), pp.139–50.
- Biagini, Eugenio, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform* (Cambridge, 1992).
- Blackburn, Helen, *Women's Suffrage: A Record of the Women's Suffrage Movement in the British Isles* (London, 1902).
- Blewett, Neal, 'The Franchise in the United Kingdom 1885–1918', *Past and Present*, XXXII (1965), pp. 27–56.
- Cannon, John, *Parliamentary Reform 1640–1832* (Cambridge, 1973).
- Chalus, Elaine, 'Women, Electoral Privilege and Practice in the Eighteenth Century', *The Power of the Petticoat: Women in British Politics, 1760–1860*, eds Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson (Basingstoke, forthcoming).
- Clark, Anna, 'Gender, Class and the Constitution: Franchise Reform in England, 1832–1928', *Rereading the Constitution*, ed. James Vernon (Cambridge, 1996).
- Cone, Carl B., *The English Jacobins* (New York, 1968).
- Cowling, Maurice, 1867: *Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution. The Passing of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge, 1967).
- Davis, J., *Reforming London. The London Government Problem 1855–1900* (Oxford, 1988).
- Davis, J., 'Slums and the Vote, 1867–90', *Historical Research*, LXIV (1991), pp. 375–98.
- Dickinson, H. T., *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York, 1995).
- Dyer, Michael, *Men of Property and Intelligence. The Scottish Electoral System prior to 1884* (Aberdeen, 1996).
- Dyer, Michael, 'Burgh Districts and the Representation of Scotland, 1707–1832', *Parliamentary History*, XV (1996), pp. 287–300.
- Epstein, James A., 'The Constitutional Idiom: Radical Reasoning, Rhetoric and Action in Early Nineteenth-Century England', *Journal of Social History*, XXIII (1990), pp. 553–73.
- Freeman, John and Duncan Snidal, 'Diffusion, Development and Democratisation: Enfranchisement in Western Europe', *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, XV (1982), pp. 299–329.
- Frow, Ruth and Edmund, eds, *Political Women 1800–1850* (London, 1989).
- Garner, John, *The Franchise and Politics in British North America 1755–1867* (Toronto, 1969).
- Gillespie, Frances, *Labour and Politics in England, 1850–1867* (Durham, NC, 1927).
- Goodwin, Albert, *The Friends of Liberty: the English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).
- Hall, Catherine, 'Rethinking Imperial Histories: The Reform Act of 1867', *New Left Review*, CXVIII (1994), pp. 3–29.

- Harrison, Brian, *Separate Spheres: the Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (New York, 1978).
- Harrison, Brian, 'Women's Suffrage at Westminster, 1866-1928', *High and Low Politics in Modern Britain*, eds Michael Bentley and John Stevenson (Oxford, 1983).
- Harrison, Royden, *Before the Socialists: Studies in Labour and Politics, 1861-1881* (London, 1981).
- Hayes, W., *The Background and Passage of the Third Reform Act* (New York, 1982).
- Hirst, Derek, *The Representative of the People? Voters and Voting in England under the Early Stuarts* (Cambridge, 1975).
- Hollis, Patricia, *Class and Conflict in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1973).
- Holmes, G., *The Electorate and the National Will in the First Age of Party* (Kendal, 1976).
- Holton, Sandra Stanley, *Feminism and Democracy. Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918* (Cambridge, 1986).
- Hoppen, K. Theodore, *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland, 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984).
- Irving, Helen, *To Constitute a Nation. A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution* (Cambridge, 1997).
- Jones, Andrew, *The Politics of Reform 1884* (Cambridge, 1972).
- Keith-Lucas, B., *The English Local Government Franchise* (Oxford, 1952).
- Kent, Susan Kingsley, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (Princeton, 1987).
- Kinzer, Bruce, *The Ballot Question in Nineteenth-Century British Politics* (New York and London, 1982).
- Kishlansky, Mark, *Parliamentary Selection: Social and Political Choice in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1986).
- Leneman, Leah, *A Guid Cause. The Women's Suffrage Movement in Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1991).
- Levine, Philippa, *Victorian Feminism* (Tallahassee, 1987).
- Lewis, Jane, ed., *Before the Vote was Won: Arguments for and against Women's Suffrage* (New York, 1987).
- McClelland, Keith, 'Masculinity and the Representative Artisan in Britain, 1850-1900', *Manful Assertions: Masculinity in Britain since 1800*, eds M. Roper and J. Tosh (London, 1991).
- Moore, D. C., *The Politics of Deference* (Brighton, 1976).
- Namier, Lewis and J. Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754-1790*, 3 vols (London, 1964).
- Phillips, J. A. and C. Wetherell, 'The Great Reform Act of 1832 and the Political Modernization of England', *American Historical Review*, C (1995), pp. 411-36.
- Phillips, J. A., *Electoral Behaviour in Unreformed England, 1761-1802* (Princeton, 1982).
- Plumb, J., 'The Growth of the Electorate in England from 1600-1715', *Past and Present*, XLV (1969), pp. 90-116.
- Porritt, E. and A. G., *The Unreformed House of Commons*, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1903).
- Pugh, Martin, *Electoral Reform in War and Peace 1906-1918* (London, 1978).

xl *History of Suffrage 1760–1867: Volume 1*

- Rover, Constance, *Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in Britain, 1866–1914* (London, 1967).
- Sedgwick, R. R., *The House of Commons, 1715–1754*, 2 vols (London, 1970).
- Seymour, Charles, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales: the Development and Operation of the Parliamentary Franchise, 1832–1885* (New Haven, 1915).
- Smith, F. B., *The Making of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge, 1966).
- Smith, Hilda L., 'Women as Sextons and Electors: King's Bench and Precedents for Women's Citizenships', *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition*, ed. Hilda L. Smith (Cambridge, 1998).
- Speck, W. A., 'The Electorate in the First Age of Party', *Britain in the First Age of Party. Essays Presented to G. Holmes*, ed. C. Jones (London, 1987).
- Strachey, Ray, *The Cause. A Short History of the Women's Movement in Great Britain* (London, 1978 [1928]).
- Taylor, Miles, 'Interests, Parties and the State: the Urban Electorate in England, c. 1820–1872', *Party, State and Society. Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820*, eds J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (Aldershot, 1997).
- Thomas, Keith, 'The Levellers and the Franchise', *The Interregnum*, ed. G. E. Aylmer (London, 1972).
- Thorne, R. G., *The House of Commons, 1790–1820*, 5 vols (London, 1986).
- Veitch, George S., *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform* (London, 1964 [1913]).
- Vernon, James, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815–1867* (Cambridge, 1993).
- Walker, B. M., 'The Irish Electorate 1868–1922', *Irish Historical Review*, XVIII (1973), pp. 359–406.
- Wood, G. A., 'The 1878 Electoral Bill and Franchise Reform in 19th Century New Zealand', *Pacific Studies*, XXVIII (1976), pp. 41–58.

Reflexions on Representation in Parliament

Reflexions on Representation in Parliament: Being An Attempt to shew the Equity and Practicability, not only of establishing a more equal representation throughout Great Britain, but also of admitting the American to a Share in the Legislature: with An Enumeration of the principal Benefits which would result from these Measures, both to the Colonies and the Mother-Country. (London: W. Flexney, 1766)

This pamphlet demonstrates the strong connection that was made by contemporaries between a more equal representative system in Britain and the necessity of a system of incorporating the colonies, notably America, within the British constitution. It was published in the midst of the turmoil caused by the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 in which it was claimed by leading parliamentarians that the colonies were 'virtually represented' by the British Parliament. Opponents to this view – which included a wide range of British and American politicians – linked the payment of taxation to the necessity for direct representation and these points are reiterated by the author of this tract. It is again claimed that the ancient practice of representation demands that 'every man, as near as possible' (in the eyes of the author this means all men with sufficient property to be immune from undue influence) should have an influence in the public bodies representing him. The author also calls for the registration of voters and an end to local representation, replacing it with a distribution of seats according to the population. He describes in great detail how such a scheme would work in America and Britain's other colonies including Ireland and the West Indies. It is asserted that a reform in the system of representation is necessary for the maintenance of the British Empire.

REFLEXIONS, &c.

IN order to determine whether or no the colonists and non-electors of Great Britain can reasonably claim a representation in parliament, it will be necessary to enquire into the origin of representation, and to sift out the true principles whereon the right of their fellow-subjects, the electors, is founded; for if they all plead the same title, their pretensions must be made good by the same proofs.

“ It was formerly disputed with great
 “ acrimony, says Mr. Hume, history of
 “ England, vol. I. p. 407, Appendix 2d.
 “ whether the commons or the represen-
 “ tatives of counties and boroughs, were
 “ in the more early times constituent parts
 “ of parliament: But such is the force of
 “ time and evidence, that they can some-
 “ times prevail even over faction, and the
 “ question seems by general consent, and
 “ even by their own, to be at last deter-
 “ mined against the ruling party. It is
 “ agreed, that the commons were no
 B “ part

“ part of the great council, till some ages
“ after the conquest, and that the military
“ tenants alone of the crown composed
“ that supreme and legislative assembly.”
As time and evidence have in this dispute
prevailed over faction and prejudice, so it
must be every honest man’s wish, that they
may be equally successful in all ; it is
therefore with a view to promote this de-
sirable end, in a question of the utmost im-
portance to these kingdoms, that the pub-
lic is troubled with the following reflexions
at this interesting juncture.

If then there was a time when the house
of commons made no part of the legisla-
ture, it is an obvious question, How came
they ever to be admitted to a share in it ?
On what principle were representatives al-
lowed of, when and by whom were they
chosen ? A brief review of the alterations
which took place in the British constitu-
tion, in the reigns immediately succeeding
the conquest, will lead us to the true an-
swer to these questions. William the 1st.
established the feudal system in England, a
system founded on this principle, or rather
fiction of law, that the property of all the
lands in the kingdom was vested in the
crown. As this, like other fictions of law,
was in its nature highly extravagant and ab-

absurd, the feudal government was hardly established here before it began to be relaxed.

The barons, or immediate tenants of the crown, asserted in great measure their independence as early as the reigns of Henry the II^d. and John. The commons, or tenants of the barons, were not slow to follow this example, as far as they were able, and accordingly we find the representatives both of counties and boroughs appearing in the next reign, at the meetings of Simon de Montfort and his confederates, Hume's history, vol. II. p. 46. Every man's indefeasible title to his property, not dependent on the will, either of the crown or his lord, being by this time tolerably ascertained, not only his interest in the community was acknowledged, but his right also to a proportionable influence in it. Since in the same degree that he is concerned for the security of the publick, ought he to influence those measures which are taken to provide for that security? not only equity demands this, but the good of the state, which are indeed inseparable: for they are least likely to pursue designs detrimental to the commonwealth, who are most exposed to suffer by them. But since in the national councils of large com-

munities, it is impossible to allow every man a vote in person ; that none however might be entirely excluded, who were entitled to share in them, the scheme of representation was devised : A scheme intended originally to give every man, as near as possible, an influence in the publick deliberations proportioned to his interest in them. These then are the principles, on which every township was allowed representatives, and every man of property in that township, admitted to vote for them. This is the theory of the British constitution, which if founded on truth and reason, every deviation from it in practice, must be a deviation from truth and reason : and yet notwithstanding its boasted improvements of late, it has well nigh lost entirely this, perhaps its most essential excellence ; the equality of representation.

An attention to the conduct of those who framed the constitution, will best enable us to form a true idea of what it was in its original purity. In those times, England, comparatively speaking, had neither manufactures nor commerce ; what little there was of the latter, was chiefly carried on by the cinque ports, and the exporters of tin from Cornwall and Devonshire. The towns in these parts therefore, from the natural effects

effects of trade, becoming the repositories of property, and the residence of its owners; the wise and equitable policy of our ancestors, allowed them a weight in the legislature, proportioned to their interest in the community. Is it not then somewhat extraordinary, that these men should be called Barbarians, and stigmatized for their ignorance of the constitution, by those who have lived to see the representatives of the above named places almost as numerous as their constituents? Might it not be at least as just to tell their posterity, “ If ye know these things, happy are ye “ if ye do them?”.

That the constitution was really modeled upon the principles already laid down, will further appear from hence, that, as Dr. Blackstone observes in his commentaries, vol. I. p. 168. “ Trade being of a “ fluctuating nature, and seldom fixed long “ to a place, it was formerly left to the “ crown to summon *pro re natâ*; the most “ flourishing towns to send representatives “ to parliament : so that as towns increased “ in trade, and grew populous, they were “ admitted to a share in the legislature”. On these principles, and these only, the equity of extending this privilege to all the

the * non-electors throughout the British dominions, may be established, including Ireland, as well as the colonies. They possess a very large part of the trade and landed property of the commonwealth; their interest in its welfare is proportionable, their share in its legislature, none.

The arguments in their favour will appear perhaps in a stronger light, if we consider a little the nature and end of taxation, one of the most important branches of legislation: A tax may be defined to be a surrender of one part of a man's property, for the sake of securing the remainder; it is somewhat analagous to that cession which every man, on entering into civil government, makes of some of his natural rights, to enjoy the rest in greater security. Every man, in these kingdoms, is taxed; that is, a part of his property is taken from him, if this too be done without his consent, which is taking also a part of his liberty, in what sense can he be called free? If property intitles one man to representation, the title must extend to all who are possessed of it: Suppose the colonies disfranchised, a resump-

* Meaning always such whose property is sufficient to render them independent, and secure them, if they please, from undue influence.

tion of grants and charters can affect only those privileges conferred by them. Natural and civil rights are not of this kind, such are those which intitle men to personal liberty and private property, and the power of taxation, by which both these are affected, can reside only in the owner, or those to whom he has delegated it. An universal representation therefore of such men is no innovation in the constitution, it is merely a restoration of it to its original purity; from which indeed we have so long and so much deviated, that many seem almost entirely to have lost sight of it, and some are ready to deny that it ever existed. But that this is not altogether a popular argument invented to serve a present turn, will appear from hence, that attempts have heretofore been made to effect this desirable reformation. Among others, this, it is well known, was the design of Oliver Cromwell: A superficial reader may perhaps imagine, that the character of the schemer is sufficient to discredit his plan, but a careful investigation of the motives which prompted him to adopt it, will prove directly the reverse. Whoever attends to the history of England since the Conquest, cannot but observe, that the greatest acquisitions were made to liberty, and the most important steps taken towards

our present constitution under those kings who had least title to the throne : These princes yielded to the just demands of the people to secure their own ill-gotten power : The natural sagacity of Cromwell could not but suggest to him the expediency of a similar policy, without this lesson from history : He whose usurpation was the most flagrant, stood in need of the most upright administration : The worst of titles could not otherwise be proposed, than by the best of measures : Such he esteemed an equal representation of the people, and he well knew that they could not look upon it in any other light : He therefore undertook it not for their benefit, but his own security : Confident, that however equivocal might be the motives for his conduct, the advantages of it to the public were manifold and † uncontrovertible.

No man will pretend to deny, that the inequality of representation in these kingdoms, has been long complained of. The

† If any reader should have taken offence at the account before given of the origin of the house of commons, which he will find enlarged in Hume's history, vol. II. p. 46. he is desired to apply the reasoning here made use of, in regard to Cromwell, to the case of Simon de Montfort and his associates.

judicious author of the late commentaries, on the laws of England, concludes his account of parliament with these words, p. 166. “ This is the spirit of our constitution; not that I assert it is in fact quite so perfect as I have here endeavoured to describe it ; for, if any alteration might be wished or suggested in the present frame of parliament, it should be in favour of a more compleat representation of the people”. Will any man then contend for making this representation less compleat? So far from remedying the evil, will he assist in making it worse, and instead of thousands, extend it to hundreds of thousands; to all N. America, instead of a part of Great Britain? Why rather should it be tolerated any longer in either? Why not corrected in both? The right which property confers on one man, it must confer on all who have it: It’s nature continues the same, be the species of it what it will, it is still property, whether copyhold or freehold, real or personal. Tis true indeed, as the considerer of objections to the taxation of the colonies has affirmed: “ That copyholders, leaseholders, and all men possessed of personal property only, chuse no representatives”: But it is a gross mistake, to suppose any of them were excluded in the original plan, or on the genuine

C

nuine principles of the constitution: As for leaseholders and copyholders, Dr. Blackstone has assigned the true reason of their exclusion; where, speaking in his commentaries, p. 166, of the statutes by which the privilege of voting for knights of the shire, is confined to freeholders; he says, “ Because beneficial leases for long terms
“ of years, were not in use at the making
“ of these statutes; and copyholders were
“ then little better than villeins, absolute-
“ ly dependent on their lords”. Agreeable to the maxim whereon we have all along been arguing, having no inherent indefeasible right to their property, they had, comparatively, no interest in the community, and having no interest, were not entitled to any influence. But when this right to their property became once established, which has long been the case, their claim to representation cannot but follow, if it rested only on this foundation: That all who contribute towards taxes, ought, if possible, to consent to them. It is indeed pretty extraordinary to hear the considerer affirming, p. 6. “ That he knows
“ of no man who is taxed by his own con-
“ sent”. He cannot but know, that every man who votes for a representative, is taxed by his own consent, in the only way the consent of millions can be given, by dele-

delegation. But if he would confine his assertion to consenting in person, it is as easily overthrown: For, when a member of parliament possessed of 300*l. per ann.* votes for a land tax; is he, or is he not taxed by his own consent?

In regard to the latter part of the sentence, quoted above, “That the owners of personal property only chuse no representatives:” It may be observed from the commentaries before mentioned, p. 168: That, “As for the electors of citizens and burgesses, these are supposed to be the mercantile or trading interest of the kingdom”. I would ask, is the property of the trading part of the nation, real or personal? If personal, we see the owners of it were far enough from being excluded in the original scheme of the constitution; and in the present improved state of it, they exceed those of the landholders in a quadruple proportion. Should it be answered, that these electors are not the trading part of the nation; it might be further asked, Why are they not what they are supposed to be? Why indeed is not this universally the case, both of electors and representatives? Can any reason be assigned why the former should chuse men, who are understood to represent others, or the

latter be chosen by those whom they are not supposed to represent? *

It has been shewn, that in the infancy of the constitution, the utmost regard was had to property of every kind then existing, as conferring on its owners a right to representation. And as this maxim was for some ages so well attended to, that every town, as soon as it became considerable, was admitted to a share in the legislature, few individuals, who were intitled to it, could have been excluded; for freeholders were represented before, leaseholders were not in being, and copyholders in a state of dependence: Enough therefore has been said perhaps, not only to establish the equity of the measure, but to shew also, that it would be no innovation in the constitution, but only a reformation of it: It is

* It may perhaps be justly objected, that personal property is of so unstable and fluctuating a nature, that the allowance of representation to those possessed of it, would give occasion to endless confusion by illegal and fraudulent transfers at the time of elections; and that moreover, it is so extremely difficult to ascertain the amount of the property of men engaged in trade, that many of them cannot tell themselves what they are justly entitled to, with any degree of exactness; but this, however true, cannot at all affect the argument as far it regards the owners of permanent and real property; whether freeholders, leaseholders, or copyholders; Europeans, Americans, or West Indians.

the

the present state of representation alone, which can justly be called an innovation; but it would be doing injustice to this part of our subject to dismiss it, without taking notice of the confession which the force of truth has extorted from one of its professed opponents.

† The Considerer, p. 17, has this passage: “ One method indeed has been
 “ hinted at, and but one that might render
 “ the exercise of this power in a British
 “ parliament just and legal, which is, the
 “ introduction of representatives from the
 “ several colonies into that body; but as
 “ this has never been seriously proposed,
 “ I shall not here consider the impractica-
 “ bility of this method, nor the effects of
 “ it, if it could be practised”. But is

† The writer of this pamphlet, so often mentioned, has all along argued from practice, and not from principles; what he has advanced amounts to this: The representation of the people of Great Britain is very unequal; therefore those in America shall not be represented at all: This inequality in England is already a great evil; therefore it is high time to make it worse: No man will contest with him the practices from whence he draws his inferences; but should they ask, Why is it so practised? the only answer they can collect from him will be, “ Because it is.” The public, especially the Americans, expected arguments from this performance, but they are treated with sarcasms; “ They looked for bread, and behold a stone.”

this

this really the case? Is there but one method which can render the exercise of this power just and legal? And shall it be exercised by any other? Is not any other unjust and illegal, according to this writer's supposition? But he goes farther, and says, "this method has never been seriously proposed". It has however been very seriously proposed in almost all the pamphlets written on the subject, both in England and America. He must therefore mean, that it has never been proposed in parliament: But if his assertion be true, that it is the only just and legal method of exercising a power of taxation over the colonies, the public might be at a loss to assign a reason for this silence, if he had not furnished them with one in his next sentence, where he speaks of it as impracticable. The weight of this objection therefore, will come next to be considered; the arguments for obviating which are of two kinds: First, those which tend to shew the practicability of an equal representation in Great Britain; and, secondly, such as may evince the same of America.

It may not be amiss however, before we attempt to prove this, to premise, that a thing may be called impracticable in two senses; it may be so in its own nature; or, if

if it clashes with the supposed interests of those whose concurrence is necessary to its execution; it may be so from their want of public spirit. Every man will call that an Utopian scheme, which he either cannot comprehend, or is averse to put in practice: If prejudiced and self-interested people are ever brought to concur in patriotic measures, it must be through necessity, and not choice: To endeavour at making converts of such men by argument, would be to cast pearls before swine, and therefore we have only to shew, that the design is not impracticable in its own nature.

The design is, that every man whose property of whatever kind, is sufficient to make him independent, should vote for a representative: It will hardly be alledged, that such a scheme is likely to meet with much opposition without doors. 'Tis ridiculous to suppose, that ninety nine parts in a hundred of the people, would object to an enlargement of their privileges; or that the clamours of the remainder, who would fancy themselves aggrieved, could or ought to be, of any consequence. I say fancy themselves aggrieved, because the preference they enjoy at present is not a part of the constitution, but a corruption of it; and it must be remembered, that
such

such of them as are really men of property, would be left in a situation little inferior to what they are in at present.

But it will be said, this is no proof of the practicability of the measure, but only, that the nation would acquiesce in it if it were practicable. It may therefore be asked, supposing the legislature well inclin'd towards the project; by what means could they carry it into execution? I answer. By abolishing local representation, and fixing that right to determinate numbers of qualified men. For instance, suppose 1000 electors were allowed a representative; if a county or city was found to contain 30,000 of them, it would be entitled to chuse 30 representatives. The present inequality so much complained of, has arisen entirely from confining the right of representatives to particular places; whereas if it was once conferred on number only, this would prevent the evil from ever recurring again in any degree, as well as remove it for the present. For if an account was taken, previous to every general election, by the sheriffs, justices of the peace, or proper officers appointed for the purpose, of the number of qualified men in each county, the representatives from thence would be more or fewer in every parliament according to
the

the flourishing or declining state of the county ; by which method, every place would have a weight in the legislature proportioned to its interest in the community. Neither would a greater power be thrown by this means into the hands of these men, than is lodged at present, in those of every returning officer : Since it would still be as easy for every qualified man to prove himself so, as it is now ; and if any such were hindered from voting, the candidate in whose interest they were, would have the same means of redress which every one has in the like case at present, and no doubt would make all possible use of them.

Should it be objected, that there is an utter impossibility of computing what number of independent men (that is, of such as according to this plan are qualified to vote for representatives) may be contained in the British dominions : So that it would be equally impossible to judge either how much property should be deemed a qualification, or what number of qualified men be allowed a representative. This objection may be removed by supposing an account taken of all property, and the owners of it, both in Great Britain and America, previous to the passing any new act for regulating elections.

D

But

But it may be urged in opposition to this, that tho' the qualifications might be raised much higher than they now are, if such an account was taken, yet wherever the standard was fixed both of the property conferring a right to vote, and the numbers entitled to have a representative, yet both electors and representatives would be much too numerous; elections would be tumults, and parliaments little better. In regard however to elections, it may justly be questioned, whether the riotous proceedings at most of them are owing so much to the numbers only, as to the low condition and brutish manners of the electors; an evil which arises entirely from the qualifications being no where sufficiently great. An attention to what passes in the metropolis at every general election, will tend to confirm this observation. The city of London contains about 10,000 freemen, but being all men of some property, and not a mixed multitude composed of the dregs of the people, their elections are conducted with all imaginable order and decency. But the Pot-wallowers of Westminster exhibit a very different scene, and are of all others the most notorious for tumult and outrage.

Should it still be thought impracticable for all the qualified men in each county to
vote

vote for every representative, this might be remedied by assigning to a determinate number; suppose a thousand, the right of choosing a representative of their own, and having as many elections as members. Though if the former method of having each representative chosen by the whole body of voters in the county, should be judged practicable, it is doubtless on many accounts, the most eligible; since nothing can so effectually guard against undue influence at elections, as both increasing the numbers, and raising the qualifications of the voters. It is from their advantages in those respects, that county elections are carried on in the fairest manner of any, except perhaps those of a few very large corporations; and according to the plan here proposed, every election would be nearly what those for counties are at present, where they differ, the preference would be due to the new method, which augments both the number and qualifications of the electors.

In regard to the second part of the objection, "That the house of commons
" would be too numerous," it may be safely said it could not be so unless business was materially interrupted by it. Numbers would secure as well the freedom of

parliaments as of elections; and if once made so great as to guard effectually against undue influence in both, a minister in the former, and a candidate in the latter, would have no weight, but what resulted from his integrity and abilities.

These seem to be the chief objections which may be made to the execution of the proposed scheme in Great Britain; let us next see what may be urged against extending it to America.

It will be advanced probably, in the first place, "That the Americans do not desire "it," I answer, this is neither true, nor to the purpose; first, for the truth of it: He must be scandalously ignorant of the present points in dispute, and of the pretensions of his fellow-subjects, the colonists, who imagines they lay claim to an independent legislature. This they have universally disavowed, as well in their † private writings, as in the solemn and public declarations of their assemblies: They must therefore, and do indeed claim only, either a subordinate legislature, or a share in the supreme. To prove

† If the parliament had not a supreme sovereign power, the Colonies would be independent, which none but fools and madmen will contend for.

ORIS'S vind. of the colonies.

this,

this, it may be sufficient to quote a passage or two from their ablest and most zealous advocate, Mr. Otis, one of the representatives for Boston: In his "rights of the colonies, he speaks thus": p. 54: "Besides the equity of an American representation in parliament, a thousand advantages would result from it. It would be the most effectual means of giving those of both countries a thorough knowledge of each others interests, as well as that of the whole, which are inseparable". And he closes his performance with these remarkable words: "This constitution (meaning that of Great Britain) is the most free one, and by far the best, now existing on earth: By this constitution every man in the dominions is a free man: No part of his majesty's dominions can be taxed without their consent: Every part has a right to be represented in the supreme, or some subordinate legislature. The refusal of this would seem to be a contradiction in practice to the theory of the constitution: The colonies are subordinate dominions, and are now in such a state as to make it best for the good of the whole, that they should not only be continued in the enjoyment of subordinate legislation, but be also represented in some
 " pro-

“ proportion to their number and estates in
“ the grand legislation of the nation, this
“ would firmly unite all parts of the Bri-
“ tish empire, in the greatest peace and
“ prosperity, and render it invulnerable
“ and perpetual”.

We see then, how far the Americans are from being averse to having representatives in the British parliament: Tho' this has been often asserted: It remains now to shew that this would be little to the purpose; that is, no good argument against the measure, if it was true: If the good of the community requires it, which it certainly does, and we have seen they are sensible of it, this alone supercedes all other considerations.

This was the primary end for which their charters were allowed them, the benefits accruing therefrom to individuals was but a secondary inducement: And as these were granted for the good of the commonwealth in general, they ought certainly to be resumed on the same principle whenever they are found to interfere with it: Those who indulged them with their privileges both might and ought to revoke them in such a case.

Another

Another plausible objection respecting America is, That as the seat of legislation would be so far removed from the colonies, it would be unable to provide for their security on any sudden emergency, as invasion, or rebellion of slaves; nor could it conveniently accommodate them with such local laws as they would stand in need of from time to time. But this seeming difficulty is easily removed: For though their assemblies would be transferred to Great Britain, yet why might not the governor and council in each province be invested with a power of making such temporary laws as they should judge necessary, but which should continue in force no longer than till they could be finally confirmed or rejected at home. The danger arising from an abuse of this power, would be very small, § early notice would be given their representatives of the first advances towards oppression, and these gentlemen, who must necessarily be men of considerable property, as they could not but suffer in common with their constituents, would undertake the cause with double alacrity.

§ Especially if the councils were every where chosen by the people, which is the case in several provinces already; as the Massachusetts, Rhode-Island, and Connecticut: In this case they would be an inferior kind of representatives.

And

And having the advantage of being on the spot, where the offender would be tried and of proceeding, if they should think proper, to parliamentary enquiry, this alteration instead of exposing the colonies to oppression, would furnish them with speedier and more effectual means of bringing a rapacious officer to justice, than any they have hitherto been fortunate enough to employ.

Should it be said, that the distance of the colonies would occasion their representatives not being present in parliament so early as the exigency of affairs might require, this may be prevented, by issuing the writs for American elections a session, or twelve-month, before those for Great Britain.

The only important objection from the same quarter, which seems now to require consideration, is this: Whether or no, if the colonies were allowed a number of representatives proportioned to their weight in the community, (and not to allow them such a number, would look like a design of oppressing them in a method the least alarming and notorious, and therefore the most dangerous ;) whether or no, I say, this would not be drawing off from the provinces so many of their greatest proprietors,

prietors, as might be an essential detriment to them. With regard to the West-Indies, the case would be very little altered from what it is at present, for with respect to them, it may safely be affirmed, that the majority of those gentlemen who are likely to be returned as their representatives, are resident here already. As to North America, so far from a prejudice to either, it would be a capital advantage both to the colonies there, and the mother country.

What would strengthen the ties by which they are connected together, so much as a personal acquaintance, and familiar intercourse between the leading men in each? A closer union between all parts of the British dominions, than subsists at present, becomes daily more and more necessary; especially as many people are running eagerly into practices which seem to threaten a total disunion of them: Among which, none of the least alarming is, that propensity which many in this country have shewn lately towards contributing largely to the foundation of colleges, and other places for the education of youth in America. Is any thing likely to alienate the colonists so soon, or so effectually, from their mother-country, as an abolition of the practice, till now so prevalent among

E

them,

them, of sending their children to the schools and universities of Great Britain? Or, can it be expected these should long continue to come 3000 miles for any advantages which are brought home to their own doors?

Having endeavoured to establish the equity, and to shew the practicability of an universal and equal representation of all the subjects of Great Britain; the benefits which would result from hence to every part of these dominions, remain, lastly, to be considered: These will perhaps appear to be so great, that tho' the equity of the project was not admitted, and the practicability dubious, even then it might be thought not only justifiable, but laudable, to grant a few indulgences, and run some little hazard of a disappointment, in favour of a scheme so highly advantageous to the community, should it be possible to carry it into execution: For, first, it is perhaps the best, if not the only expedient for reconciling the dignity of the British legislature, with the pretensions of the colonists; and this not only so as to terminate the present dispute, but to take away entirely all occasion for future differences on this and almost every other subject. But the superiority of this to every other

other method hitherto proposed for accomplishing this desirable reconciliation, will best appear from comparing it with them : It will soon be manifest from hence, how well adapted this expedient is, and how insufficient all the rest are for attaining the ends proposed.

The methods generally recommended are these : First, a repeal of the Stamp-Act ; 2dly, a forcible execution of it ; 3dly, a mitigation ; and, 4thly, a suspension : A repeal having the fewest advocates, and indeed the most to be said against it, and least in its favour, will be soonest dismissed. It is indeed true, that acts of parliament have been passed in one session, and repealed the next, or very soon after ; but this has been always when such acts have not been productive of the advantages expected from them, or have been attended with inconveniencies which more than counterbalanced those advantages.

In all these cases the expediency only, and not the right of making them has been called in question : Where this is the case, (as it is with the stamp act) a repeal might be construed almost into giving up the right of legislation. For, to deny that kings, lords and commons have a right to

make any law they please (not contrary to the constitution) is to affirm that they are not the legislature. And where they to repeal an act because their right to passing it is so denied, this would look like countenancing the assertion. A measure no less derogatory from their dignity, than it would be dangerous to the community, and opposite to the constitution: This may suffice to shew the inexpediency of a repeal: The 2d proposal is that of a forcible execution of the act, this having far more advocates than the last, will require a more ample discussion. But I must pause here a little to observe with what concern, indignation, and astonishment, every thinking man must have seen the levity with which some people talk of sending half a dozen regiments, or twenty ships of the line to America. Do these gentlemen reflect at all upon the guilt of promoting, or the misery of being involved in a civil war? They will answer perhaps, "This is not likely to be the consequence, the Americans are not strong enough to think of resistance, and if these steps were taken the act would be peaceably complied with." But if it can be made appear, which perhaps it can, that an immediate rupture with them may possibly follow these measures; that, if not, a distant one will, and that
the

the ruin of both countries will be the consequence of either; this procedure, though the favourite one of some people, will perhaps in general be thought even less advisable than a repeal. Let us first see what probability there is of resistance. In order to judge of this the reader must be desired to consider, that the Americans will not act in this affair according to the ideas he may here conceived of their situation; but agreeable to their own opinion of it: He must imagine himself therefore in such a condition as they, however erroneously, have supposed themselves, before he can pretend to say in what manner they are likely to act. What notions then have they of their present circumstances? This surely they are better able to tell us than we are to conjecture; and therefore the best way of judging will be from their own testimony.

Of this I shall produce only one instance, but this of the most weighty and authentic nature, being part of the instructions of the city of Boston to their representatives in the assembly; and is as follows: “ What
 “ still heightens our apprehensions is, that
 “ these unexpected proceedings may be
 “ preparatory to new taxations upon us:
 “ For if our trade may be taxed, why not
 “ our

“ our lands ? Why not the produce of our
 “ lands, and every thing we possess or make
 “ use of ? This we apprehend annihilates
 “ our charter right to govern and tax our-
 “ selves. It strikes at our British pri-
 “ vileges, which as we have never for-
 “ feited them, we hold in common with
 “ our fellow subjects who are natives of
 “ Britain : *If taxes are laid on us in any*
 “ *shape without our having a legal represen-*
 “ *tation where they are laid, are we not re-*
 “ *duced from the character of free subjects,*
 “ *to the miserable state of tributary slaves*” ?
 Such taxes are laid upon them ; we know
 then the state in which they consider them-
 selves : He therefore who would judge
 rightly how they are likely to behave, must
 consider how he himself would probably
 act if he viewed his own situation in the
 light in which they regard theirs. Should
 it be said, that, considering the disparity
 of strength between Great Britain and Ame-
 rica, the alternative of resistance can never
 be embraced by any reasonable man ; it
 must be remembered, that people under the
 influence of any violent passion are no longer
 such men ; the colonists are irritated and
 exasperated, they will act from the dictates
 of resentment, not those of reason ; in
 which case, their behaviour will by no
 means be regulated by a comparison of
 their

their strength with that of their antagonists, but by the sense they have of their supposed injuries. "Ministerial oppression," says Mr. Otis, "will make the wisest mad, "and the weakest strong". Since then the Americans in general, almost indeed universally, consider the stamp act as oppressive, why is it so unreasonable to suppose they may possibly resist a forcible execution of it? If they should, a civil war must ensue; this perhaps it is needless to prove will be the ruin both of them and Great Britain, since *Frangimur si collidimur* seems to be the general voice. But as it has been insinuated above that, even the acquiescence of the colonies in the execution of the stamp-act, may be followed by a distant rupture, this will hardly be so generally admitted; and therefore it must be shewn what grounds there are for such an apprehension.

We have seen what the Americans already think of the stamp-act. Is there any reason to expect an alteration of their sentiments, if a forcible execution of it should be resolved on? Men change their opinions on seeing they were ill-founded, not on being made to act in opposition to them. Conviction is effected by arguments, and not force, since that can only
tend

tend to make people obstinate in their errors. If these then continue the same, the Americans will submit to the execution of the stamp-act on this principle, and this only, that they are unable to oppose it. Let any man of spirit then reflect with what kind of temper, he would submit to the power of those who without the right (that is, in his opinion) should curtail his liberty and property against his will, and this without giving him any sufficient security against future encroachments, or any good assurance how much in the end might be left him of either. If he esteemed it rank oppression, what would be his thoughts of the oppressor? Can the Americans esteem it otherwise, while they continue in their present sentiments? Or, Is it likely these should change? If not, will they not from this instant look on the interests of Great Britain and America, not only as distinct, but opposite? Will they not pursue chiefly such branches of commerce as are prejudicial rather than advantageous to the mother-country?

Retaliation is the natural consequence of injury, real or imaginary: If therefore, an encouragement of manufactures is found by the colonists to be the most distressing measure to Great Britain, will not this be-

become the favourite object of American industry? They have given us an earnest of this already, by prohibiting the importation of almost every article usually sent there from these kingdoms; many of these, however, they cannot do without, they must therefore be supplied with them either from among themselves, or from our enemies: In short, will not every scheme be eagerly pursued which tends to aggrandize them at the expence of their fellow-subjects in Europe, or, as they will call them, their oppressors? If there be any foundation for these apprehensions, let every advocate for a forcible execution of the stamp-act, seriously ask himself, whether any inconvenience is not preferable to such an evil.

There is no contradiction in saying an act may be forcibly executed, which is not openly resisted; that is certainly a forcible execution of it, which is absolutely against the consent of those who submit to it, whether it be effected by dint of terror, or of arms.

The third method proposed to put an end to the present troubles, is a mitigation of the act; but as this extends to the expediency only, and not the right of making it,

the grand objection the colonists have to it, will continue in full force.

The fourth and last proposal is, that of a suspension ; but if by this be meant only a delay of the execution till the Americans shall be better able to pay the tax imposed by it, the same difficulty remains which occurred to the last ; for since this too does not reach the question of right, and it is on that chiefly the opposition of the colonists is founded, they will be as little disposed to submit to the act, when the proposed respite is expired, as they are at present. If indeed the advocates for a suspension contend for it as an expedient to gain time, till some method can be devised of reconciling the Americans to the right also of the British legislature, as well as put them in a better condition to pay new taxes, this scheme entirely coincides with the design here proposed : A suspension of the act till the next general election, by which time measures might be taken for an equal representation of all the men of sufficient property throughout the British dominions. This expedient, and perhaps this only, would both save the dignity of the legislature, and quiet the apprehensions of the colonists. The former would be effected by leaving the question of right undecided

decided till the expediency of the act should come to be debated in what might justly be called the first parliament of the British empire. Whatever should then be thought advisable, whether repeal, execution, suspension, or mitigation, it would be done with the consent, and by the authority of the whole community; for it has been already shewn, that a representation of the colonies at home is thought by their inhabitants both desirable and necessary.

I must refer the reader, who requires further satisfaction, to Mr. Otis, their own advocate, from whose performance, however, I shall quote one or two of the strongest passages to this purpose: "When
 " the parliament, says he, p. 90, shall
 " think fit to allow the colonists a repre-
 " sentation in the house of commons, the
 " equity of their taxing the colonies
 " will be as clear as their power is at pre-
 " sent of doing it without, if they please:"
 And in p. 53, he observes, "The colo-
 " nists will have an equitable right, not-
 " withstanding any forfeiture of charter, to
 " be represented in parliament, or to have
 " some new subordinate legislature among
 " themselves: *It would be best, if they had*
 " *both.*"

The further advantages which would result to Great Britain and her colonies from this equal and universal representation of the proprietors in both, are so numerous, and at the same time so striking, that it would be both a needless delay, and an affront to the discernment of the reader to attempt a particular enumeration of them. It may not be amiss however to mention some of the principals. If such a distribution of the representation was to take place, as was proposed in treating of the practicability of the scheme; that is, supposing any determinate number of qualified men were allowed a representative, this would give to every part of the British dominions a weight in the legislature proportioned to its importance in the community, and no more: If proper officers also were appointed in each district, to take an account of the men qualified to vote, previous to every general election, this would entirely save the trouble of all future alterations of the representation, since the people would be as equally represented after 700 as after 7 years. In this case too the parliament at every general election would not only see the comparative increase or diminution in the strength of Great Britain and America, but of every county in England, every province in America, and every parish,

parish, as they are called, in the West-India islands. This would unite the colonists to their fellow subjects in Europe by the closest ties, by the only ones indeed which can form an intimate and lasting union, equality and mutual interest. The measures beneficial to both countries would be better understood, and more attended to: Since even the remotest parts of the British dominions would have such advocates in the legislature, as would be best able and most interested in shewing how they would be affected by every proceeding of government: and the state of the several places they represented would shew at every general election, whether or no they had been deceived in their conjectures. We might then reasonably hope to see that carried into execution which has been so often proposed, by bounties in some colonies, and duties or prohibitions in others, to excite every province to attend to some peculiar staple: Each of them differs from the rest both in climate and soil, and therefore all must have advantages over the others in bringing some particular produce to perfection: This is no new project, but one of these, which, like many others, every man has allowed to be good, and none have endeavoured to reduce to practice.

America

America would derive one advantage from these regulations in which Great Britain would be no sharer; there would be an entire stop put to all disputes between governors and assemblies; some of which are carried to such a length, as to be in the highest degree detrimental to the colonies, a melancholy example of which is at this instant exhibited in Jamaica, till lately, the most flourishing of our islands; should it be said that this would be taking away from the colonists the grand bulwark of their liberties, whose representatives in these assemblies are their constant support against arbitrary encroachments; we have already shewn they would be much more effectually so by having seats in the grand legislature of the community, their complaints would not only have more weight, but would be at once preferred to those who could give them immediate redress; if the guilt of a governor was by this means made apparent to the house of commons, an application from them for his removal or further punishment would of course be obtained; and when obtained, would answer the purpose more effectually than any method hitherto used, perhaps better than any which can possibly be devised.

Another

Another benefit, and that by no means the least, which would result from an equal representation of the people, is this: That the state could not then be ruined by any internal cause less than an universal corruption of men of all orders and degrees. For as it would be impracticable according to this plan, from the numbers and property of the voters to carry even a single election by sinister influence; no representative could then be returned, but such men as all representatives should be; men of large property, tried integrity, and distinguished abilities; whereas, whenever the majority of electors throughout the kingdom becomes corrupt, it requires no spirit of prophesy to foretel that the majority of representatives must be so too: None but men as bad as themselves will stoop either to bribe or represent them. Whether or no there will not be reason to apprehend this want of evils, if the disproportion between electors and non electors continues long to increase as it has done for some ages, must be left to their consideration who alone can apply the remedy; Lord Bacon's apopthegm is well known, England cannot be ruined but by a parliament. 'Tis plain this great man thought it might be ruined by a parliament, and Montesquieu has told us, of what sort.

“ The

“ The English ” says he, “ will lose their
“ liberty when the legislative power shall
“ become more corrupt than the execu-
tive”. *Dii talem avertite pestem.*

It may farther be observed, that as, according to this plan, a vote for a representative would be an object of rational ambition to the lower sort, and a voice in the legislature no less so to those above them; this would be a spur to industry in the former, and an incentive to the latter to pursue such a conduct as would gain them the esteem of honest and discerning men.

There is still remaining one recommendation of this scheme, which cannot but have its weight with every friend to his country, and the liberties of mankind: The British constitution would hereby be rendered in practice, as well as theory, the most perfect of human institutions: There would not be the least occasion to soften or explain away, as some have done, that celebrated assertion of Mr. Locke’s,
“ That there remains still inherent in the
“ people a supreme power to remove or
“ alter the legislature, when they find the
“ legislative act contrary to the trust re-
“ posed in them; for when such trust is
abused,

“ abused, it is thereby forfeited, and devolves to those who gave it.” Mr. Locke was far enough from intending to advance positions favourable to sedition; and what he did advance, it was seldom in the power of any other man to disprove.

The above maxim of his is as far from being dangerous as it is from being untrue; if it is any where dangerous, it must be there only where every assertion is so which favours the natural rights of mankind; in those countries where the wretched condition of the people makes every innovation desirable, because none can be for the worse: But in the constitution here proposed, wherein every man would have as much liberty, and as great influence, as it is possible, according to any system, to allow him, the majority can hardly be supposed so senseless as to desire any alteration, when none could be made by which they would not be losers.

The general inference, which it is intended the reader should draw from what has been said, is this:

Union is necessary to the British empire.

This union cannot long subsist without equality of representation ;

Therefore equality of representation is necessary to the British empire.

The reader's patience must be desired a little longer, to shew briefly what would be the effects of this union ; they may all be comprized in this : That it would soon exalt these kingdoms to an height of power and riches, perhaps, superior to any state which ever existed ; but, certainly, to any which is now in being : If it can be shewn, that we shall then have the means of both in our hands, the truth of the assertion is demonstrated :

First, in regard to power ; the late peace, whether good or bad, adequate or inadequate, has certainly left us in possession of an extent of territory, which, tho' not perhaps larger, is capable from the wholesomeness of its climate in general, and the abundance of its useful productions, to subsist more inhabitants than those of any other nation, we have therefore the means of attaining greater power, which depends ultimately on number of inhabitants.

Secondly, as to riches, these are only to be acquired by gainful trade; but as the British dominions are extended into all the climates they are capable of furnishing, with due industry and attention, all the productions of the world; when once they do so, we shall supply all states with something; receiving nothing in return ourselves but money: This cannot be the case of any other nation, since none but ourselves have the means of raising every commodity; therefore none have such opportunities of becoming rich.

It is needless perhaps to acquaint the reader that it by no means falls within the scope and design of this performance, nor the knowledge and abilities of its author, to obviate, or even to enumerate every difficulty which may be started against the scheme proposed: Nothing farther is intended than to shew upon the whole, that it has some pretence to the strictest equity and the greatest benefits to the community; perhaps to practicability; with here and there an incentive to those who may incline to think so, if there should be any such, to contribute their share towards carrying it into execution.

If the equity and advantages it pretends to are in a good degree made to appear, an absolute demonstration of its practicability will hardly be expected or desired; since, if these are allowed it, that, it may reasonably be hoped, will come to be discussed before much abler judges; by those whose authority alone can make it practicable, though ever so equitable or beneficial.

It must be confessed, that to effect an equal and universal representation of all the men of property throughout the British dominions, is an arduous enterprize; but the more arduous the attempt, the more glorious its execution; and the more glorious the better worthy the legislature of Great Britain.

P O S T S C R I P T.

IF the reader, notwithstanding what has been said, should still incline to think, that our ancestors did not pay so scrupulous a regard to property, as has been here asserted; he must be desired to consider, that this may be given up, without in the least affecting the argument.

We are not enquiring if our ancestors understood the constitution, but what the constitution is, and whether or no we who do understand it can be justified without acting up to our knowledge. The constitution is, and God forbid it should ever be otherwise, that King, Lords and Commons should exercise the supreme power of legislation: But who are the commons? The representatives of the people. Of all the people? It is impossible from their numbers that all should vote for them, but there is also another reason for requiring a qualification to vote, which take as follows.

“ The

“ The true reason, (says Dr. Blackstone,
“ p. 165. after Lord Coke and others) of
“ requiring any qualification, with regard
“ to property, in voters ; is to exclude such
“ persons as are in so mean a situation that
“ they are esteemed to have no will of their
“ own”.

But why then should any be excluded who are not in this mean situation, and who have a will of their own? It is easy to shew, that tho' property was never attended to in regard to voters, as it ought, yet it was never entirely neglected : Why else were towns admitted to a share in the legislation for some ages, as fast as they became considerable ; and why, at this day, is any man admitted to vote who can increase his freehold from 20 to 40 shillings? As laws, especially taxes, affect all men of property, why should not all such consent, by their representatives to the imposition of them : The colonies have laid claim to representation, in that legislature, by which they are to be taxed, whether supreme or subordinate : Not only the equity of this claim is to be considered, according to the principles on which the British constitution is founded, but the consequences also of a refusal.

F I N I S.

Thoughts on a Parliamentary Reform

Soame Jenyns, *Thoughts on a Parliamentary Reform* (London: J. Dodsley, 1784)

Soame Jenyns (1704–87) was elected as a Member of Parliament for Cambridge in 1742 and continued to represent the county or borough of Cambridge until 1780. He was appointed in 1755 as one of the Commissioners of the Board of Trade and Plantations.

Jenyns wrote *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform* in 1782. In this he observed that the complete elimination of influence from the Commons would render majorities haphazard and government impossible at a time when many would not accept party discipline. Earlier, in *The Objections to the Taxation of our American Colonies* (1765), he had defended Parliament's right to tax the colonies: 'if the towns of Manchester and Birmingham, sending no representation to Parliament, are notwithstanding there represented, why are not the cities of Albany and Boston equally represented'. Pitt argued against the view that the Americans enjoyed virtual representation: how could they be represented when the MPs never saw the populace they were supposed to represent? The failure of virtual representation in the American colonies was also brought up by subsequent campaigners for reform as a warning not to rely on the doctrine.

THOUGHTS, &c.

THE great object of a parliamentary reform I take to be this, to procure a parliament totally independent on the crown and its ministers ; in which no member shall be intimidated by power, seduced by hopes, or
B corrupted

corrupted by interest: this seems at present to be the chief pursuit of all our political doctors; the grand specific which alone can cure all our national disorders, and restore our broken constitution to its original vigour.

ON this important subject two questions offer themselves for our consideration; first, What are the most likely means to obtain such a parliament; and secondly, What would be the effects of it if obtained.

FOR the first, innumerable have been the schemes presented to the public by real and pretended patriots, that is, by those who have more honesty than sense, and those who have more sense than honesty, Some have been for shortening the duration of parliaments to three, and some to one year : some have recommended voting by ballot, as the most effectual method to put an end to bribery ; others have disapproved it as inconsistent with that open avowal which ought to accompany every act of a British freeman : some have proposed to

B 2 annihilate

annihilate all the small and corrupt boroughs, and to add the same number of representatives which they now send to the several counties : some to add to the counties, and not to disfranchise the boroughs ; others to abolish the boroughs, without any addition to the counties : some to enlarge, and some to diminish the qualifications of the electors ; and others to require no qualification at all, but to allow every man a vote, who is not disqualified by nature, for want of reason, or by law, for the commission of some
crime :

crime: but as very few have agreed in any one of these propositions, and no one has been able to form any satisfactory plan out of them all, I shall not here enter into any discussion of their merits, or make any comparison between them; but shall only say, that of all these plans, that of giving a right of voting universally, together with annual elections, appears to be the most uniform, consistent, and effectual: it has indeed one capital defect, which is, that it is absolutely and utterly impracticable; but I do not mention this as
an

an objection, so far from it, that I think it is its chief excellence, and is what induces me to prefer it to all the rest.

To be convinced of the impracticability of this scheme, let us but figure to ourselves multitudes of all descriptions and denominations called out to exercise their right of voting, inflamed by contest and intoxicated by liquor; laborers and manufacturers of every kind, above and under ground; weavers from their looms, and miners from tinneries, and coal-pits; failors

failors from their ships, and foldiers from their quarters ;—to whom we muſt add, thouſands of thieves, ſmugglers, rogues, vagabonds, and vagrants : I ſay, let us figure to ourſelves all theſe reſpectable electors let looſe in one day throughout every part of the kingdom, and ſuch a ſcene of confuſion, of drunkenneſs and riot, of rapine, murder, and conflagration, will preſent itſelf, as muſt ſhock us with horror, even in imagination.

NOR would it be poſſible to carry on, or ever to conclude elections

in which the voters are so innumerable, and consequently so unknown. They must be polled in one of these two ways; they must either be admitted only to vote in the parishes to which they belong, or permitted to be polled in whatever place they happened, or chose to be at the time of the election: should the first of these methods be adopted, the acceptance or rejection of every vote might be attended with the trial of a settlement, and counsel learned in the law be heard on both sides: if the latter, crowds so numerous,

numerous, and so unknown to the candidates, and all whom they could employ to poll them, would press into every place, where money and liquor flowed in the greatest abundance, that the chief part of them might vote in ten different places, or ten times in the same place undiscovered; and if these elections were annual, one could not be finished before the other began.

ANOTHER reason, which persuades me that this scheme is impracticable, is, that I cannot

C foresee

foresee any class of men whose interest or inclination would not induce them to oppose it: the landed gentleman would not much approve, that every pauper, gypsy, vagrant, and least of all every poacher, should enjoy as great a share in the legislature as himself; the city of London will never consent that every drayman, hackney-coachman, and chimney-sweeper, should be vested with as good a vote as the lord mayor and aldermen, nor the livery be desirous of admitting so numerous an addition to their respectable fraternity: the

the corporations throughout the kingdom, will never submit to have their consequence annihilated by a participation of their privileges with so innumerable a multitude; nor do I think that very multitude, or the people at large, would be extremely zealous to support it: at first, indeed, when they are told, that they shall all be legislators, obliged to obey no laws but of their own making, nor pay any taxes but of their own imposing, and that every one of them shall have as good a vote for a parliament-man as the Squire

or the parson, and recollect that this vote has ever been as good as ready money; they will perhaps be a little elated and delighted with their new acquisition; but when they are better informed, and understand, that the intent of this scheme is to prevent all bribery and corruption, and will preclude them from receiving one shilling or one dram of gin for their votes, they will reject this useless donation with contempt; and there will not be a tinker, who will not choose rather to mend a kettle for six-pence, than
the

the constitution for nothing, nor a laborer, who will not make faggots rather than laws, nor a pick-pocket, who will not prefer the exercise of his profession at an election to giving his vote.

BUT was this scheme of universal representation, or any other of the proposed plans of reformation practicable, and pursued, certain I am, that they would not in the least contribute to the great end, which is the formation of an independent parliament, because reason does not persuade
me,

me, that electors the most ignorant and profligate, the most necessitous and venal, would return members more incorrupt than the present; nor does experience teach me, that ten or twenty constituents would chuse representatives less able or less honest than ten or twenty thousand. I am firmly convinced, both by reason and long experience, that no alteration in the mode of election, or in the electors themselves, would produce any change in the elected; in them lies the source of the evil, which no external application can

approach: whether they are chosen by a greater or a less number, by counties or boroughs, by the rich or by the poor, by ballot or by audible voices, the parliament, when assembled, will be just the same; different modes of election may make some difference in the trouble and expence of the candidates, and may differently affect the morals of the people, and the peace of the country, but will make no difference in the representative body when brought together, and it is of little signification by what means they come there:

there : the majority of any legislative assembly, consisting of five hundred and fifty members, in the same circumstances and situation, will infallibly act in the same manner ; if their situations differ, their proceedings will differ with them. In the weakness of infant states, and in perilous times, they will be more intent on the safety of the community, because their own is immediately included in it ; but when the danger is removed, they will be more influenced by the views of interest and ambition, they will split into factions

tions and parties, and list under contending leaders, and sometimes prefer their interest or their own to that of their country. Their corruption will always increase in proportion to their power, because they have more to sell and are more necessary to be bought. Those who cannot make shift with such a parliament, must have none, because it is impossible for any mode of election, or species of electors, to choose a better, unless they could make men, as well as members.

D

LET

LET us now see what would be the effects of this independent parliament, if obtained. By an independent parliament, in the language of the present times, is to be understood a parliament in which the majority would oppose any administration: now no arguments are necessary to prove, that with such a parliament no public business whatever could be transacted, nor any government subsist. But it will be said, this is not what is wished for, but one in which the members shall be always ready to support the measures of ministers,

nisters, when right, and to resist them when wrong, unawed, and uninfluenced, and guided only by the dictates of their own judgment and conscience. This indeed is what every wise man would desire, but no wise man will expect to see, as no such assembly, if numerous, ever existed in this or in any country, from the beginning of the world to the present hour, nor ever can, unless mankind were melted down, and run in a new mould: as they are now formed, in every numerous assembly there must be some who have

D 2 judgment,

judgment, and others who have conscience, and some who have neither : take away self-interest, and all these will have no star to steer by, but must sail without a compass, just as the gales of favour, or resentment, of popular absurdity, or their own shall direct them ; a minister therefore must be possessed of some attractive influence, to enable him to draw together these discordant particles, and unite them in a firm and solid majority, without which he can pursue no measures of public utility with steadiness or success.

cess. An independent House of Commons is no part of the English constitution, the excellence of which consists in being composed of three powers, mutually dependent on each other; of these, if any one was to become independent of the other two, it must engross the whole power to itself, and the form of our government would be immediately changed. This an independent House of Commons actually performed in the last century, murdered the king, annihilated the peers, and established the worst kind

kind of democracy that ever existed; and the same confusion would infallibly be repeated, should we ever be so unfortunate as to see another.

A NUMEROUS assembly uninfluenced, is as much a creature of the imagination, as a griffin or a dragon; the one created by the poets, the other by ignorant or designing politicians. Parliaments have ever been influenced, and by that means our constitution has so long subsisted; but the end and nature of that influence is

perpetually misrepresented and
misunderstood. They are seldom,
very seldom, bribed to injure
their country, because it is sel-
dom the interest of ministers to
injure it; but the great source of
corruption is, that they will not
serve it for nothing. Men get
into parliament in pursuit of
power, honors, and preferments,
and until they obtain them, de-
termine to obstruct all business,
and to distress government; but
happily for their country, they
are no sooner gratified, than they
are

are equally zealous to promote the one, and support the other.

UPON the whole, under the same mode of elections, and under parliaments not less influenced than the present, this nation has not only subsisted for many years, but arrived at the summit of wealth, honor, power, and dominion, and might still have preserved them, if the means of that influence had been sufficient to satisfy the demands of ambition, and the hunger of faction.

But

But even now, if we survey the condition of every country on the globe, and compare it with our own, we shall find abundant reason to be contented: there are in it some evils, and much good, which is the utmost which any human institution will admit of. We have, indeed, too much oratory, too much liberty, too much debt, and too many taxes; but then we have plenty, and may have peace, if we please: we have security to our persons and properties, and excellent laws, justly, though not very cheaply administered; we have

E a parliament

a parliament not worfe, and a king
a great deal better than we de-
ferve, and therefore I fhall con-
clude with the words of Shake-
fpear,

*'Tis better fure, to bear the ills we know,
Than fly to others, which we know not of.*

F I N I S.

Extracts from Letters to the Volunteers of Ireland

'The Circular letter sent by Mr. Wyvill', 'Mr. Wyvill to Mr. Alderman Crosby', 'Mr. Wyvill to Mr. Henry Joy', 'Mr. Wyvill's Answer to the Queries proposed by the Committee of Correspondence at Belfast', 'John Campbell to Mr. Wyvill', 'Mr. Wyvill to John Campbell', 'The Earl of Effingham to Lieut. Col. Sharman', 'Richard Price to Lieut. Col. Sharman', 'Friendly Hints to the Committees of Parliamentary Reformation in Ireland from Thomas Northcote', 'From John Cartwright' and 'Heads of a Plan of a Parliamentary Reform', *A Collection of the Letters to the Volunteers of Ireland on the Subject of a Parliamentary Reform* (London: J. Stockdale, 1783), pp. 1-7, 10-19, 20-1, 21-45, 45-6, 46-53, 61-72, 80-8, 89-97, 98-103 and 111-14

The Irish representative system contained similar anomalies to those of England and Wales. The counties were dominated by the Anglo-Irish aristocracy and in the majority of the boroughs the narrow franchise ensured that there was little scope for independent political action. In 1728 Catholics had been formally excluded from the franchise. The movement for Irish political reform grew out of the successful Volunteer movement, which had been established in 1778, ostensibly to protect the country from invasion.

In July 1783 delegates from Volunteer associations all over Ireland met at Lisburne and dispatched a circular letter seeking answers to eight specific questions to leading politicians in England and Ireland. The eight queries were as follows: 1) should rotten boroughs be disfranchised; 2) should the number of MPs be increased; 3) should county representation be increased; 4) which system of suffrage should be employed; 5) should there be secret ballot; 6) should Parliaments be of a shorter duration (the system currently in place was for octennial parliaments); 7) should compensation be paid for disqualified boroughs; and 8) how should reform be introduced given the particular situation of Ireland. The objective was to formulate proposals for reform of the Irish representative system. The replies to this correspondence thus give an indication of the most progressive contemporary opinions on reform.

As a result of this correspondence, the Volunteers drew up an advanced programme of reform including annual Parliaments, secret ballot, the abolition of rotten boroughs, an increase in the country representation and anti-bribery legislation. However the movement was dogged by dissension and the bill was eventually defeated in their Irish Parliament.

A

C O P Y

O F T H E

C I R C U L A R L E T T E R,

Which, at the last Meeting of the Committee of Association for this County, was ordered to be sent by their Chairman, the Rev. Mr. WYVILL, to the Chairman of the several other Petitioning and Associated Bodies, and such other Friends to the Reformation of Parliament as he should think fit.

BURTON-HALL, near BEDAL,
Nov. 1, 1782.

S I R,

I AM directed by the Committee of Association for the County of York, to transmit to you the inclosed Account of their Proceedings on this day, and the 31st of October, which they request you will have

B

the

the goodness to lay before the Committee of —, at its next Meeting.

I am also instructed to mention how much the Yorkshire Committee wish to obtain a free Communication of Sentiments with the Committee of —, on the subject of Parliamentary Abuses, hoping, by their opinion and advice, to be enabled to judge what Propositions, for the Reformation of Parliament, it may be expedient to recommend to the intended General Meeting of the County of York on the 19th day of December next.

The Yorkshire Committee have seen, with much satisfaction, Petitions adopted by several Public Meetings of great Respectability, requesting, in *general Terms*, a Redress of Parliamentary Grievances, they approve this respect and deference to Parliament, and wish a similar delicacy may be observed in the measures of the County of York: But it seems to be adviseable that this *General Petition* of the people should be supported by some *particular Declaration* of their wishes, in a mode as little offensive as possible to the dignity of Parliament; for
if

if it shall not be known on what grounds, and to what extent the people desire that the Reformation of Parliament may proceed, it may be foreseen that hence insuperable Objections will be urged against every Plan of Reformation which their friends in Parliament may propose. INSTRUCTIONS from each Constituent Body to their respective Representatives seem to be the most obvious and unexceptionable mode, by which Parliament may be apprised what Correction of Abuses is expected by the People, and yet every appearance of Disrespect to that Assembly may be entirely avoided.

If this Method of conveying the Sense of the Nation to Parliament, and ascertaining *what Reformation there* would give general satisfaction, should be approved, the next important Consideration would be, what particular Propositions of Reform, in the present State of this Country, are most eligible ; and, if proposed in the INSTRUCTIONS of any Constituent Body, are most likely to receive the general concurrence of the public : For, if too extensive a System of Reformation should be rashly ob-

B 2 truded

truded on Parliament, the whole attempt might miscarry, and the Opportunity to secure the Liberties of England for Generations to come, might be irretrievably lost. But on the other hand, every Friend to the Constitution would lament the Loss of superior Improvement, if, from too rigid a scruple to extend the terms of the Association, the additional Representation of the Counties and the Metropolis should be alone procured, when the Abolition of the MOST OBJECTIONABLE BOROUGHs, in a limited degree, might have been obtained. In the Opinion of the Yorkshire Committee, the little decayed Boroughs, dependent on, or unduly influenced by, the Boards of Ordnance, Treasury, Admiralty, &c. may be justly placed in that class. For what more dangerous Perversion of the Constitution can be imagined, than THE NOMINATION OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT BY THE CROWN; or what Fidelity to the Public Trust can be expected from Senators who are thus created by that Government, whose Conduct they ought to watch and controul?

On this occasion, the Yorkshire Gentlemen are free to own their inclination, if the Proposal should fortunately meet the Approbation of the Committee of —, and other respectable Bodies, to recommend to the General Meeting of the County of York, on the 19th of December :

1. To instruct their Representatives to introduce, or to support a Bill in Parliament, for abolishing at least Fifty of the MOST OBNOXIOUS BOROUGHES; providing for the Electors in the several Boroughs abolished a proper gratuitous Compensation for their extinguished Franchises; and enabling them to vote, together with the Freeholders, in Elections for Knights of the respective Shires to which they belong; and also adding an adequate number of Members, not less than an Hundred, in a due proportion to the several Counties and the Metropolis :

2. And farther to instruct their Representatives to move, or to support a Motion for the Repeal of the Septennial Bill.

3. Also for admitting Proprietors of Copyhold Lands of Inheritance, with Fine certain, of the clear yearly value of Forty Shillings, to vote at County Elections of Members of Parliament throughout the kingdom :

4. And lastly, to support the Application of any County in Scotland, for setting aside nominal and fictitious Votes, and for regulating Elections to Parliament in that part of the kingdom, in a manner agreeable to the true intent and spirit of the Constitution.

On the subject of the two last Articles of Reform, the Yorkshire Committee are little apprehensive that any considerable Variation of Sentiment will be found among the True Friends of the Constitution—still less can they suppose that, to the Proposition for the Repeal of the Septennial Bill, any material Objection will be urged: But if the Proposal for a limited Disfranchisement of the most obnoxious Boroughs should not receive the Approbation and Concurrence of a decided Majority of the Counties and Principa
pal

pal Towns, which support the Claim of Parliamentary Reformation, the Yorkshire Committee will not hesitate a moment to sacrifice their wishes to the preservation of that harmony and union among the several Associated and Petitioning Bodies, without which there cannot be a Probability of Success. In that case they will readily strike out the Article for the Abolition of certain Boroughs, and recommend to the General Meeting of the County of York to adhere in their Instructions to the Second Proposition in their Form of Association, for reinforcing the sound part of our Representation, by the Addition of One Hundred Members, to be proportionally chosen by the Counties and the Metropolis.

The Yorkshire Committee having so freely suggested their Sentiments on these important Matters, do most earnestly intreat the Committee of ———, with equal freedom, to communicate their opinion and advice, which will be received with the greatest deference and respect.

I have the honour to be, SIR,

Your most humble Servant,

C. WYVILL.

The following LETTER is a Copy of the Answer sent by the Rev. Mr. WYVILL, to Mr. Alderman CROSBY, Chairman of the COMMITTEE of the LIVERY of LONDON.

BURTON-HALL, Dec. 7, 1782.

S I R,

I AM happy that my political conduct at any time has been honoured with the approbation of the Committee of the Livery of London. But I cannot flatter myself, that the part I took in the transactions at the Thatched House in May last, deserved any peculiar commendation; or that opinions delivered there by so humble an individual possessed that weight of influence, which the Committee are pleased to ascribe to them. On the other hand, I trust I shall be able to satisfy the Committee, that their disapprobation of my conduct in a recent instance, which I observe, with much concern, conveyed in the same letter which has bestowed upon me such unmerited praise, is founded on a mistaken view of my sentiments and actions.

I do admit, Sir, that at the Thatched-House I did object, with some respectable Gentlemen of other Counties, to a vote of thanks to the Duke of Richmond, in all the various shapes in which it was offered to the Meeting. To me, who hold his Grace in high respect, as a firm and intrepid assertor of our Free Constitution, this was a painful opposition. But, in my conception, public duty bound me to oppose the respective motions for that purpose; not because his Grace was the proposer of a specific plan for a Reformation of Parliament, but because his specific plan appeared to me impracticable, and not to be attained by any regular or constitutional effort of the people; and therefore any resolution of thanks, which might be construed by the Public as a declaration in favour of his Grace's System, could only tend to defeat that more safe and moderate proposal for restoring the Constitution, which their peaceful endeavours might probably obtain. In this opposition the worthy Members of the corporation of London, then present, generally concurred; by their influence the several motions were withdrawn; and consequently, it became unnecessary to urge

any farther objections against the Plan itself, considered with respect to its utility in the present circumstances of this country. I do admit also, that although no formal resolution was passed upon the subject, yet it was agreed at the Thatched House, and I concurred in the agreement, that it was expedient the intended Petition for Redress of our Parliamentary Grievances should be drawn up *in general terms*. But I certainly did not bind myself “to avoid any specific Propositions relative to the Parliamentary Reform,” in any other mode of declaration, whenever a proper degree of union upon the subject could be accomplished. And I do not find the other Yorkshire Gentlemen, who had been present at the Thatched House, understood this agreement in a different manner. At the late Meeting of the Yorkshire Committee, several of those Gentlemen attended; and to their recollection the objection did not occur, when the circular letter was proposed.

In my opinion, the want of unanimity among the agents of the people, in favour of any specific plan, is the unfortunate circumstance which threatens most their total disappointment.

disappointment. For if no means can be devised to unite the body of the people, in support of some rational and substantial improvement of the Constitution, their continued dissentions, no doubt, will furnish to the timid or interested obstructors of Reformation, a ready answer to their Petition: “ Why should Parliament admit a change, till it is known what change will satisfy the nation? When the people themselves are agreed what redress they ought to ask, then, and not before, let Parliament deliberate what redress they ought to grant.” It is obvious indeed, that till that general union of the people shall take place, discordant Petitions, recommending to Parliament different specific plans of Reformation, would but expose the people to the derision of their adversaries. But it behoves their agents to consider, that no time should be lost, no endeavours should be unemployed, to conciliate and to unite the various friends of Reformation, before the season for that work be irrecoverably past. At length the whirl of casual events has brought on the favourable opportunity; but if they omit to improve the fleeting advantage, a few short months

months may frustrate every future attempt to retrieve their neglect.

“The Committee of London hope for a mature and well-digested Reform of Parliament, which they trust will proceed from the investigation of a Committee of the House of Commons.” I freely own my hopes are placed upon a different foundation, viz. on the firmness and energy of the British People, pointing out the principle of that Reformation which they request; specifying the extent to which they desire it may proceed; and leaving the minute detail of Reformation to be settled by Parliament itself: But if the late overture of the Yorkshire Committee, and every other attempt to accomplish a more general union of the people, for the prosecution of some specific plan of Reformation of equal extent, should prove unsuccessful, it may be expected that any correction of Parliamentary Abuses, which may flow from the spontaneous act and pleasure of Parliament, will be much inferior to that plan of Constitutional Improvement, which the Yorkshire Gentlemen have proposed. In my apprehension, any change that may be made
will

will also originate with less propriety, and, in point of precedent, with less safety from Parliament, than from the special applications of the people, by instructions to their respective Members. Such were my sentiments before the Meeting of the Thatched House; and they remain unaltered since, by conversation or correspondence.

The general phrase is, that "something must be done." What probably will be done, may perhaps in some measure be collected from the Message which I had the honour to receive from Lord Shelburne in August last; the purport of which was soon after communicated to the Committee of London. His Lordship undoubtedly stands pledged to support the Propositions of the Yorkshire Association; *i. e.* To promote the addition of one hundred Members to the Counties and the Metropolis, and the repeal of the Septennial Bill. But if Petitions, in general terms alone, shall be presented to Parliament, and no Instructions shall be offered to our several Representatives for the amputation of rotten Boroughs, I see no reason to suppose that any abolition of their obnoxious Franchises will
take

take place, against the manifest interest of many powerful Members of Parliament; except by the slow operation of a Parliamentary Tribunal in some rare instance disfranchising an unfortunate Borough, on proof of Corruption too flagrant to be dissembled. I am far from meaning to disparage the measure for reinforcing the sound part of our Representation: If nothing better can be obtained, I shall be thankful even for that additional security to our freedom. But I am convinced that an adequate abolition of the little decayed Boroughs would strongly corroborate that security; and I conceive that both might yet be accomplished by a timely and vigorous exertion of the People for those special purposes.

With these impressions on my mind, I attended the late Meeting of the Yorkshire Committee; and having produced to that Assembly a Copy of the Message from Lord Shelburne, and stated to them my subsequent correspondence on that subject with his Lordship, which appeared at once to confirm the Message, and to be improper for public inspection *at that time*, my production of the correspondence in question

was

was not required by the Committee. But it was not my advice to the Committee to acquiesce in these declarations of support from Lord Shelburne. At the Thatched-House Meeting I had opposed thanking the Duke of Richmond for his impracticable plan; at the Yorkshire Meeting I exhorted the Committee not to content themselves with the mere Augmentation of County Members, &c. which the Cabinet seemed disposed to promote; but, as far as it is possible without risking that acquisition, to attempt the still superior improvement of an adequate amputation of the little decayed Boroughs. What I ventured to suggest on this occasion, was honoured with the approbation of that respectable Assembly, and was carried into effect in the Circular Letter, which the Committee of London has already seen.

From this explanation of my political conduct and sentiments for some time past, I trust I shall be justified in the opinion of that Committee, as having acted, in circumstances of some difficulty, an honest and consistent part. But this is a matter comparatively of small moment. I am con-

D

fident

fidest from this state of some late transactions, whatever the final determination of that Committee may be on the subject of the Circular Letter, they will approve the caution, the perseverance, the well-tempered zeal of the Yorkshire Committee.

With respect to the propriety of “postponing Instructions to their Representatives, until the fate of the General Petitions is decided,” which your respected Committee proposes to that of Yorkshire, I would beg leave to suggest one short observation; which is, That when the fate of the Petitions shall be decided, any Instructions upon the subject will probably come too late. If, in consequence of an application *in general terms* to Parliament, the Representation of the Counties and the Metropolis shall be reinforced by the addition of fifty or sixty Members, any future application to the Legislature for farther improvement, in this age at least, cannot with any probability be expected to receive the countenance and support of the nation — If therefore the Committee of London have no objection to the Propositions offered by the Yorkshire Gentlemen, their concurrence *now* can alone
be

be of any avail. If they decline giving their sanction to that proposal, from a preference to the Duke of Richmond's scheme, I beg leave to declare my firm opinion, as I did before the Thatched-House Meeting, that there exists not the smallest probability that his Grace's plan will be adopted by the Towns and Counties of Great-Britain in any considerable proportion.

I have the Honour to be, SIR,

Your most obedient Servant,

C. W Y V I L L.

Brass Crosby, Esq. Chairman, &c.

*To Mr. HENRY JOY, Junior, Secretary
of the Committee of Correspondence, at
Belfast.*

Burton-Hall, near Bedal, August 22, 1783.

S I R,

ACCORDING to your desire, my answer to the Queries of the Committee of Correspondence at Belfast, was transmitted to Lieutenant Colonel Sharman, at Lisburn, on the 12th instant. But wishing to guard against a miscarriage, which in the hurry of a General Election may be possible, I take the liberty to trouble you with a duplicate of my answer.

The Committee of Yorkshire is expected to meet about the end of September; when your Letters, and the other papers communicated by your respectable Committee, will be laid before the Yorkshire gentlemen. I am firmly persuaded they will rejoice at the noble spirit of reformation which has arisen in Ireland; they will sincerely wish to their worthy fellow-subjects complete success: I trust also, they will be most
ready

ready to co-operate with them in any legal mode which can be devised, mutually to assist each other, in the laudable and necessary undertaking to obtain a substantial reformation in Parliament, in the respective kingdoms of Ireland and Great-Britain.

I am, Sir, with great respect,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

C. W Y V I L L,

Mr. WYVILL's Answer to the Queries proposed by the Committee of Correspondence at Belfast.

I. IN all attempts by a free people to improve the frame of their legislature, it seems adviseable as much as may be possible, to preserve ancient foundations, and to suffer every part of the fabric to stand, which is not absolutely incapable of substantial repair. In my opinion, it is unnecessary and inexpedient to disfranchise the populous Boroughs in Ireland, in which the right of election is invested in a few persons. In such Boroughs, a due extension of the right of suffrage is sufficient to obtain every

every desirable purpose, but all the little depopulated Boroughs ought certainly to be disfranchised; and their privilege of Parliamentary representation should be transferred, to oppose those populous districts which are unrepresented, or whose share of representation is inadequate.

II. If in consequence of the proposed disfranchisement of the smallest class of Boroughs, a sufficient share of the representation can be transferred to the largest districts, it does not seem necessary that the number of the Irish House of Commons should be increased. The liberty of the nation may be well protected by a House of Commons, whose Members do not exceed three hundred; if those Members be firmly connected with the body of the nation. But if from the paucity of Boroughs proper to be disfranchised, or from the influence of powerful men interested to preserve such Boroughs a sufficient share of the representation cannot be transferred to the largest districts; the present number of the House of Commons in Ireland, compared with the elective body, is by no means so large as to forbid any addition of Members. For what
secures

secures a Parliament in the interest of the public? DUE ELECTION, AND A SPEEDY RETURN INTO THE COMMON MASS. A Senate thus constituted would instantly feel what the community felt, and faithfully act according to the wishes of the constituents. These are essential requisites in the formation and conduct of a House of Commons; and where they are found, it is of little moment, whether the Assembly consists of three hundred persons, or of any larger number, not exceeding those limits, beyond which it is not easy to preserve order in a deliberative assembly. On these grounds it may be presumed, that no solid objection to an augmentation of the Irish House of Commons could be offered, even if the present elective body were incapable of increase. But since the time is perhaps arrived, or may not be very distant, when the Catholics of Ireland might be safely admitted a participation in the right of election, the difficulty wholly vanishes.

III. Where property is very unequally distributed, aristocratical influence will be found to operate extensively; and no means
can

can be devised completely to guard the community against the mischievous consequences of that influence, without a breach in the laws of property, which hardly ever can be justifiable. But the regulations may be framed, by which the danger from the excessive power of the aristocracy may be averted; and in some tolerable degree that share of influence may be obtained by the people, without which they cannot possess a free constitution, or have any substantial security that the true interests of the nation will be steadily pursued by Government. Laws extending the right of suffrage to fit classes of men; prohibiting bribery and expence at elections; and facilitating the voters access to the place of polling; those are the most obvious and effectual means by which the Commons may be protected against a domineering aristocracy, without recurring to the desperate expedient of an Agrarian law. And since the counties of Ireland are inadequately represented, and since the natural luxury of the rich, and the growing industry of the poor, will combine to lessen the evil complained of, it seems advisable that the county representation should be re-
inforced

enforced, and at the same time, that every proper regulation to check the excess of aristocratical influence, should be introduced.

IV. The fourth Query has been, in some measure, answered in the reply to the third. It seems not to admit a doubt, that the right of suffrage should be extended to Ireland. But the difficult part of the question is, to WHOM? Conscious I am how delicate the subject is, I cannot, however, decline to give my sentiments upon it with plainness and unreserved sincerity.

It is the right of mankind to be governed by their own consent, given personally, or by representation, On this principle all just Government has been originally formed. It was the principle on which our Saxon ancestors founded their Constitution; and though it must be admitted, that from the first introduction of a deputed Assembly of the people in England, the principle never was strictly adhered to, and that in fact, the rights of election was not universally enjoyed, even before the Statute of Disfranchisement passed, in the eighth year of

E

Henry

Henry the Sixth, yet the principle was still appealed to, and by a legal fiction supposed to exist in practice.

Such was the happy equality of mankind in the earlier stages of society, ill exchanged, in my opinion, for the glare and glitter of a more splendid scene, where the loss of the political happiness of the many, is poorly compensated by the pomp and magnificence of a few individuals.

In countries where property is equally divided, or nearly so, it can hardly be supposed, that the unlimited right of suffrage may not be established. If such an exception to all political experience should occur, the circumstances which could occasion the limitation, must be of a very extraordinary nature. But it states where property has been distributed with considerable inequality, some diminution of popular privileges has usually taken place: and as far in the greatest part of the globe, where the extreme of riches and poverty almost divide each community, those privileges have been trampled under the foot of their tyrannical rulers, and scarcely a vestige of them is to
be

be found; even in those free countries of Ireland and Britain, there seems to have been a culpable propensity to contract these rights to a degree for which there was no sufficient reason. The interests of mankind require, that the basis of society should be broad; the rulers of justice require, that their natural rights should not be taken away, but upon proof of misusage, or political delinquency. I am satisfied, therefore, that where the right of universal suffrage has not been found actually inconsistent with the public safety, it ought not to be abridged. But in all cases, where the claims of individuals are incompatible with the public good, the privileges of a part of the community must be postponed to the welfare of the whole. For the law of self-preservation is to societies, as to individuals, an indefeasible law; and by that law, societies are justifiable which eject the full employment of the rights of citizens, persons to whom those rights could not be continued without danger to the public. The election franchise may be considered as both a privilege and a trust; and men who have been found incapable of executing that trust, in a manner not advantageous to

the community, are unfit to remain invested with it. That trust may be as properly taken from such men, as by the concession of the advocates for its widest extension, it may be withheld from women, minors, and persons of some other descriptions. But men, from whom this franchise has been taken, ought to be permitted to renounce their allegiance to the State, and transfer it to another. If, in this case, they acquiesce under the deprivation, without renouncing their allegiance to the State, or even expressing any dissatisfaction, their acquiescence would amount to a tacit acceptance of virtual representation; and they would still be governed, as they ought to be, by their own consent.

In communities in which this deprivation has already taken place, similar reasoning will determine to what classes of men the election franchise ought to be restored, or may be justly refused. It ought to be restored to all who may be reasonably expected to exercise it for the public good. This is indisputably clear; and it seems equally certain, that it may be justly refused to all to whom it would be unsafe to impart

impart it; whom candour would judge most likely to misuse their privilege, and to be guilty of that political delinquency for which their original deprivation would be justifiable.

Those observations are alike applicable to the case of Britain and of Ireland. In both countries, numerous classes of men have been deprived of this franchise, but the liberal temper of the times, aided in each by some favourable concomitant circumstances, has brought this question to a serious discussion; what restoration of the right of election ought to be proposed, or is fit to be established? The mere inequality of property alone, is by no means a valid objection to the most extensive Restoration. For if, from the love of order, justice, and liberty, prevalent in the lower classes, and the meek and unambitious spirit of superiors, no material danger were to be apprehended from the influence of a wealthy aristocracy, or from numerous and frequent assemblies of the populace; in such circumstances, notwithstanding the unequal division of property, the right of
suffrage

suffrage might be safely restored to the exclusive classes, and therefore it ought not to be refused.

Whether Ireland be a country thus fortunately circumstanced, or not, it behoves the Delegates of Ulster to consider with strict impartiality? In what degree the manners of the Irish people are corrupt, to what extent the property of their country is unequally distributed, the Delegates will be most competent to judge. But if aristocratical power be found too predominant in the counties of Ireland, under the present limitations of the right of election; as it is stated to be, in the letter of the 19th of July, by the Committee of Belfast; the extension of the right to persons in the situation of absolute dependence on the great, would render their power wholly irresistible. If the capital contain a numerous and profligate populace, the periodical assemblies of that populace, for the purpose of elections, would, too probably, produce tumults, and all the wild and pernicious effects of frantic insurrection. Evils like these would be more intolerable, than those

those abuses which are now so justly complained of; and unless some effectual remedy were speedily applied to them, would lead Ireland through a series of calamity, to the utter ruin of its constitution.

Presuming Ireland to be a country nearly in this situation, I cannot venture to recommend the restoration of universal suffrage. In my opinion, the circumstances here described must be considerably altered, before the refusal of that unlimited privilege can be thought unjust. At present, the utmost length to which the right of election there seems safely communicable, is to impart it to every class of men, who, from the possession of property to some small amount, may be thought likely to exercise their franchise freely, and for the public good. To concede the right of suffrage in Ireland beyond that boundary, appears not consistent with national prudence, or the safety of the Public; and therefore, in my apprehension, is not required by justice.— In this opinion I am countenanced by the general practice of the Free States of antiquity; I am supported by that of modern Europe, and the more recent example of
America.

America. In the American Republics, property is more equally divided, and the manners of the people are more simple, orderly, and incorrupt, than they are in these kingdoms. And yet, in some of them, qualification of property has been thought necessary to entitle inhabitants to the rights of voting. In Massachusetts, and some other American States, the landed qualification exceeds that of any English Freeholders.—I should be still farther confirmed in these sentiments, if the excluded classes discovered no anxiety to regain this important privilege, even when it became the subject of national debate. For why should the work of Political Reformation be loaded with great, and perhaps insurmountable difficulties, by struggling to impart to the non-electors, a franchise which they are neither likely to exercise with discretion, nor solicitous to obtain.

By the rule here suggested, all persons paying taxes within the counties, cities, and boroughs of Ireland, would be comprehended among their voters; and to the county electors also would be added persons holding land by copyhold, by leasehold for
life,

life, or a term exceeding thirty years; equal in value to the present freehold qualifications.

By the same rule it is understood, that Catholics of similar qualifications in property would be admitted to the choice of representatives, together with their Protestant Brethren.

It must be confessed, that this concession to humanity and liberal policy, could not be proposed in Britain with any prospect of success. But Ireland, by granting a complete toleration to Catholics, has displayed the true spirit of candour and equity. And on this great occasion of reforming its constitution, the same equitable spirit will naturally lead that country, not to exclude those men from the primary right of citizens, by whose assistance its own independence and dignity were obtained. The Catholics of former ages may have been justly degraded from the class of electors, because an attachment to a foreign Potentate, dangerous to the peace and welfare of their country, may then have formed an essential part of their religious creed. But why

should men whose religious opinions are now deemed inoffensive to the State, and therefore fit to be tolerated by law, be thought unfit to concur with their fellow citizens in the election of representatives? The established religion would be secure as it is at present; because Catholic voters could not elect Catholic representatives. However, their mode of Christianity may be disapproved, however necessary it may be to oppose the re-admission of that system, as the religion of our country, and no person disapproves it more completely or would resist its establishment more strenuously than the writer of this paper; yet surely, in mere matters of civil concern, the profession of errors allowed to be harmless to the state, ought not to be a disqualification.—Surely Christians of every sect ought to be permitted to enjoy those political privileges, from which persons untaught by any religion are not excluded.

If on this occasion the right of suffrage should be extended to Catholics, let them receive the indulgence not from the insidious clemency of a Court, but from the friendship and magnanimity of their Protestant

testant fellow-subjects, and the peace and liberty of Ireland will be unhurt by the concession.

V. Elections by ballot seem to be unadvisable. In places where no undue influence can be exerted, the concealment of the ballot is totally unnecessary. But, where the influence is predominant, it ought to be resisted, not by a practice encouraging cowardly disingenuity and breach of promise, but by open and honourable means; by means consonant with truth, integrity, and the courageous spirit of liberty.

VI. The duration of Parliaments ought to be limited to a shorter term than eight years. It should be found as practicable to obtain annual as triennial Parliaments, the preference in point of efficacy seems due to annual Parliaments. But the beneficial effect of triennial, or of annual Parliaments will not be felt till the representation has been meliorated, and elections have been rendered uncorrupt and inexpensive.

VII. It would be expedient that a satisfactory compensation should be given by the

nation to the proprietors of those boroughs which may be abolished. If this were understood to be the intention of the public, a less animated opposition to the disfranchisement of boroughs might be expected. But a more harsh mode of reformation would disgust and exasperate individuals, which would be extremely imprudent, when a slight expence to the whole kingdom might purchase their acquiescence, and preserve general harmony.

Undoubtedly a compensation is what strict justice does not enjoin; the nation has an absolute right to revoke privileges which are become injurious to its welfare; but in the view of equity, as well as that of policy, this more lenient mode of correcting abuses which time has introduced, without any marked criminality of the present proprietors, seems to be preferable.

VIII. From the answers which have been returned to the former queries, my opinion respecting the eighth and last query, in some measure, might be collected. But the reply to the most important question of them all shall not be less explicit than those which
have

have been already given. If then I had the honour to be delegated to attend the meeting at Dungannon, my present ideas on the subject would lead me,

1. To recommend with all possible earnestness, the abolition of every small and decayed borough ; and the gift of a reasonable compensation to every person immediately affected by that act, with permission to the disfranchised electors to vote at elections for their respective counties.

2. To propose the reinforcement of the representation, by transferring to the counties, the capital, and the considerable unre-presented town, if there be any such in Ireland, the members taken from the disfranchised boroughs ; and also by adding to them as many new members, as might be necessary clearly to turn the balance of legislative power in favour of the counties, principal cities and towns, which form the body of the nation, and in which the strength of the Irish democracy resides.

3. To suggest the utility of extending the right of suffrage to all persons paying taxes
to

to counties, cities, and boroughs; to all copyholders and leaseholders for life, or a term exceeding thirty years, the yearly value of whose estates shall be at least forty shillings; and also the propriety of admitting Christians of every denomination to the equal exercise of that most important right of a citizen.

4: To advise a shorter duration of Parliaments, preferring annual Parliaments to triennial, if equally attainable.

5. And for securing the advantages of those measures in their full extent, to recommend the strictest prohibition of bribery and expence at elections, and regulations facilitating to the respective voters the exercise of their franchise.

Such are the improvements which appear to my mind most practicable, safe, and efficacious, in the present State of Ireland,
— TO RESTORE TO THE PEOPLE
UNARMED THEIR JUST AND NECESSARY
CONTROUL OVER THE
REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY.

To

To some of the Delegates at Dungannon, these propositions might appear not extensive enough. To many more perhaps they might appear too extensive to be at once adopted with prudence.

Having therefore offered these propositions to the meeting, I should think it ill became me to adhere to them with pertinacity. On the contrary, it would be more suitable to my very limited experience, and imperfect knowledge of Irish affairs, and also more conducive to the success of the great cause, to submit my opinion with deference to better informed judgments, and to accede to a less extensive plan for a substantial reformation of Parliament; in favour of which a more general concurrence of the Volunteers might be probable. For that is the best plan of reformation, which is the most effectual that is like to be attained.

The means for obtaining those regulations, or other improvements which may be deemed more salutary, are sufficiently obvious to restore a declining constitution, is the duty, the interest, and the peculiar
office

office of the collective body. Self Reformation is as odious a task to corrupt assemblies of men, as it is to profligate individuals. A degenerate Parliament will never seriously engage in that business, but from the impulse of the people. By their active zeal the work of reformation must be begun; by their firmness and perseverance it must be finished. In a more tolerable condition of Parliament, it would be sufficient to state an abuse; and of its own accord an honest House of Commons would immediately apply the proper correction. But when the mischief lies in the frame and disposition of Parliament itself, it behoves the people not only to specify their grievance, but to point out on what principle, and to what extent they expect redress. For, if the popular complaint be well founded, Parliament cannot be qualified to judge for the people with due impartiality; nor indisposed spontaneously to grant that mode of reformation which may appear best adapted to promote their happiness. Hence proceeds the principal difficulty of this great enterprize.—When the claim of independence was the object of pursuit, there was but one simple proposition—every Irishman was agreed. If
the

the Volunteer assemblies should deliberate apart on the general question only, Whether a reformation of Parliament be expedient? there is little reason to apprehend any material diversity of opinion would arise. But, if the question to be considered, should be, What specific plan of reformation is most fit to be proposed to Parliament? the discussion of that proposition in many distinct assemblies might unhappily divide the Volunteers. The reformation of Parliament is an ample field of speculation, in which the sentiments of wise and good men may be widely different. It is a subject of the highest practical importance, on which those various sentiments may be maintained with warmth and eagerness. In the progress of those disputes the Provincial meetings might form different opinions; they might be heated; might be alienated; the ill offices of artful and interested men might increase the disgust; till the formation of a general opinion in favour of any specific plan, would become exceedingly difficult, if not wholly impracticable. In order to guard against so fatal disunion, it seems advisable, if the specific plan ought to originate from the people, that a GENERAL

G

ASSEM-

ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES from every part of Ireland should meet, and determine what that specific plan should be. By such a meeting the Union of the Volunteers might be compleatly preserved; and the application from that meeting for an effectual redress of parliamentary abuses would be presented to Parliament with the weight and authority of the whole collective body. It is needless to add that their requisition must be complied with.

Such is the judgment which I have formed to the most Impartial consideration of the Queries transmitted for my opinion by the Committee of Belfast. I feel myself much honoured by the gentlemen who have called forth my sentiments on this momentous occasion. By imposing that honourable task upon me, they have committed to my hands an important trust, which I am bound to execute with scrupulous fidelity, with conscientious sincerity. I am but too well convinced, that what I have been able to suggest deserves not much of their attention. But the opinion now given has been formed, and delivered under a sense of duty. And if this communication offer nothing
else

else which may be fortunate enough to meet their approbation, yet I am confident the Delegates of Ulster will approve the freedom and integrity of my answer.

As a man I sincerely wish the enjoyment of liberty, in its most ample extent, to men in every climate and country ; but as fellow-subjects I am deeply and more peculiarly interested in the welfare and happiness of Irishmen. When the Volunteers of Ireland successfully asserted the honour and independence of their country, I rejoiced at its emancipation from an injurious controul. When they abolished persecution, and gave peace and security to millions of their oppressed brethren, my heart concurred and approved the deed. When they checked the corrupt profusion of the public money, I joined with every virtuous man in applauding this prelude to a more important reformation. To restore a sinking constitution is their last and greatest labour. It is a task whose difficulty can only be exceeded by the immense advantages resulting from the performance. Nothing else can give permanent security to the freedom and prosperity of Ireland. When the zeal and

spirit by which the Volunteers gained those benefits to their country shall be relaxed, unless a radical reformation of Parliament shall have been first accomplished, the benefits themselves will not be of long duration : they will be lost again, or they will be left under circumstances of public distress, in which the enjoyment will be impossible. The mischief of a factious and corrupt Government will be felt once more : ministerial profusion will again seduce the senate, and impoverish the community. In this state of things, liberty will be precarious, and commerce and industry will be undone. And then, when the poor Catholic is starving for want of employment, toleration itself will be to him a comfort of little avail. Even the joy excited in the public mind by the acquisition of independence will soon sink, and be lost in the superior sense of domestic misery. But I trust a different, and far happier scene is just ready to open upon Ireland. From the vigour and virtue of Irish people, conducted by the wisdom of their Delegates, a substantial reformation of Parliament, with every national blessing in its train, may soon be expected. Let them but persevere in the
same

same spirited, temperate, and legal conduct, which hitherto has marked their character with honor;—let them be firm—let them be unanimous; and in this just and necessary undertaking, as in all the rest, THE VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND will command that success which they so well deserve.

C. W Y V I L L.

REVEREND SIR,

THE Merchant Company here, having taken under consideration the intimation made by the King's Ministers of bringing into Parliament a Bill for equalizing the representation of the people, were unanimously of opinion, that it would tend to the interests of the Burghs of Scotland to have an alteration in the mode of election of their Members of Parliament, and appointed a Committee to correspond with the other Burghs and Committees who may testify their approbation of the alteration, and particularly with the Yorkshire Committee, so as common measures may be followed, being sensible that unanimity will con-

contribute greatly towards carrying the proposed plan into execution.

The Committee therefore beg leave to give the present trouble to know from you the plan proposed to be adopted by the county of York, and will esteem your answer a particular favour, in which it is hoped you will transmit every information you may think material for us to know.

I am respectfully, Reverend Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

JOHN CAMPBELL, *Chairman.*

Stirling, Feb. 26, 1783.

To the Rev. Mr. Wyvill.

S I R,

INCLOSED in this and another cover I have the honour to transmit to you the papers mentioned in my letter from Wansford, from which the Committee of Merchants of Stirling will be able to collect the information they have desired respecting
the

the plan for the Reformation of Parliament which had been adopted by the county of York ; and also the reasons why that plan will not be brought forward in Parliament during the present session.

At the first establishment of the English House of Commons, and for many ages after that period, the counties, cities, and principal towns, which form the main body of the nation, returned to Parliament a large majority of Members. Since the reign of Henry VI. the numbers in that House have received a gradual increase ; till at last, by the addition of at least one hundred Parliamentary Boroughs, the balance of legislative power has been taken from the freeholders, citizens, and freemen of county towns, &c. and placed in the hands of a few petty Burgeſſes, who bear an inconsiderable proportion to the whole mass of electors. This is a fundamental defect in the present frame of English representation ; for although mathematical equality is not to be expected in such matters, yet it never can be thought proper by any rational friend to liberty, that a thirtieth part of the electors of England should appoint a
majority

majority of English Representatives. But this inequality is not a mere speculative impropriety ; it is a defect, whose mischievous consequences have been severely felt, and threaten the utter ruin of the nation. For hence an intercourse of corruption has been established between Electors, Members, and Ministers of State : hence the Crown and a few great aristocratical families have obtained an unconstitutional influence in that Assembly, which ought to be the unbiassed guardian of the public weal : and hence measures destructive to our best interests have been supported, and may still be carried on against the general sense of the community. Such were the evils felt and apprehended from this great abuse when the counties and the metropolis of England undertook the task of restoring the constitution. Since that period, official and parliamentary regulations have been established, which tend in some degree to palliate the evil. But their beneficial effects can neither be great nor permanent. For although the influence of the Crown may have been diminished, that of the aristocracy seems to have been augmented. The weight taken from the Crown has not been transferred to
the

representation. In the present circumstances of the nation, they conceive the plan of universal suffrage is unfit to be recommended; neither likely to be attained by any regular or legal efforts of the people; nor, if it were established, likely to be maintained and exercised in that purity and peace, which alone can render it a blessing to the community. Instead of attempting a Reformation therefore, which, defensible as it may be in theory, seems at present not safely reducible to practice, they have been content to propose a more moderate change, of easier attainment, but effectual in their opinion to replace the rights and liberties of the nation in a state of full and permanent security.

It would not be difficult to name fifty Boroughs, in which a number of voters, less than the tenth part of the freeholders of Yorkshire, return one hundred Members to Parliament. By disfranchising those most obnoxious Boroughs, and adding an adequate number of Representatives to the counties and principal towns, the ancient balance in the system of English representation would be restored, without increasing
the

the number of English Representatives. This Reformation would be rendered still more effectual by a shorter duration of Parliament, by the abolition of nominal fictitious votes in Scotland, and the admission of copyholders to the right of suffrage in England. And if this plan of constitutional improvements should be thought not sufficiently comprehensive, it seems by no means unreasonable to presume, that, from a House of Commons thus constituted, the correction of every other abuse, the establishment of every other beneficial regulation, might be readily obtained, by which the mischiefs of *despotic power* on the one hand, and of *factious and corrupt system of Government* on the other, might be forever excluded.

Such were the general views of that very numerous and respectable Assembly of Gentlemen, held at York on December the 19th last: and it is my firm belief, that if it had been then known to the Yorkshire Gentlemen, that the right of election is monopolized by a few Members of a Council in almost every Borough in Scotland, their zeal for the liberty of their fellow-

citizens would have prompted them, as far as the offer of their assistance might avail, to promote an application to Parliament from the unrepresented Burgesses of Scotland, for a proper extension of that right. If the friends to a *General Reform* of Parliament would be consistent, they must approve the redress of every *local abuse* respecting representation and the right of election; it must be their anxious wish that the rights of the British Constitution may be distributed with an equal and impartial hand in every part of the kingdom: and it is hoped the advocates for *local Reformation* will be found equally disposed to support the *General Plan* whenever it may be brought forward.

The petitions on this subject have hitherto conveyed to Parliament in *general terms* the complaint of parliamentary grievances from the English counties and cities, &c. whose purpose is, *to avoid the introduction of any plan of Reformation into the House of Commons*, till the fate of Mr. Pitt's intended motion on the seventh of May shall be determined. If the efforts of that incomparable Senator shall be defeated on that day,
by

by a combination of men adverse to the just claims of the people, that event surely ought not to discourage the Committee, or lessen their zeal in a pursuit so just and necessary. On the contrary, it will afford an additional proof how much it behoves the nation to prosecute these claims with increasing ardour; to concert and adopt a plan of Reformation at once moderate and efficacious; and to support it in the succeeding session of Parliament by every means which can be devised, consistent with law and the constitution. On that occasion, perfect unanimity between the numerous friends of Parliamentary Reformation in all parts of the kingdom cannot be expected; but if they can be generally induced, by the obvious necessity for union, to act in concert, and with a mutual confidence, the joint and regular efforts of their Committees to promote the COMMON CAUSE can hardly fail to be crowned with final success.

I am, Sir, with great respect,

Your most obedient servant,

C. W Y V I L L.

*John Campbell, Esq. Chairman of the
Committee of the Merchants of Stirling.*

TO LIEUT. COL. SHARMAN, &c,

“ S I R,

“ I HAVE received a letter signed by the Secretary of 45 corps of Volunteers of Ulster, desiring my opinion concerning a Reform of the representation of the Commons in Parliament, may be transmitted to you for the information of the committee appointed by the delegates of those respectable bodies.

“ From the first moment of that question's being agitated in England, I have invariably held one opinion, as to the *right of representation* in theory, as founded on one plain proposition, *viz.* to be free is to be self-governed, and *vice versa*. Therefore every man must either vote in person or by his representative, in making those laws which are to affect his life, liberty and property.

“ I am very ready to admit, however, the possibility of our being obliged to relinquish

quish in practice, what seems perfect in theory ; and on that account, I have joined in some associations here, for a reformation which I think far from complete, but the best plan in which a sufficient number of persons were ready to join, so as to give us any prospect of success.

“ In the eight queries contained in the letter to me, there are some which depend on local circumstances, which I am not sufficiently acquainted with to be able to give so direct and explicit an answer as I could wish ; I therefore think it is best to give you a brief account of the plan I wish to see adopted in England, and afterwards to enclose you a separate paper containing each query, and the best answer to it which I find myself prepared to give.

“ My favourite plan for this country, to secure a representation tolerably equal, and to make as little alteration in the present mode, as our security will admit, is as follows :

“ Let

“ Let the counties and cities remain **just** as they are at present.

“ Let the counties be divided into four or more classes, according to their importance in the national scale, considering their population, agriculture and manufactures.

“ Let each return from four to ten or twelve burgeses, making in the whole the same number of members as at present.

“ Let every man paying scot and lot have a vote for burgeses.

“ Let the poll be taken on a certain day in every parish, before the parish-officers and principal inhabitants.

“ Let the constable witness the poll, and attend the Sheriff on a certain day, who, assisted by such magistrates as may chuse to attend, is to cast up the same, and make the return.

“ The foregoing seems to me to be clear of all objection, as it disfranchises nobody;
but

but only restores to liberty such as are now unjustly disfranchised ; and as it takes no man out of his parish, removes, the only plausible objection to frequent elections.

I am with great regard,

S I R,

Your most obedient

humble servant,

EFFINGHAM."

Aug. 13th, 1783.

" P. S. I beg to observe that no argument has ever yet been produced in favour of a seven years Parliament, which is not equally good for one of seventeen years."

SEPARATE ANSWERS, &c.

Answer to first Query.

I WOULD *disfranchise* nobody, but I would communicate to all those who are *at present unjustly disfranchised*, a participation of liberty with the rest of their country. By consolidating the boroughs, and all other householders, every man would be represented by *at least four* members.

Answer to 2d Query. The number of members I take to be a matter of indifference, provided they are amply sufficient to attend to all the *local business*, and not too many sit and debate in one chamber. If any *corrupt connexion* is apprehended between the representative Body and the Crown, it is the short duration of Parliaments and not the number of members that must prevent or cure that evil.

Answer to 3d Query. The objection alluded to is, that as now two great families

K

endeavour

endeavour to return the two county Members, the same would be done by six families were there six members. I should think it probable, in such a case, that the two most powerful of those families would return four of the Members, and four families next in power would compromise for two; and thus the six united would totally throw out those unconnected with them. This consideration would determine me to leave the county representation untouched.

Answer to 4th Query. I think every man not incapable through infancy, insanity, or criminal conduct, has a right to the franchise of being represented; but I cannot entertain a moment's doubt, in respect of those who bear the public burthens.

Answer to 5th Query. I rather think it would be not wise to have the members returned by ballot; but as I must candidly own, some of the best men in this country are of a different opinion, I will briefly give you the reason for mine. I had an opportunity some years ago, of learning how a ballot might be as easily abused as any other method of voting, and it was upon the
the

the following occasion: The kingdom of Sweden, it is well known, has in the present century enjoyed about fifty years of a free government; during which time, they collected the votes in their diet by ballot. When a Member was bribed, whose promise the briber did not chuse to rely on, it was the custom for him to write on the same paper with his vote, some word or sentence agreed on; by which it was known whether he had earned his wages or not. To prevent this, a law is made, that if any such mark appeared in future, the vote should be null and void.

In the year 1769, I was witness of a strong contest for the choice of a land marshal; when among other exertions of each party, bribery and corruption were not forgot; but as the law above-mentioned prevented the old method, they took the following; instead of desiring any one to vote for the favourite candidate, each manager applied to the supposed friends of the opposite side, and gave them money to destroy their own vote; by which, though they could not encrease their own numbers, they could diminish the number of their adversaries.

varies. It is easy to conceive numberless other contrivances, which, *till known*, will serve to evade any regulation that can be made.

But I have a much stronger reason against ballots. It is not merely *influence*, but *secret intelligence*, that I dread. For so long as riches or power can confer any favours or benefits; and so long as good men shall possess gratitude, knaves avarice, or fools pride, so long influence will exist. But while that is brought to light by open voting in the face of our country, it appears to me in a less formidable light, than if it worked in the dark, where I could neither see the nature or extent of my danger.

Answer to 6th Query. I think a triennial Parliament the longest that can be any ways consistent with the idea of any controul in the constituent over his representative. Indeed any fixed duration beyond the session to which Parliament is called by the King's writ, is granting an independence to the representative for that term, and so far making that branch of the legislature an *aristocratic body*.

Answer

Answer to 7th Query. As I cannot suppose it possible that any gentleman has either procured his own return with a view to sell his vote, or taken money to procure the return of another man, I am at a loss to account for a pecuniary claim in *amende* for a *property in the lives and liberty* of a people who call themselves so free, that they assert a negro slave does *ipso facto* obtain his liberty by setting his foot among them. If, however, by any former mistaken notions, such a thing could have happened; if any gentleman has really given a few thousands more than the true value of an estate, on account of a supposed privilege annexed to it; or if a poor Member of a corporation would by the proposed reform really believe that he was unjustly deprived of an odious annual twenty pounds, I should think that equity might, at the intercession of liberality, so far relax the severity of her rules, as to permit a sufficient sum to be distributed in *secret service money*, to prevent the general joy from being interrupted by any murmurs of sorrow or discontent.

Answer

Answer to 8th Query. In all the foregoing questions I have considered what I wished to be established here, as equally applicable to Ireland; and have reserved to this place my observations on the only very material difference which strikes me in the situation of the two countries as to their representation. The very extensive line I draw for this country may appear dangerous in Ireland, on account of the great proportion of Roman Catholics in that kingdom, and renders it necessary for me here to make a short observation on that subject. A Papist is not dangerous because he prays to Saints, but because he sets up a foreign jurisdiction, paramount to our laws. I will never fight with my fellow-citizen, because we cannot agree whether a wench in a white sheet, be a sacrament or a ceremony; I will only, as a good Christian ought, pray to God to pardon him all his errors, and me all mine. But, if he will go about to overturn the Protestant succession, or any other security for the liberties of my country, I will, as it is my duty, oppose him to the last drop of my blood. On these principles we have in England, very justly, as I think, relaxed in
the

the severity of our Penal Laws ; and I hope the day is not far distant, when bigotry shall have given way to common sense, and our religious opinions be all reconciled to one plain truth, that to outrage the first laws of Nature and Reason, cannot be to serve God.

How far the situation of Ireland in this respect may, or may not warrant what we have done, can only be determined by those who have the opportunity of knowing the numbers and the inclinations of the Roman Catholics ; how far the influence of their clergy operates upon them ; what security they have given or will give for maintaining the constitution. On these circumstances must depend the answer to the first part of this Question. As to the second part of it, *viz.* “ the Steps to be taken,” none appear to me more eligible than those we have adopted by county Committees of Correspondence, to endeavour to fix on the principal points.

If the friends of Reform then move Parliament to consider of the present state of Representation, it will appear to every man
so

so unequal, that there can remain no doubt but that the justice and propriety, I may add *the necessity* of a Reform, will be obvious, and consequently with general consent adopted. The mode of Reform coming from Parliament, will give satisfaction to those who (having in some points differed from other Committees, and thinking their opinions equally fit to be followed); will readily submit to such authority.

If I have not given so exactly as I desired my ideas upon a subject I have so much at heart, I hope you will attribute it to my want of ability, and not to any want of inclination to convince you of the truth with which

I have the honour to be,

S I R,

Your most obedient, and

humble Servant,

EFFINGHAM.

Peckham.

To LIEUT. COL. SHARMAN, *Chairman*
of the COMMITTEE of CORRESPON-
DENCE, appointed by the *Forty-five Vo-*
lunteer Corps assembled at Lisburn, on the
First of July, 1783.

S I R,

I THINK myself greatly honoured by the letter addressed to me, in the name of the Committee of which you are Chairman. It is indeed with a satisfaction not to be expressed, I find that the people of Ireland, after rescuing their trade and their legislature from the oppression of a sister kingdom, are now undertaking to rescue themselves from an *internal* oppression, no less inconsistent with liberty. The occasion is great, and the undertaking important and arduous in the highest degree. Should they be blest with success, they will have completed their own happiness, and exhibited an example which will for ever shine in the annals of mankind. The subjoined paper * will shew that

I have

To the officiated VOLUNTEERS of IRELAND.

A native of England, but a citizen of the world, and a warm friend to universal liberty, congratulates them with
great

I have been for some time wishing they would carry their views to this object. It was shewn to Mr. Grattan above a year ago, and written when the Duke of Richmond, the Earl of Shelburne, Lord Camden, Mr. Pitt, and other friends to a Parliamentary

M Reform,

great satisfaction, on their success in obtaining, without bloodshed, that precious blessing for which torrents of blood have been shed in America; and, rejoicing in their emancipation, he wishes to propose to them the following queries:

1st. Having seized the favourable opportunity which the war with America has offered them, should they not be anxious about improving it to the utmost, from a conviction that such another opportunity may never offer itself?

2dly. Having succeeded in gaining *external* liberty, should it not be their next concern to gain *internal* liberty? And while they want the latter, can they possess any just security for the former?

3dly. Is not a free and equal representation essential to the *internal* liberty of a kingdom?

4thly. Is Ireland possessed of such a representation? Or is not, on the contrary, a vast majority of its House of Commons chosen, not by the people, (but as in England) by a few Grandees and Beggars?

5thly. By establishing an equal representation, may not the people of Ireland do their sister kingdom a most important service, by provoking its emulation, and rendering it ashamed of its own corrupt and mock representation?

6thly. Have they not reason to expect, from the liberality of the new Ministers, and the endeavours which some of them are now using to gain an equal representation of England, that they will rejoice to see this work undertaken in Ireland, and give it their encouragement and support?

Lastly.

Reform, were in power. We are now governed by an odious Coalition, formed between Whigs and the Conductors of the late war, to gratify ambition and party rage by censuring the Peace. These united parties are, in general, hostile to Reformation; and this will make it more difficult for the people of Ireland to succeed in their views; but *nothing can be difficult to a people determined to recover their rights*—IF UNANIMOUS AND FIRM.—The motive commonly urged to check such exertions, “not to disturb what is quiet,”—would prevent all improvements, and perpetuate darkness and slavery amongst mankind. It would, in particular, had it influenced in America, have prevented the Revolution in favour of the rights of mankind, which has lately taken place there; and had it influenced Ireland, it would have prevented that emancipation of which has been lately so happily

Lastly. Is it not therefore almost certain, that the Volunteers and Patriots of Ireland will easily succeed in this undertaking, if they set themselves to it with that glorious zeal which they have hitherto discovered, and by which they have exhibited to the world an example of public spirit and virtue scarcely ever before known, and which must render them the admiration of future ages? *July, 1782.*

pily effected.—The blessings of legitimate Government, and a free Constitution, are inestimable. Too much cannot be sacrificed to acquire them; and no country has acquired them where the body of the people, equally and fairly represented, have not the chief share in the powers of Government.

I can by no means pretend to that degree of information and knowledge, which is necessary to enable me to give any proper answer to the queries contained in your letter; and the shortness of the time between this and the 20th of August, together with the dissipated state I am now in at Brighthelmstone, will not allow me to be very full and explicit. The Committee will therefore, I hope, accept the following general observations, as the best reply to their queries that I can at present give:—

The principles of civil liberty require, that every independent agent in a State (that is, every one who can be supposed to have a will and judgment of his own) should have a vote in the choice of his Governors.—But it has been seldom practicable to ex-

tend the right of voting so far. In America, where new forms of government are established more liberal than any the world has yet seen, this right is limited to persons who pay taxes and possess property. Perhaps it may not be prudent in Ireland to go even this length. In these cases, to avoid the danger of losing all by aiming at too much, the attempts of enlightened men should be governed by a regard to what is most practicable, considering present circumstances, and the attachment which always prevails in a country to old establishments. In England I have wished, that the friends of reformation had confined their views at present to the extension of the right of voting to Copyholders, and Leaseholders; and the substitution of a hundred knights for counties in the room of a hundred members for boroughs. This, though in theory unspeakably too little, would have been a very important reform; and less than this, I have not thought much worth contending for. The people in Ireland are more alive, and therefore, probably much more may be attempted there with success. But how much more I am not qualified to say. Suppose the right of voting was extended to
all

all who possess property of a certain value, and every county divided into six districts, each of which should choose one Representative, leaving the remaining Representatives to be chosen by the largest towns and boroughs — Would this be too great an object? Is it too much to be undertaken without destroying unanimity?

The duration of Parliaments seems a point of less consequence. If chosen by the People at large, they will be short; for it is impossible that a People should not see that the long possession of power will corrupt, and that their security against the abuse of power depends on keeping their Representatives in a constant state of dependence and responsibility.

If, on the contrary, Parliaments are not chosen by the people, shortening their duration will be no remedy. They will not on this account be less usurpations and mockeries.

Annual Parliaments seem to me preferable to Parliaments of any longer duration; not only because they keep the Representative Body more subject to the controul of its
confi-

constituents, but also because being chosen more frequently they will be chosen more of course, and with less tumult and riot.

There seems to be no reason for changing the number of the Representative Body in Ireland.

I am so much an enemy to persecution that I cannot help wishing the right of voting could be extended to Papists who possess property in common with Protestants. It is unjust to deprive any man of his Rights on account of his religion, unless self-defence makes it absolutely necessary. The danger from Papists is perhaps more produced by the Penal Laws against them, than by their religion. These detach them from the rest of the community, give them a separate interest, and *make* them enemies. Why should not a Papist be attached to the liberties of his country as well as a Protestant, if he is allowed to share in them? In truth, a country which allows him no rights, he cannot reckon *his* country. It is nothing to him whether it is enslaved or free; nor can he care what becomes of it.

If

If there is any remedy for the evil which occasions the objection against increasing the number of Members for counties, it is that extension of the right of voting and division of counties into districts which I have mentioned.

The proprietors of the enslaved boroughs do not seem, in reason, entitled to a compensation, because they hold them by usurpation and a kind of robbery. It seems, however, necessary, that a compensation should be allowed—and it would, I suppose, be allowed in England were the rotten boroughs disfranchised. The necessity of abolishing such boroughs, I think, very apparent. There cannot be worse nuisances in a State.

I am sensible, Sir, of the great imperfection of these remarks, and must rely on the candour of the Committee. Indeed they have done me too much honour by supposing me capable of advising them. From the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Pitt, &c. they may receive advice that will be more worth their attention. But there is
on

no one whose heart and wishes are more with them. May Heaven grant them success! and may the example of Ireland influence this country and shame it to imitation.

With all possible respect,

I am, SIR,

Your most obedient and humble servant,

RICHARD PRICE.

Bright-helmstone, Aug. 7, 1733.

P. S. Ireland is peculiarly situated in two respects. A great majority of the inhabitants are Papists; and a distribution of property, more unequal than in England or America, subjects them more to aristocratic tyranny. I have hinted, as a remedy for the former inconvenience, the admission of Papists to equal rights; but there may be stronger objections to this than I am aware of.

Trade and liberty, will, it is to be hoped, in time, diffuse property more in Ireland, and produce a less unequal distribution of it.

FRIENDLY

FRIENDLY HINTS *to the* COMMITTEES
of PARLIAMENTARY REFORMA-
TION *in* IRELAND.

S I R,

I HAVE just now perused with infinite satisfaction the Duke of Richmond's truly admirable, and in my opinion, unanswerable Letter to Col. Sharman of the Lisburne Volunteers. My own ideas on this important subject have the honour, as far as they go, to coincide with his Grace's general Principles, and decisive Plans.

The enclosed Thoughts, thrown out in consequence of Dr. Price's Letter, after so elaborate a performance as the noble Writer's, must appear to great disadvantage; but, as we see objects in different points of view, some new Argument or useful Hint may arise in the most casual and imperfect Production of men who are used to think for themselves.

The rights which our common Creator made inherent in, and unalienable from, our nature, as free, moral agents, cannot lawfully by any delegated authority be taken from us, or *granted* to us. It is therefore giving up the point of Right to petition usurped Powers for the exercise of such Rights. It involves gross absurdities and contradictions, in making the prior and original Right to depend upon the authority which is subordinate and derived, and the natural Powers which belong to all men, to be at the disposal of a few.

Dr. Price, in this Letter, seems to have forsaken his old ground of general Principles, to offer incense to expedience, and resign the great Body of the People a sacrifice to the interest and the safety of an Aristocracy. From the elevated Philosopher and Patriot he appears to sink into the State Partizan, when on the greatest occasion that could flatter the liberal mind, and elevate the ideas, he stoops to adopt the selfish maxims of partial Reformation in this corrupt and slavish kingdom, to apply them to an armed nation, able to perfect its Government upon the

true

true Principles of the Constitution, and to fix it in future on a basis of Election-Right, too extended and firm to be shaken. To a nation thus situated, it was enough to say to armed Citizens, Gentlemen, you command the Fate of your Country—If you are armed *for the People*, restore to every man the Rights of Nature, which cannot be lawfully withheld from any—The man who *eats* and is *clothed* at his own expence, pays taxes; and, by his labour and industry, however humble his lot, is a useful member of the Community. Who shall dare to *unman* him, or by what authority to reduce him to Vassalage, to Brutality, by depriving him of his natural inheritance, the Dignity of a Man, the Honour of a Citizen?

If such a line of Exclusion could be drawn against particular Classes and Descriptions of men, it must be only by the great Majority of the nation. But who will presume to draw this Line of Civil Excommunication against the great Majority itself? For it is evident that being thus outlawed and proscribed by Power, they could owe the Government no obedience; but might

be justified in meeting the Law of Power with the Right of Self-defence. Having no lot or portion in the laws or Government, they are not ruled as Free Men; and there is no Power in this State that can treat them as the Vassals and Instruments of other men's Interest or Ambition. Under such circumstances, a general revolt of all the Non-Electors, and unrepresented, could not be deemed Treason or Rebellion, since the Government with regard to them would be Tyranny, as being not only unprotected, but violated in their equal Rights of Men and Citizens.

As no man can be supposed originally to enter into Society under the stigma of such an exclusion from the Community, so no one can be bound to continue under it who has the Virtue to assert his Dignity with his Rights. And when a nation, long groaning under the Oppression of partial Civil Rights, hath the means of full Redress in its hands, shall we insinuate the slow poison of a frigid Caution to chill the ardor of virtuous Enterprize, and frustrate a glorious Reformation, by leaving it ineffectual? A work like this must be carried equally out
of

of the reach of Treachery, and of Power. It must go all lengths, or it is lost. It must trample Tyranny and Corruption under foot, or it will be the Scorn and Derision of Government. Prudential maxims of *practical Reforms*, may suit a Yorkshire Committee, (for Englishmen, shame upon them! are only *Beggars of Rights*) but for a nation where Wisdom hath adopted Strength, and Perfection is within the grasp of Valour, a single chance must not be left in the power of Fate, were it possible to prevent it. A single Vote must not be lost: for such is the vigilant and encroaching nature of Power, that every inch of political Ground, not already occupied and guarded by the People, is instantly seized and fortified by their Oppressors. Free Subjects are never safe, but when they have Suffrages to guard their Rights, and Arms to defend their Suffrages. An Englishman, without a *Vote* or a *Musket*, is stripped more naked and defenceless than the Savage in the Desert. Both his Person and Property are always open to Violation. It is high Time then that this great fundamental Principle of Liberty and the Constitution should be asserted and established

ed in the three Kingdoms upon the equal Claims of Freemen and Citizens, instead of those partial Franchises and Qualifications which have been arbitrarily substituted in the Room of natural Rights, to defeat the Gift of God, and deface his Image in the moral and social Freedom of rational Beings. Until this be effected, it is the vainest of all vain Hopes to expect that Representation will ever be so far reformed as to answer its only great End in producing an incorruptible Parliament, and a virtuous Government. Will they who have usurped the Power over the Public Purse quit their Hold without a desperate Struggle, like all other Robbers? Shall we in such a Case rely upon Petitions or upon Pistols? America hath beaten off the Freebooters, and goes now about her Business without Molestation. Ireland has nearly rescued herself from Foreign and Domestic Spoilers; while North's Bagshot Gang continues as usual to bully poor Old England out of her Money and her Freedom.

They reprobate all Reformation as Innovation; and when Tyranny becomes Established Government, Innovation is the most

most mortal Sin against it, although without Innovation the most civilized Kingdoms of Europe had been as savage as the Wilds of Africa or America. But the Truth is, every Thing is dangerous to the State, that is so to Ministers, or to those who contend for the Power. Even a Burke, who boasts of his Philanthropy and Love of Liberty, would have bound America to unlimited Subjection. He hath published his Doubts, whether Statutes enacted by the People's Deputies may not bind the very Consciences of their Masters? And he holds Septennial Parliaments to be a Fundamental of the Constitution, of which they are the Grave, because "the permanent Virtue of the whole House of Cavendish," continues to defend, what the Treason of their Ancestor usurped. The English of all which is, that he, and all such Adventurers for the Power and the Plunder of the People, had rather have the Honour and Benefit of *taking Care of them*, than resign to them such usurped Powers as would enable them effectually *to take Care of themselves*; and consequently to get rid of all such knavish Intruders upon their Rights, Privileges, and Property. It would be difficult

to

to say whether this Man's Hypocrisy, or a North's barefaced Tyranny reflect the greater Credit on the Alliance.

With regard to Catholics voting in Ireland for Representatives, they are the best Judges who live among them as Neighbours, and Fellow-Citizens. Certainly no Man ought to be persecuted for his Religion, unless his Religion be intolerant to others. Nothing can, or ought to disqualify him from exercising the Rights of a Man and a Citizen, but his having actually resigned his own Judgment and Will, and consequently his Freedom, to the Guidance and Direction of others who may abuse the Trust to the Public Detriment. In that Case, not being a free Agent, but the Puppet of other Movers, he could have no Reason to complain of his own voluntary Exclusion. Self-preservation is the first Duty and Concern of the Individual and the Community. Men who will not do in the like Case, as they are done by, are certainly not entitled upon any Principle of Policy, of Common sense or Justice to exercise the Privileges of a community. There may be exceptions from the general Rule

of which they are to judge who risk the indulgence. Let the free, honest, and good Citizen be indemnified from the Abuse of his liberal Confidence, and not a Doubt can remain about the equal Rights of all to enjoy this great Public Benefit, which renders every Man the Guardian of his Person, Family, and Property. And this I take to be the true Line of Conduct with regard to the civil Rights and Privileges of Papists under a Protestant Government—In a Word, I consider the Extension of Election Rights beyond the possible Reach of Corrupt Influence from any Quarter, to be the only effectual Barrier of Liberty and the Constitution against every Mode of Attack.

I am, Sir,

Your very humble servant,

THOMAS NORTHCOTE.

October 15, 1783.

O,

SIR,

S I R,

AS an anxious friend to the cause of a Parliamentary Reform, in which both Ireland and England are equally interested, I trust you will excuse the freedom I use in addressing you on this occasion. I cannot doubt but that the principles of the constitution, and that the means necessary to restore freedom to the people, as well as purity to Parliament, are well known to the Gentlemen who in Ireland have taken a leading part in this great work: but yet, as amongst others of their countrymen, that knowledge may not be so generally diffused as might be wished, and as the humblest essays in that line may be of some Use, I have taken the liberty to order some copies of different tracts, which have employed my pen, to be directed to you at Lisburn, for the disposal of the Committee of Correspondence, over which you preside; the acceptance of which on their part I should esteem a particular honour:

In those writings I have thought it my duty to adhere inflexibly to what appeared to me to be the rights of men; and much
thought

thought has convinced me, that in proportion as those rights shall be departed from, the Reform itself will not only be clogged with difficulties and inconsistencies in the execution, but that, when accomplished, it will proportionally fail in its proposed effects. I confess that in England we have not yet had, at any period, a prospect of effecting a complete Reform; but in Ireland, your Volunteer Army—the most glorious production of public virtue that ever adorned a nation!—have perfection or imperfection wholly in their option. The conduct of that army has hitherto manifested too much wisdom and too much patriotism to leave it doubtful which choice it will make. It would ill suit with the splendour of what is past, that a Reform in the Parliament of Ireland should bear marks of material defectiveness. Such an event would greatly lessen that dignity of character to which she hath attained, and which I trust she means to transmit to latest posterity, by henceforth securing equal justice to her Citizens, and to her Parliament that purity which alone can insure the permanency of her freedom and her glory.

A close adherence to the genuine principles of freedom, would introduce into her elections, as well as into the frame of her representative body, that which surpasses all human inventions for guarding against the insinuating properties of corruption: I mean simplicity. In providing for the purity of a Parliament, every thing depends on the elections; and the freedom of elections rests on these two pillars:—1st, The multitude of electors; and 2dly, The short duration of power. These two principles necessarily conduct us to universality of suffrage, and Parliaments of a single session; and so sacred, in my humble opinion, are these rights, that on no account or pretence whatever, can they become the subject of voluntary concession. It is time enough to accept of any thing short of these rights, when attainment is impossible, or the contest not attended with any hope of success. These, however, are cases which the magnanimity of Ireland has not left applicable to her. How, then, can she act as though they were. She cannot. Her honour demands of her a complete enfranchisement. A free state, without free citizens, is a solecism

cism in terms. But it is worse than a selfishness. It is folly; it is corruption; it is misery; it is disgrace. It is freedom to vice, and chains to virtue.

What has occurred to me as expedient to add to the essentials above noticed, will be seen at large in the several details of which I have treated in the barrier; but as one of those expedients appears to me to merit a distinguished preference to the rest, I will trespass a moment longer on your time to say a few words upon it. The ballot is that to which I allude. It has its enemies. Their arguments certainly deserve attention. I have heard, I believe, the most forcible; and with much truth can say, that I considered them with the utmost impartiality. At one time, indeed, I was prepared to renounce the idea as publicly as I had before expressed myself in its favour. I returned, however, to my original opinion, and with additional decision of mind. To this latter change of sentiment, conversations with Mr. Laurens not a little contributed. From him I learned that in South Carolina, the ballot in their elections was introduced about forty years ago; that its
good

good effects were immediately observable, that it was ever afterwards considered as a wise measure, and that it was thought to have been particularly serviceable during the most critical periods of the late revolution in that country. These proofs of its happy effects, instantly outweighed all that I had heard advanced of its tending to abate the virtue and courage necessary to freedom. I have since been farther confirmed in my favourable opinion of the ballot, by numerous conversations with tenants and tradesmen; who, for the most part, have laid even as much stress upon this security, as upon the other two; nay, more.

With respect to the universality of suffrage, it may perhaps be observed, that the States of America, in their new constitutions, have thought fit to require qualifications. But although I reverence the wisdom so conspicuous in those constitutions, I cannot, however, admire any rules in practice, which contradict the noblest and clearest of their political reasonings, and which needlessly violate the eternal principles of truth and justice. In sterling money, some of their qualifications are not
equal

equal to ten shillings a year. So trifling an exclusion is the very nonsense of inveterate prejudice.

Since there can be no union between two countries on terms of entire equality, and for a common interest, unless both those countries are equally free, I trust that the friends of the constitution, in both Ireland and England, will hold a regular intercourse, and consider a Reform in their respective legislatures as a common cause. I hope too, they will each have their Society for constitutional information, and that those Societies will correspond and co-operate in their generous scheme.

With that high respect which is due to one who is chosen to preside where all are great, and with my warmest prayers to the Author of all good, that he may give you success in your efforts to establish his laws of human government, I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your well wisher,

JOHN CARTWRIGHT.

Marnham, August 26, 1783.

William Sharman, Esq.

HEADS of a PLAN of a PARLIAMENTARY
REFORM, *proposed by the ULSTER COM-
MITTEE of CORRESPONDENCE to the
PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY of VOLUN-
TEERS, and by them referred to the GRAND
NATIONAL CONVENTION.*

Annual Parliaments—Election by Ballot,
Mean, decayed, or depopulated Boroughs
to be deprived. The diminution of Mem-
bers thereby occasioned to be supplied by
giving Representatives to such considerable
Towns as are not now represented, and by
encreasing

encreasing the number of Representatives for counties, cities, and great towns.

Q U A L I F I C A T I O N .

In counties, every protestant male, (ideots, criminals, &c. excepted) having inhabited twelve months, and for that time possessed freehold worth forty shillings per annum clear, or any kind of property to the value of 20*l.* over and above legal debts, to be an elector.—In cities and towns the same qualifications as in counties to entitle a person to vote—also living in a house for which he pays 5*l.* yearly rent, or more—no menial servants however to vote, either in county, city, or town, unless a householder, paying taxes.

Every person offering to vote, (if required by any candidate or elector) to be obliged to swear to his qualification, and that he will vote for such candidate or candidates, as he believes most likely to support the liberties of the people in Parliament—and also to take the oath against bribery—all votes once given to stand unimpeachable, but any elector swearing falsely, and thereof convicted by verdict of a jury,
to

to forfeit 20*l.* to the prosecutor, lose his franchise for ever, and suffer the punishment allotted for perjury. If any officer make a false return, and thereof convicted by verdict of a jury, disabilities, heavy penalties, and a new election to take place.

Every Member returned, before taking his seat, besides the present oaths, to swear that he, nor no person for him, at his cost or knowledge, has, directly or indirectly, bribed any elector to vote for him.

A reasonable compensation to be made to the patrons of disfranchised Boroughs, also to those of such as from having the elective suffrage vested in a few, shall become free cities or Boroughs, at the national expence.

Extension of suffrage to such description of Roman Catholics as the National Convention may deem proper objects of that great trust.

Elections to be held on same day in the different baronies, half baronies, or parishes, so as to finish in one, or in a very few days.

Q

Total

Total exclusion of pensioners and placemen, save that the Lord Lieutenant may appoint any of the public officers of the Crown, not exceeding six at any one time, to sit, debate, and explain the public business, but not to vote.

Extracts from Political Register

John Almon, 'Cautions to the English Electors, against such persons as they ought not to chuse to represent them in the ensuing Parliament', 'Hercules Cleaning the Augean Stable', 'Regulus, or a View of the present State of public Affairs: with certain Proposals, addressed to the independent Electors of Great-Britain', 'John Wilkes', 'Instructions for the Representatives of Norwich', 'Observations on the Freedom of Elections, on impartial Proceedings in Parliament, and on a late Extension of Royal Clemency to a capital Convict', 'Address of John Wilkes to the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of Essex' and 'An Essay on Liberty and Independency', *Political Register and impartial review of new books*, January 1768, vol. 9, pp. 40-8, facing p. 193; 1768, vol. 12, pp. 218-43, facing p. 321; February 1769, vol. 23, pp. 65-72, 224-31, 240-2 and November 1769, vol. 32, p. 247-61

John Almon (1737-1805), the editor of the *Political Register*, was a prolific writer, journalist and publisher. He was at the forefront of the campaign to publicise parliamentary business and from 1771 his short sketch of the day's proceedings in Parliament was printed in the *London Evening Post*. In 1774 this was superseded by his monthly record of parliamentary debates, which was published under the title of the *Parliamentary Register*.

From May 1767 Almon began the publication of a monthly magazine entitled the *Political Register*, which articulated many of the concerns of the Wilkite reformers and reflected his close friendship with Wilkes. The periodical was discontinued in 1769 having given offence to the authorities. Its publication coincided, however, with the climax of Wilkes's parliamentary career and his triumph in the Middlesex elections of 1768-9. The *Political Register* contained a wide variety of material, including: caustic satires; election addresses; instructions to candidates; and satirical illustrations. The two examples included here contrast the alleged bribery and corruption of the Court with a heroic cameo of Wilkes surrounded by gods and goddesses, the shield of St George and pertinent political works. Almon's most substantial piece in the *Political Register* was published in March 1768 - a special election issue. The extended article, 'Regulus, Or a View of the present State of public Affairs: with certain Proposals, addressed to the independent Electors of Great-Britain', gave a cogent indictment of the existing electoral system and proposals for its purification including annual Parliaments and the ballot. On the suffrage, a household franchise was suggested.

For the POLITICAL REGISTER.

Cautions to the English Electors, against such persons as they ought NOT to chuse to represent them in the ensuing parliament.

OF all the different characters that exist in society, that of a legislator, or member of parliament, is by far the most important. Others are employed in devising rules and maxims for the direction of their own private conduct; the legislator is occupied in making laws and institutions for the government of the whole nation. As this character, therefore, is of so much consequence, it ought not to be bestowed but with the utmost deliberation; and I shall here take the liberty of offering to my fellow-countrymen, a few necessary cautions against such as they ought *not* to chuse to represent them in the ensuing parliament. These may be comprehended, with a very few exceptions, under the title of merchants, colonists, lawyers, eldest sons of peers, placemen and pensioners, spendthrifts, young men without knowledge or experience, and trimmers, or those who compose, what is usually called the Flying Squadron. And first of

The M E R C H A N T.

The character of a merchant is deservedly respectable, being in reality the cementing principle of the whole body politic; and it has, besides, this singular advantage annexed to it, that reconciles to the greatest interests of society, the most selfish and mercenary pursuits. Every gain which the merchant makes, from fair adventure, serves equally, at the same time, to enrich others, and to diffuse through the whole state, a general spirit of industry and application. This is the greatest benefit arising from the mercantile

mercantile profession, and a benefit, it must be owned, peculiar to itself; but it behoves us, for that very reason, to be extremely cautious, upon whom we bestow that honourable title. There are none to whom it can be justly due but real adventuring merchants; men who have large fortunes actually employed in foreign traffic. Factors, agents, insurers, brokers, and such sorts of people, though highly useful in their stations, are by no means entitled to the honours of that character; much less are fund-mongers, stock-jobbers, directors of incorporated companies, government contractors, court-jobbers, and such other sorts of people as may be rather stiled instruments of power, and preys upon the people. It is true, that the characters of both kinds are sometimes blended together; and then the merits of the useful are sunk in the demerits of the hurtful.

The pure and unmixed mercantile character, is therefore the only of trading ones that deserves great honour; because a man of that profession every way enriches his country, and in no way injures it. This character of a genuine merchant, is, I am afraid, less common at present than it was in former times; government-engagements and alley-dealings having contributed to destroy it.

But of Merchants in general, this much may be affirmed, that all their services done to the community, proceed from their search after private gain, and it is merely by accident that this coincides with the public interest, while they only seek to benefit themselves. Thus their practices are purely selfish, however advantageous they may prove to their country.

The sole object of a merchant, in all his undertakings, is private gain. It is his duty to make it such, the great duty of his station; and he is the more valuable member of society the more vigorously he prosecutes it; as the great interests of his country are therein linked with his own. But this useful propensity gives a bias to his mind, till gain, by degrees, becomes the sole object of his thoughts; and when that is the case, extraordinary opportunities for making it may prove very dangerous baits. Hence even genuine merchants may be considered as an order that should not predominate in a House of Commons; much less those who, with all that avidity for gain which the mercantile character naturally produces, are employed in pursuits, that instead of being useful, are hurtful to society.

True merchant adventurers may, however, be very useful in that assembly; and they are the most proper representatives of the great places of general trade; such as the cities of London and Bristol, and the towns of Liverpool and Hull. Were these represented by the ablest of their own merchants, nobody

would complain; and it would be the better for the public if there were no other merchants in the house; nor ought one tradesman, or jobber, or alley-dealer, to be there: For they are of no use for information, and have all such a bias towards money-getting on their minds, as may make them dangerous to be relied on, in trusts of such importance as those of public liberty, and the properties of a people.

Of all those who have sat in parliament, under the character of merchant, let candour examine how many have been useful; and how many have been known to acquire there emoluments, such as perhaps none but great adepts in arithmetic could be accurate calculators of. Merchants, therefore, are more useful to the nation in their accompting-houses than they are in the senate: Their dealings in one place being most eminently useful, and in the other often as singularly pernicious.

Of Colonists, and persons connected with the Colonies.

ANOTHER set of people whom I would caution you against chusing to represent you in the ensuing parliament, are colonists, and persons connected with the colonies.

The mother-country, in point of people at least, may be considered as the source and origin of the colony. This gives her a natural right to dominion and authority. She is moreover the protectress or guardian of the colony; which gives her a political right to the same kind of dominion and authority.

The rights of nature and of policy ought always to be strictly guarded. It is with the offsprings of nations, as with those of mankind: Affection naturally descends, and duty ought to ascend. The parents seldom fail in their parts; the children often do. Colonies, like children, have always an eye to independence; and too commonly think they have an interest to prosecute at the expence of those who gave them birth.

It is on this principle we ought to judge of parliamentary influence with respect to our colonies: We owe them protection; they owe us obedience. Should our interests ever be rendered subservient to theirs, our natural stations will thereby become quite changed: They will then grow our masters, and we their tributary dependants; a people whom they will govern by means of our own parliament.

I decline the discussion of a late contest; but cannot help remarking, that the soil of our South American colonies is too much monopolized; and that monopoly affects the pockets of every one in this kingdom. The owners of lands there ought to cultivate them, or part with them; and not be allowed to make their own prices for a necessary commodity, from the
scantiness

scantiness of the production. Were all the corn lands in England engrossed by an hundred people, and they, in order to secure their own prices for grain, should resolve to cultivate but half of them, the community would certainly have a right to resist such an injury, and oblige them to cultivate all their lands, or else to dispose of them; for monopolies in general are inconsistent with freedom, and repugnant to the policy and rights of all nations. The encreasing riches and power of our colonists, are well known. These are things that require to be remedied; and that remedy must be a parliamentary one. Ought we then to favour an influence that must naturally operate against such a remedy?

Colony intrigues, therefore, should never be admitted to operate in our national senate. We should never forget, that our colonies are in subjection to us; and that it is their proper station to be so. But if we suffer them to buy us out of our native inheritances and votes with our own money; and by their influence in parliament, become the framers of our laws, it must then be they that will govern us, instead of our governing them; and we shall dwindle into a tributary nation to those to whom we gave birth, and have hitherto protected. Let Americans, therefore, be kept in their proper sphere; and no interest but a genuine British one be ever suffered to prevail in a British House of Commons.

L A W Y E R S.

YOU ought likewise to be extremely cautious of chusing lawyers to represent you in parliament. The Marquis of Halifax says on this subject; "If lawyers have great practice, that ought to take them up; if not, it is no great sign of their ability; and at the same time giveth suspicion that they may be more liable to be tempted.

"If it should be so in fact, that no King ever wanted judges to soften the stiffness of the laws that were made, so as to make them suit better with the reason of state, and the convenience of government, it is no injury now to suppose it possible for lawyers in the House of Commons so to behave themselves, in making of new laws, as the better to make way for the having their robes lined with fur.

"They are men used to argue on both sides of a question, and if ordinary fees can inspire them with very good reasons in a very ill cause, that faculty exercised in parliaments, where it may be better encouraged, may prove very inconvenient to those that chuse them.

“ And therefore without arrainging a profession that it would be scandalous for a man not to honour, one may, by a suspicion, which is more excusable when it is in behalf of the people, imagine, that the habit of taking money for their opinion, may create in some such a forgetfulness to distinguish, that they may take it for their vote.

“ They are generally men, who by a laborious study hope to be advanced. They have it in their eye, as a reward for the toil they undergo.

“ This maketh them generally very slow and ill-disposed (let the occasion never so much require it) to wrestle with that soil where preferment groweth.

“ Now, if the supposition be in itself not unreasonable, and that it should happen to be strengthened and confirmed by experience, it will be very unnecessary to say any more upon this article, but leave it to the electors to consider of it.

ELDEST SONS of PEERS.

NOR ought the eldest sons of Peers to find more favour with you than the Colonists or the Lawyers. The Lords and Commons have long since established rules, as well for the support of their particular orders, as for the promotion of their general interest. They unite in carrying on the affairs of the nation, but with a jealousy and rivalry of each other's importance: And on this jealousy and rivalry the power of the crown and their own safety alike depend.

Hence they respectively assert privileges, which they resolutely support, and which essentially divide them in the pursuit of the public interest. They act separately as bodies, though jointly for the community; and the community, as well as the crown, is best served and secured by this junction of counsels, and this disjunction of orders. The more distinct, therefore, this pale of separation is kept, the more happy must it be for the whole community.

One of the great privileges which the Commons assert, is, that the Peers have no right to interfere in their parliamentary elections; a privilege, which, it is well known, the Peers do not acknowledge in theory, and still less, perhaps, submit to in practice. But the keeping the Lower House entirely free from the influence of the Upper one, is essential to the very being of our mixed constitution. For, should the Upper House ever, from the encrease of such influence, gain the ascendancy in the Lower one, the democratical part of our government would be swallowed up in the aristocratical; and the crown and the commonalty would be equally reduced to slavery.

For

For this reason, the eldest sons of Peers, who are born to the heirship of a seat in the Upper House, are persons in whose hands the rights and privileges of the Commons should by no means be trusted. They must have the interests of their own order too much at heart : And, from a natural jealousy of the Commons, must be apt to side too strongly with the crown, as friends to that prerogative from which their nobility is derived, and of the splendour of which their high dignities enable them to partake. Against such an influence, therefore, the Commons should ever be on their guard, especially as of late the number of Peers has been so greatly encreased : And we see what a great proportion of them, and of their children, there is likewise in the army.

PLACEMEN and PENSIONERS.

BUT of all sorts of men, against whom I would caution you, the principal are placemen and pensioners. It may be necessary, indeed, for the information of the house, the service of the crown, and the forwarding of public business, that some men in posts should have seats in the House of Commons. But as most men, who are possessed of public employments, are supposed to act under influence ; this must be admitted as an indisputable maxim, that a majority of members in the Lower House having places, pensions, or other emoluments, would make that house no assembly acting on the part of the people, but one that acts merely for their own private advantage, by the direction of the crown, in disposing of the rights and properties of the people, at the will of the sovereign.

It is from a supposition of the truth of this maxim, that members of parliament, who accept of offices from the government, thereby vacate their seats in the house ; and that their constituents are at liberty to re-elect them, or not, as they shall judge it safe to repose so great a trust in their hands. For the same reason, many offices of importance to the state disqualify those who hold them from enjoying a seat in parliament : Nay, many of them, exclude their possessors from all right of using influence in parliamentary elections, under the severe and infamous penalties of fining, cashiering, and being rendered incapable of ever holding an employment again under the government. All which laws and regulations manifestly imply, that men under the influence of government, have such a bias upon their minds, that it is neither safe for the state they should be members of parliament themselves, nor exercise any influence in the election of those who are.

Thus

Thus has the legislature itself set a mark upon placemen, and thereby signified the great danger of electing them members of parliament. It is indeed unreasonable to suppose, that any body of people can be freely represented by a man who is himself not free, and who actually enjoys a reward for submitting to the will of another. So that it is on the virtue of an uninfluenced majority, or the great rectitude of government, and not on the integrity of such men, that the people must depend for the security and preservation of their liberties and properties.

It is idle to suppose, that men in such situations are left to the dictates of their own conscience, since the open declaration of a former premier is well known, that *a minister would be a pitiful fellow indeed, who did not turn any man out who acted contrary to his will.* And I wish there were not undeniable proofs of obedience being demanded not only of the elected but even of the electors; that we had not seen instances of the refractoriness of both the one and the other punished by means that were equally injurious to the sufferers, and detrimental to the nation.

It is weak therefore to imagine, that strict obedience is not exacted from those who receive emoluments from the crown; or that for the sake of them, they will not vote contrary to the interest and opinion of their constituents.

Mr. Gordon talking of this subject, in a discourse addressed to freeholders, observes, that “that he will prove but a sorry advocate, who takes fees from your adversary; and as indifferent a plenipotentiary, who receives a pension from the Prince whom he is commissioned to treat with; nor can there be any security in the fidelity of one, who can find it more his interest to betray you, than to serve you faithfully.” And in another place he says, “Choose not therefore such as are likely to truck away your liberties for an equivalent to themselves, and to sell you or those against whom it is their duty to defend you. When their duty is in one scale, and a thousand pounds a year, or more, or less, is thrown into the contrary scale, you may easily guess, as the world goes, how the balance is like to turn.”

Of the FLYING SQUADRON, SPEND- THRIFTS, YOUNG MEN, &c.

THE last class of men I shall at present mention, as unfit to represent you in the ensuing parliament, are spendthrifts, young men, and what are usually called *The Flying Squadron*. This last is a sort of men of a dubious, undeterminate character, whose variable conduct would never suffer their constituents to say precisely what they are; and for this reason it is, that they have obtained

obtained the appellation of the *Squadron volante*, or *Flying Squadron*. They are a kind of heterogeneous, amphibious animals; hermaphrodites, or Otters in politics; neither in nor out, pro nor con, court nor country, whig nor tory, Scot nor English. They are, like sir Anthony Brainville, in a state of fluctuation; and hang, like Mahomet's tomb, in perpetual suspense. They are ready to veer and turn, like approved weathercocks, with every gust of politics. They stand between *aye* and *no*, like the schoolman's ass between two bundles of hay; or like prince Volscius in Love—hip, hop; hip, hop—one boot on, and t'other boot off.

Spendthrifts are another sort of men whom it is unsafe to depend upon: because prodigality begets poverty, and poverty, when joined to luxury, is a strong temptation to corruption. An habit of pleasure and extravagance will excite desires, which, if not satisfied on honourable terms, will be gratified with dishonour. This, if the practice of selling conscience was more infamous than it now is, must always be the case of those in necessitous circumstances, especially considering the unhappy tendency of vice; for when virtue is once dismissed, we soon grow familiar with dishonour. A man who is base enough to wrong those who trust him, need take but one step farther in iniquity to sell himself and his country.

Young men, if of a volatile disposition, are also unfit for such a charge: because they will be apt to think too lightly of the most weighty matters, and treat in a trifling way things that require the most serious attention; nay, will sometimes be led by their passions to exceed the bounds of reason. We ought not to forget a late violent prosecution, which was pushed on with extraordinary violence and much seeming malignity by a young man of good family, and now in high office, to the great disgust of all dispassionate persons. Senators should have calmness, wisdom and foresight; qualities in which extreme youth are very apt to be deficient. It is proper, therefore, not to rely upon spirit before it is qualified by prudence: for indiscretion, or rashness, may in some cases prove as pernicious as bad intentions. Mr. Gordon says farther on this subject.

“Choose not those who live at a great distance from you, and whose abilities, probity, and fortunes, are not well known to you. Reject all those timorous, fearful, and dastardly spirits; men, who, having good principles, either dare not own them, or act according to them. Choose not men who are noted for non-attendance, and who have been members of parliament without waiting upon the business of parliament; men who will probably be engaged in a foxchace, in a tavern, or in other debauched houses, though the kingdom were undoing. What
excuse

excuse can they offer for themselves, when by their wanton absence a vote may pass, which may cost you millions?

“ Be particularly careful, that those whom you choose be duly qualified according to law, and that no deceit be practised in obtaining temporary qualifications. You ought to enquire into their estates, and how they came by them: and if they have none, as many who stand candidates, I am told, have nor, you may guess who assists them, and what hopeful services are to be expected from them. Such men, you may be sure, will never speak your sense in parliament—nor their own, if they have any; but that of their masters.