

SELECTIONS

FROM

COBBETT'S POLITICAL WORKS:

BEING

A COMPLETE ABRIDGMENT OF THE 100 VOLUMES WHICH COMPRISE THE WRITINGS OF "PORCUPINE" AND THE "WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER."

WITH NOTES,

HISTORICAL AND EXPLANATORY.

BY

JOHN M. COBBETT AND JAMES P. COBBETT.

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TO THE

JOURNEYMEN AND LABOURERS

OF

ENGLAND, WALES, SCOTLAND, AND IRELAND,

On the Cause of their present Miseries ; on the Measures which have produced that Cause ; on the Remedies which some foolish and some cruel and insolent Men have proposed ; and on the line of Conduct which Journeymen and Labourers ought to pursue, in order to obtain effectual Relief, and to assist in promoting the Tranquillity and restoring the Happiness of their Country.

(*Political Register*, November, 1816.)

FRIENDS AND FELLOW COUNTRYMEN,

Whatever the pride of rank, of riches, or of scholarship, may have induced some men to believe, or to affect to believe, the real strength and all the resources of a country, ever have sprung and ever must spring, from the *labour* of its people ; and hence it is, that this nation, which is so small in numbers and so poor in climate and soil compared with many others, has, for many ages, been the most powerful nation in the world : it is the most industrious, the most laborious, and, therefore, the most powerful. Elegant dresses, superb furniture, stately buildings, fine roads and canals, fleet-horses and carriages, numerous and stout ships, warehouses teeming with goods ; all these, and many other objects that fall under our view, are so many marks of national wealth and resources. But all these spring from *labour*. Without the journeyman and the labourer none of them could exist ; without the assistance of their hands, the country would be a wilderness, hardly worth the notice of an invader.

As it is the labour of those who toil which makes a country abound in resources, so it is the same class of men, who must, by their arms, secure its safety and uphold its fame. Titles and immense sums of money have been bestowed upon numerous Naval and Military Commanders. Without calling the justice of these in question, we may assert, that the victories were obtained by *you* and your fathers and brothers and sons, in co-operation with those Commanders, who, with

your aid, have done great and wonderful things; but, who, without that aid, would have been as impotent as children at the breast.

With this correct idea of your own worth in your minds, with what indignation must you hear yourselves called the Populace, the Rabble, the Mob, the Swinish Multitude; and with what greater indignation, if possible, must you hear the projects of those cool and cruel and insolent men, who, now that you have been, without any fault of yours, brought into a state of misery, propose to narrow the limits of parish relief, to prevent you from marrying in the days of your youth, or to thrust you out to seek your bread in foreign lands, never more to behold your parents or friends? But suppress your indignation, until we return to this topic, after we have considered the *cause* of your present misery and the measures which have produced that cause.

The times in which we live are full of peril. The nation, as described by the very creatures of the Government, is fast advancing to that period when an important change must take place. It is the lot of mankind, that some shall labour with their limbs and others with their minds; and, on all occasions, more especially on an occasion like the present, it is the duty of the latter to come to the assistance of the former. We are all equally interested in the peace and happiness of our common country. It is of the utmost importance, that in the seeking to obtain those objects, our endeavours should be uniform, and tend all to the same point. Such an uniformity cannot exist without an uniformity of sentiment as to public matters, and to produce this latter uniformity amongst you is the object of this address.

As to the *cause* of our present miseries, it is the *enormous amount of the taxes*, which the Government compels us to pay for the support of its army, its placemen, its pensioners, &c., and for the payment of the interest of its debt. That this is the *real* cause has been a thousand times proved; and, it is now so acknowledged by the creatures of the Government themselves. *Two hundred and five* of the Correspondents of the Board of Agriculture ascribe the ruin of the country to *taxation*. Numerous writers, formerly the friends of the Pitt System, now declare, that taxation has been the cause of our distress. Indeed, when we compare our present state to the state of the country previous to the wars against France, we must see that our present misery is owing to no other cause. The taxes then annually raised amounted to about 15 millions: they amounted last year to 70 millions. The nation was then happy; it is now miserable.

The writers and speakers, who labour in the cause of corruption, have taken great pains to make the *labouring classes* believe, that *they are not taxed*; that the taxes which are paid by the landlords, farmers, and tradesmen, do not affect *you*, the journeymen and labourers; and that the tax-makers have been *very lenient* towards *you*. But, I hope, that you see to the bottom of these things now. You must be sensible, that, if *all* your employers were *totally* ruined in one day, you would be *wholly* without employment and without bread; and, of course, in whatever *degree* your employers are deprived of their means, they must withhold means from you. In America the most awkward common labourer receives five shillings a day, while provisions are cheaper in that country than in this. Here, a carter, boarded in the house, receives about seven pounds a-year; in America, he receives about thirty pounds a-year. What is it that makes this difference? Why, in America the whole of

the taxes do not amount to more than about *ten shillings* a-head upon the whole of the population; while in England they amount to nearly *six pounds* a-head! *There*, a journeyman or labourer may support his family well, and save from thirty to sixty pounds a-year: *here*, he amongst you is a lucky man, who can provide his family with food and with decent clothes to cover them, without any hope of possessing a penny in the days of sickness, or of old age. *There*, the Chief Magistrate receives 6,000 pounds a-year; *here*, the civil list surpasses a million of pounds in amount, and as much is allowed to each of the *Princesses* in one year, as the Chief Magistrate of America receives in two years, though that country is nearly equal to this in population.

A Mr. PUKSTON, a lawyer of great eminence, and a great praiser of Pitt, has just published a pamphlet, in which is this remark: "It should always be remembered, that the eighteen pounds a-year paid to any placeman or pensioner, withdraws from the public the means of giving active employment to one individual as the head of a family; thus depriving five persons of the means of sustenance from the fruits of honest industry and active labour, and rendering them paupers." Thus this supporter of Pitt acknowledges the great truth, that the taxes are the cause of a people's poverty and misery and degradation. We did not stand in need of this acknowledgment; the fact has been clearly proved before; but, it is good for us to see the friends and admirers of Pitt brought to make this confession.

It has been attempted to puzzle you with this sort of question: "If taxes be the cause of the people's misery, how comes it that they were not so miserable before the taxes were reduced as they are now?" Here is a fallacy, which you will be careful to detect. I know that the taxes have been reduced; that is to say, *nominally* reduced, but not so in fact; on the contrary, they have, in reality, been greatly augmented. This has been done by the *slight-of-hand of paper-money*. Suppose, for instance, that four years ago, I had 100 pounds to pay in taxes, then 130 bushels of wheat would have paid my share. If I have now 75 pounds to pay in taxes, it will require 190 bushels of wheat to pay my share of taxes. Consequently, though my taxes are *nominally* reduced, they are, in reality, greatly augmented. This has been done by the legerdemain of paper-money. In 1812, the pound-note was worth only thirteen shillings in silver. It is now worth twenty shillings. Therefore, when we now pay a pound-note to the tax-gatherer, we really pay him twenty shillings where we before paid him thirteen shillings; and the fundholders who lent pound-notes worth thirteen shillings each, are now paid their interest in pounds worth twenty shillings each. And, the thing is come to what Sir FRANCIS BURDETT told the Parliament it would come to. He told them, in 1811, that if they ever attempted to pay the interest of their debt in gold and silver, or in paper-money equal in value to gold and silver, the farmers and tradesmen must be ruined, and the journeymen and labourers reduced to the last stage of misery.

Thus, then, it is clear, that it is the weight of the taxes, under which you are sinking, which has already pressed so many of you down into the state of paupers, and which now threatens to deprive many of you of your existence. We next come to consider, what have been the causes of this weight of taxes. Here we must go back a little in our history, and you will soon see, that this intolerable weight has all proceeded from the want of a Parliamentary Reform.

In the year 1764, soon after the present king came to the throne, the

annual interest of the debt amounted to about five millions, and the whole of the taxes to about nine millions. But, soon after this a war was entered on to compel the Americans to submit to be taxed by the Parliament, *without being represented in that Parliament*. The Americans triumphed, and, after the war was over, the annual interest of the Debt amounted to about nine millions, and the whole of the taxes to about 15 millions. This was our situation, when the French people began their Revolution. The French people had so long been the slaves of a despotic government, that the friends of freedom in England rejoiced at their emancipation. The cause of *Reform*, which had never ceased to have supporters in England for a great many years, now acquired new life, and the Reformers urged the Parliament to *grant reform*, instead of going to war against the people of France. The Reformers said : " Give the nation *reform*, and you need fear no *revolution*." The Parliament, instead of listening to the Reformers, *crushed them*, and went to war against the people of France ; and the consequence of these wars is, that the annual interest of the Debt now amounts to 45 millions, and the whole of the taxes, during each of the last several years, to 70 millions. So that these wars have ADDED 36 millions a-year to the interest of the Debt, and 55 millions a-year to the amount of the whole of the taxes ! This is the price that we have paid for having checked (for it is only *checked*) the progress of liberty in France ; for having forced upon that people the family of Bourbon, and for having enabled another branch of that same family to restore the bloody Inquisition, which Napoleon had put down.

Since the restoration of the Bourbons and of the old government of France has been, as far as possible, the grand result of the contest ; since this has been the *end* of all our fightings and all our past sacrifices and present misery and degradation ; let us see (for the inquiry is now very full of interest,) what sort of Government that was, which the French people had just destroyed, when our Government began its wars against that people.

If, only 28 years ago, any man in England had said, that the Government of France was one that ought to be suffered to exist, he would have been hooted out of any company. It is notorious, that that Government was acruel despotism ; and that we and our forefathers always called it such. This description of that Government is to be found in all our histories, in all our Parliamentary debates, in all our books on government and politics. It is notorious, that the family of Bourbon has produced the most perfidious and bloody monsters that ever disgraced the human form. It is notorious, that millions of Frenchmen have been butchered, and burnt, and driven into exile by their commands. It is recorded, even in the history of France, that one of them said, that the putrid carcass of a Protestant smelt sweet to him. Even in these latter times, so late as the reign of Louis XIV., it is notorious, that hundreds of thousands of innocent people were put to the most cruel death. In some instances, they were burnt in their houses ; in others they were shut into lower rooms, while the incessant noise of kettle-drums over their heads, day and night, drove them to raving madness. To enumerate all the infernal means employed by this tyrant to torture and kill the people, would fill a volume. *Exile* was the lot of those who escaped the swords, the wheels, the axes, the gibbets, the torches of his hell-hounds. England was the place of refuge for many of these persecuted people. The grandfather of the present Earl of Radnor, and the father of the venerable Baron Maseres, were amongst them ; and, it is well known that England owes no inconsiderable part of her manufacturing skill and

industry to that atrocious persecution. Enemies of freedom, wherever it existed, this family of Bourbon, in the reign of Louis XIV. and XV., fitted out expeditions for the purpose of restoring the Stuarts to the throne of England, and thereby caused great expense and bloodshed to this nation; and, even the Louis who was beheaded by his subjects, did, in the most perfidious manner, make war upon England, during her war with America. No matter what was the nature of the *cause*, his conduct was perfidious; he *professed peace* while he was preparing for war. His object could not be to assist *freedom*, because his own subjects were *slaves*.

Such was the *family* that were ruling in France, when the French Revolution began. After it was resolved to go to war against the people of France, all the hirelings of corruption were set to work to gloss over the character and conduct of the old Government, and to paint in the most horrid colours the acts of vengeance which the people were inflicting on the numerous tyrants, civil, military, and ecclesiastical, whom the change of things had placed at their mercy. The people's turn was now come, and, in the days of their power, they justly bore in mind the oppressions which they and their forefathers had endured. The *taxes*, imposed by the Government, became, at last, intolerable. It had contracted a *great Debt* to carry on its wars. *In order to be able to pay the interest of this debt, and to support an enormous standing army in time of peace*, it laid upon the people burdens, which they could no longer endure. It *fined and flogged fathers and mothers*, if their *children* were detected in smuggling. Its courts of justice were filled with cruel and base judges. The nobility treated the common people like dogs; these latter were compelled to serve as *soldiers*, but were excluded from all share, or chance, of *honour and command*, which were engrossed by the nobility.

Now, when the time came for the people to have the power in *their* hands, was it surprising, that the first use they made of it was to take vengeance on their oppressors? I will not answer this question myself. It shall be answered by Mr. ARTHUR YOUNG, the present *Secretary of the Board of Agriculture*. He was in France at the time, and living upon the very spot, and having examined into the causes of the Revolution, he wrote and published the following remarks, in his *Travels*, Vol. I. page 603 :

“ It is impossible to justify the excesses of the people on their taking up arms; they were certainly guilty of cruelties; it is idle to deny the facts, for they have been proved too clearly to admit of doubt. But is it really THE PEOPLE, to whom we are to impute the whole?—Or to THEIR OPPRESSORS, who had kept them so long in a state of bondage? He who chooses to be served by slaves and by ill-treated slaves, must know that he holds both his property and his life by a tenure far different from those who prefer the service of well-treated freemen; and he who *dines to the music of groaning sufferers*, must not, in the moment of insurrection, complain that his daughters are ravished, and then destroyed; and that his sons' throats are cut. When such evils happen, they surely are *more imputable to the tyranny of the master*, than to the cruelty of the servant. The analogy holds with the French peasants. The murder of a Seigneur (a Lord,) or a country-seat in flames, is recorded in every newspaper; the rank of the person who suffers, attracts notice; but where do we find the *registers of that seigneur's oppressions of his peasantry*, and his exactions of feudal services, *from those whose children were dying around them for want of bread?* Where do we find the minutes that assigned these starving wretches to some vile pettifogger, to be fleeced by impositions, AND MOCKERY OF JUSTICE, in the seignoural courts (petty courts of justice)? Who gives us the awards of the Intendant (Head Tax-collector) and his *sub-delegates*, which took off the taxes of a man of fashion, and laid them with accumulated weight on the poor, who were so unfortunate as to be his neighbours? Who has dwelt sufficiently upon explaining all the

“ ramifications of despotism, *regal, aristocratical, and ecclesiastical*, pervading the whole mass of the people; reaching, like a circulating fluid, the most distant capillary tubes of poverty and wretchedness? In these cases the sufferers are too ignoble to be known; and the mass too indiscriminate to be pitied. But should a philosopher feel and reason thus? Should he mistake the cause for the effect? and, giving all his pity to the few, feel no compassion for the many, because they suffer in his eyes, not individually but by millions? The excesses of the people cannot, I repeat, be justified; it would undoubtedly have done them credit, both as men and as Christians, if they had possessed their new acquired power with moderation.—But let it be remembered, that the populace in no country ever use power with moderation; excess is inherent in their aggregate constitution: and as every Government in the world knows, that violence infallibly attends power in such hands, it is doubly bound in common sense, and for common safety, so to conduct itself, that the people may not find an interest in public confusions. They will always suffer much and long, before they are effectually roused; nothing, therefore, can kindle the flame, but such oppressions of some classes or order in society as give able men the opportunity of seconding the general mass; discontent will diffuse itself around; and if the Government TAKE NOT WARNING IN TIME; it is ALONE answerable for all the burnings and all the plunderings and all the devastation and all the blood that follow.”

Who can deny the justice of these observations? It was the Government ALONE that was justly chargeable with the excesses committed in this early stage, and, in fact, in every other stage, of the Revolution of France. If the Government had given way IN TIME, none of these excesses would have been committed. If it had listened to the complaints, the prayers, the supplications, the cries, of the cruelly-treated and starving people; if it had changed its conduct, reduced its expenses, it might have been safe under the protection of the peace-officers, and might have disbanded its standing army. But it persevered; it relied upon the bayonet, and upon its judges and hangmen. The latter were destroyed, and the former went over to the side of the people. Was it any wonder that the people burnt the houses of their oppressors, and killed the owners and their families? The country contained thousands upon thousands of men that had been ruined by taxation, and by judgments of infamous courts of justice, “ a mockery of justice; ” and, when these ruined men saw their oppressors at their feet, was it any wonder that they took vengeance upon them? Was it any wonder that the son, who had seen his father and mother flogged, because he, when a child, had smuggled a handful of salt, should burn for an occasion to shoot through the head the ruffians who had thus lacerated the bodies of his parents? Moses slew the insolent Egyptian who had smitten one of his countrymen in bondage. Yet Moses has never been called either a murderer or a cruel wretch for this act; and the bondage of the Israelites was light as a feather, compared to the tyranny under which the people of France had groaned for ages. Moses resisted oppression in the only way that resistance was within his power. He knew that his countrymen had no chance of justice in any court; he knew that petitions against his oppressors were all in vain; and, “ looking upon the burdens ” of his countrymen, he resolved to begin the only sort of resistance that was left him. Yet, it was little more than a mere insult that drew forth his anger and resistance; and, if Moses was justified, as he clearly was, what needs there any apology for the people of France?

It seems at first sight very strange, that the Government of France should not have “ taken warning in time.” But, it had so long been in the habit of despising the people, that its mind was incapable of entertaining

any notion of danger from the oppressions heaped upon them. It was surrounded with panders and parasites, who told it nothing but flattering falsehoods; and it saw itself supported by 250,000 bayonets, which it thought irresistible; though it found in the end, that those, who wielded those bayonets were not long so base as to be induced, either by threats or promises, to butcher their brothers and sisters and parents. And, if you ask me how the *ministers* and the *noblesse* and the *priesthood* who generally know pretty well how to take care of themselves; if you ask me how it came to pass, that *they* did not "take warning in time," I answer, that *they* did take warning, but, that, seeing, that the change which was coming would deprive them of a great part of their power and emoluments, they resolved to resist the change, and to destroy the country, if possible, rather than not have all its wealth and power to themselves. The ruffian, whom we read of, a little time ago, who stabbed a young woman, because she was breaking from him to take the arm of another man whom she preferred, acted upon the principle of the ministers, the noblesse, and the clergy of France. They could no longer unjustly possess, therefore they would destroy. They saw that if a just government were established; that, if the people were fairly represented in a national council; they saw, that if this were to take place, they would no longer be able to wallow in wealth at the expense of the people; and, seeing this, they resolved to throw all into confusion, and, if possible, to make a heap of ruins of that country, which they could no longer oppress, and the substance of which they could no longer devour.

Talk of violence indeed! Was there anything too violent, anything too severe, to be inflicted on these men? It was *they* who produced confusion; it was *they* who caused the massacres and guillotining; it was *they* who destroyed the kingly government; it was *they* who brought the King to the block. They were answerable for all and for every single part of the mischief, as much as Pharaoh was for the plagues in Egypt, which history of Pharaoh seems, by-the-by, to be intended as a lesson to all future tyrants. He "set task-masters over the Israelites to afflict them with burdens; and he made them build treasure cities for him; he made them serve with rigor; he made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service of the field; he denied them straw, and insisted upon their making the same quantity of bricks, and because they were unable to obey, the task-masters called them *idle* and *beat* them." Was it too much to scourge and to destroy all the first-born of men, who could tolerate, assist, and uphold a tyrant like this? Yet was Pharaoh less an oppressor than the old government of France.

Thus, then, we have a view of the former state of that country, by wars against the people of which we have been brought into our present state of misery. There are many of the hirelings of corruption, who actually insist on it, that we ought now to go to war again for the restoring of all the cruel despotism which formerly existed in France. This is what cannot be done, however. Our wars have sent back the Bourbons; but the *tithes*, the *Seigneurs* (the Lords), and many other curses have not been restored. The French people still enjoy much of the benefit of the revolution; and great numbers of their ancient petty tyrants have been destroyed. So that, even were things to remain as they are, the French people have gained greatly by their revolution. But things cannot remain as they are. Better days are at hand.

In proceeding now to examine the *remedies* for your distresses, I shall first notice some of those, which foolish, or cruel and insolent men have proposed. Seeing that the *cause* of your misery is the *weight of taxation*, one would expect to hear of nothing but a *reduction of taxation* in the way of remedy; but, from the friends of corruption, never do we hear of any such remedy. To hear them, one would think, that *you* had been the guilty cause of the misery you suffer; and that you, and you alone, ought to be made answerable for what has taken place. The emissaries of corruption are now continually crying out against the *weight* of the *Poor-rates*, and they seem to regard all that is taken in that way as a *dead loss to the Government!* Their project is, to deny relief to all who are *able to work*. But what is the use of your being able to work, if no one will, or can, give you work? To tell you that you must work for your bread, and, at the same time, not to find any work for you, is full as bad as it would be to order you to make bricks without straw. Indeed, it is rather more cruel and insolent; for Pharaoh's task-masters did point out to the Israelites that they might go into the fields and get *stubble*. The *Courier* newspaper of the 9th of October, says, "we must thus be *cruel* only to be *kind*." I am persuaded, that you will not understand this kindness, while you will easily understand the cruelty. The notion of these people seems to be, that every body that receives money out of the taxes have a *right* to receive it, *except you*. They tremble at the fearful amount of the *Poor-rates*: they say, and very truly, that those rates have risen from *two-and-a-half* to *eight or ten* millions since the beginning of the wars against the people of France; they think, and not without reason, that these rates will soon swallow up nearly all the rent of the land. These assertions and apprehensions are perfectly well founded; but how can *you* help it? You have not had the management of the affairs of the nation. It is not *you* who have ruined the farmers and tradesmen. You want only food and raiment: you are ready to work for it; but you cannot go naked and without food.

But the complaints of these persons against you are the more unreasonable, because they say not a word against the sums paid to *sinecure placemen* and *pensioners*. Of the five hundred and more Correspondents of the Board of Agriculture, there are scarcely ten, who do not complain of the weight of the *Poor-rates*, of the immense sums taken away from them by the *poor*, and many of them complain of the *idleness* of the poor. But not one single man complains of the immense sums taken away to support *sinecure placemen*, who do *nothing* for their money, and to support *pensioners*, many of whom are *women* and *children*, the wives and daughters of the nobility and other persons in high life, and who can do nothing, and never can have done any thing, for what they receive. There are of these places and pensions all sizes, from *twenty pounds* to *thirty thousand* and nearly *forty thousand pounds a year!* And, surely, these ought to be done away before any proposition be made to take the parish allowance from any of you, who are unable to work, or to find work to do. There are several individual placemen, the profits of *each* of which would maintain a *thousand families*. The names of the *ladies* upon the pension-list would, if printed one under another, fill a sheet of paper like this. And is it not, then, base and cruel at the same time in these Agricultural correspondents to cry out so loudly against the charge of supporting the unfortunate *poor*, while they utter not a word of complaint against the *sinecure* places and pensions?

The unfortunate journeymen and labourers and their families have a *right*, they have a *just claim*, to relief from the purses of the rich. For, there can exist no riches and no resources, which they by their labour, have not *assisted to create*. But, I should be glad to know how the sinecure placemen and lady pensioners have assisted to create food and raiment, or the means of producing them. The labourer who is out of work, or ill, to-day, may be able to work, and set to work to-morrow. While those placemen and pensioners never can work; or, at least, it is clear that they never *intend* to do it.

You have been represented by the *Times* newspaper, by the *Courier*, by the *Morning Post*, by the *Morning Herald*, and others, as the *scum* of society. They say, that you have *no business at public meetings*; that you are *rabble*, and that you *pay no taxes*. These insolent hirelings, who wallow in wealth, would not be able to put their abuse of you in print were it not for *your labour*. You create all that is an object of taxation; for even the *land* itself would be good for nothing without your labour. But are you *not taxed*? Do you *pay no taxes*? One of the correspondents of the Board of Agriculture has said, that care has been taken to lay *as little tax as possible* on the articles used by you. One would wonder how a man could be found impudent enough to put an assertion like this upon paper. But the people of this country have so long been insulted by such men, that the insolence of the latter knows no bounds.

The *tax-gatherers* do not, indeed, come to you and demand money of you: but, there are few articles which you use, in the purchase of which you do not pay a *tax*.

On your shoes, salt, beer, malt, hops, tea, sugar, candles, soap, paper, coffee, spirits, glass of your windows, bricks and tiles, tobacco: on all these, and many other articles you pay a *tax*, and even on your *loaf* you pay a *tax*, because every thing is taxed from which the loaf proceeds. In several cases the tax amounts to more than one-half of what you pay for the article itself; these taxes go in part, to support sinecure placemen and pensioners; and, the ruffians of the hired press call you the *scum* of society, and deny that you have any right to show your faces at any public meeting to petition for a Reform, or for the removal of any abuse whatever!

Mr. PAKSTON, whom I quoted before, and who is a *member of Parliament* and has a large estate, says, upon this subject, "Every family, even " of the poorest labourer, consisting of five persons, may be considered as " paying, in *indirect taxes*, at least *ten pounds a year*, or more than half " his wages at seven shillings a week!" And yet the insolent hirelings call you the *mob*, the *rabble*, the *scum*, the *swinish multitude*, and say, that your voice is nothing; that you have no business at public meetings; and that you are, and ought to be, considered as nothing in the body politic!—Shall we *never* see the day when these men will change their tone! Will they never cease to look upon us brutes! I trust they will change their tone, and that the day of the change is *at no great distance*!

The weight of the Poor-rate, which must increase while the present system continues, alarms the corrupt, who plainly see, that what is paid to relieve you *they* cannot have. Some of them, therefore, hint at your *early marriages* as a great evil, and a *clergyman* named MALTHEUS, has seriously proposed measures for *checking* you in this respect; while one of the correspondents of the Board of Agriculture complains of the IN-

crease of bastards, and proposes *severe punishment* on the parents! How hard these men are to please! What would they have you do? As some have called you the *swinish multitude*, would it be much wonder if they were to propose to serve you as families of young pigs are served? Or, if they were to bring forward the measure of Pharaoh, who ordered the midwives to kill all the male children of the Israelites?

But, if you can restrain your indignation at these insolent notions and schemes, with what feelings must you look upon the condition of your country, where the increase of the people is now looked upon as a curse! Thus, however, has it always been, in all countries, where taxes have produced excessive misery. Our countryman, Mr. GIBBON, in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, has the following passage: "The horrid practice of *murdering their new-born infants* was become every day more frequent in the provinces. It was the effect of *distress*, and the distress was principally occasioned by the *intolerable burden of taxes*, and by the *vexatious as well as cruel prosecutions of the officers of the revenue* against their insolvent debtors. The less opulent or less industrious part of mankind, instead of rejoicing at an increase of family, deemed it an act of paternal tenderness to release the children from the impending miseries of a life which they themselves were unable to support."

But that which took place under the base Emperor Constantine will not take place in England. You will not murder your new-born infants, nor will you, to please the corrupt and insolent, debar yourselves from enjoyments, to which you are invited by the very first of Nature's laws. It is, however, a disgrace to the country, that men should be found in it capable of putting ideas so insolent upon paper. So then, a young man, arm-in-arm with a rosy-cheeked girl, must be a spectacle of evil omen! What! and do they imagine, that you are thus to be *extinguished*, because some of you are now (without any fault of yours) unable to find work. As far as you were wanted to labour, to fight, or to pay taxes, you were welcome, and they boasted of your numbers; but now that your country has been brought into a state, of misery these corrupt and insolent men are busied with schemes for *getting rid of you*. Just as if you had not as good a right to live and to love and to marry as they have! They do not propose, far from it, to check the breeding of sinecure placemen and pensioners, who are supported, in part, by the taxes which you help to pay. They say not a word about the *whole families* who are upon the pension-list. In many cases there are sums granted in trust for *the children* of such a lord or such a lady. And, while labourers and journeymen who have large families too, are actually paying taxes for the support of these lords' and ladies' children, these cruel and insolent men propose that they shall have no relief, and that their having children ought to be *checked*! To such a subject no words can do justice. You will *feel* as you ought to feel; and to the effect of your feelings I leave these cruel and insolent men.

There is one more scheme to notice, which, though rather less against nature is not less hateful and insolent; namely, to *encourage you to emigrate to foreign countries*. This scheme is distinctly proposed to the Government by one of the correspondents of the Board of Agriculture. What he means by *encouragement* must be to *send away* by force, or by *paying for the passage*; for a man who has *money* stands in no need of

relief. But, I trust, that not a man of you *will move*, let the *encouragement* be what it may. It is impossible for *many* to go, though the prospect may be ever so fair. We must stand by our country, and it is base not to stand by her, as long as there is a chance of seeing her what she ought to be. But, the proposition is, nevertheless, base and insolent. This man did not propose to *encourage* the sinecure placemen and pensioners to emigrate; yet, surely, you who help to maintain them by the taxes which you pay, have as good a right to remain in the country as they have! You have fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers and children and friends as well as they; but, this base projector recommends, that you may be encouraged to leave your relations and friends for ever; while he would have the sinecure placemen and pensioners remain quietly where they are!

No: you will not leave your country. If you have suffered much and long, you have the greater right to remain in the hope of seeing better days. And I beseech you not to look upon yourselves as the *scum*; but, on the contrary, to be well persuaded, that a great deal will depend upon *your exertions*; and, therefore, I now proceed to point out to you what appears to me to be the line of conduct which journeymen and labourers ought to pursue in order to obtain *effectual relief*, and to assist in promoting tranquillity and restoring the happiness of their country.

We have seen that the cause of our miseries is the *burden of taxes*, occasioned by wars, by standing armies, by sinecures, by pensions, &c. It would be endless and useless to enumerate all the different heads or sums of expenditure. The *remedy* is what we have now to look to, and that remedy consists wholly and solely of such a *reform* in the Commons' or People's House of Parliament, as shall give to every payer of *direct taxes* a vote at elections, and as shall cause the Members to be *elected annually*.

In a late Register I have pointed out how easily, how peaceably, how fairly, such a Parliament might be chosen. I am aware, that it may, and not without justice, be thought wrong to deprive those of the right of voting, who pay *indirect taxes*. Direct taxes are those which are directly paid by any person into the hands of the tax-gatherer, as the assessed taxes and rates. Indirect taxes are those which are paid indirectly through the maker or seller of goods, as the tax on soap or candles or salt or malt. And, as no man ought to be taxed *without his consent*, there has always been a difficulty upon this head. There has been no question about the *right* of every man, who is free to exercise his will, who has a settled place in society, and who pays a tax of *any sort*, to vote for Members of Parliament. The difficulty is in taking the votes by any other means than by the *Rate-book*; for if there be no *list* of taxpayers in the hands of *any person*, mere menial servants, vagrants, pick-pockets and scamps of all sorts might not only come to poll, but they might poll in several parishes or places, on one and the same day. A corrupt rich man might employ scores of persons of this description, and in this way would the purpose of reform be completely defeated. In America, where one branch of the Congress is elected for *four years* and the other for *two years*, they have still adhered to the principle of *direct taxation*, and in some of the States, they have made it necessary for a voter to be worth a hundred pounds. Yet they have, in that country, duties on goods, custom duties and excise duties also; and, of course, there are many persons, who really *pay taxes*, and who, nevertheless,

are not permitted to vote. The people do not complain of this. They know that the number of votes is so great, that no corruption can take place, and they have no desire to see livery-servants, vagrants, and pick-pockets take part in their elections. Nevertheless, it would be very easy for a *reformed Parliament*, when once it had taken root, to make a just arrangement of this matter. The most likely method would be to take off the indirect taxes, and to put a small direct tax upon every master of a house, however low his situation in life.

But, this and *all other good things*, must be done by a *reformed Parliament*.—We must have *that first*, or we shall have nothing good; and, any man, who would, *beforehand*, take up your time with the detail of what a reformed Parliament ought to do in this respect, or with respect to any changes in the form of government, can have no other object than that of defeating the cause of reform, and, indeed, the very act must show, that *to raise obstacles* is his wish.

Such men, now that they find you justly irritated, would persuade you, that, because things have been perverted from their true ends, there is *nothing good* in our *constitution and laws*. For what, then, did Hampden die in the field, and Sydney on the scaffold? And, has it been discovered, at last, that England has *always* been an enslaved country from top to toe? The Americans, who are a very wise people, and who love liberty with all their hearts, and who take care to *enjoy* it, too, took special care not to part with any of the great principles and laws which they derived from their forefathers. They took special care to speak with reverence of, and to preserve Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, the Habeas Corpus, and not only all the body of the Common Law of England, but most of the rules of our courts, and all our form of jurisprudence. Indeed, it is the greatest glory of England that she has thus supplied with sound principles of freedom those immense regions, which will be peopled, perhaps, by hundreds of millions.

I know of no enemy of reform and of the happiness of the country so great as that man, who would persuade you that we possess *nothing good*, and that *all* must be torn to pieces. There is no principle, no precedent, no regulations (except as to mere matter of detail), favourable to freedom, which is not to be found in the Laws of England or in the example of our ancestors. Therefore, I say, we may ask for, and we want *nothing new*. We have great constitutional laws and principles, to which we are immovably attached. We want *great alteration*, but we want *nothing new*. Alteration, modification to suit the times and circumstances; but the great principles, ought to be and must be, the same, or else confusion will follow.

It was the misfortune of the French people, that they had no great and settled principles to refer to in their laws or history. They sallied forth and inflicted vengeance on their oppressors; but, for want of settled principles, to which to refer, they fell into confusion; they massacred *each other*; they next flew to a military chief to protect them even *against themselves*; and the result has been what we too well know. Let us, therefore, congratulate ourselves, that we have great constitutional principles and laws, to which we can refer, and to which we are attached.

That *Reform* will come I know, if the people do their duty; and all that we have to guard against is *confusion*, which cannot come if Reform take place *in time*. I have before observed to you, that when the friends of corruption in France saw that they could not prevent a *change*, they

bent their endeavours to produce *confusion*, in which they fully succeeded. They employed numbers of unprincipled men to go about the country proposing all sorts of mad schemes. They produced, first a confusion in men's minds, and next a civil war between provinces, towns, villages, and families. The tyrant ROBESPIERRE, who was exceeded in cruelty only by some of the Bourbons, was proved to have been in league with the open enemies of France. He butchered all the real friends of freedom whom he could lay his hands on, except PAINÉ, whom he shut up in a dungeon till he was reduced to a skeleton. This monster was, at last, put to death himself; and his horrid end ought to be a warning to any man, who may wish to walk in the same path. But I am, for my part, in little fear of the influence of such men. They cannot cajole *you*, as Robespierre cajoled the people of Paris. It is, nevertheless, necessary for you to be on your guard against them, and, when you hear a man talking big and hectoring about projects which *go farther than a real and radical Reform of the Parliament*, be you well assured, that that man would be a second Robespierre if he could, and that he would make use of you, and sacrifice the life of the very last man of you; that he would ride upon the shoulders of some through rivers of the blood of others, for the purpose of gratifying his own selfish and base and insolent ambition.

In order effectually to avoid the rock of confusion, we should keep steadily in our eye, not only what we *wish* to be done, but what *can* be done *now*. We know that such a reform as would send up a Parliament, chosen by all the payers of direct taxes, is not only just and reasonable, but *easy of execution*. I am, therefore, for accomplishing that object first; and I am not at all afraid, that a set of men who would really hold the purse of the people, and who had been just chosen freely by the people, would very soon do every thing that the warmest friend of freedom could wish to see done.

While, however, you are upon your guard against false friends, you should neglect no opportunity of doing all that is within your power to give support to the cause of Reform. *Petition* is the channel for your sentiments, and there is no village so small that its petition would not have some weight. You ought to attend at every public meeting within your reach. You ought to read to, and to assist each other in coming at a competent knowledge of all public matters. Above all things, you ought to be unanimous in your object, and not to suffer yourselves to be *divided*.

The subject of *religion* has nothing to do with this great question of reform. A reformed Parliament would soon do away all religious distinctions and disabilities. In their eyes, a Catholic and a Protestant would both appear in the same light.

The COURIER, the TIMES, and other emissaries of corruption, are constantly endeavouring to direct your wrath against bakers, brewers, butchers, and other persons, who deal in the necessaries of life. But, I trust, that you are not to be stimulated to such a species of violence. These tradesmen are as much in distress as you. They cannot help their malt and hops and beer and bread and meat being too dear for you to purchase. They all sell as cheap as they can, without being absolutely ruined. The beer you drink is more than half *tax*, and when the tax has been paid by the seller, he must have payment back again from you who drink, or he must be ruined. The baker has numerous taxes to pay, and

so has the butcher, and so has the miller and the farmer. Besides all men are *eager to sell*, and, if they could sell *cheaper*, they certainly would, because that would be the sure way of *getting more custom*. It is the weight of the taxes, which presses us all to the earth, *except those who receive their incomes out of those taxes*. Therefore I exhort you most earnestly not to be induced to lay violent hands on those, who really suffer as much as yourselves.

On the subject of *lowering wages*, too, you ought to consider, that your employers cannot give to you, that which they have not. At present corn is *high in price*, but that high price is no benefit to the farmer, because it has arisen from that *badness of the crop*, which Mr. HUNT foretold at the Common Hall, and for the foretelling of which he was so much abused by the hirelings of the press, who, almost up to this very moment, have been boasting and thanking God for the goodness of *the crop!* The farmer, whose corn is half destroyed, gains nothing by selling the remaining half for *double* the price at which he would have sold the whole. If I grow 10 quarters of wheat, and, if I save it all, and sell it for two pounds a quarter, I receive as much money as if I sold the one-half of it for four pounds a quarter. And I am better off in the former case, because I want wheat for *seed*, and because I want some to *consume myself*. These matters I recommend to your serious consideration; because, it being *unjust* to fall upon your employers to force them to give that which they have not to give, your conduct in such cases must tend to weaken the great cause in which we ought all now to be engaged; namely, *the removal of our burdens through the means of a reformed Parliament*. It is the interest of vile men of all descriptions to set one part of the people against the other part; and, therefore, it becomes you to be constantly on your guard against their allurements.

When journeymen find their wages reduced, they should take time to *reflect on the real cause*, before they fly upon their employers, who are, in many cases, in as great, or greater, distress than themselves. How many of those employers have, of late, gone to jail for debt, and left helpless families behind them! The employer's trade falls off. His goods are reduced in price. His stock loses the half of its value. He owes money. He is ruined; and how can he continue to pay *high wages*? The cause of his ruin is the *weight of the taxes*, which presses so heavily on us all, that we lose the power of purchasing goods. But, it is certain, that a great many, a very large portion, of the farmers, tradesmen, and manufacturers, have, by their *supineness* and want of *public spirit*, contributed towards the bringing of this ruin upon themselves and upon you. They have *skulked* from their public duty. They have kept aloof from, or opposed, all measures for a redress of grievances; and, indeed, they still *skulk*, though ruin and destruction stare them in the face. Why do they not *now* come forward and *explain* to you the *real cause* of the reduction of your wages? Why do they not put themselves at your head in *petitioning* for redress? This would secure their property much better than the *calling in of troops*, which can never afford them more than a short and precarious security. In the days of their prosperity, they were *amply warned* of what has now come to pass; and the far greater part of them abused and calumniated those who gave them the warning. Even if they would *now* act the part of men worthy of being relieved, the relief to us all would speedily follow.

If they will not ; if they will still *skulk*, they will merit all the miseries which they are destined to suffer.

Instead of coming forward to apply for a reduction of those taxes which are pressing them as well as you to the earth, what are they doing ? Why, they are applying to the Government to add to their receipts by passing *Corn Bills*, by preventing *foreign wool* from being imported ; and many other such silly schemes. Instead of asking for a *reduction of taxes*, they are asking for the means of paying taxes ! Instead of asking for the abolition of sinecure places and pensions, they pray to be enabled to continue to pay the amount of those places and pensions ! They know very well, that the salaries of the judges and of many other persons were greatly raised, some years ago, on the ground of the rise in the price of *labour* and *provisions*, why then do they not ask to have those salaries reduced, now that *labour* is reduced ? Why do they not apply to the case of the judges and others, the arguments which they apply to you ? They can talk boldly enough to you ; but, they are too great cowards to talk to the Government, even in the way of *petition* ! Far more honourable is it to be a ragged pauper than to be numbered among such men.

These people call themselves the *respectable* part of the nation. They are, as they pretend, the *virtuous* part of the people, because they are *quiet* ; as if virtue consisted in *immobility* ! There is a canting Scotchman, in London, who publishes a paper called the "*Champion*," who is everlastingly harping upon the virtues of the "*fire-side*," and who inculcates the duty of quiet submission. Might we ask this Champion of the tea-pot and milk-jug, whether Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights were won by the fire-side ? Whether the tyrants of the House of Stuart and of Bourbon were hurled down by fire-side virtues ? Whether the Americans gained their independence, and have preserved their freedom, by quietly sitting by the fire-side ? O, no ! these were all achieved by *action*, and amidst bustle and noise. *Quiet*, indeed ! Why, in this quality, a log, or a stone, far surpasses even the pupils of this "*Champion*" of quietness ; and the chairs round his fire-side exceed those who sit in them. But, in order to put these quiet, fire-side, respectable people to the *test*, let us ask them, if they approve of drunkenness, breaches of the peace, black eyes, bloody noses, fraud, bribery, corruption, perjury, and subornation of perjury ; and, if they say NO, let us ask them whether these are not going on all over the country at every general election. If they answer YES, as they must, unless they be guilty of wilful falsehood, will they then be so good as to tell us how they reconcile their *inactivity* with sentiments of *virtue* ? Some men, in all former ages, have been held in esteem for their wisdom, their genius, their skill, their valour, their devotion to country, &c., but, never, until this age, was *quietness* deemed a quality to be extolled. It would be no difficult matter to show, that the quiet, fire-side, gentry are the most callous and cruel, and, therefore, the most wicked part of the nation. Amongst them it is that you find all the speculators, all the blood-suckers of various degrees, all the borough voters and their offspring, all the selfish and unfeeling wretches, who, rather than risk the disturbing of their ease for one single month, rather than go a mile to hold up their hand at a public meeting, would see half the people perish with hunger and cold. The *humanity*, which is continually on their lips, is all *fiction*. They weep over the tale of woe in a novel ; but, round

their "decent fire-side," never was compassion felt for a real sufferer, or indignation at the acts of a powerful tyrant.

The object of the efforts of such writers is clearly enough seen. Keep all *quiet!* Do not *rouse!* Keep *still!* Keep *down!* Let those who perish, perish in *silence!* It will, however, be out of the power of these quacks, with all their laudanum, to allay the blood which is now boiling in the veins of the people of this kingdom; who, if they are doomed to perish, are, at any rate, resolved not to perish in *silence.*—The writer, whom I have mentioned above, says, that he, of *course,* does not count "the *lower classes,* who, under the *pressure of need,* or under the "influence of *ignorant prejudice,* may blindly and weakly *rush upon certain and prompt punishment;* but that the security of every *decent fire-side,* every *respectable father's* best hopes for his children, still "connect themselves *with the Government.*" And by *Government* he clearly means, all the mass as it now stands. There is nobody so callous and so insolent as your sentimental quacks and their patients. How these "decent fire-side" people would stare, if, some morning, they were to come down and find them occupied by uninvited visitors! I hope they never will. I hope that things will never come to this pass: but if one thing, more than any other, tends to produce so sad an effect, it is the cool insolence with which such men as this writer treat the most numerous and most suffering classes of the people.

Long as this Address already is, I cannot conclude without some observations on the "*Charity Subscriptions*" at the *London Tavern.* The object of this subscription professes to be to afford relief to the *distressed labourers, &c.* About *forty thousand pounds* have been subscribed, and there is no probability of its going much further. There is an *absurdity* upon the face of the scheme; for, as all parishes are *compelled by law* to afford relief to every person in distress, it is very clear, that, as far as money is given by these people to relieve the poor, there will be so much *saved in the parish rates.* But, the folly of the thing is not what I wish you most to attend to. Several of the subscribers to this fund receive each of them more than *ten thousand pounds,* and some more than *thirty thousand pounds* each, out of those taxes which you help to pay, and which emoluments not a man of them proposes to give up. The *clergy* appear very forward in this subscription. An Archbishop and a Bishop assisted at the forming of the scheme. Now, then, observe, that there has been given *out of the taxes,* for several years past, *a hundred thousand pounds a year,* for *what,* think you? Why, for the relief of the *poor clergy!* I have no account at hand later than that delivered *last year,* and there I find this sum!—for the *poor clergy!* The *rich clergy* do not pay this sum; but, it comes out of those taxes, part, and a large part, of which you pay on your *beer, malt, salt, shoes, &c.* I dare say, that the "*decent fire-sides*" of these "*poor clergy*" still connect themselves with the Government. Amongst all our misery we have had to support the intolerable disgrace of being an object of the *charity of a Bourbon Prince,* while we are paying for supporting that family upon the throne of France. Well! But, is this all? We are taxed, at the very same moment, for the support of the *French Emigrants!* And you shall now see to what amount. Nay, not only *French,* but *Dutch* and others, as appears from the fore-mentioned account, laid before Parliament last year. The sum, paid out of the taxes, in one year for the RELIEF of *Suffering French Clergy and*

Laity, St. Domingo Sufferers, Dutch Emigrants, Corsican Emigrants, was, 187,750*l.*; yes, *one hundred and eighty-seven thousand, seven hundred and fifty pounds*, paid to this set in one year out of those taxes, of which you pay so large a share, while you are insulted with a subscription to relieve you, and while there are projectors who have the audacity to recommend schemes for preventing you from marrying while young, and to induce you to emigrate from your country! I'll venture my life, that the "decent fire-sides" of all this swarm of French clergy and laity, and Dutch, and Corsicans, and St. Domingo sufferers, "still connect themselves closely with the Government;" and, I will also venture my life, that you do not stand in need of one more word to warm every drop of blood remaining in your bodies! As to the money subscribed by *Regiments of Soldiers*, whose pay arises from taxes, in part paid by you, though it is a most shocking spectacle to behold, I do not think so much of it. The soldiers are your fathers, brothers, and sons. But if they were *all* to give their *whole pay*, and if they amount to *one hundred and fifty thousand men*, it would not amount to *one-half* of what is now paid in Poor-rates, and of course would not add half a pound of bread to every pound, which the unhappy paupers now receive. All the *expenses of the Army and Ordnance* amount to an enormous sum—to sixteen or eighteen millions; but the pay of 150,000 men, at one shilling a-day each, amounts to no more than *two millions, seven hundred and twelve thousand, and five hundred pounds*. So that, supposing them all to receive one shilling a-day each, the soldiers receive only about a third part of the sum now paid annually in Poor-rates.

I have no room, nor have I any desire, to appeal to your passions upon this occasion. I have laid before you, with all the clearness I am master of, the causes of our misery, the measures which have led to those causes, and I have pointed out what appears to me to be the only remedy—namely, a reform of the Commons', or People's House of Parliament. I exhort you to proceed in a peaceable and lawful manner, but at the same time, to proceed with zeal and resolution in the attainment of this object. If the *skulkers* will not join you, if the "decent fire-side" gentry still keep aloof, proceed by yourselves. Any man can draw up a petition, and any man can *carry* it up to London, with instructions to deliver it into trusty hands, to be presented whenever the House shall meet. Some further information will be given as to this matter in a future Number. In the meanwhile,

I remain your Friend,

WM. COBBETT.

A LETTER
TO THE LUDDITES.

(*Political Register, November, 1816.*)

FRIENDS AND FELLOW COUNTRYMEN :

At this time, when the cause of freedom is making a progress which is as cheering to the hearts of her friends as it is appalling to those of her enemies, and, when it is become evident that nothing can possibly prevent that progress from terminating in the happiness of our country, which has, for so many years, been a scene of human misery and degradation; when it is become evident that so glorious a termination of our struggles can be now prevented only by our giving way to our passions instead of listening to the voice of reason, only by our committing those acts which admit of no justification either in law or in equity; at such a time, can it be otherwise than painful to reflect, that acts of this description are committed in any part of the kingdom, and particularly in the enlightened, the patriotic, the brave town of Nottingham?

The abuse which has been heaped upon you by those base writers whose object it is to inflame one part of the people against the other; the horrid stories which have been retailed about your injustice and cruelty; the murderous punishments which these writers express their wish to see inflicted on you; the delight which they evidently feel when any of you come to an untimely end; all these produce no feeling in my mind other than that of abhorrence of your calumniators. The atrocious wickedness of charging you with the burning of BELVOIR CASTLE, in support of which charge there has not been produced the slightest proof, in spite of all the endeavours to do it and all the anxiety to fix such a crime upon you; this alone ought to satisfy the nation, that it can rely upon nothing which a corrupt press has related relative to your conduct. But still it is undeniable, that you have committed acts of violence on the property of your neighbours, and have, in some instances, put themselves and their families in bodily fear. This is not to be denied, and it is deeply to be lamented.

However enlarged our views may be; however impartial we may feel towards our countrymen; still, there will be some particular part of them whose conduct we view with more than ordinary approbation, and for whom we feel more than ordinary good will. It is impossible for me, as a native of these Islands, not to feel proud at beholding the attitude which my countrymen are now taking; at hearing the cause of freedom so ably maintained by men who seem to have sprung up, all at once, out of the earth, from the North of Scotland to the banks of the Thames.

At Glasgow, at Paisley, at Bridgeton, throughout the noble counties of York and Lancaster, and in many other parts besides the Metropolis, we now behold that which to behold almost compensates us for a life of persecution and misery. But, still, amidst this crowd of objects of admiration, Nottingham always attracts my particular attention. I have before me the history of the conduct of Nottingham in the worst of times. I have traced its conduct down to the present hour. It has been foremost in all that is public-spirited and brave; and, I shall be very nearly returned to the earth when my blood ceases to stir more quickly than usual at the bare sound of the name of Nottingham.

Judge you, then, my good friends, what pain it must have given me to hear you accused of acts, which I was not only unable to justify, but which, in conscience and in honour, I was bound to condemn! I am not one of those, who have the insolence to presume, that men are *ignorant* because they are *poor*. If I myself have more knowledge and talent than appears to have fallen to the lot of those who have brought us into our present miserable state, it ought to convince me, that there are thousands and thousands, now unknown to the public, possessed of greater talent, my education having been that of the common soldier grafted upon the ploughboy. Therefore, I beg you not to suppose, that I address myself to you as one who pretends to any superiority in point of rank, or of natural endowments. I address you as a friend who feels most sincerely for your sufferings; who is convinced that you are in error as to the cause of those sufferings; who wishes to remove that error; and, I do not recollect any occasion of my whole life when I have had so ardent a desire to produce conviction.

As to the *particular* ground of quarrel between you and your employers, I do not pretend to understand it very clearly. There must have been faults or follies on their side, at some time or other, and there may be still; but, I think, that we shall see, in the sequel, that those circumstances which appear to you to have arisen from their *avarice*, have, in fact, arisen from their want of the *means*, more than from their want of *inclination*, to afford you a competence in exchange for your labour; and, I think this, because it is their *interest* that you should be happy and contented.

But, as to the use of *machinery in general*, I am quite sure, that there cannot be any solid objection. However, as this is a question of very great importance, let us *reason it together*. Hear me with patience; and, if you still differ with me in opinion, ascribe my opinion to *error*, for it is quite impossible for me to have any *interest* in differing with you. But, before we proceed any further, it may not be amiss to observe, that the writers on the side of corruption are very anxious to inculcate notions *hostile* to machinery, as well as notions hostile to bakers and butchers. This fact alone ought to put you on your guard. These men first endeavour to set the labouring class on upon their employers; and then they call aloud for troops to mow them down.

By *machines* mankind are able to do that which their own bodily powers would never effect to the same extent. Machines are the produce of the *mind* of man; and, their existence distinguishes the civilized man from the savage. The savage has no machines, or, at least, nothing that we call machines. But, his life is a very miserable life. He is ignorant; his mind has no powers; and, therefore, he is feeble and contemptible. To show that machines are not naturally and necessarily an

evil, we have only to suppose the existence of a patriarchal race of a hundred men and their families, all living in common, *four men* of which are employed in *making cloth by hand*. Now, suppose some one to discover a machine, by which all the cloth wanted can be made by *one man*. The consequence would be, that the great family would (having enough of every thing else) use *more cloth*; or, if any part of the labour of the three cloth-makers were much wanted in any other department, they would be employed in that other department. Thus, would the *whole* be benefitted by the means of this invention; the whole would have more clothes amongst them, or more food would be raised, or the same quantity as before would be raised, leaving the community more leisure for study or for recreation.

See ten miserable mariners cast on shore on a desert island with only a bag of wheat and a little flax-seed. The soil is prolific; they have fish and fruits; the branches or bark of trees would make them houses, and the wild animals afford them meat. Yet, what miserable dogs they are! They can neither sow the wheat, make the flour, nor catch the fish nor the animals. But let another wreck toss on the shore a spade, a hand-mill, a trowel, a hatchet, a saw, a pot, a gun, and some fish-hooks and knives, and how soon the scene is changed! Yet, they want clothes, and, in order to make them *shirts*, for instance, six or seven out of the ten are constantly employed in making the linen. This throws a monstrous burden of labour upon the other *three*, who have to provide the food. But, send them a *loom*, and you release six out of the seven from the shirt-making concern; and *ease* as well as plenty immediately succeed.

In these simple cases the question is decided at once in favour of machines. With regard to their effects in a great community like ours, that question is necessarily more complicated; but, at any rate, enough has been said to show, that men cannot live in a civilized state without *machines*; for, every *implement* used by man is a *machine*, machine merely meaning *thing*, as contradistinguished from the *hand of man*. Besides, if we indulge ourselves in a cry against machines, *where* are we to *stop*? Some misguided, poor, suffering men in the county of Suffolk, have destroyed *thrashing* machines. Why not *ploughs*, which are only *digging* machines? Why not *spades*, and thus come to our *bare hands* at once? But, why *thrashing* machines? Is not the *flail* a machine? The corn *could be rubbed* out in the hand, and winnowed by the *breath*; but, then, nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of us must starve, and the few that remained must become savages.

I will not insult that good sense, of which the men of Nottingham have given so many striking proofs, by pushing further my illustrations of the position, that *machinery in general is not an evil*. But, the great question to be decided, is, whether machinery, as it at present exists, *does not operate to the disadvantage of journeymen and labourers, and is not one cause of the misery they now experience*? This is the great question to be decided. But, before I enter on it, give me leave to show you, that the *corrupt* press, by which you are so much abused, is actually engaged in the work of sending us back by degrees into the savage state just described!

There is a paper in London, called the *COURIER*, which is always praising the acts of the Government and always abusing the Reformers, in the most gross and outrageous manner. The *Morning Chronicle* asserts that the proprietor of this paper has regular communications with

the offices of Government. I do not know how this may be; but, certain it is, that through thick and thin, it praises the acts of the Government. This paper, on the twenty-first instant, contained the following paragraph:—"Amongst other employments for the poor, it is recommended, that parishes should furnish themselves with *hand corn-mills*; that *parish bake-offices* should be established; and that the *women and girls* should be employed in spinning and carding of wool. In Essex, many hands have been employed to *shell beans in the fields*, which has been done so low as 3d. *per bushel*, a sum *under that usually paid for thrashing*. By this means, the beans are got *quick to market*, first being dried upon the kiln, with the advantage of not being bruised, as they must otherwise have been, if thrashed with the *flail*."

This is actually a bold step towards the savage state. It is exceedingly foolish, but, as I shall presently show, exceedingly *mischievous* also; or, at least, it would be so, if the people had not too much sense to be misled by it. The mind of man has discovered a mode of preparing corn for making him food, by the use of brooks, streams, rivers, and the wind. His mind has subjected the water and wind to his control, and compelled them to serve him in this essential business. But, these barbarians would fain render his discoveries of no avail. They would deprive us of the use of the *Wind* and the *Water* in this respect, and set us to grind our corn *by hand*. Still, hand-mills are *machines*. Come, then, let us resort to ROBINSON CRUSOE'S *pestle and mortar*. No: those are *machines*. Why, then, let us, like cattle, grind the corn with our *teeth*!

But, what *good* are these hand-mills to do the *poor*? Let us see. There is *one mill* in Hampshire which is capable of grinding and dressing 200 sacks of wheat in a day. The men employed in and about this mill are, or would be, if in full work, about *twelve*. Now, there are about 200 parishes in Hampshire. Suppose each has a hand-mill, capable of grinding and dressing *a sack in a day*, and that is full as much as can be done by *two able men*. Here are *four hundred men* and *two hundred machines* employed to do that which would be a great deal better done by *twelve men* and one stream of water! Aye, but this would find *employment* for 400 men! Employment! Why not employ them "to fling stones against the wind?" What *use* would their labour be to any body? May they not as well be doing *nothing* as doing *no good*? In short, if the powerful assistance of the wind and the water were thrown aside in this important business, we should find ourselves making a rapid progress towards the feebleness of savage life.

"*Bake-houses*;" parish bake-houses are recommended; and, for what? People now bake at their own houses, if they choose, and yet they find, in general, that there is little economy in so doing. Why, then, this new invention? It is a gross folly. Why not recommend us all to make *our own shoes*, our own *hats*, and so on throughout all the articles of dress and furniture? Why is the baker's trade become more unnecessary now than at any former period? But, the *folly* is here surpassed by the *mischievousness*; because this recommendation has a tendency to excite *popular discontents against the bakers*, and to cause such acts of violence as form an excuse for the calling forth of *troops*. Seeing that this is a matter of great importance, I will lay before you a statement of the *bakers' profits*, by which you will see how unjust are all the attacks which are made upon that description of persons. The

best way, however, to satisfy your minds upon this subject, is to suppose the same man to be both *miller* and *baker*, and to show you how much a load of wheat is sold for to the miller, and how much it brings back from the public, when paid for by them in the shape of bread. There is no man in England better able to speak confidently upon this subject than I am, having myself caused corn to be ground into flour by a *horse-mill*, under my own immediate inspection and superintendence, and having verified all the particulars with the greatest exactness. This very year I have sold wheat at market, and, at the same time, have ground the same sample of wheat into flour, for my own use and that of my labourers. Thus I know to a certainty the profits of the miller and the baker both together, and my wonder has been, that they find the means of living upon so small a profit.

I speak of a load of wheat, because my experiments have been made upon that quantity. A load is 40 Winchester bushels. A load of my wheat, weighing $58\frac{1}{2}$ lb., a bushel, and, in the whole, 2349 lb. yielded me 1487 lb. of flour, fine and seconds; but, I take it, 1475 lb. of fine flour, and 807 lb. of bran, pollard, and what we call blues. The 1475 lb. of flour made 1890 lb. of bread, according to repeated experiments. The distribution of the load of wheat stood thus:

In flour.....	1487lbs.
In offal.....	807
Waste	55

Weight of wheat 2349

The waste arises partly from what goes off in *dust* about the mill, but chiefly from the *evaporation* which takes place when the grain comes to be bruised, because, though apparently quite dry and hard, there is a certain portion of *moisture*, or else there could be no *vegetation* in the grain, and, it is the small remnant of this vegetative principle, which causes the flour to *swell*. If dried upon a kiln, wheat will never produce light bread. Now, as to the *money* part of the concern.

The 1475 lb. of flour made 1890 lb. of bread, or 438 *quartern* loaves, at 4 lb. 5 oz. each. The offal was worth, at the market price, a *penny* a pound weight. The bakers in the village sold bread, at the same time, at 1s. 1d. the quartern loaf.

438 loaves amounted to	£23 14 0
807 lb. of offal	3 17 0

£27 11 0

Market price of the wheat 19 0 0

Balance £8 11 0

Here, then, is 8l. 11s. more than the wheat cost. But, only think of what is to be done for this sum! The wheat to be put into the mill; beer for the carters; the grinding and dressing of the wheat; the sacks to put the flour and offal into; the carrying out of the flour and the offal; a delay in the sale; interest of the 19l. and of all those other outgoings; trust and bad debts; the taxes on the miller's horses, on all he uses and consumes. Then comes the baker. Fire for his oven; yeast; labour in making the bread; labour in sending great part of it

out; rent of his house; all his numerous taxes; trust and bad debts; and payment for his time. Is it not wonderful, that a load of wheat can be manufactured into bread and distributed at so *cheap* a rate? But, in order to show you what would be the consequence of destroying the trade of a baker, let us suppose the *flour* of this load of wheat bought by 26 good large families, who require about a bushel of flour each a week. Here would be 26 ovens to *heat* and 26 women employed during the better part of the day. This would be a cost *double* in amount to the baker's profit; and, what then would be the case, if there were 50 or 70 ovens to heat? My good friends, I know it from very careful observation, that no family can *afford* to bake their own bread, even where they have ovens, unless they have their *fuel for nothing*; and I know, too, that labourers, who live in cottages of my own, who have nice little ovens and *fuel for nothing*, who yet purchase their bread of the bakers in the village, if their wives have any sort of employment in the fields; and, they have convinced me, that, if the wife loses a day's work in a week for the sake of baking, they *lose* by baking their own bread.

What, then, can be more foolish, more unjust, and more dastardly, than to fall with fury upon this useful, this necessary, class of men? And, what can be more base and wicked than the efforts which the corrupt press is making to cause you to believe that a part, at least, of your sufferings arise from what they villanously call the *extortions* of bakers and butchers? There is no trade which yields so little profit as that of the baker. The butcher comes next; and, must it not be very clear to every one, that, if these trades made *large profits*, many more persons would go into these trades? Every man wants to get money, and, if money was to be gotten in so simple a way, would there not be plenty of people to come forward to get it?

The story of women and children *shelling beans in the field at 3d. a bushel* must be false. But, if true, is it possible for any human being to shell in that way *a bushel a day*, while it is well known that a man with a flail will thrash more than *twenty bushels* of beans in a day, and be in the *dry* and be *clean* and warm all the while! But, this is such miserable nonsense, that I will not any longer detain you with further notice of it. Satisfied, that you will be convinced, from what has been said and from the operation of your own good sense, that there is no just ground for anger against bakers and butchers, and that the cause of your suffering must be very different from that of any extortions on the part of such tradesmen. I shall now return to the subject of machines, and beg your patient attention, while I discuss the interesting question before stated: that is to say, *Whether machinery, as it at present exists, does, or does not, "operate to the disadvantage of journeymen and labourers."*

The notion of our labourers in agriculture is, that thrashing machines, for instance, *injure* them, because, say they, if it were not for those machines, we should have *more work* to do. This is a great error. For, if, in consequence of using a machine to beat out his corn, the farmer does not expend *so much* money on *that sort* of labour, he has so much *more money* to expend on some *other sort* of labour. If he saves twenty pounds a year in the article of thrashing, he has that twenty pounds a year to expend in draining, fencing, or some other kind of work; for, you will observe, that he does not take the twenty pounds

and put it into a *chest* and lock it up, but lays it out in his business; and his business is to improve his land, and to add to the quantity and amount of his produce. Thus, in time, he is enabled to feed more mouths, in consequence of his machine, and, to buy, and cause others to buy, more clothes than were bought before; and, as in the case of the ten sailors, the skill of the mechanic tends to produce *ease* and *power* and *happiness*.

The thrashing machines employ women and children in a dry and comfortable barn, while the men can be spared to go to work in the fields. Thus the weekly income of the labourer, who has a large family, is, in many cases, greatly augmented, and his life rendered so much the less miserable. But, this is a trifle compared with the great *principle*, upon which I am arguing, and which is applicable to all *manufactories* as well as to farming; for, indeed, what is a farmer other than a *manufacturer of corn and cattle*?

That the use of machinery, *generally speaking*, can do the journeyman manufacturer *no harm*, you will be satisfied of in one moment, if you do but reflect, that it is the *quantity of the demand* for goods that must always regulate the *price*, and that the price of the goods must regulate the *wages* for making the goods. I shall show by-and-bye how the *demand* or *market*, may be affected by an alteration in the currency or money of a country,

The quantity of demand for *lace*, for instance, must depend upon the quantity of money which the people of the country have to expend. When the means of expending are abundant, then a great quantity of lace will be bought; but as those means diminish, so will the purchases of lace diminish in amount. But, in every state of a country, in this respect, the effect of *machinery* must be the same. There will always be a quantity of money to spare to expend in lace. Sometimes, as we have seen, the quantity of this money will be greater, and sometimes it will be less; but, in no case do I see, that machinery can possibly do the journeyman lace-maker any harm. Suppose, for instance, that the sum which the whole nation have to expend in lace, be 100,000 pounds a year; that the number of yards of lace be 500,000; and that the making of the lace, at 40*l.* a family, give employment to 2500 families. The lace by the means of *machinery* can be made, it is supposed, at 4*s.* a yard. But, destroy all machinery, and then the lace cannot be made, perhaps under 20*s.* a yard. What would the effect of this be? No advantage to you; because, as there is only 100,000*l.* a-year to spare to be expended in lace, there would be a demand for only *one hundred thousand yards*, instead of *five hundred thousand yards*. There would still be 2500 families employed in lace-making, at 40*l.* a-year for each family; but, at any rate, *no advantage* could possibly arise to you from the change, because the whole quantity of money expended in lace must remain the same.

Precisely the same must it be with regard to the *stocking* and all other manufactures. But, while the destruction of machinery would produce *no good* to you with regard to the *home* trade, it would produce a great deal of *harm* to you with regard to the *foreign* trade; because it would make your goods so *high in price*, that other nations, who would very soon have the machinery, would be able to make the same goods at a much *lower price*.

I think, then, that it is quite clear, that the existence of machinery, to its present extent, cannot possibly do the journeyman manufacturer *any harm*;

but, on the contrary, that he must be injured by the destruction of machinery. And, it appears to me equally clear, that if machines could be invented so as to make lace, stockings, &c. for half or a quarter the present price, such an improvement could not possibly be injurious to you. Because, as the *same sum of money* would still, if the country continued in the same state, be laid out in lace, stockings, &c., there would be a *greater quantity* of those goods sold and used, and the sum total of your wages would be exactly the same as it is now.

But, if machinery were injurious to you now, it must *always* have been injurious to you; and there have been times, when you had no great reason to complain of want of employment at any rate. So that it is evident, that your distress must have arisen from *some other cause or causes*. Indeed, I know that this is the case; and, as it is very material that you should have a clear view of these causes, I shall enter into a full explanation of them; because, until we come at the nature of the *disease*, it will be impossible for us to form any opinion as to the *remedy*.

Your distress, that is to say, that which you now more immediately feel, arises from want of employment with wages sufficient for your support. The want of such employment has arisen from the want of a sufficient demand for the goods you make. The want of a sufficient demand for the goods you make has arisen from the want of means in the nation at large to purchase your goods. This want of means to purchase your goods has arisen from the weight of the taxes co-operating with the bubble of paper-money. The enormous burden of taxes and the bubble of paper-money have arisen from the war, the sinecures, the standing army, the loans, and the stoppage of cash payments at the Bank; and it appears very clearly to me, that these never would have existed, if the Members of the House of Commons had been chosen annually by the people at large.

Now, in order to show, that taxes produce poverty and misery generally, let us suppose again the case of a great-patriarchal family. This family we suppose to consist of many men and their wives and children; we suppose them *all to labour* in their different branches; and to enjoy each of them the same degree of wealth and comfort and ease. But all at once, by some means or other, nine or ten of the most artful men make shift to impose a *tax* upon the rest; and to get from them, in this way enough to support themselves and their wives and children *without any work at all*. Is it not clear, that the *taxed part* of the community must *work harder or fare worse* in consequence of this change? Suppose this taxing work to go on, and the receivers of taxes to increase, *till one-half* of the whole of the produce of all the labour be taken in taxes. What misery must the *payers of taxes* then begin to endure? It is certain, that they must be punished in two ways; first by an addition to the hardness of their work, and next by a reduction of their former food and clothing. They must, under such circumstances, necessarily become skinny, sick, ragged and dirty. For, you will observe, that those who would *live upon the taxes*, would each of them eat and drink and wear ten times as much as one of the poor mortals who were left to labour and to pay taxes. As these poor creatures would be unable to lay up anything against a day of sickness and old age, a poor-house must be built to prevent them from actually dying by the road-side, and a part of the taxes must be laid out to support them, in some way or other, till they expired, or, if children, till they should be able to work.

There can be no doubt, that such would be the effect of heavy taxation in this case ; and the same reasoning applies to millions of families, only the causes and effects are a little more difficult to trace. Now, you will observe, that I do not say, that *no taxes* ought to be collected. Our vile enemies impute this to me ; but, my friends, I have never said it or thought it. In a large community of men, there must be laws to protect the weak against the strong ; there must be administrators of the laws ; there must be persons to hold communications with foreign powers ; there must be, in case of necessary wars, a public force to carry on such wars. All these require taxes of some sort ; but when the load of taxes becomes so heavy as to produce *general misery* amongst all those who pay and who do not receive taxes, then it is that taxes become an enormous evil.

This is our state at present. It is the sum taken from those who labour to be given to those who do not labour, which has produced all our present misery. It has been proved by me, but, which is better for us, it has been expressly acknowledged by Mr. PÆSTON, who is a lawyer of great eminence, the owner of a large estate in Devonshire, and a Member of Parliament for a *Borough*, that the labourer who earns 18 pounds a year, pays 10 pounds of it in taxes. I have before observed, but I cannot repeat it too often, that you pay a tax on your shoes, soap, candles, salt, sugar, coffee, malt, beer, bricks, tiles, tobacco, drugs, spirits, and, indeed, on almost every thing you use in any way whatever. And, it is a monstrous cheat in the corrupt writers to attempt to persuade you, that you pay *no taxes*, and, upon that ground to pretend, that you have no right to vote for Members of Parliament. In the single article of *salt*, it is very clear to me, that every one of our labourers who has a *family*, pays more than a *pound* every year. The salt is sold in London at 20s. a bushel, wholesale ; but, if there was no tax, it would not exceed perhaps 3s. a bushel. Every labourer with a family must consume more than a bushel, which does not amount to more than *the third part of half-a-pint a day* ; and, you will bear in mind, there is salt in the bacon, the butter, and the bread, besides what is used in the shape of salt.

Now, is it not clear, then, that you do pay taxes ? And, is it not also clear, that the sum, which you pay in taxes, is just so much taken from your means of purchasing food and clothes ? This brings us back to the cause of your *want of employment* with sufficient wages. For, while you pay heavy taxes, the landlord, the farmer, the tradesman, the merchant, are not exempt. They pay taxes upon all the articles which they use and consume, and they pay direct taxes besides, on their houses, lands, horses, servants, &c. Now, if they had not to pay these taxes, is it not clear, that they would have more money to expend upon labour of various kinds ; and, of course, that they would purchase more *stockings* and more *lace* than they now purchase ? A farmer's wife and daughters, who would lay out 10 pounds in these articles, cannot so lay it out, if it be taken away by the tax-gatherer ; and so it is in the case of the landlord and the tradesman. I know a country town, where a couple of hundred of pounds used to be expended on a *fair-day*, in cottons, woollens, gloves, linen, &c. and where, at the last fair, not *fifty* pounds were expended. The country-shopkeeper not wanting the goods to the *same* amount as before, the London wholesale dealer does not want them to that amount ; and as he does not want them from your employers, they do not want your labour to the same *amount* as before. So that they are compelled to *refuse you work*, or, to give you work at *low wages*, or, to give away to you their

property and means of supporting themselves and their families, which, in reason and justice cannot be expected.

Then, there is another very injurious effect produced by this load of taxes. The goods made by you cannot be *so cheap* as if you and your employers had not so heavy taxes to pay. Thus foreign nations, which are not so much loaded with taxes, can afford to make the goods themselves as cheap, or cheaper, than you can make them. Formerly, when our taxes were light, the Americans, for instance, could not afford to make stockings, broadcloth, cutlery, cotton goods, glass wares, linens. They now make them all, and to a vast extent! They have *machinery* of all sorts, manufactories upon a large scale, and, what is quite astonishing, they, who, before our wars against the French people, did not grow *wool* sufficient in quantity for their hats and saddle-pads, grow now fine wool sufficient for their own manufactories of cloth, and to *export to Europe!*

This change has been produced wholly by the late wars, and more especially by our Orders in Council and by our impressment of native American seamen, which last produced *the war with America*, to carry on which both parties, the INS and the OUTS, most cordially joined. That war finished what the Orders in Council had begun. It *compelled* the Americans to manufacture; and, in order to protect their own manufactories, the Government of that country has naturally passed laws to check the import of ours. Thus it is, my good friends, that the manufacturers of England, Scotland, and Ireland, have lost a considerable part of the custom of *ten millions of farmers and farmers' wives and children*. I foresaw this consequence in 1811; and I most earnestly, at that time, in a series of Letters to the Prince Regent, besought the Government not to enter into that fatal war. It was, however, entered into; my advice was rejected, and the manufacturers and merchants of this kingdom are now tasting the bitter fruit of that disgraceful war, which, after having cost about fifty millions of money, was given up in the teeth of a solemn declaration to the contrary, without having effected any one of the objects for which it was professed to have been begun and prosecuted.

Thus, then, my fellow-countrymen, it is not *machinery*; it is not the grinding disposition of your employers; it is not improvements in machinery; it is not extortions on the part of bakers and butchers and millers and farmers and corn-dealers, and cheese and butter sellers. It is not to any causes of this sort that you ought to attribute your present great and cruel sufferings; but wholly and solely to the great burden of taxes, co-operating with the bubble of paper-money. And now, before I proceed any further, let me explain to you how the paper-money, or funding-system has *worked* us all. This is a very important matter, and it is easily understood by any man of plain good sense, who will but attend to it for a moment.

Before the wars against the French people, which wars have ended in replacing our king's and country's *old enemies*, the family of *Bourbon*, on the thrones of France, Spain, and Naples, and which have restored the Inquisition that Napoleon had put down; before those wars, the chief part of the money in England, was *gold and silver*. But, even the first war against the people of France cost so much money, that bank-paper was used in such great abundance that, in 1797, people became alarmed, and ran to the Bank of England to get real money for the notes which they held. Then was fulfilled the prophecy of Mr. PAINÉ. The Bank *could not pay their notes*; the Bank Directors went to PITT

and told him their fears. He called a Council, and the Council issued an *order* to the Bank to *refuse* to pay their promissory notes in specie, though the notes were all payable to the *bearer* and on *demand*. The Parliament *afterwards* passed an Act to *protect* PITT, the Council, and the Bank Directors *against the law*, which had been violated in these transactions?

From this time, there has been little besides paper-money. This became plenty, and of course wages and corn and every thing became *high in price*. But, when the *peace* came, it was necessary to reduce the quantity of paper-money; because, when we came to have intercourse with foreign nations, it would never do to sell a one-pound note at *Calais*, as was the case, for about *thirteen shillings*. The Bank and the Government had it in their power to lessen the quantity of paper. *Down came prices* in a little while; and if the *Debt* and *taxes* had come down too in the same degree, there would have been no material injury; but, they did not. Taxes have continued the *same*. Hence our ruin; the complete ruin of the great mass of farmers and tradesmen and small landlords; and hence the misery of the people.

But, some of the taxes have been *taken off*. Yes; about 17 millions out of 70, or about a *fourth* part. But, the paper-money has been diminished in a greater degree, and, of course, farm-produce in the same degree as paper-money. Bread and corn sell pretty high, owing to a bad harvest; but we must take *all* the produce of a farm, and you will soon see how the farmer has been ruined.

BEFORE.	£	s.	d.
A load of Wheat.....	33	0	0
A cart Colt 2 years old	38	0	0
A Cow.....	22	0	0
A Southdown Ewe	1	18	0
A Steer for fattening	15	0	0
	£109 18 0		

Now.	£	s.	d.
A load of Wheat.....	10	0	0
A Cart Colt 2 years old	17	0	0
A Cow	7	0	0
A Southdown Ewe	0	18	0
A Steer for fattening	6	0	0
	£40 18 0		

Thus, our produce has fallen off 69*l.* out of 109*l.* 18*s.* 0*d.*, and our taxes have been reduced only 17*l.* in every 70*l.* This has been the effect of the paper-money bubble. I speak this with a *certain knowledge* of the facts. I myself have 8 beautiful Alderney heifers, with calf, for which I cannot obtain 4*l.* each. Four years ago I could have sold just such for 16*l.* each. I have 12 Scotch steers, for which I cannot obtain 5*l.* each. Just such ones, at Barnet Fair, only in 1813, I saw sold for 13*l.* each. This has been the effect of paper-money; and by this cause have thou-

sands upon thousands of farmers been already wholly ruined, while thousands upon thousands more are upon the threshold of the jail.

Here, then, we have the *real causes* of our sufferings, the sufferings of all the labourers, all the farmers, all the tradesmen, and, in short, of every class, *except those who live upon the taxes.*

If, as I observed before, *the taxes had been lowered* in the same degree as the farm produce, the distress would not have been much greater than before; that is to say, if the sum total of the year's taxes had been reduced from 70 millions to about 26 millions. But this could not be done, while the interest of the DEBT was paid in full at 5 per cent., while an army of 150 thousand men was kept up; and while all the pensions and sinecures and the Civil List were kept up to their former amount; and, besides these, all the pay of the naval and military people and all others living, in any way, upon the taxes.

And, why should such an army be kept up? There was a time, when a man would have been looked upon as mad, if he had proposed to keep up any standing soldiery at all in time of peace. Bnt, why not reduce *pay and salaries*? The JUDGES, for instance, had their salaries *doubled* during the war, and so had the *Police Justices* and many others. When the WHIGS (the *famous Whigs!*) were in office, they augmented the allowances of the junior branches of the Royal Family from 12 thousand pounds each to 18 thousand pounds each per year. The allowance to the King, Queen, &c. called the Civil List, was augmented enormously. Now, you will observe, that all these augmentations were made upon the express ground, that the *price of provisions* had risen. Well, *provisions fall*, and down come the *wages of journeymen and labourers*; and why, in the name of reason and of justice, should not the *salaries of the Judges*, and the pay and allowances of all others in public employ *come down too*? What reason can there be for keeping all these *up*, while *your wages* have come down?

Then, as to the DEBT, why should those who have lent their money to the Government to carry on the wars; why should they continue to be paid in full at 5 per cent. interest in the present money? It is the bubble of paper-money; it is the bubble which they have helped to make, which has reduced my Alderney heifers from 16*l.* value to 4*l.*, and why am I and you and all the rest of us to pay them as much as we used to pay them? The greater part of them *lent* their money to the Government, when the pound-note was not worth more than *half* what it is worth now, if we take all circumstances into view; and, what right, then, have they to be paid in full in the money of the present day? Yet, they are paid in full, and I am compelled to give them as much tax out of the price of a heifer worth 4 pounds, as I used to give them out of the price of the heifer worth 16 pounds. You will see, and you will *feel* most severely, that *corn is now dear*. But, this is owing to the *short crop and bad harvest*. This high price is no good to the farmer; but a most terrible evil. If he should get 15*s.* a bushel for his wheat instead of 7*s.* or 8*s.*, he will *receive no more money*; because he will not have more than *half the quantity* to sell. If I sell a hog at 15*s.* a score, instead of 8*s.*, I do not gain by the high price; because, I am, from the shortness of my crop of corn, and the badness of the corn, not able to fat more than half as many hogs as I should have been able to fat, if the crop had been good and the harvest fine. So that, as you will clearly see, as to the

present high prices of corn and bread, that it cannot be any benefit at all to the farmer, and cannot at all tend to enable him to pay the enormous taxes that now press him out of existence.

Thus have I laid before you the *real causes* of your sufferings. You see, that they are deep-rooted, of steady growth, and that they never can end, but in consequence of some very *material change* in the mode of managing the nation's concerns. They have arisen from the *taxes and loans*; those arose out of the *wars*; the wars arose out of a desire to keep down *Reform*; and a desire to keep down Reform arose out of the *borough system*, which excludes almost the whole of the people from voting at elections. It is a maxim of the English Constitution, that *no man shall be taxed without his own consent*. Nothing can be more reasonable than this. But, as I have shown, we are *all taxed*; you pay away half your wages in taxes; but, do you *all vote for Members of Parliament*? If the Members of Parliament, for the last fifty years, had been chosen *by the people at large*, and *chosen annually*, agreeably to the old laws of the nation, do you believe that we should have expended one thousand millions in taxes raised during the wars, and another thousand millions, which is now existing in the shape of a *DEBT*? This is not to be believed; no man *can* believe it. And, therefore, as the want of such a Parliament is the real root of all our sufferings, the only effectual remedy is to obtain such a Parliament. A Parliament, *annually chosen by all the people*, seeing that they *all pay taxes*.

In 1780 the late Duke of Richmond brought a Bill into the House of Lords to restore the people to their right of having such a Parliament. PITT co-operated in this work with the Duke of Richmond; and PITT expressly declared, in a speech in Parliament, that, until the Parliament was reformed, [it was] "*impossible for English Ministers to be honest.*" Therefore, this is no *new scheme*; it is a measure long contended for and well-digested; it may be carried into effect with perfect safety to every rank in society; and it is my firm persuasion, that it is the *only* means of preserving order and peace. Indeed, I am of opinion, that it is the *hope* of seeing this measure adopted; that it is the *expectation* that it will be adopted, which *now* preserves that tranquillity in the country, which is so honourable to the understanding and the hearts of the people. God send that this expectation may not be *disappointed*!

In order that it may not, the people of every class should assemble and petition the *Parliament* for Reform. No matter how many, or how few; no matter whether in counties, cities, towns, villages or hamlets. We have all a *right to petition*; to perform that right is a *sacred duty*; and to obstruct it a *heinous crime*. But in these petitions, the *only essential object* should be a *Reform*; for, though the want of it has produced numerous and great evils, still this is all that need be petitioned for, seeing that a Reform would cure all the evils at once. Trade, commerce, manufactures, agriculture, all would soon revive, and we should again see our country free and happy. But, without a Reform, it is impossible for the nation to revive, and, I believe, it is also impossible to prevent utter confusion.

How vain, how stupid, then, are all the schemes of the writers on the side of corruption for *making employment* for the poor! And how base all their attempts to persuade the people, that their sufferings can be alleviated by what are called "*charitable subscriptions*," which are, in

fact, only so many acts of *insolence* towards the numerous and unhappy sufferers, who are paying, in the shape of *taxes*, one-half of the little that they earn by their labour!

These corrupt writers, in order still to cajole and deceive the people, (who, thank God! are no longer to be deceived) recommended to the landlords and farmers to *make employment* for the poor, by causing commodious *roads*, *footpaths*, and *causeways* to be undertaken; by causing *shell-fish to gathered for manure*; by causing *lime, chalk, marl, &c.*, to be gotten and prepared; by causing *land to be drained* and *embankments* made! What folly, or what an impudent attempt to deceive! Why, these are some of the very things that the poor would be employed in if the landlords and farmers *had money* to give in wages; and, if they have not money to give in wages, how are they to have money to bestow in these works at all?

As to the "*charity subscriptions*," the people seem to understand the object of them perfectly well. LORD COCHRANE sent them forth to the nation, *stripped of their mask*, for which we are deeply indebted to him, and which debt of gratitude we are not so base as not to pay. The people of GLASGOW led the way in their indignation against *the soup-shop and its kettle*. At WIGAN, at OLDHAM, and several other places, where meetings of the *subscription tribe* have been held, the people have told them, that they want not soup and old bones and bullock's liver; but they want their *rights*. Indeed, these attempts to hold pretended *charitable* meetings are full of *insolence*. Those who are enabled to work, or to find work, have a *legal right* to be supported out of taxes raised on the rich and *on all houses and all lands*. Why, then, are they to be held out as *beggars*? Why are self-erected bodies to insult them with their pretended *charity*? It is not the poor, who have brought the nation into its present state. It is not they who have ruined so many farmers and tradesmen. The *law* says that they shall be relieved; and, why are they to look to any other relief than this, until the state of the nation can be amended?

But, before I conclude, let me beg your attention to a very curious fact or two as to the employment of the taxes which you and all of us pay. In an Address to *Journeyman and Labourers* in general (inserted at page 1 of these Selections), I noticed, that, in the account which was laid before Parliament in the year 1815, there was a charge for money paid to suffering *French and Dutch Emigrants*, and also to the *poor clergy* of the *Church of England*. But, I observed, that I did not know whether any such charges were contained in the accounts laid before Parliament *this year, 1816*; I have that account before me now, and what will be your feelings, how will you feel towards the soup-kettle fraternities, when you are told, that there is, in this last account, a charge of *seventy-five thousand pounds* for the relief of French and Dutch Emigrants, and of *one hundred thousand pounds* for the *poor clergy* of the *Church of England*! This is, you will observe, quite a *new* thing. Never till the time of Perceval was any Minister bold enough to take money, or to get the Parliament to vote money *out of the taxes*, paid by the poor as well as the rich, to be given to the *poor clergy* of a church, whose dignitaries and benefited people are bursting with wealth, and who receive in various ways, *more than five millions a year*! What! And have these subscription gentry the impudence to look you in the face while these things exist? Have they the impudence to talk of their *charity* towards you,

while they say not a word against seeing *you taxed* to help to make up the immense sums thus given in *charity* to the French and Dutch Emigrants, and to the clergy of the Church of England? Put these pithy questions to the insolent societies of the soup-kettle, and tell me what they can say in their defence. What! Are you to come crawling, like sneaking curs, to lick up alms to the amount of *forty or fifty thousand pounds*, round the brim of a soup-kettle, while you are taxed, with the rest of us, to the amount of *one hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds*, in order to give *relief* to French and Dutch Emigrants, and to the *poor* clergy of the Church of England! I do hope, that there are none of my countrymen who will be so base. I trust that they have yet English blood enough left in their veins to make them reject *such alms* with scorn and indignation.

If I had room, I would lay before you an account of some of the other articles of expense, to defray which you are taxed; but, as I intend, within three or four weeks, to show you how *all* the taxes are expended, I shall now conclude this long letter by expressing my hope, that it will be proved by your subsequent conduct not to have been written wholly in vain.

For past errors I make all possible allowance. We all fall into errors enough naturally; and, no wonder that you should have adopted erroneous notions, seeing that the corrupt press has, for so many years, been at work to deceive and mislead you. This base press, knowing what would be the inevitable consequence of your seeing the *real causes* of your calamities, has incessantly laboured to blind you, or to direct your eyes towards an imaginary cause. Machines, bakers, butchers, brewers, millers; anything but the *taxes* and the *paper-money*. In all the acts of violence, to which you have been led by these vile hirelings, you have greatly favoured the cause of corruption, which is never so much delighted as at the sight of *troops* acting against the people. Let me, therefore, most earnestly beseech you to think seriously on these matters; to stay the hand of vengeance against your townsmen and countrymen, and to harbour that feeling to the latest hour of your lives against all that is corrupt and detestable. I have taken the liberty freely to offer you my advice, because I have full confidence in your good sense and your public spirit. The hirelings have endeavoured to exasperate you by their revilings and menaces; I, knowing that brave men are not to be abused or bullied into compliance, have endeavoured to gain you by an appeal to your sense of honour and of justice. The hirelings call aloud for sending forth penal statutes and troops to put you down; I send you the most persuasive arguments my mind can suggest, and all the kindest wishes of my heart.

And, with these wishes, I hope I shall always remain,

Your friend,

WM. COBBETT.

A LETTER
TO THE
LORD MAYOR OF LONDON.

On the divers Expedients, which have been brought forth, under the sanction of his Lordship, for the Employing and Relieving of the Poor.—Also the late Disturbances, and on the Meeting of the Londoners in Spa-Fields.

(Political Register, December, 1816.)

MY LORD MAYOR,

When I call to your Lordship's recollection, for, perhaps, you may have forgotten them, the many acts of kindness which I have personally received at your hands, and especially when I lead you back to that interesting moment of my life, when, owing to your interposition, I was relieved from the intolerable pain of associating with those *felons*, amongst whom the Judges of the Court of King's Bench had doomed me to the chance of living for two years, because I had written and published a paragraph about the flogging of the Local Militia in the Isle of Ely; when I lead your Lordship's mind back to that moment and make you again behold the tears of gratitude in the eyes of my wife and children, I am sure, you will be convinced, that nothing short of a sense of imperious duty to my country could urge me publicly to express even a difference of opinion with you upon any matter of public importance.

A little son of mine came to me one day, exclaiming: "Papa! I saw Mr. Wood in a golden coach! In a real golden coach! It was, indeed, it was!—It was a coach all made of gold!" "Yes," said I, "James, but you seem to have overlooked the best part of the thing." "What was that?" "Why, it was the kind and honest and patriotic heart of Mr. Wood himself, which is much more worthy of admiration than all the golden coaches and gold chains in the world." Thousands, I dare say, are the roofs, beneath which your benevolence has excited feelings of gratitude; but I am not afraid to assert, that in that feeling all who belong to me are exceeded by none of the thousands who entertain that feeling towards you.

Therefore, you will be well assured, that it is not without pain, that I publicly dissent from any well-known opinion of yours, notwithstanding I am too well assured of your sound sense and your candour, not to be confident that you will hear with patience, and without any mixture of anger, my reasons for such dissent.

When a miserable object presents himself before our eyes; when hunger and nakedness show themselves before us: when the parting soul seems only to linger on the pale and quivering lip, it does not require a heart so benevolent as yours to send the hand of the beholder speedily to the purse or pantry in search of the means of instantaneous relief. But, my Lord Mayor, this is not a point upon which any human being can differ with you. We are all now engaged in this sort of work. There

are none of my neighbours who do not share what they have with the innumerable beggars who now visit us. I used to be very scrupulous on this head: used to make very strict inquiries, and very seldom give relief to any but late *soldiers* and *sailors* and *soldiers' wives and children*. This was my rule; but the floods of misery have broken in upon us in such a way as to render it impossible to live in our houses and endure the sights we behold, without sharing our victuals and drink with *every* one who comes on the dismal errand of beggary. This is not the case with me in particular. It is the general practice of all my neighbours who have a morsel to spare; and, it is, because it *must*, be the general practice in every part of the kingdom. Our very servants and labourers participate in this work of relieving. The wretchedness they behold overpowers every sense of their own conveniences and wants.

It is not, therefore, my Lord Mayor, the acts of real charity, which you are so zealously promoting, the wisdom of which I call in question; for, if such acts are unwise, we are *all* guilty of folly. But, what I disapprove of is, the bringing forward and the adopting of *public plans* for relief, the tendency of which is to cause the people to imbibe wrong notions with regard to the *real cause* of their miseries; and to lull the nation at large into the opinion, that the suffering is merely of a *temporary* nature. I know very well, that as far as *you* are concerned, there is no *intention* to deceive the people as to either of these points or as to any thing else; but I am equally well satisfied, that the *tendency* of such measures is to give a wrong bias to the public mind, and to retard those great and general measures, which can alone restore the nation to happiness, and which, in my opinion, can alone prevent calamities such as I shudder but to think of.

Before, however, I say more on the subject of giving relief in the shape of *alms*, give me leave to notice a few of the schemes which have been proposed to you for the *finding of employment for the poor*.

The want of employment has arisen from the want of *means* in the former *consumers* and *employers*, and, therefore, unless those former means can be restored, it is a pursuit worse than the vanity of vanities to attempt to discover employment. The corrupt part of the press, either from ignorance or from a desire to deceive, has called upon the gentlemen and farmers in the country, to employ the poor in making new and better roads, foot-paths, embankments, cleaning out of water-courses, and enclosing waste lands. Now all these things were going on a few years ago, till the cracking of the bubble of paper-money smote them like a burst from a shell. If you were now to ride from Whitchurch to Winchester, a distance of only about thirteen miles, you would see more than two thousand acres of land, which was enclosed a few years back, flung up again, and, not to bear *grass*, as it did before, but all kinds of worthless weeds. The same dismal change is taking place in every part of the kingdom.—And while this is going on; at the very moment when *want of means* is throwing immense tracts of land *out of cultivation*, the press of corruption is calling upon us to find employment for the poor in the *enclosing of waste lands!*

The same may be said, as to new or repaired highways, foot-paths, embankments, and water-courses. These are all *improvements*, and improvements must come out of a *redundance* of means. There is one parish in Monmouthshire, I am told, where every payer of king's taxes, except one, was actually under *distress* for those taxes, a little while ago;

and we know that the magistrates of that county have declared the impossibility for the people to pay the taxes, then due and becoming due. Now, my Lord Mayor, is it not madness or fraud unparalleled for any one to hold out the hope of such people being able to find employment for the poor on works of *ornament*, or on works of *distant utility*?

It is the turning of men off from works of *profit* that has produced the misery amongst the labouring classes. How, then, can it be expected, that those who are *unable* to employ them on works of *profit*, will be able to employ them in any *other* works? The farmers of a particular parish, suppose them to be ten in number, have, we will suppose, turned off twenty of the men they formerly employed. *Why* have they done this? Because the weight of taxes, co-operating with the bubble of paper-money, have rendered each of them unable to pay so many men as they did before by *two* each. They used to employ these two men each in the works of draining, banking, grubbing hedge-rows, chalking, liming, marling, and in other works of improvement; but, they now cannot *afford* to employ them in this way. What, then, must we think of the proposition to call upon these same farmers to employ the same men in works of ornament, or in the making of *public* roads, or the cleansing of *brooks* and *rivers*? What must we think of the proposition to induce a farmer to *find* five pounds to lay out upon *public works*, when he cannot get the five pounds to expend upon his *own works*? The idea is so absurd, that it can have originated only in a disordered mind, or in a desire to deceive the people, and to hide from them the *real causes* of the want of employment and of the consequent distress and beggary that now prevail.

You are not wholly unacquainted with country affairs yourself, and you have the advantage to know and hear persons of great experience and knowledge in such affairs; and, I am very certain, that their accounts of our situation will substantially accord with mine. They will also inform you, that the monstrous depreciation in the value of lean animals upon a farm, has produced a corresponding want of employment. A great multitude of labourers were employed in the works connected with the *rearing of stock*. One-half of this multitude are now unemployed, because the rearing of stock is now what farmers in general cannot *afford* to lay out money in. Their capitals are called away for the payment of taxes. To keep a heifer, a steer, a lamb, or a colt, until fit for *use* is out of the power of great numbers. And, thus, that vast source of individual and national wealth is undergoing a most alarming diminution. The amount of this diminution will, in a few years, if the present system continue, be discoverable in symptoms the most humiliating to us, and indeed, the most degrading to our character in the world. Instead of the farm-yard and its surrounding closes teeming with animal life; filled with pigs, lambs, calves, and colts, with dams and young ones of all sorts and sizes, we shall see, and we already begin to see, docks and thistles and uncovered sheds. All seems to be going to waste and speedily converting itself into sterility. There is no species of wealth or power which does not spring from *Agriculture*; and, if that decline, all must decline; if that perish, all must perish. The persons employed in trade, commerce, navigation and manufactures often appear to think, that they have interests *separate* from those of the farmer. This must have been Mr. WAITHMAN's view of the matter, when, in opposing the CORN BILL, he stated, that agriculture had *had* its days of prosperity, and that the *turn* of trade and manufactures was *now come*. I opposed the Corn Bill

too : but, upon very different grounds ; and I then warned Mr. Waithman in print, that if the *turn* of agriculture to *suffer* was come, the *ruin* of trade and of manufacture must also *come*. How fatally true has Mr. Waithman found this to be !

Therefore, my Lord Mayor, *expedients* are useless in the first place, because they cannot remove so deep-rooted and wide-spreading an evil.

And in the second place, they are mischievous, because they divert the attention of the people from the real and only remedy, and thereby tend to prolong the evil, till it shall have become too monstrous and inveterate to admit of a peaceful cure.

Of the schemes, for finding employment, which have been submitted to you, my Lord Mayor, and which have gone forth under the sanction of your respected name, not one appears to me to have reason to recommend it. I dare say, that Mr. SALISBURY meant well in proposing to employ the poor in the collecting of the seeds of *Cocks-foot grass*, and that he really did pay 3s. 6d. to a man, who, in a few hours, collected some in *Hyde Park*. But, if Mr. Salisbury will purchase that seed of me at the same rate, I will engage that he shall, next fall, have as much sent to him *in a day* as shall be sold in all England in *ten years*. Besides, as there is only so much money to be laid out in *grass seeds of all sorts* every year, it must necessarily follow, that the labour employed in obtaining the other sorts would *fall off* in the exact proportion, in which the Cocks-foot labour would increase, and, that, therefore, on a *general view* of the matter, no good could possibly arise from this diversion of labour.

Mr. PETTIGREW meant well, I dare say. But is there not a sufficiency of *field weeds* and *simples* collected *already* ? If more hands be employed in the collection of simples, the wages of collection must be lowered ; for (and I beg you bear this principle in mind) there are no means, other than those attendant on a return of *general* prosperity, that can possibly add to the aggregate sum expended upon simples. As to the making of *cordage* out of *nettles*, *hop-binds*, &c. the thought is *very old*. The thing has been frequently tried. No doubt of its *practicability* ; and it is also *practicable* to dig potatoes with a *golden spade* ! But, what would be the *good* ? It would not add to the sum of money annually expended in cordage ? Less cordage would be made in all probability ; or, if the alteration produced *no harm*, it could not possibly produce any good. The *discovery* of the *pith of rushes* being to be obtained in our boggy land, and being applicable to domestic purposes in lieu of candles, comes as a *discovery* rather late ; for I have not yet forgotten, that, more than *forty years ago*, my dear old grandmother Cobbett, used to light me to bed, and to mend my stockings, by one of these very rushes, which she used to dip in grease, and keep in a long piece of oak bark, suspended against her cottage wall, just by the side of her wooden salt box. But the notable wives of our labourers in Hampshire still do the same ; and, I have lately heard, that they are obliged to leave a slip of the *green rind* of the rush *not wholly covered by the grease*, for fear of the *Exciseman*, one of whom recently told a labourer's wife upon visiting her *manufactory*, that if her rushes had *another dip*, they would have been *seized as candles* !

Ah ! My Lord Mayor ! This and things like this, are worthy of your attention ! Here we see the *real cause* of all our miseries ; and not in the *importation* of flag or willow baskets ; for, your Lordship may be well assured, that, it is not *money* which is sent to Holland and

to France to purchase the baskets, of the importation of which the shallow, though probably humane Mr. SALISBURY, complained, but *goods*, made by the hands of our ingenious manufacturers, and made, for the greater part, out of the wool and flax grown on the surface, or out of the ore and the coals dug from the bowels of our soil. Mr. Salisbury would, apparently, push us back a little towards the rudeness of savage life. The converting of twigs and flag rushes into utensils is of the description of the manufactures, carried on by the Indians of North America. We barter with those rude people our products for theirs; but a knife or a pair of scissars will purchase the fruit of half a year of their labours; and, probably, a few ounces of some of our works in steel are equal in value to, and will exchange for, a waggon load of the baskets which come from Holland or from France. What folly then, to imagine that any relief to our manufacturers can arise from our wearing *none but English goods*! Whatever is imported is exchanged for exported goods of some sort or other; and, therefore, in whatever degree we discourage the import of the goods of other nations, we discourage and prevent the export of our own. Foreign nations will naturally imitate our apparently selfish regulations; but, whether they imitate the regulations or not, the *effect* will, in the long run, be the same; and, it is truly pitiful to see a Court Order for the wearing of English manufactures at two *birth-day balls*, and to see the Prince's birth-day changed from August to March, with a view of *relieving the sufferings of the nation*! Good God! How much more likely to answer that purpose would be a great diminution of that *Civil List*, and of all those salaries, sinecures, allowances, and grants, which are paid out of the taxes, and which are received by those very persons who wear court-dresses! But, more upon this subject by and by.

Your Lordship is reported, in the newspapers, to have brought forward, or patronised, a plan for furnishing the poor with *fuel* made of a composition, consisting of *clay* and cinders, or small-coals. This plan was to have a two-fold effect: *the employing of thousands of poor*, and *the economizing of fuel*. Now, my Lord Mayor, if you could by such a scheme reduce the quantity of coals used to one-half of the present quantity, what havoc would you make amongst the *coal-miners* and the *seamen*, which last are the most miserable class of this most miserable nation. In whatever degree this new manufacture of fuel found employment for the poor of London, it would destroy the employment of those employed in digging and conveying coals. "Rob Peter to pay Paul." That is the maxim of all those who project any other means of relief than *the reduction of taxes*.

But, is *cheapness* of fuel the object? My Lord Mayor, it is impossible to discover any thing so cheap as coals, even with all the *taxes* with which they are loaded. Whatever of the *burning* quality the new manufacture may contain must come from the coal-pit, after all. Clay may make the combustible matter more *slow* in its evaporation, but clay, thus used, will never add one particle of *heat*. Far cheaper would it be to bring *turf* or *peat* from Bagshot Heath, where only digging and drying is necessary to make a blazing fuel. But little trouble as it is to obtain *peat*, *peat*, even *used on the spot*, is not so cheap as coals brought from Newcastle and taxed into the bargain. From Bagshot Heath I, when a boy, used to assist in fetching *excellent peat*, which was the fuel of my father's house, at four miles distance. Through the very valley, whence

I used to fetch that peat, there now runs a canal from London to Basingstoke; and, within 400 yards of the spot where we used to dig the peat, there are very fine *coal-wharfs*. Farewell the peat-digging! Though you may have the peat for the digging, no one digs any more! What a fine thing to behold! That Cumberland should send, and through a tax too, fuel into Surrey at so cheap a rate, that the people prefer *buying* it to the using of the product of their own country, though they can have it *without buying*! But, the fact is, my Lord Mayor, they did *buy* their peat; that is to say, they had to pay for the *digging* and *carting* and *housing*, and they soon found, that it would *cost them less* to keep a fire of coals. At Botley it is cheaper to buy coals than to cart even *good wood* two or three miles, though you have it *given to you*. I purchase coals for the use of a large farm-house, where a great deal of steaming is also carried on: I fetch these coals more than two miles by land; and this I do while I can have wood for the mere carting, and while I have thousands and hundred thousands of loads of peat at 200 yards from the spot. The coals are cheapest. A wood-fire, though in our woody-country, is an expensive luxury. In better times I used to burn *my own wood*: the hardness of the times has induced me to *buy coals*!

No, my Lord Mayor, these plans are all futile. If, indeed, you had proposed to the city to *relinquish their tax upon coals*, that would have been doing something, especially as I do not perceive very clearly, why the coals that enter the Thames should be taxed, any more than those which enter the mouth of any other river. However, even this would be doing so very little, that it would hardly be felt. It is the general weight of taxes and the paper-money bubble which have produced all the misery; and, until these be removed, there will be no regular and settled means of employment for those who now want employ.

As to the *Soup Establishments*, or any other means of rescuing poor, starving creatures from the jaws of death, no one can, in *that light*, disapprove of them, any more than he can disapprove of our giving victuals at our doors. But, my Lord Mayor, all *meetings*, which are held for the considering of *means to be adopted for the relief of the poor*, are **BLAMEABLE**, if the *real causes* of the misery be passed over in *silence*, because, in that case, the people are deluded, as far as such meeting can delude them, into a false hope of permanent relief.

If you have done me the honour to read this work for some years past, you must have seen, that all which has now come to pass has been regularly foretold; and that effect after effect have followed cause after cause, the Register always keeping on about a year in advance of the events. That which we now see is nothing unnatural, nothing surprising: it is the inevitable result of the public measures that have been pursued; and which measures no man has more decidedly disapproved of than yourself. Therefore, my Lord Mayor, you appear to me to be wanting in justice, not to any other persons, but to be wanting *in bare justice to yourself*, when you disclaim all political considerations, and seem to cast the blame of producing our miseries upon that non-descript thing called "*the times*." The *times*! What mean the *times*? We have no new sort of time. Summer and Winter, Spring and Autumn, Day and Night, still continue to come in their turn as usual. It is, therefore, *measures*; it is a something, done somehow, by some body, which has produced all this misery, and I have a right, and so have you, to assert that this mi-

ery could have been prevented, because we, with many others, sought to prevent the causes of the misery.

I am, therefore, wholly at a loss, my Lord Mayor, to discover the grounds upon which you forego the advantage now offered you of asserting your claim to political foresight and rectitude. Your merits as a magistrate are, I dare say, very great; but it was not for *those merits* that you were re-elected. You were re-elected on account of your well-known political principles; and, had not that been the case, your re-election would have been a matter of no moment to the country. I know your political principles remain *unaltered*; but, why, in this dreadful moment, when the very peace of the kingdom hangs by a thread, should those excellent principles be allowed to *sleep*, especially as those of our enemies never sleep either day or night! Why is the effect of these principles to be suspended till the time when your power shall become less than it is now? Your Lordship has seen a great many Pittite Lord Mayors. Did any one of them ever let his principles sleep for the year? Besides, what cause is so great as the cause of our country? How is it possible that we can lay our principles on the shelf for a year, or for a day?

The point I aim at is this; that, at no meeting, held under your auspices, for the relief of the poor, ought the *causes* of their sufferings to pass unnoticed, unmarked, unrebated, *by you* above all men in the kingdom. What! have you, for so many years, been the forwardest of the most forward to remonstrate against the fatal system by which we have finally been plunged into ruin; have you, upon so many occasions, took the lead in telling the King and the Parliament, that national misery would be the result of the measures that were pursuing; and now, when this misery is actually arrived, shall you, having the best of means to make your voice heard, keep silence upon the subject of the causes of this misery? Nay, shall we see you sit quiet, while you hear details and discussions, calculated to make the people believe, that their miseries may be removed without that radical change in the system, for the absolute necessity of which you have so long been most gallantly contending?

My Lord Mayor, I beg you to be well assured, that, in a case like yours, there is *no neutrality*. I know you will not *abandon* your principles; I know you will not *change*; I know that your attachment to the liberties of your country will always remain unshaken. But in a case like yours, there can be *no neutrality*; no *suspension of exertion*, without great injury to your country. A man like me might retire when he pleased. I owe the people nothing, while, if they have derived any knowledge from my exertions, they owe me something. They have never given me their votes, nor do I stand pledged to them, any more than any one of them stands pledged to me. But the case is different with you. Very different indeed; for you are now placed aloft by the voice of the people; and, that which was before a mere matter of choice, now becomes a matter of duty, or, at least, very nearly approaching a duty.

It must be very evident to your Lordship, that there can be no end to the people's sufferings, until some great change with regard to *taxation* shall take place. At the opening of the last session of Parliament, the speech described the country as in a state of *prosperity*, and the first business of the House of Commons was to vote vast sums of money to erect monuments to commemorate the glories of that war, which had ended in the restoration of the Bourbons and the inquisition, and in

adding eight hundred millions to the debt!—The Ministers, at first, denied that there was any distress in the country. They next asserted, that the undeniable distress was *temporary*. The corrupt writers have repeated that assertion; and, to this very hour, they repeat it, though the distress is every day becoming greater and greater, and appears, day after day, to be more durable in its nature; and though the correspondents of the Board of Agriculture have given in details, which prove the fact beyond all contradiction and all question.

How necessary is it, then, my Lord Mayor, that men like *you* should be always pointing to the *real causes* and to the *only remedy*! And, how fatal must the result be, if those causes be much longer disguised, and that remedy delayed! Mr. VANSITTART said, at the opening of the last Session, that the *Englishman* must be *base*, indeed, who did not *prefer* the present situation of his country to the situation of his country previous to the war of 1793! What a mind must that gentleman have! How strange must be its composition! But, the truth is, he was ignorant of the situation of the country. He knew little about the matter. And, what have we to expect from any of the expedients that such men may have in reserve? Every day, no matter what the season of the year, must our situation become worse and worse. The mass of human misery must become greater and greater; and the danger to all property of every description become more and more imminent.

In such a state of things, the question is not, whether the present system be preferable to any that may be proposed; for the present system *cannot* last long. There must be a change of some sort; and the only question is, *what sort of change that shall be*. While, indeed, there was a possibility of keeping up the thing as it now stands, there was a colour for dissenting from every proposition for making a change; but, I am sure you will agree with me, that that possibility has now ceased.

The progress of our ruin has not been so rapid as some persons seem to imagine. It has been on foot for more than *twenty years*. From the year 1793 to the present day, the number of the paupers has been increasing. The farmers and tradesmen wore the appearance of prosperity; but it was a false appearance, arising from the bubble of paper-money. The decrease of taxation and of consequent pauperism was constantly at work in the bowels of the community. Family after family were pressed down into the list of paupers. Small farmers became labourers, and labourers went one after another to the poor-house. Small farm-houses, those numerous scenes of frugality, industry, morality and happiness, became, one after another, the scenes of the labourer's misery. The lands went to stretch out the great farmer's tracks or the nabob's park. And the cottages of the labourers became sheds for cattle, or fell into rubbish, while poor-houses rose their heads aloft all over the country. During the sway of Pitt and his successors the houses and villas round the metropolis have been monstrously swelled in number; but during the same period how many thousands of happy hamlets have been wholly deserted and destroyed! This has been caused by that pernicious system of taxation and paper-money, which has huddled property together in *great masses*, and which has reduced to mere labourers almost the whole of the people. The property thus amassed, has become more immediately under the control of the Government; so that at last there exists a state of things from which the idea of *private* property is almost wholly excluded.

In this state the *peace* found us, and then came the *alteration in the value of the currency*, which finished what was nearly approaching its end before. This alteration, which, in fact, doubled our taxes, has operated as an act of *confiscation*, as completely as any Act of Parliament under that title could have done. It has sent into the Gazette and into jails thousands upon thousands of men, the most industrious and the most punctual in the world. It has destroyed almost entirely that confidence, called *trust*, which made men's *words* equal in value to money. As pinching poverty first broke through that honest pride of the labourer, which kept him from the parish; so this irresistible blow of paper-money has broken down that spirit amongst tradesmen and farmers, which used to produce such punctuality in the fulfilment of their engagements. After long struggling, they have been compelled to yield; and, at last, reputation for punctuality seems no longer to be the care of those, who were formerly punctuality itself.

Thus is the whole of society actually breaking up. Talk, indeed, of its being a *breach of faith* to lower the interest of the *fundholder*! Has not faith been broken with the farmer and the tradesman? The tradesman for instance, had, when the alteration in the currency took place, his shop and warehouse full of goods. He owed a sum of money upon these goods. All at once, in a moment, his goods were, by the bubble of paper-money, reduced one half in their *sale amount*. He must be ruined, unless he had money beyond the extent of his trade. *Lead*, for instance, and *Iron*, fell nearly one-half in price. What a blow to those who had had stocks of these goods on hand, and especially if they were trading, as most men do, to the full extent of their capital! And, my Lord Mayor, is there no pity for *such men* and their families? Has there been *no breach of national faith* with them? Are they to have no compassion? Are the fundholders to have *all* the consideration bestowed on them?

These are the causes that are at work in the producing and the reproducing of distress and misery; and, while I find no fault of any effort to afford immediate relief, especially to the poor *starring sailors*, I regret exceedingly, that your Lordship should preside at any meeting without taking care to expose these *real causes of the misery*. These causes must be removed before any remedy can be applied; and to be removed they must first be exposed; but, the soup-meetings, as now conducted, have a tendency to *disguise* these causes, and, therefore, a tendency to prolong the evil till a peaceable remedy shall become impossible. It must be clear to all the world that this soup-kettle work cannot go on *for a series of years*. It cannot, even if it were efficacious, be anything more than a mere temporary measure; it can last only for a short time; a considerable part of the population of a country, never can be fed by alms for any length of time. There must soon be an end to it, and how will it end; how is it to end; how must it end, if the cause of the misery respect, but, at the same time, with great earnestness, and with a most anxious desire that you would bestow on them your serious consideration.

My Lord Mayor, I will not call in question the *motives* of any individuals in contributing towards the soup-kettle fund. But, what will the world think of our situation, when the Ministers advise their Master to send 5000*l.* out of the Droits of Admiralty to help feed those whose wages are so heavily taxed? The *East India Company* has, it

seems, subscribed the sum of 250*l*. That Company has received many millions out of those *loans*, which now form that *Debt*, which is the greatest of all the causes of our misery, and to help pay the interest of which the poor of Spitalfields are taxed, through almost every article which they consume. To maintain the authority of this Company a very considerable part of the *Debt* has been contracted. Not less, I am convinced, than 50 millions. Many millions, not less, I believe, than twelve millions, have been *voted out of the taxes*. I have not the official accounts at hand; but, I know that I do not exaggerate. These millions have been paid to that Company, directly out of the *loans* or *taxes*, no matter which. And, for *what*? I should be glad to know *for what*? The East Indians become immensely rich. They come home and purchase the houses and estates of the stupid country gentlemen, who have been ruined by taxation and funding; and yet, the *nation* has had to pay this Company of Merchants immense sums of money! It is my opinion, that the interest of that part of the *Debt*, which has been contracted on account of the East India Company, amounts to more than *two millions a year*; and this Company subscribes 250*l*. towards feeding with soup, those who contribute towards the paying of this very interest! Can this *last*? Can this be anything more than a miserable and abortive expedient?

And, as to the *Bank* and all those who are connected with it, have not they thriven upon the very means which have brought ruin upon the nation? Has not every change in the currency been advantageous to them? They have been the principal characters in the fatal drama. Was it the fault of persons engaged in agriculture and trade, that the stoppage of cash-payments took place in 1797? Was it our fault, or the fault of our workmen, that such immense quantities of paper came forth from 1797 to 1811? Was it our fault, that the paper was drawn in at the peace? No, surely; but, it is the nation which *suffers* for all these transactions; and suffer it must till the desolating causes be removed.

In the meanwhile misery is making a dreadful progress in the producing of acts of illegal violence, of which your Lordship has recently been but too good a witness, during those proceedings which *filled the City of London with regular troops*! A sight too humiliating to be contemplated without pain by any Englishman, and which must have been particularly painful to you, though you were, doubtless, convinced of the dire necessity. In a late Register I observed that it was not in the *nature* of our countrymen to be cruel or thievish. The city of Philadelphia, containing, including its surrounding villages, nearly 200,000 people, has seen only *two* men, and *two* negroes, executed in the space of *fifteen years*. Not only are almost all the inhabitants of that fine city the descendants of English, Scotch, and Irish; but, a very large portion of them especially of the Irish, have actually gone from these countries to that country. So that it is impossible, that the multitude of *crimes*, in England, can have arisen out of the viciousness of our natures. I lived eight years in Philadelphia and New York; without ever hearing of a house being broken open, or of a murder being committed, in either city. And, I do not recollect, that, except in case of an election *row*, once or twice, that I ever heard of a *single breach of the peace*; to which let me add, that I never, while in the country, set my eyes on *one single regular soldier*!

Now, my Lord Mayor, what can be the *cause* of a distinction so abominably disgraceful to our country? There are nearly, at this time, as many people in the United States of America as there are in England and Wales; and, I will venture to say, that your Lordship has more criminals brought before you at the Old Bailey, *at any one single session in the year*, than are, during a whole year, brought before all the tribunals in that country! There is no contemplating a fact like this, without feeling one's heart sink in one's body. But, in pursuing our inquiries into the *causes* of this shocking state of things, we find, from official papers laid before Parliament, that *crimes* have regularly increased with the increase of *paupers*, and that the paupers have regularly increased with the increase of the amount of the *taxes*. Not quite *conclusive*, it may be said, that the weight of the taxes is the origin of this increasing mass of crimes; but let us look again across the Atlantic, and there, where there are so few crimes, we shall find, that the taxes, compared with ours, are really nothing; and thus, by an argument of experience, we arrive very nearly at proof.

But the reason of the case is of itself sufficient. Rich men never are caught picking pockets. The trade is not worth their attention. Vicious education, bad company, lead the originally innocent to become criminal; but, the vicious education and the bad company have *their origin* in *poverty* and *misery* nine hundred and ninety times out of every thousand. In America, where the common day labourer receives a dollar a day, and where the journeyman of most trades receives from a dollar and a half to three dollars, while provisions are lower in price, upon an average, than they are in England, there is no *temptation* to thieve, or to break open houses, or commit murders for the purpose of getting at the property of others. The wages are so *high*, because the taxes are so *low*; and it is the high wages, and the easy circumstances which they create, which are the real guardians of the public morals and of the public peace. There is no need of a standing army in a country, where the very lowest classes are so well off as to have no desire and no interest to disturb the public tranquility. This was formerly the situation of our now miserable country. "The English Constitution," says Blackstone, "knows nothing of a standing soldier." And, then, he goes on, in a triumphant strain, to say, that "*No fortresses; no barracks; nothing to keep soldiers distinct from the people;*" that nothing of this sort belongs to England. Alas! my Lord Mayor, what would this great commentator on our laws have said, if he could have lived to this day! Let his son-in-law, Dr. Rennell, the Dean of Winchester, come and speak for him, in a few weeks, when we shall have a County Meeting in that City, at the very gates of a *Barrack*, into which the Royal Palace of Edward the Third has been converted!

Talk of expending millions in monuments to commemorate the *glory* of these times! Talk of City feasts and City swords to regale and to decorate the foreign associates in acquiring this *glory*! Sackcloth and ashes, the penitents' sheet and cowl, the hanging head and the weeping eye, better become our fallen situation.

Poverty, misery, these are the parents of crime; and, what adds to the pain of the reflection, is, that the crimes thus produced are more likely to be committed by the brave than by the cowardly part of the poor. When a man becomes a *robber* from want, it is because he cannot endure to be a *beggar*, or, because, he has resolution to set death at defiance

rather than become a skeleton from starvation. The most dangerous state of society, if society it can be called, is that which exhibits numerous persons *become desperate from want*. I lately had occasion to observe, that when *hope* ceases to linger in the bosom, and despair takes its place, it is useless to talk about the vengeance of the law or the infliction of the sword; for, the miserable creature who is the object of the menace, knowing that starvation will end his days to a *certainty*, will rush on an *almost* certainty of death to relieve his hunger; and, when I turn my eye back to the poor, miserable, woe-smitten sailors, whom I saw last Sunday sitting in the recesses of Westminster-bridge, how can I be surprised at, though I deeply lament, the unlawful and desperate deeds of the Monday? Pale, their very lips were pale, long beards, ragged jackets, no shirts, bits of shoes, or their feet wholly naked. They asked nobody for alms; but sat crouched up with countenances that seemed to reproach death for being so tardy. The sight of them, coupled with the reflection of their past life, was enough to pierce the heart of a tiger. And are these, thought I, the gallant tars of Old England! Are these some of those men, to commemorate whose deeds we are about to expend millions on monuments!

You and I, my Lord Mayor, do not know what the word *hunger* means. That celebrated victim of despotic power, BARON TRENCK, tells us, that, upon one occasion, he hastened out of a poor woman's house, feeling that he was capable of murdering her for the sake of securing her food to relieve his raging burning hunger; and the heart which is unmoved by the tale can have nothing human about it. The Civil Law, Mr. JACOB tells us, did not deem persons guilty of felony or larceny, who took the property of others to *preserve themselves from starving*, it being held that, in such cases, they proceeded from *necessity*, and self-preservation being the first law of nature. He tells us, indeed, that this principle has long ceased to be considered as a principle to be acted on in the administration of our laws; and, therefore, I do not mention it as the ground of justification of any one in seizing the property of another, which is, in all cases, a crime in the eye of our law. But, I mention it in order to show, that, though we must condemn the conduct of such unhappy creatures, they are entitled to the exercise of our compassion in its fullest scope; and that, in speaking of the late acts of violence, common humanity ought to restrain us, if discretion did not, from loading the actors with all those opprobrious names, which have, upon this occasion, been resorted to by the corrupt part of the press, which really appears to me to be desirous to plunge the whole country into anarchy and bloodshed.

These corrupt writers call the rioters *miscreants, robbers, assassins*. They speak of them as a contemptible rabble at the same time. They boast of the number of troops ready to act against them. They jeer them, flout them, reproach them, despise them, and yet they curse them in the same breath. But, never does a word of pity for their sufferings find its way into their writings. Nay, as if to embody the great mass of the people on the side of the actors in scenes of violence, these writers have the atrocity to ascribe the violence to those, who are sedulously seeking to preserve the tranquility of the country by exciting *hope* in the popular breast, through the exercise of the undoubted right and sacred duty of *petition*.

Your Lordship well knows, that the riots in the City had no connection whatever with the Meeting of the People of the Metropolis in Spafields,

where, while propositions the most constitutional and the best calculated to promote harmony and peace were under sober consideration, the firing of guns was heard from the City. It is notorious, that the persons who broke open the first gunsmith's shop had been first collected, almost close to the spot, to witness *the hanging of four men!* This fact is notorious; but still these corrupt writers persist in ascribing the riots to a Meeting held and quietly dispersed at a distance of more than a mile!

Misrepresentations like these have the most fatal tendency for the peace of the country. The resolutions passed at Spafields; the letter of Mr. HUNT to Lord Sidmouth; his Lordship's answer; the speech of Mr. HUNT upon this occasion, all are before the public; and, let that public say, whether any meeting that ever was held in England, was conducted with more propriety in all respects, and especially with a more anxious desire to preserve the public peace; which object was attained too, and that in a manner to excite the admiration of all well-disposed people. But, the truth is, that it is *this manner* of conducting popular discussions, which stings the authors and abettors of these corrupt publications to the soul. They wish to see the friends of *Reform* guilty of folly and violence. This would answer *their* purpose; and, the writer in the *Courier* expressly said, a few weeks ago, that it was this *peaceable* conduct which was the greatest cause of *suspicion* and *alarm!* Alarm! for what? Why, for corruption, for immorality, for wickedness of all sorts; but not for the tranquillity and happiness of the country.

The tendency of such wicked writings is to make the people *despair*, and from popular despair general confusion must arise. We are labouring most earnestly, and I hope, not in vain, to keep *hope* alive, to check impatience, to inspire fortitude. We hold out what we believe to be a real and general remedy. We recommend a strict submission to the laws; we use no means that are not legal; we have no disguise; we have no cabals, societies, or secret correspondence; we speak and publish our opinions; we deal in argument and not in abusive reproaches and names; we challenge our adversaries into the field of discussion; we contend for rights which we think we are entitled to; we think that we have justice and even policy on our side; and we are *answered* by every species of scurrility and of calumny. These have prevailed heretofore, but they will prevail no longer. The people are enlightened, and the power of calumny is at an end. We contend, that it is the taxes, the loans, the debt, and the paper-money, which are the real causes of our sufferings. We think, that a Reformed Parliament, annually chosen by ballot by the *People* at large, would be able to put all to rights, in a short time, and to prevent such evils in future. We give our *reasons* for this belief; and we are *answered* by foul names and atrociously false accusations. We recommend the people to petition for a constitutional reform in the representation, and the corrupt press recommends the Ministers to seize our persons and strip us of our property.

It is my sincere opinion, that the *hope* held out of a reform of the Parliament has done, and is doing, more for the tranquillity of the country than all the other means put together; and, as far as I myself am concerned, or have any power to do good or harm, I am perfectly convinced, that if I could possibly entertain the cruel and unnatural wish of seeing my country plunged into confusion and bloodshed, my course would be, not to write Registers, but *never to write or utter another word upon public affairs*; and, I am certain that, if the press and all popular dis-

cussion could at once be put an end to, it would not be one single month before pillage, devastation and carnage, would spread themselves over every part of the country. It is my belief, that the encouragement given to the people to hope for an approaching *Reform* is the best security for the public tranquillity as well as for a return of happiness; it is this belief which has induced me to take the liberty to address your Lordship, and to endeavour to prevail on you to give your powerful aid in the strengthening of a hope, the enfeebling of which I cannot help regarding as the sure forerunner of calamities, such as never were experienced by any nation in the world.

I am, with the greatest respect,
 Your Lordship's most obedient,
 and most humble Servant,
 WM. COBBETT.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE

COUNTRY GENTLEMEN,

SHOWING THAT THEIR ONLY REMAINING CHOICE IS BETWEEN
 PARLIAMENTARY REFORM AND TOTAL RUIN.

(*Political Register*, December, 1816.)

London, 20th December, 1816.

GENTLEMEN,

Innumerable are the instances in private life where men blindly and pertinaciously listen to those who are their worst enemies, who are undermining their characters and their fortunes, and who are fattening at their expense; while, towards those who are naturally, as well as by inclination, their friends, they wear an eye of constant suspicion, and entertain a feeling nearly approaching to that of enmity. That this failing, which is so common amongst individuals, is not without its influence on whole bodies of men, the conduct of the Country Gentlemen of these Islands, for many years past, most abundantly proves. And, as such conduct in private life seldom fails to produce ruin to the party, or his family; so, in your case, total ruin to yourselves, or, at least, to your descendants, appears to be a consequence altogether inevitable, unless you immediately rouse yourselves, shake off the infatuation, and act as becomes men who have children whom they do not wish to become beggarly dependents.

Amongst the other marks of this fatal infatuation, is, an obstinate refusal, not only to follow the advice of those who propose a Reform of

the Parliament, or who disapprove of the measures of the Government; but, a refusal equally obstinate to *hear* what they have to say. A stubborn, a stupid, a contemptible obstinacy, to give way to which is justly punishable with ruin and disgrace. And, indeed, instead of patiently hearing what we have to say, no small part of you have repaid our endeavours with every species of persecution within your power. You have shown no sense of justice in these matters. You have not heard *both sides*, as common fairness pointed out; but have suffered yourselves to be led along by Corruption's sons, as an ass is led by a gipsy; you have spitefully kicked at every man who has endeavoured to set you free; and even now, when your backs are breaking under your burdens, and your bones are sticking through your skins, you appear to feel a new *fit of alarm* at the proposition of that measure, which alone can, by any possibility, afford you relief and security.

Under such circumstances, it is almost impossible for us so far to master our resentment as to entertain a desire that you should now act the part that becomes you; but, to harbour such resentment would be to injure the great cause of the country, and it is, therefore, our duty to bury it, if possible, in everlasting oblivion. For my own part, bred up in the country, and taught in early life to look towards your order with great respect; remembering the times when your hospitality and benevolence had not been swept away by the tax-gatherer; having still in my recollection so many excellent men, to whose grandfathers, upon the same spots, my grandfathers had yielded cheerful obedience and reverence, it is not without sincere sorrow that I have beheld many of the sons of these men driven from their fathers' mansions, or holding them as little better than tenants or stewards, while the swarms of Placemen, Pensioners, Contractors, and Nabobs, with all the keen habits of their former lives, have usurped a large part of the soil, and wholly changed the manners, and even the morals of the country. Upon this occasion, I wish to address you in the temper inspired by the recollection of early impressions, rather than in that which recent facts would naturally dictate. For more than ten years I have been endeavouring to convince you, that that which has now taken place would take place. I have hitherto, with regard to you, laboured in vain; and, one more effort, though it should prove equally useless, will form but a trifling addition to the disappointments already experienced.

My opinion is, that you have now no choice remaining, except that which lies between a *Reform of Parliament* and the *loss of your estates* through the means of taxation; and the soundness of this opinion I will, if you will give me a patient hearing, endeavour to prove in the clearest manner.

Let me first ask you a question or two applicable to this matter. Look, each of you, just around your own neighbourhoods. Take a circumference of thirty or forty miles. Put all the Gentlemen's mansions within that compass down upon paper. Write against each who was the owner *thirty years ago*, and who is the *owner now*. And then tell me, what reason *you* have to hope, that *your sons* will possess your estates? If you have any love for your children, can you take this survey without experiencing the most poignant anguish? Then, look at the numerous little farm-houses tumbling down, or suffered to dwindle into wretched sheds for labourers. Look at the out-stretchings of the Metropolis, and see the increase of glittering chariots that rattle through its streets and

squares ; then turn to the places where numerous hamlets once stood, inhabited by happy people ; and, then tell me, whether the accumulation of property into great masses, by the means of taxes and loans, has been for the glory or the disgrace of the country ? Search the poor-books of fifty years back, and, when you find but *one pauper* for every *hundred paupers* that now are upon those books, tell me whether you can behold the horrid sight without shame?for the present and apprehension for the future ? The sons of Corruption would fain induce you to believe, that this dreadful change has been produced by a change in the *morals* and *manners* of the labouring people. This is not a very decent charge to make against them at the close of a war, during which those classes have shown so much valour, and have endured, with patience, so many and such great hardships. But the fact is, that there is less drunkenness than formerly ; the labourers work harder than their forefathers worked ; and, it surely will not be denied, that they are *better educated*, if by education we mean reading and writing. What, then, can have caused the poor-rates to rise, during the sway of the *Pitts* and the *Rosess*, from *two millions and a quarter to eight millions* a year ? What can have been the cause of this increase of human degradation ? It is useless, besides being unjust, to rail against the poor. It is clear, that they *ought* to be fed, that they have both a *legal* and *equitable* right to be fed out of the produce of the soil ; but it is also clear, that they *must* be so fed. They never *can* be made to die by thousands quietly under the hedges ; and, if they *could*, the evil would be still greater ; for then there would be nobody to labour, and the country would become again a wilderness.

It is impossible for you to dwell upon reflections of this kind for ten minutes without being convinced, that there is some great radical cause of all these evils. And, does it not become you, then, patiently to investigate that cause ? If you, however unreasonably, have imbibed a dislike of the person who now addresses you ; if you have been addicted, however unjustly, to rail against his motives ; if you still think him actuated by mischievous designs, even that opinion ought not, unless you prefer self-destruction to self-preservation, to shut your ears against his *reasonings*, which can belong to no family or name, which must be either *true* or *false*, whether they come from him or any body else ; thus to shut your ears would be to act as foolish a part as the refusing of a guinea because tendered to you by a man against whom you happened to have a grudge. If you had a bad opinion of the man who tendered the guinea, you would examine very carefully to ascertain whether it was *gold* ; you would weigh it to see whether it was *weight* : but, if you found it of pure quality and of full quantity, you never would be so foolish as to refuse to put it into your pocket.

But, at the present day, there is another and most important reason for your lending a patient ear ; for your examining and well weighing what is tendered to you, which reason is this : that your farmers, your tradespeople, your workmen of all sorts are *very attentively reading* upon these subjects. It is quite useless for you to endeavour to discourage and check the progress of political knowledge. That knowledge has gone forth like the rays of the sun bursting a black cloud asunder ; and it is as impossible to destroy the effect of that knowledge as it would be to smother the rays of the sun. Even *error*, when strongly imprinted on the mind, has always been found extremely difficult to efface. What, then, is to efface *truth*, when imprinted on the mind in fair and distinct

characters? "The *lower classes*," as they are called by the sons of Corruption, appear, to some, to have become enlightened *all of a sudden*. They have, indeed, *put forth* their proofs of knowledge all of a sudden; but, the truth is, that they have long been *acquiring* that knowledge. They have been patiently and impartially listening; they have been reading attentively what you have been turning your eyes from; and now that the times call them forth, they astonish you with their political learning. You must, therefore, if it be only in your own defence, now resort to the same sources. It is useless for you, in conjunction with the Pittite parsons, to shut the *light* out of reading-rooms and great booksellers' shops. It makes its way through the country in spite of your and their threats. It has been, by a singular process, shut out of mess-rooms and ward-rooms. But all these measures have only served to keep the higher or richer classes in political ignorance, while the middle and lower classes, as you call them, have been acquiring light, and improving in knowledge. The mass of information which has been discovered at the several public meetings seems quite surprising. The Mayors, Provosts, Boroughreeves, and others, who have refused to call public meetings, imagined, I dare say, that the *people* were nothing of themselves. They have found their mistake by this time, and they must have been ready to gnaw their very fingers off to see the accounts of those proceedings, which have been published, and in which a degree of talent and of wisdom has appeared, surpassing and very far surpassing, any thing that was ever before brought forth at public meetings in this or any other country. At Nottingham, the corporate body, like men of sense, have cordially acted with the people; but, at Manchester, Wigan, Boston, Lynn, Glasgow, Paisley, Renfrew, and divers other places, all persons in authority have either thrown obstacles in the way, or have at the very least, refused to participate. This, however, has not at all held the people in check. They know their rights, and they have come forward and exercised them with talent and spirit, and, at the same time, with the greatest possible prudence. Must not the natural consequence be, that the people will drop that respect for the rich which they have hitherto entertained?—And, is not this a most awful warning to the *Country Gentlemen*? Must they not see in these instances a proof, that, unless they place themselves at the head of the people, in the work of Reform, the people will find leaders amongst their own body? Must they not see even a *greater danger*; must they not see, that, if they still keep aloof, they will, at last, become objects, not altogether of contempt, but also of *resentment*? When the rich and the powerful of both the political factions united met in the open air at MAIDSTONE, to propose an address to the Prince on the marriage of his daughter, they had no more idea of an opposition from the *people* than they had of an opening of the earth beneath them. What must have been their "*surprise and regret*," when they found the people, not that shouting, huzzaing rabble that followed old Blucher about the streets, but a well-informed body who saw to the bottom of the subject, who knew how to trace their own sufferings down from the grants of public money, and who, having spirit equal to their understanding, hissed the rich and powerful addressers from the open air into a room in a tavern! Will not instances like these satisfy you, that the time is arrived for you to show yourselves? If they will not, you must be in more than Egyptian darkness.

But, and this brings me to the main point as concerns you, what do

the people ask for? They do not ask for any one thing, in the obtaining of which *you* are not as deeply interested as they are. They do not ask for your *property to be taken from you*; they do not ask for your *rents to be reduced*. On the contrary, they ask for that which would prevent your total ruin and the annihilation of your very names. Your conduct is most surprising, and not to be accounted for upon any supposition short of that of the existence of an almost self-devotion to destruction. You have seen a law passed to make a tax on your land *perpetual*; then, upon the back of that, you have seen another passed, under the name of a *redemption of that tax*, to make you purchase the tax, or to enable the Government to *sell it to any body else*. And, thus, you have been compelled to purchase back part of your own estates, or to sell a part of them, in order to prevent the Government from selling to other individuals a rent-charge upon the whole. In some instances the right to receive the tax has been bought by individuals; in others, you have sold part of the estates entailed upon your sons, in order to buy the property in the remainder. And, in all this you appear to have very quietly acquiesced! You now hear your *rents attacked*; not by the *people*, but by some of the correspondents of the *Board of Agriculture*, which Board is a *Government Board*, and maintained at the public expense. Rents! These persons complain of your *high rents*; and they propose, that they should be *reduced*. They say, that high rents are the cause of the national misery, taking care to keep the debt and taxes and change of currency out of sight; and if they mean any thing practical, they must mean, that you ought to be *compelled* to lower your rents; or, in other words, to surrender another large part of your estates! And yet, you appear to feel no sort of *alarm* at proceedings and propositions like these! You, wise men that you are, are not to be awakened to a sense of danger by any thing but the expression of the people's wish to have a voice in the choosing of those who are to make laws and impose taxes!

That, if no change take place, your estates will pass away from you is not now attempted to be denied by any one who has the ability to put pen to paper. And, yet you remain stagnant as the weeds of Lethe! The operation of the *funding and army system* upon your estates is just as visible as the operation of lading water out of one bucket and putting it into another; that is to say, it is thus visible to all eyes but yours; for, if it were visible to you, your conduct would denounce you as downright idiots. You see your incomes fall off; you see your tenants ruined; you see all the labourers become paupers; you are compelled to shut up your windows, to turn off your servants, to lay down your horses and carriages, to hang or drown your dogs, to cease all hospitality, and, finally, to abandon to the rain, the wind, and the bats, the mansions in which you were born, and which, only in your immediate fathers' lifetimes, were scenes of plenty, hilarity, and happiness. You slide into some patched-up farm-house and vainly hope, by assuming the occupation, to share in the profits of the farmer; or you hide your diminished heads in some gaudy box, where art is at strife with nature, in the skirts of the metropolis, and where, instead of the voices of your hounds, you are cheered with the rumble of the convenient short coach which takes you to steal your politics while you are snapping up your dinner; or, unable to endure this degradation in the land of your forefathers, you decamp to some foreign shore, where, while you linger out, in a state of voluntary

exile, a life of shabby gentility, your children imbibe the rudiments of that mongrel education which well prepares them to wander through the world, cursed with poverty and pride, loaded with contempt, and bereft of the benefits of compassion.

All this you know; all this you see before your eyes; all this many of you are now actually experiencing; and yet not a hand, not a tongue, have you moved in order to get rid of the cause of your ruin! If there be ten men composing a community; if each has a certain portion of property; if two out of the ten contrive, by any means, to appropriate to themselves a certain large part of the property of the other eight every year; is it not clear as day-light that, in a very few years, the two must have *all the property*, and, of course, the eight have no property at all? And yet you will not see that the tax-gatherers, who take a large part of your incomes and hand it over to the placemen, the pensioners, the grantees, the fundholders, and the army, are actually engaged in such a transfer! You will not see this; but you see dreadful dangers in a Reform of the Parliament, which would very nearly put an end to the transfer!

Well! but you do see it. You see it and feel it. You know that, in a short time, you must be ruined if no change take place. The delusive hope that it is a *sudden transition from war to peace* has been dispelled; you see that the cause is as permanent as the sixty millions of taxes and the eight or ten millions of poor-rates. You do, at last, confess that the loss of your estates, of which I warned you more than ten years ago, has taken place in part and is now upon the eve of consummation. You wish not to be wholly stripped. You would, if you could, save the remnant of your property. Why, then, do you not join the *people*, who, with undivided voice, are praying for that change, which they look to as the only means of affording effectual present relief and future security, and which certainly is as necessary to you as to them?

The press of corruption call upon you to keep aloof upon these grounds. They say, that the standing army is necessary to preserve the peace of the country; that the present amount of civil list, sinecures, pensions, grants, and salaries is also necessary; and that to reduce the interest of the debt would be a *breach of national faith* and a *robbery*.

Now, the Reformers say, and I for one, that a Reform would cause the peace of the country never to be broken, or attempted to be broken, except in such a trifling degree as to be easily restored by peace-officers.

We say, that, as to sinecures, pensions, &c., a Reformed Parliament would reduce them to the standard of strict *public services*. We say, that, as to salaries and pay, they should be reduced in the proportion in which the wages of labourers and mechanics and manufacturers have been reduced. We say, that, if we were to stop here, the drain upon your estates would become *much less* than it is. But, I am not for stopping here. I am for making that reduction of the interest of the debt, which has been stigmatised as a *breach of national faith*, and, by others, as a *robbery*; and, I will endeavour to prove, that it is neither one nor the other.

At several of the public meetings it has been resolved, that the debt is *not national*; that those only owe the money, who have *voted* for those who *borrowed* the money; and that those who have filled the *seats* owe the debt. Without attempting to enter into this question at present, I shall proceed to say, that those who have lent their money to the Govern-

ment were the best judges of the *security* they received for repayment. They very well knew, that they had no other security than that which the power of collecting a sufficiency of taxes gave them; and, the simple question is, whether, in order to collect a sufficiency of taxes, the nation is bound to hazard the very lives of a great part of the people. I say, that it is not; I say, that the safety and happiness of millions is to be preferred to the safety and happiness of thousands; and, I say, that this is a principle that is consonant with every notion of justice and humanity.

But, let us look a little into the facts of this case. There are *some* of the fundholders, who lent their money in a currency, one pound of which was equal in value to a pound of the present day; but, all those who lent the Government money after the stoppage of the Bank in 1797, lent no such a thing. They lent a *paper-money of inferior value*; and now, when the currency has been again raised in value, is the nation bound to pay the lenders as much of *this paper* as they lent of an *inferior paper*? If the lending had been in pieces of gold of *one ounce weight* each, would it be a *robbery* to make payment for ten pieces in five pieces of *two ounces weight* each? If the lending had been in bushels of wheat at 9s. a bushel, would it be a *robbery* to make payment for ten bushels in five bushels at 18s. each? And, though the price of wheat is now more than half what it used to be when the money was lent, this is merely owing to a *short crop*, and, if we take *all* the articles of produce, lean stock, meat, wool, flax, and corn, they do not sell for *half* the price they sold for when the main part of the money was borrowed. And yet they call it *robbery*, if we do not continue to pay *two for one*!

Nor had the *nation* any thing to do in changing the value of the currency. The Governor and Directors of the Bank Company were bound by law to pay the amount of their notes to the bearer upon demand, *in gold and silver*. They issued such large quantities of notes, that, in 1797, when the holders of the notes went for payment, the Governor and Directors went to Pitt, and told him *their fears for the safety of their concern*. Pitt procured an Order of Council, authorising them to refuse to pay their notes! This was all *unlawful*; but, the Parliament passed an Act to protect the Governor and Directors and Pitt and the Council against the consequences of this great and memorable breach of the laws. This Bank Company are amongst the very greatest of the *fundholders*, and they cry aloud about *breach of faith*, about *robbery*, because Mr. Preston and others have proposed to pay them no longer the value of two bushels of wheat for the value of one bushel of wheat!

The Bank paper, including the country paper, which depended upon that of the London Bank, has now been more than half *drawn in*. Whose *fault* was that? Not the *nation's*. The nation had no hand in the stoppage of 1797, nor had it any hand in drawing in the paper. The whole has been done by those who manage the paper-money; and yet, the nation at large are to be called *robbers*, if they assert that they ought not to be wholly ruined by the operations of these managers!

Let us take the case of the common *day-labourer*. Infinite pains have been taken by the sons of corruption to persuade the labouring classes, that *they* do not pay any part of the *Debt*. Oh, no! great care is taken these corrupt men tell them, *not to tax THEM*. Great care is taken, to lay the weight upon the shoulders of those who are *able to bear it*. Great care is taken not to make the poor man contribute

towards the support of the splendid sinecure placeman and pensioner ; and these corrupt men say, that the war, having been carried on for the *protection of property*, men of *property* are, and ought to be, liable to pay the interest of the debt, which was contracted, that is to say, *the money that was borrowed and expended upon the war*. If this really were the case, and if the taxes paid by you and your yeomanry cavalry tenants, did not at all affect the labouring classes, it would be a matter of much less consequence than it is. But this is *not* the case. The press of corruption tell the labouring people a gross and wicked falsehood when it tells them that they are not taxed. They *are* taxed, and pretty handsomely too. The malt, beer, leather, salt, sugar, tea, tobacco, soap, candles, and spirits, of which the farmer's man, the artizan, the mechanic, and the manufacturer and their families consume, and must consume, a very large part of all that is consumed in the country ; these articles all pay a heavy tax, and, indeed, the taxes raised upon the *malt, hops, and beer* alone, amount to a greater sum, and a much greater sum, than the taxes on all the *land*, and all the *houses*, all the *windows*, all the *carriages*, all the *horses*, all the *servants*, all the *dogs*, and all the other taxes imposed on the rich and not on the poor. Let us, however, come to the *proof* ; for this is a great matter. Let me go to *the book* ; the book of all books, the book of taxes ! Here I have it before me. It is an account of what the Government received from the people in England, Scotland, and Wales, *during the last year of our lives*. It received, for the above-mentioned things, as follows :

For Beer, Hops, and Malt	- - - -	£9,588,641
For Land, Houses, Windows, Carriages, Horses, Mules, Servants, Bailiffs, Waiters, Powder- Tax, Dogs, &c., &c.	- - - - only	7,616,200

So that the beer, hops, and malt *alone*, which are chiefly used by those who are called the "*lower classes*," pay nearly one-fourth part more every year than all the land, houses, windows, and the other things just named. And yet the corrupt press would fain make the labouring classes believe that *they* pay no taxes, and that *great care* has been taken not to lay any burdens upon those who are not well able to *bear them* ! And, this is the reason, forsooth, why the *poor* ought not to have a vote at elections !

But, I am wandering from the point immediately before me, which was to show how the common day-labourer stands affected with regard to the *Debt*. The expenses of the Government may be divided into two heads :—*First*, the army, navy, civil list, pensions, &c. ; and, *Second*, the debt. The taxes required to pay the army, navy, &c., amount to about twenty-two millions a year ; and the taxes required to pay the interest of the debt to about forty-four millions a year ; so that the charge for the debt is twice as great as the charge for every thing else. The commonest day-labourer pays in taxes, according to Mr. PRASTON'S computation, *ten pounds a year*, if he earn eighteen pounds a year, and, of course, his ten pounds are divided nearly as follows :

For Army, Civil List, &c.	- - - -	£3 6 8
For Debt	- - - -	6 13 4
		<hr/>
		10 0 0
		<hr/>

Now, when the greater part of the debt-money was borrowed, the labouring man used to receive at Botley from 15s. to 18s. a week; and he now receives only from 9s. to 10s. a week. And, if we reckon the time that he now loses for *want of work*, which used never to be the case, his wages have, in fact, especially if we include the want of work for his wife and children, been *reduced one-half*. And is he still to pay the 6l. 18s. 4d. a year on account of the *Debt*? When the debt-money was borrowed, it took only about *eight weeks' wages in the year* to pay his portion of the charge for the debt; but now it takes *sixteen weeks' wages in the year*; and the fundholder can have these sixteen weeks' wages for the same quantity of money that he could have had eight weeks' wages when the debt-money was borrowed. And yet they call it a *robbery* to reduce the payment from sixteen weeks' wages to eight weeks' wages! Nay, they call it a *robbery* to reduce the fundholder *one per cent.*, that is to say, they call it a robbery to give him more than the amount of *twelve weeks' wages for the eight weeks' wages* which he lent to the Government! This they stigmatise as a robbery; this they call a breach of national faith; against this they cry as loudly as parson Parks cried, the other day, against the "*horrid and diabolical plot*," which he had discovered in a hackney-coach, and which consisted, I suppose, in the entwining of ribbons of colours red, white, and blue!

It is impossible to take this view of the matter and not to be convinced that things cannot go on in their present train for any length of time. The question, therefore, is not, whether all shall remain as it is, or a change take place; for a change of *some sort* must take place; and, the only question is, of *what sort* that change shall be.

I believe, that most men are convinced, that, if a Reform of the Parliament had taken place in 1792, we never should have seen a war against the people of France; that we should have suffered that people to settle their affairs in their own way; that we should not have expended *million* after *million* on the Bourbon fugitives and French aristocratic and ecclesiastical emigrants, while our own list of paupers was increasing at so dreadful a rate: and that we should never have heard of votes for monuments to commemorate the *glory* of having restored the Bourbons and the inquisition. I believe that most men, high as well as low, are now convinced of this. I believe also, that the same conviction prevails as to the impossibility of sufficiently reducing the expenses of the country, and, of course, the taxes, *without a Reform*. At any rate, the people, the great body of the people, are now most thoroughly convinced, that their miseries can never have an end, until this Reform shall take place. They now clearly see what are the real causes of their sufferings; they see that they arise from taxation and the management of the paper-money; they have too much sense to believe that soup-kettles can form a permanent establishment, and too much spirit to endure the thought of living all their lives upon alms; they laugh, and well they may, at the idea of *saving banks*, where they are to provide for sickness and old age by putting by a *penny or two a week*, while each labourer is paying *about four shillings a week in taxes*. In short, they now, in spite of all the endeavours to "*irritate and mislead*," clearly see their way, and are coolly and firmly pressing forward with petitions for *Reform*.

And, why are you alarmed at this? Do you fear the consequences

of putting an end to that mass of bribery and corruption and immorality of every sort, which now attend elections?—How can you be injured by annual Parliaments and universal suffrage? If the Members be really the choice of the people, what is it to you how often they are elected? Does universal suffrage frighten you? Why should it, if universal taxation does not? By the word *universal*, it is impossible that we should mean *universal* in its literal sense. We often say, that “all the world” knows such or such a thing. But, by these words, we do not mean, that all the people in all countries, savages and all, know it. The word *universal* is made use of to save the repetition of a great many words. We explain, that we mean, that every *man*, who is of age, and who is untainted with any infamous crime, should have a vote; and, when we have so clearly shown, that even the common day-labourer is so heavily *taxed*, we wait to hear the arguments to prove that he ought not to be permitted to have a vote in the choosing of those by whom he is so *taxed*, and such arguments we have not yet heard.

The *practicability* is all that can possibly remain in doubt, for the *justice* of the thing is clear. Some persons, very sincere and very able friends of Reform, are disposed to stop at *householders*; that is to say, all men who are masters of a house, or occupy a house, whether they pay any *direct* rates or taxes, or whether they do not. This would be doing a great deal; for, as it would include all cottagers and all married journeymen, it would, perhaps, satisfy the people. But, certainly, nothing one inch short of this ever will satisfy them; and, in this case, the *ballot* appears necessary to preserve the free exercise of this invaluable right; for, without the ballot, what is to protect the farmer and the householder against their landlord? In America, where so very small a part of the farmers are *tenants*, and where the labouring classes are so very independent, they have still adhered to the ballot, which, besides the protection it affords to tenants and other dependent persons, has the excellent effect, in many cases, of preventing strife amongst neighbours and relations. The ABBE MABLY, a French writer of great eminence, in his Letters to Mr. JOHN ADAMS, on the American Constitutions, finds fault of the *ballot*, as being a provision against an *evil that ought not to exist*; and he predicts, that it will tend to *degrade* the people. He wrote in 1786; but, his prediction has not yet been fulfilled. However, I would break with nobody on the subject of the *ballot*, nor do I believe the petitioners in general would. I have confidence enough in the honesty and spirit of my countrymen to believe that without the ballot they would act as became freemen.

But, after all, let us have the subject *fairly discussed*; let a *bill* be brought in, and let us, when we see its provisions, examine whether they be good or bad. Let free discussion take place, and I will engage, that we arrive at the truth. And, what has any one, who means rightly, to *fear* from such a reform? It contemplates no hostility to any lawful prerogative or privilege; but, on the contrary, it fully contemplates the real enjoyment of both by those who are entitled to them. Are you afraid, that such a Reform would fill the Commons' or People's House with low and foolish men? If you are, upon what are your fears founded? Has a representative system, from top to toe, produced this effect in America? No: the four persons who have been *Presidents*, Messrs. Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Madison, were the four men most distinguished in their country for political talent and wisdom, equal to

any men upon earth as to private character, and all of them possessing estates, to which, *unaugmented*, they retired at the termination of their public duties. The two Houses of Congress, are filled, with very few exceptions, by men of *some fortune* as well as men of distinguished talent. Why, then, should you suppose, that the people of England, if free to choose, would fix *their choice* on men of no *property* and no *talent*!

But are you afraid, that the King would be compelled to put his authority into the hands of men having no *noble blood* in their veins, and that, thus, the ancient families of the kingdom would have the shame of submitting to the sway of upstarts? Before you express such a fear, you should ask yourselves, who and whence came those who have this sway in their hands now. The Lord Chancellor is the son of a Coal-Merchant; Lord Sidmouth the son of a Doctor of Physic; Lord Liverpool the son of a very clever man, who was once a writer in Reviews and other such publications; Mr. Vansittart was, not many years ago, a Sessions Lawyer in Berkshire; Mr. Canning's origin I have no certain trace of; Mr. Huskisson is a farmer's son, and has been an Apothecary or Banker's clerk; and our worthy friend, old George Rose, at whose heels the Baronets and 'Squires of Hampshire follow like well-trained spaniels, was a Purser in the Navy. Come, come, then! Cheer up! Don't be frightened! What is it that has raised these men, and many others who could be mentioned, to such a height of power? Why, their application to business; their industry; their store of knowledge calculated for the purposes of supporting the system; their superior talents of the sort that are required to carry on that which they are wanted to carry on. If, therefore, the notion of attaching importance to mere *birth* were to be admitted to be wise instead of being foolishness itself, what have you to fear on this score from the proposed Reform? Nay, I see no reason at all, why the present ministers, with an exception or two, should not remain as they are. A reformed Parliament would certainly leave the King perfectly unfettered in his choice; and, it is the evils of the present system that we want to get rid of, and not of the *men* who carry it on. For, as you must have observed, amongst all the numerous petitions for Reform, not one expresses a wish to produce a *change of the ministers*. The WHIG press has been, indeed, labouring at this point; but, its efforts have been so contemptible in point of effect, that not a single petition contains any such thought. Pitt, in his better days, and before his connection with Dundas, said, that without a reform of the Parliament, no minister in England could be *honest*, by which he meant, I suppose, that no minister could act freely and effectually for the good of the country; and this appears to be the opinion of the people.

Now, then, if no other considerations had any weight with you, do you not perceive, that there is danger to yourselves in keeping aloof from so many thousands and hundreds of thousands of sturdy men as are now so eagerly seeking for the accomplishment of this great wish of their hearts? You cannot deny, if the question be put home to you, that you *lament* the events of the last twenty-five years. You cannot say, that you believe the present distress and misery to be *temporary*. You cannot point to any ground of *hope* of an alteration for the better, if the present system be persevered in. You can hardly endure the idea of seeing your estates wholly pass away from you. And, if you were, or are

insensible to every other feeling, do you not dread the thought of being held in contempt or abhorrence by the labouring classes? And yet, must not this be the case, if you still resolve to keep aloof? They have, everywhere, with their accustomed deference to their superiors in rank and property, been anxiously looking towards those superiors. They have respectfully urged *them* to take the lead; and, they have, everywhere except at Nottingham, and Norwich, and in the County of Cornwall, met with refusal, and, in some cases, with insult and abuse. This, however, has not prevented them from exercising their right of petition, and, in their cool, decorous, and able manner of doing it, they have given those superiors a lesson which ought to be a warning to them in future. That men should, by false pride, be rendered so stupid as to cast away proffered influence and power would appear incredible were not the fact attested by undeniable evidence. At CARLISLE the labouring classes have made a formal and written application to *their employers* to place themselves at their head in the work of petitioning. The document is curious and interesting, and is as follows. The application appears to have been a *Circular*.

“SIR,—We the Operative—in your employ, considering the necessity of a Reform in Parliament to be the only means of relieving the present existing distress of the country, call upon you to come forward along with your brother manufacturers of other trades, in calling a general public meeting to express the grievances which the people lie under and the necessity of redress.—Sir,—It is the full intention of the people to petition the King, likewise the Legislature—and if you absolutely refuse to act in a public capacity in the business, we shall be under the disagreeable necessity of taking the cause in hand ourselves.—But we fondly hope you will accede to our reasonable request, and come forward to use every lawful means in your power to redress your own grievances and the grievances of your servants.

“And your Petitioners will ever pray.”

Now, I should be glad to know, what proceeding could be more proper, more sensible than this? What more reasonable, what more fair and honest? And yet, it appears, that the employers, though *not* with insult and abuse, declined the invitation, upon the vague assertion, that “no benefit could be expected to result” from such a public meeting. The *insult and abuse* were left to be supplied by the proprietor of the COURIER, who was once himself a *journeyman tailor*, and who now, affecting airs of *high-blood*, treats these sensible, modest, and suffering people as if they were so many curs, fit to be fed only on carrion. Do you think, that THIS is the way to conciliate the people, to cheer them with hope, to induce them to exercise fortitude and patience, and to strengthen the natural ties which bind them to their superiors in rank and wealth? No: but it is the way to burst those ties asunder and to destroy them for ever. A Reform will take place or it will not. If it do not, if it be finally refused, and that, too, as those vile writers would recommend, without a fair and full and candid hearing, what disappointments, what heart-burnings, what hatreds, what resentments, what combustibles are here gathering together! And, if it do take place, in what contempt will the mass of the people hold those whom they, with that modesty which is inseparable from true courage, now look up to as their superiors! And, therefore, in keeping aloof from the people in this the hour of their distress and anxiety, are you acting the part of men who form a just estimate of the means of preserving even your own property and character, to say nothing of the peace, happiness and power of our

country, which might as far surpass all others in prosperity as it does in enterprise, talent, and renown ?

The country, instead of being disturbed, as the truly *sedition* writers on the side of corruption would fain make us believe ; instead of being "*irritated*" by the agitation of the question of Reform, is kept, by the hope, which Reform holds out to it, in a state of tranquillity, wholly unparalleled in the history of the world, under a similar pressure of suffering. Of this fact, the sad scenes at DUNDEE are a strong and remarkable instance. At the great and populous towns of Norwich, Manchester, Paisley, Glasgow, Wigan, Bolton, Liverpool, and many others, where the people are suffering in a degree that makes the heart sink within one to think of, they have had their meetings to petition for Reform ; they have agreed on petitions ; hope has been left in their bosoms ; they have been inspired with patience and fortitude ; and *all is tranquil*. But, at Dundee, where a *partial meeting* had been held early in November, and where a gentleman who moved for Reform had been borne down, there violence has broken forth, houses have been plundered, and property and life exposed to all sorts of perils, and this, too, amongst the sober, the sedate, the reflecting, the prudent, the moral people of Scotland.

One would think, that this instance alone would rouse you from your unaccountable state of torpidity. The pensioned Burke insolently said, that the King held his crown in *contempt* of the Reformers of 1789. You cannot hold your property in *contempt* of the people ; and if you could do it, what would your property be worth ? Yet, every day that passes over your heads, is, by your keeping aloof, separating you more and more widely from the people, the great mass of whom are well convinced, that you have only to place yourselves at their head to obtain for them the full accomplishment of their wishes ; and, what is more, they would be satisfied with *less* if speedily obtained by your assistance.

Thus, it appears to me, that every consideration, whether as to self or to country, calls on you to come forth and cordially join in the work of obtaining a Reform. The approaching session of Parliament will, if I am not much deceived, be the most important that this country ever saw. Its measures will finally pronounce on *your* fate ; and, what sort of fate that will be will wholly depend on yourselves.

WM. COBBETT.

A CALL UPON THE CLERGY,

To come forward and assist in the putting an end to Bribery, Corruption, Perjury, and all sorts of infamies; and to deny, if they can, the persecutions and the cruelties of the House of Bourbon and the horrors of the Inquisition, both of which have now been restored.

“The congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of Bribery.”—Job, chap. xv. 34.

(*Political Register*, December, 1816.)

London, Dec. 25, 1816.

GENTLEMEN,

The text, which I have here taken is the very text, which, nearly *eleven years ago*, I posted up in the borough of Hoxton in Devonshire, with the hope of inducing some part, at least, of its inhabitants to give their votes without receiving *payment* for them, which is, as you well know, not only bribery, but bribery of that sort, the being concerned in which is made, in Scripture, the ground of exposing the guilty parties to have their habitations consumed by fire. There is no doubt, that this denunciation is to be understood figuratively; that it was not meant that the bribers or the bribed would have their habitations actually burnt; but there can be as little doubt, that it was meant to declare in the strongest terms, that bribery was to be looked upon as a most heinous offence, and that it would inevitably be followed by the severest of all punishments. “Your habitations shall be consumed; you and your very dwellings shall be swept from the face of the earth, on account of this horrid crime.” This appears to have been the clear meaning of the text, and a denunciation more awful is not, as far as I recollect, contained in the whole of the Scriptures.

Now, seeing that I have, in this same work of mine, and under this same title, laboured incessantly for the last *eleven years of my life*, with a view to root out the cause of Bribery, Corruption and Perjury, it is not without feelings strongly tinged with indignation that I have learnt, that the most busy and most loud of the calumniators of me and my work, have been found and are still to be found in *your order*. I will not, however, be so unjust as these men, who make a point of confounding me with known traitors and murderers; I will not level against your whole body that censure, which, as I would fain hope, is merited but by comparatively a *few* of the clergy of the Church of England, who, as an order of men, can, I trust, never be so detestably base as to cooperate with the hirelings of corruption's press in the work of impeding the progress of undeniable truths, and in that of propagating notorious falsehoods.

But, speaking with this large and liberal exception, have I not reason to complain of the enmity which you discover towards the cause of

Parliamentary Reform generally, and particularly towards the exertions which I and many other individuals are now making in that cause? And further, have I not reason to complain, that now, when you *must* see the absolute necessity of Reform in order to secure the chance of a restoration of national happiness, you do not, from any of your more than thousand pulpits, utter a single word in favour of that measure, the justice of which no man, whose character is not already as black as soot, will attempt to deny!

If, indeed, the Reformers in general, and I in particular, had made the undermining of religion, or the taking away of the temporal property of the Church, a part of the change we contemplate and recommend, there might have been some ground for your hostility towards us and our plans. But, while the Reformers in general have been wholly silent upon these matters, I have most strenuously recommended the abstaining from all attempts to mix up questions of religion with the question of Reform. I am for coming to no previous determination as to the temporalities of the Church; but, to leave that matter to be settled (if it be necessary to meddle with it at all) by a Parliament, chosen fairly by the people at large. There *are persons* who have ascribed a large part of the present sufferings of the nation to the existence of *tithes*; and who, of course, have directed, as far as they have been able, *the hatred of the people against you*. They have, in fact, told the people, that your tithes are a *tax*; that they are a *heavy burden upon the farmer and the poor*; that they are *oppressive*; and, in short, that they are one of the *great causes* of the present miseries of the people. But, *who are these persons*? Not the Reformers; no, but those very men whom you are labouring to uphold against the Reformers! And, what is more, you must see, that these men have now in contemplation a measure which, if adopted, will inevitably, in a few years, produce the total annihilation of the whole of your temporal means! On the other hand, so far from joining in this deceptive outcry against you; so far from putting tithes upon a level of the *taxes*, I have taken no inconsiderable pains to show the fallacy of such a notion. I have reminded my readers, that it would be difficult to show, how the *mass of the people* can suffer because the rent of the landlord is divided with the parson; I have reminded them, that if tithes were abolished to-morrow, they would only be added to the farmer's rent, and go to add to the already immense estates of the landlord, without doing any good to the people at large; I have reminded them, that tithes have existed for *seven hundred years*, and that England has been very happy during that time, but that *Paper-Money, National Debts, Standing Armies, Enormous Sinecures, Pensions, and Grants, to East-India Companies, French Emigrants, &c.* are quite NEW THINGS, and, that to these, and not to our ancient establishments, are our miseries to be ascribed. Who but me amongst all the laymen in England, has ever treated your order with this fairness and liberality? Who, with any degree of talent at his command, has ever put your case upon its true ground? And yet, whom have you ever pursued with so much foulness and illiberality?

However, with regard to your temporalities you must now be left to take your chance. If prejudices, though they may be unfounded, exist against your possessions, I look upon myself as absolved from the duty of interference, seeing that those possessions are made use of by you to impede the progress of political knowledge, and that your pulpits re-

sound with the cry of "*sedition*," against truths which cannot be denied and arguments which cannot be answered. You have, for years past, been cheering on the Gentry and Yeomanry in the pursuit and for the destruction of the Reformers; and, it will, therefore, not be a subject of very deep regret, if, at last, you should, like *ACTÆON*, be devoured by your own hounds.

It is possible, that some of you may doubt whether a Parliamentary Reform would produce *all* the good which we contemplate; but, it is quite impossible that you should not be convinced, that it would put an end to the greatest mass of wickedness that ever existed in any nation upon earth. You know as well as I do, that the land is filled with crimes in consequence of the present mode of election. You know that drunkenness, fraud, calumny, bribery, corruption, false-swearing, and, in short, every [species of infamy, are produced by this cause, and that, too, in degree and quantity wholly unparalleled in the history of the world. When I was at HONITON, in 1806, many of the wretched voters told me, in the hearing of witnesses now alive, that they knew how wicked it was to do what they did; but, that they wanted the money to pay their rents, and that they should be starved if they did otherwise. Some abused me very foully, and said, that, in advising them to vote uninfluenced by money, I was endeavouring to *rob* them of their *blessing*! For this was the term they gave to the money which they were to receive. But, indeed, the bribery and corruption, the frauds and false swearings are too notorious to need particular instances to establish their existence. The Records of Parliament, the proceedings of Election Committees, contain a greater mass of proofs of fraudulent villainies, than, as I verily believe, is to be found in the Records of all the Criminal Courts of all the other nations in the world. And, if to this be added the frauds and the perjuries, growing out of the Custom and Excise Laws, which, for the far greater part, have grown out of Paper-money, National Debts, and Standing Armies, the picture is too huge and too horrid to be endured by any one not lost to every sense of morality and honour.

Now, if this be not a true and fair statement of the case, why have none of you ventured to contradict and disprove it? There are more than *fifteen thousand* of you, who have *livings* or *benefices* of one sort or another, and, there are more than twenty thousand of you in orders. Out of this number can no man be found, with all your College acquirements, to put a cool and fair *answer* upon paper? For forty years has that venerable and most able and virtuous Reformer, Major Cartwright, challenged you to the discussion; and never has he been answered but by revilings. Not that you dislike to meddle with politics; for of what else have your printed sermons consisted for the last twenty-five years? Amongst the *pamphlet*-writers in favour of the wars against the French nation, who figured next after the pensioned Burke? Who but the Ministers of the Church of England? Mr. HERBERT MARSH, who is now become a Bishop, wrote a pamphlet to prove the *justice* and *necessity* of the war; and, this gentleman had a *pension*, too, of more than five hundred pounds a year. Whether he has it *now* is more than I can say; but, he had it in 1808. He published his pamphlet in 1799, or in 1800; and the pension was given him in the month of May, 1804. I mention this, not only as a well-recorded instance of clergymen *meddling with politics*; but also, as a proof, that

such meddling has not been *displeasing to the Government*. The late Rev. JOHN BRAND wrote a political pamphlet in favour of Pitt and the war, and he had the great living of St. GEORGE, in the borough of Southwark, given to him very soon afterwards, by the then Lord Chancellor Loughborough. Messrs. NARES and BELoe were long, and, perhaps, still are, the chief conductors of that political engine, called the BRITISH CRITIC. They have both good rich livings, if not two each. Besides, Mr. NARES, who has the living of Reading, is an Archdeacon, and Mr. BELoe *was* Librarian of the British Museum; the manner of his ceasing to be which, may, when I have more time, be fully recorded.

The object, in giving these instances, is, not to throw blame on these gentlemen for writing on politics. I could say, that some of them have written very baldly, and, I am convinced, that, whatever may have been their intentions, they have, in the same degree as they have produced effect, *done mischief*. But, this is not the point at which I am aiming. The object is to show, that you have not been backward to meddle with politics; and indeed, it is notorious, that, at public meetings, held for the purpose of promoting the continuation of the late wars, you have seldom failed to take a prominent part, and that, upon one particular occasion, the Clergy of the Diocese of Salisbury, just after the death of PERCEVAL, stood *alone* in urging the Prince Regent to push on the war with *vigour*.

Your not *answering* us, therefore, cannot be ascribed to your dislike to enter into political discussions. No; it arises from your consciousness of the goodness of our cause, and the consequent badness of that of our opponents. You do not answer, because you cannot answer. You cannot openly say, that it would be an *evil* to get rid of bribery, corruption, perjury and subornation of perjury; and yet this you must say, or no answer can you give. There are no shifts and shuffles to be made avail with *you*. Others may say, that a Reform of the Parliament would not do good in certain other ways. But you, being clergymen, must say, at once, that you *approve* of bribery, corruption, and perjury, or that a Reform would be a *good thing*. This is the reason why you do not answer our writings, and why you endeavour to misrepresent our characters and our motives.

But, what is most surprising to me, is, that *you*, above all men in the world, should be able to endure the thought of the existence of such disgraceful crimes, such an audacious violation of decency and moral rectitude, such an open defiance of the religion you profess. When I have beheld the scenes of drunkenness, fraud, perjury, bribery, and of beastliness at the contested rotten borough elections, and, indeed, at all elections, where money is expended as the means of obtaining a majority on the poll, I have felt shame at the reflection that those whom I beheld were my countrymen. What, then, ought to have been my reflections, if I had been, as you are, charged with the *care* not only of the *morals*, but of the *souls*, of the people? At your ordination you vow before God, that you *firmly believe* yourselves to be *called by the Holy Ghost* to take upon you the teaching of the people; and, previous to your induction into any living or curacy, you most solemnly declare that you will do all in your power to lead your flocks in the paths of religion and virtue and holy living, and of your *sincerity* you call upon the Almighty to be your witness. It is not my wish to accuse you of being wholly unmindful of vows made with such awful solemnity; but, may I not,

then, express my surprise, that I have never heard of any one instance, in which you have appeared at any election to put a stop to or to check the abominations exhibited at such scenes? But, suppose this remissness to be excusable, which, I think, no one can suppose, ought you not to appear foremost in the ranks of those, who would apply a remedy to this monstrous evil, this unparalleled wickedness? Of minor offences you are ready enough to take notice. The breach of the observance of the Lord's Day, which observance is, as you know, enjoined merely by *human laws*, you are apt enough to notice. You talk stoutly enough against drunkenness, profane swearing, and rioting, all which, though deserving of serious censure, are mere trifles, or, rather, they are nothing at all, when compared to those deliberate acts of bribery, corruption, and perjury, which are not only base and detestable in themselves, but which strike, with traitorous hand, at the vitals of our country's freedom and happiness. It is curious to observe, with what alacrity you push forward to join in condemning every thing that is aimed against the conduct of persons in power; how ready you are to make the charge of *sedition* against every man who writes or speaks in defence of the people's rights; but, not a word do you say against the violation of those rights or against any acts, however scandalous, of which persons in power have been guilty, as witness your ever-memorable conduct relative to the affair of the Duke of York and Mrs. Clarke. Instead of making your pulpits ring with condemnation of the acts which had been brought to light, though you were condemning such acts in the *people* every day, you stigmatized as *sedition* men, those who had endeavoured to put an end to such acts by the exposing them to the reprobation of the world. As if it was *sedition* to complain of the vile traffic which was then brought to light! Nay, it is notorious, that more than one of the clergy of the Church of England were, more or less, involved in the transactions; and, let it never be forgotten, that one Doctor of the Church obtained the honour of preaching before the king and queen through the interest and *at the express recommendation of Mrs. Clarke!* Now, though I do not pretend to believe, that you, as a body, *approved* of these things, yet never did I hear of your *disapprobation* of them; and, I well recollect, that when, at a public meeting at Winchester, resolutions were moved strongly condemning these scandalous transactions, a clergyman of the Church of England was the *only* man who had the shamelessness to oppose them. He, too, called the resolutions *sedition*, which is a very convenient word, as it seems to mean any thing that those who use it please; but, the sense which we ought to put on it when used against fact and argument, is, that it means "*true and unanswerable but dangerous to the corrupt.*"

Amongst all the Ministers of my time PERCEVAL was the favourite of the Church. All men in *great power* are favourites; but there seemed to be a sort of intrinsic merit in PERCEVAL, which entitled him to your peculiar regard and affection. This man, when *Attorney-General*, prosecuted a *tinman* of Plymouth, for having offered Mr. ADDINGTON, then Minister, a *sum of money* for a place under the Government. This appears to have been a very ignorant man, and he had seen so much of bribery, that he, I dare say, thought there was no danger in what he was doing. Perceval, however, made a grand display of the *enormity* of the offence, and took occasion to assert, that in *no age, in no country*, were men in power so free from this species of traffic. He, thereupon,

called for *punishment* on the tinman, who was fined and imprisoned, whose family was utterly ruined, and who soon after died with grief and misery. Well! "But was it not *right*," you will say, "to punish this attempt to bribe?" Yes: but now let us look at the conduct of this same Perceval, when he became a Minister, six years afterwards. The exposures of 1809 included *every species of bribery*; selling of offices; swapping of offices for seats; all sorts of trafficking in this way. But, at last, out came a distinct charge of Mr. MADDOCKS against this same *Perceval himself*, whom Mr. MADDOCKS accused of having, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, who was also a Privy Councillor, *CONNIVED at the sale of a seat in Parliament, and at the causing the holder of the seat to quit it afterwards, because the holder would not vote for the acquittal of the Duke of York!* This was the distinct charge which Mr. MADDOCKS made against Perceval, and he pledged himself to prove it by witnesses, at the bar of the House of Commons, if the House would hear those witnesses.

Now, then, what did your favourite Perceval, the unrelenting prosecutor of the poor tinman do? Why, he *did not deny* the charge, but, he begged of the House to get rid of Mr. MADDOCKS' motion, and *not to hear his witnesses*; and, *why?* Because, as he said, those who brought forward such charges *were enemies to the Constitution*, and were actuated by *sedition* motives. And, generations to come will hear with indignation, that the House determined by a large majority, that, *they would not hear the witnesses!* And Perceval continued to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, he continued to be a Privy Councillor, he was afterwards exalted to be Prime Minister, and when he was killed by Mr. Bellingham, you, particularly in the diocese of Salisbury, sent up an Address to the Regent, in which you *eulogized his character!*

Do you think, that these things can be forgotten? Do you think, that the calling the exposure of such things *sedition* will silence the voices or assuage the indignation of the virtuous part of mankind? Do you wish the people of England to be a *moral and religious* people, and yet do you wish that they should *not* hold these things in abhorrence? Do you wish them to be *honest and true*, and yet do you wish that they should approve of the foulest of frauds and the basest of perjuries? Do you wish them to believe in the Scriptures, and yet do you wish to regard those men as *sedition*, who reprobate bribery and corruption and false-swearing, agreeably to the principles of those very Scriptures?

SAMUEL, when about to yield up his Rulership over the Israelites, appeals, thus, to their justice as to his conduct in his great office:—"Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine enemies therewith? and I will restore it you."—1 *Samuel*, chap. xii. verse 3. But his sons, whom he had appointed to rule after him, appear to have been of a different character. "And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment."—1 *Samuel*, chap. viii. verse 3.

What was the consequence? Nothing short of a *revolution*; for the people, abhorring so much this act of taking *bribes*, called upon Samuel to leave them under the sway of a *King*; and, though Samuel told them, that a King would scourge them and plunder them; though, in short,

they were assured, that they should be subjected to the most horrid *despotism*, yet, with their eyes open, and with the choice fairly before them, they preferred an open despotism, however severe, to a base and cowardly, undermining and hypocritical system of *bribery*, by which they would have been as cruelly oppressed as by an undisguised despotism, and would, at the same time, have been deprived of the sympathy, which is always felt for those who suffer under the hand of an open and acknowledged despot. This is a remarkable instance of the horror in which the crime of bribery was held in those times; and, indeed, it is a crime which, in every part of the Scripture, where it is mentioned or alluded to, is, as far as I recollect, numbered amongst the most atrocious of offences. "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with *bloody men*, in whose hands is mischief, and whose right hand is *full of bribes*." — *Psalms* xxvi. v. 9 and 10. And, really, there can be little doubt, that he who will deliberately tender or take a *bribe*, being well aware of all the consequences, is capable of *any crime*. How many crimes has bribery actually created! ISAIAH charges the Israelites with being *corrupters*, and tells them that their burnt-offerings and sacrifices are a base and insolent mockery of God, while they are guilty of such things. "Learn to *do well*," says he (chap. 1), and do not rely upon the formalities of your religion. JEREMIAH compares "*corrupters*" to *brass and iron*; and, indeed, as we well know, they are the most impudent, the most profligate of all mankind. He calls them "*grievous revolters*" also (chap. vi. v. 28); but if he had lived in our day, he would have been called a *revolter*, that is to say, a *revolutionist* himself! For this is the name given to us, who are labouring to *put down* corrupters and bribers by destroying the sources of corruption and bribery. Is it thus that we ought to be treated? From any of *your* Order ought we to expect such treatment? And, will any of you still persist in opposing the circulation of this work, the plain and obvious tendency of which is to drive from the land the abominations against which both Scripture and Reason cry aloud? Despitefully as some of you have treated me; great and unjust as is the hatred which some of you have shown towards me; yet I will not apply even to these my most bitter enemies the description given by Amos (chap. v. 10, 11, and 12 v.); but, if they persevere in their soul hostility, I shall leave the people to make the application. "They *hate him that rebuketh in the gate*, and they abhor him that *speaketh uprightly*. Forasmuch, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they *afflict the just*, they *take a bribe*, and they *turn aside the poor in the gate from their right*." If this serve to show, that there were bribery and corruption in times of old, it also serves to show, that there were men to reprobate such crimes, and to utter denunciations against those who committed them. The civil and political institutions of the Israelites were different from ours; but, the principles of morality and of justice have always been, and must always be, the same; and, without speaking profanely, what was Amos more or less than a *Reformer*, and a political Reformer too, of his day? He found the people in a state of oppression, he saw the poor trodden down, he saw them heavily burdened with taxes, he saw a large part of the produce of their labours taken from them, he saw those who took the

taxes building splendid mansions and living in luxury, he saw the work of partiality and bribery going on, he saw the lower orders in society turned out of their rights, and he complained, that whoever rebuked any of the persons guilty of these things, whoever spoke uprightly, was *hated and abhorred* by those who had an interest in the continuance of the oppressions.

As to the crime of *false-swearing*, it is notoriously one of the heaviest of those sins against which the wrath of God has been denounced ; but, it becomes of much more than ordinary importance, and much more than ordinary enormity, when it affects the well-being of a whole community. You know as well as I, that if any man gives a vote, either in the Parliament or at an election, from *any motive of self-interest*, he is guilty of *false-swearing*. You know, that the Peers are strictly forbidden by law, and it is a breach of their honour and their oaths as Peers, to exert *any sort of influence* in the returning of Members to the People's House, or Commons' House of Parliament. And well knowing these things, how can you, as clergymen bound by solemn vows to God to watch vigilantly over the morals, and earnestly to labour for the safety of the souls of the people ; how can you, possessing this knowledge, and bound by these obligations, hold your tongues as to these scenes, which relative to these matters, are almost constantly before your eyes ? And, do you think, that your silence will be justified by the plea, that the Reformers are *sedition* men ? Do you think, that, if asked why you have not endeavoured to put an end to the scenes exhibited at elections, it will be sufficient for you to say, that you feared *worse* might come ? Do you suppose, that the bare plea of the apprehension of a *possible evil* will be a sufficient justification for a neglect to endeavour to put an end to a notoriously existing evil ? If so, you must believe, that to suffer a poor creature to starve by the road side will be justified, upon the plea of its being possible, that, if relieved, he might do harm in the world. This, however, you cannot believe. We are not to do evil that good may come of it ; but we are not to refrain from doing good from the fear that evil may possibly be the ultimate consequence. The old Norman proverb : *Fait ce qu'il faut, arrive ce qu'il pourra* : Do what you *ought to do*, let the consequence be what it may : This is a rule of conduct worthy of men of honour and of true religion, and this is the maxim of our able and virtuous leader, MAJOR CARTWRIGHT, whose answer to all the forebodings of the timid and the insincere, has always been : " Let us, keeping the laws and constitution for our guides, do all that we are able to do, and *leave the rest to God* " And, indeed, this is the language of common sense and is conformable to the common practice of mankind in all the concerns of life, public as well as private. Not to act upon this principle would be effectually to prevent every species of enterprise ; nothing could ever be undertaken even for the preservation of the independence of a country. No improvement could ever be adopted ; no difficulty could ever be overcome ; nothing good could ever be undertaken, and, of course, could ever be accomplished.

" Where much is given, much is required ;" and though this applies to all men, in their several degrees, it applies more especially to you, whose very profession calls upon you to exert yourselves against such detestable wickedness, and who receive such very large sums for your services. The annual income of the Church, arising from tithes and other sources, which are destined by the law for the purpose of insuring *teachers* of the people, is not less, I believe, than *five millions of pounds*

a year, exclusive of the immense Church Property in Ireland. It is impossible to reconcile to reason, that this property ought to be suffered to be enjoyed by you but as a *reward for public duties*. It was originally so intended, as the endowments and the early laws clearly show. That it is not *private property in you* is certain, for you can neither give it away in your life-times nor bequeath it at your deaths. If, then, it is to be looked upon as the compensation for services, how great ought those services to be! And, it will not be denied, I believe, that the poor as well as the rich, have a claim to a share in those services. Have not the *people*, then, the great mass of the nation, a right to call on you to come forth to their assistance upon this occasion? If you post yourselves up as the clergy only of the rich and powerful, on what do you ground your claim to any attention on the part of the people? Besides you ought to bear in mind, that the *tithes* were not granted to clergymen and their *families*; that they were granted to a clergy who *never had wives*; that the income of each living was to be divided into *four equal parts*, one part for the *poor*, one for the repairing of the church and church-yard and for the furnishing of the sacramental elements, &c., one part for keeping hospitality for travellers and pilgrims, and the remaining part for the *support of the priest*. The poor are now maintained by the parish, the churches, &c. are provided for by parish-rates, you keep no hospitality for travellers, and you and your families consume the whole of the income! I know that modern laws allow of this; but, pray, then, do not object to the people's obtaining a *modern law* to insure to them their political rights.

Even if public duty were out of the question, and if you could divest yourselves of all considerations of a religious nature, your *interest*, it seems to me, would naturally push you forward in the people's cause, which, if rightly viewed, is your own cause too. You can hardly believe, that things can proceed long without a great change of *some sort*, and nothing short of downright infatuation can induce you to hope that you can do any thing to prevent such change. And, I would ask you seriously, whether, under such circumstances, it is prudent, leaving justice out of the question, for you to *keep aloof from the people*? However, this will now be your *own affair*; and, if you resolve, after this remonstrance, to convince the people, that you will be the very last to afford them support, the people will with the less reluctance leave you to your friends the agricultural gentry and the yeomanry cavalry, who will probably dispose of your affair even before the question of Parliamentary Reform shall have been finally settled.

I now come to the *second part* of my subject, and I call upon you to *deny, if you can, the cruelties of the House of Bourbon and the horrors of the Inquisition*. And, why do I thus call upon you? Because it is notorious, that, in every stage, you were for war against the French people; and because, at the peace, there was a *Thanksgiving in the Church of England*, which last took place after the restoration of the Pope and the Bourbons.

As to the cruelties of the House of Bourbon, previous to the Revolution in France, the bare enumeration of them would fill volumes. I shall, therefore, only assert here, that it is notorious, that they were the most cruel tyrants that Europe ever saw, and that this I am able to prove when any one of you shall dare deny the fact. But, as to the **INQUISITION**, I have something more particular to say, and, though I

have said the same things upon a former occasion, this is a proper time to say them again. We are now feeling the weight of a war that cost more than a thousand millions; the miserable people of this country are now sinking under the consequences of that war. That war *put down Napoleon*; that war sent the brave and generous Napoleon into captivity; that war restored the Bourbons in France, Spain and Naples; it restored the Pope and the Inquisition, all which Bonaparte had put down. This is the price of our taxes, debts, and misery; and, let us see, then, how it agrees with the religious opinions you have taught, to rejoice at this restoration.

If there was one trait, above all others, by which your sermons and prayers, until of late years, were characterised, it was by your zealous, your violent, not to say foul-mouthed, attacks on the Romish Pontiff, faith, and worship. You had no scruple to represent the Pope as *Antichrist*, and as the *Scarlet Whore* of Babylon, covered with abominations. *How clearly did you prove that he was the Beast of the Revelations*; that he had made the world drunk with his fornications; that his seven heads were the seven hills on which Rome is situated; his ten horns the ten principal Catholic Sovereigns of Europe; and that his colour was *scarlet*, because it was *died in the blood of the Saints*? Was there scarcely a sermon, was there a prayer, that issued from your lips, in which you did not call on the Lord for vengeance on this "*Man of Sin*," and in which you did not describe the Catholic religion as *idoltrous, blasphemous, diabolical*, and as evidently tending to the *eternal damnation of millions and millions of precious souls*?

Every one, who shall read what I am now writing, must acknowledge, that this description of your conduct, in regard to the Romish Church, is far short of the mark. What, then, have you now to say in justification of your recent conduct? Where is your justification for your violent attacks on Napoleon and his family, to say nothing, at present, of your thanksgivings for the restoration of the ancient order of things, or, in your own language, "*the ancient and venerable institutions*?" Where is your justification for your attacks on the Bonapartes? *Others*, indeed, might consistently attack them. Such as thought that the Church of Rome and her power were good things; or, such as regarded one religion as good as another, might consistently attack Bonaparte. But, *you!* you, who professed the opinions above described; how can *you* apologize to the world, and to your flocks, for the part which *you* have taken against him?

The case, with regard to you, stands thus: There was, before Bonaparte's power commenced, existing in Europe a system of religion, or, as you called it, irreligion, having at the head of it a Sovereign Pontiff, with innumerable Cardinals, Bishops, Vicars General, Abbots, Priors, Monks, Friars, Secular Priests, &c. &c. under him. To this body you ascribed false doctrines, tricks, frauds and cruelties without end. You charged them with the propagation of idolatry and blasphemy; with keeping the people in ignorance; with nourishing superstition; with blowing the flames of persecution; with daily murdering, in the most horrid manner, the martyrs to the true faith. The Sovereign Pontiff himself, the corner-stone of the whole body, you constantly called *Antichrist*, the *Scarlet Whore*, the *Beast*, and the *Man of Sin*. And you prayed most vehemently for his overthrow, in-

sisting that the system, of which he was the foundation, manifestly tended to the eternal damnation of the souls of the far greater part of the people of Europe.

Well! Napoleon arose. He hurled down the Pope; he overthrew the Antichrist, the Scarlet Whore, the Beast, the Man of Sin, and with him all the long list of Persecutors of the Saints. Napoleon and his associates did, in three years, what your prayers and preachings had not been able to effect in three centuries. The Pope was stripped of all temporal power; the Cardinals and Bishops were reduced to mere ciphers; the Monks were driven from their dens of laziness and debauchery; the tricks and frauds were exposed; the adored images were turned into fire-wood; the holy relics were laughed at; the light of truth was suffered freely to beam upon the minds of the people; religious persecution was put an end to; and all men were not only *permitted*, but also *encouraged*, openly to profess, pursue and enjoy, whatever species of religious faith and worship they chose. Every man became eligible to offices, trusts, and honours; and, throughout the domains of Italy and France, where a Church-of-England man would have been tied to a stake and roasted, rather than be suffered to fill an office of trust, or to preach to a congregation, religious liberty was, under Napoleon, made as perfect as in America.

These are facts, which none of you will dare openly to deny. They are as notorious as they will be, and ought to be, memorable.

Ought *you* not, therefore, to have rejoiced at this wonderful change in favour of religious liberty? How could you see 50 millions of souls set free without feeling it impossible to suppress an expression of your pleasure? How could you see the fall of *Antichrist* without putting up thanksgiving to that God, to whom you had so long been praying, whom you had so long been worrying with your importunities, for the accomplishment of that object? Was not this an event calculated to call forth your gratitude to Heaven? Ought it not to have been expected from you, that you should speak very cautiously in disapprobation of Napoleon and the French Republicans, who had effected what you had so long been praying for apparently in vain? Ought you not, if you had spoken at all of the sins of his ambition; if you had blamed him as an invader, a conqueror, to have touched him with a tender hand, considering the immense benefits which religious liberty had received in consequence of his invasions and conquests? Ought he not to have found in *you*, above all men living, if not merciful judges, at least, mild and moderate censors?

If this was what might naturally and justly have been expected from you, what must have been the surprise and indignation of those who saw you amongst the very fiercest of Napoleon's foes; amongst the foulest of his calumniators; amongst the first and loudest of those who rejoiced at his fall; who heard you hail with rapture the return of "the ancient order of things," and the re-establishment of the "*venerable institutions*," of Europe; who heard you joining in the Hosannas of the Monks, and styling the Cossacks and their associates "*Deliverers!*"

What was that "ancient order of things," the return of which you hailed with such rapture? What were those "*venerable institutions*," of which you thanked the Lord for the re-establishment? The *Holy see of Rome* was one, and the *Inquisition* was another. Thousands of subaltern "*venerable institutions*" naturally followed in the train of these; such

as the Virgin Mary's house at Loretto; the shrine of Saint Anthony; the Holy Cross; the exhibition of Saint Catherine's wheel, of the Holy Thorn that penetrated Christ's cheek. Hundreds and thousands of thousands of these "venerable" things, naturally followed the overthrow of him who had overthrown them. All the persecutions of the Protestants; all the frauds, insolence, and cruelty of the Romish Priests must have been in your view. You are not ignorant men. You knew to a moral certainty that the Pope, whom you had formerly led your flocks to believe was Antichrist, would be restored. You knew that, instead of a milder sway, he would naturally be more rigid than ever in the exercise of his power. All this you knew. You knew, that the *toleration* of all Protestant sects, the encouragement of them, the free use of reason on religious subjects, and the free circulation of religious opinions, which were so complete under Napoleon, would be instantly destroyed in the far greater part of Europe.

The holy father, whom you formerly called the "scarlet whore," dyed in the blood of the Saints, the "beast," as you used to call him, whose "mouth was full of blasphemies," remounted his chair even before "the Most Christian King" got upon his throne. One of his first acts was to restore the *Jesuits*, that "ancient and venerable institution," which had become so odious, on account of its wicked acts, that it had been abolished by all the Princes of Europe, and even by a former Pope himself. The next remarkable step was the re-establishment of the *Inquisition* in Spain, where it had been abolished by Napoleon on the day that he took possession of the Government of that country.

You yourselves well know what that tribunal was; but as some of the good people may not know the precise nature of that "venerable institution," which Napoleon abolished, and which has been restored in consequence of the successes of the war, I will here insert an account of it from the last edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, under the words "Inquisition" and "Act of Faith," as follows:—

"INQUISITION.—In the Church of Rome, a tribunal in several Roman Catholic countries, erected by the Popes for the examination and punishment of heretics.—This Court was founded in the 12th century, by Father, Dominic and his followers, who were sent by Pope Innocent III. with orders to excite the Catholic Princes and people to extirpate heretics, to search into their number and quality, and to transmit a faithful account thereof to Rome. Hence they were called *Inquisitors*; and this gave birth to the formidable tribunal of the Inquisition, which was received in all Italy and the dominions of Spain, except the kingdom of Naples, and the Low Countries. This diabolical tribunal takes cognisance of heresy, judaism, mahometanism, sodomy, and polygamy; and the people stand in so much fear of it, that parents deliver up their children, husbands their wives, and masters their servants, to its officers, without daring in the least to murmur. The prisoners are kept for a long time, till they themselves turn their own accusers, and declare the cause of their imprisonment; for they are neither told their crime, nor confronted with witnesses. As soon as they are imprisoned their friends go into mourning, and speak of them as dead, not daring to solicit their pardon, lest they should be brought in as accomplices. When there is no shadow of proof against the pretended criminal, he is discharged, after suffering the most cruel tortures, a tedious and dreadful imprisonment, and the loss of the greatest part of his effects. The sentence against the prisoners is pronounced publicly, and with the greatest solemnity. In Portugal, they erect a theatre capable of holding 3000 persons; in which they place a rich altar, and raise seats on each side in the form of an amphitheatre. There the prisoners are placed; and over against them is a high chair, whither they are called, one by one, to hear their doom, from one of the *Inquisitors*.—These unhappy people know what they are to suffer by the clothes they wear that day. Those who appear in their own

" clothes are discharged, upon payment of a fine ; those who have a *santo benito*
 " or strait yellow coat without sleeves, charged with St. Andrew's cross, have
 " their lives but forfeit all their effects ; those who have the resemblance of flames
 " made of red serge, sewed upon their *santo benito*, without any cross, are pardoned,
 " but threatened to be burnt if ever they relapse ; but those who, besides these
 " flames, have on their *santo benito* their own picture, surrounded with figures of
 " devils, are condemned to expire in the flames. The Inquisitors, who are ec-
 " clesiastics, do not pronounce the sentence of death ; but form and read an
 " act, in which they say, that the criminal being convicted of such a crime, by
 " his own confession, is, with much reluctance, delivered to the secular power to
 " be punished according to his demerits ; and this writing they give to the seven
 " judges, who attend at the right side of the altar, who immediately pass sentence.

" ACT OF FAITH.—In the Romish church, is a solemn day held by the In-
 " quisition for the punishment of heretics, and the absolution of the innocent
 " accused. They usually contrive the *Auto* to fall on some great festival that the
 " execution may pass with the more awe and regard ; at least it is always on a
 " Sunday.—The *Auto da Fé* or *Act of Faith*, may be called the last act of the In-
 " quisitorial tragedy ; it is kind of gaol-delivery, appointed as oft as a competent
 " number of prisoners in the Inquisition are convicted of heresy, either by their
 " own voluntary or extorted confession, or on the evidence of certain witnesses.
 " The process is thus:—In the morning they are brought into a great hall, where
 " they have certain habits put on, which they are to wear in the procession. The
 " procession is led up by Dominican Friars ; after which come the penitents, some
 " with *sao benitos*, and some without, according to the nature of the crimes ; being
 " all in black-coats without sleeves and barefooted, with a wax candle in their
 " hands. These are followed by the penitents who have narrowly escaped being
 " burnt, who over their black coats have flames painted with their points
 " turned downwards. *Fuego revolto*. Next come the negative and relapsed, who
 " are to be burnt, having flames on their habits pointing upwards. After these
 " come such as profess doctrines contrary to the faith of Rome, who, besides
 " flames pointing upwards, have their picture painted on their breasts, with
 " dogs, serpents, and devils, all open-mouthed about it. Each prisoner is attended
 " with a familiar of the Inquisition ; and those to be burnt have also a Jesuit on
 " each hand, who is continually preaching to them to abjure. After the prisoners
 " come a troop of familiars on horseback, and after them the Inquisitors, and
 " other officers of the Court, on mules ; last of all, the Inquisitor-General, on a
 " white horse, led by two men with black hats and green hat-bands. A scaf-
 " fold is erected in the *Teneiro de Paes*, big enough for two or three thousand
 " people ; at one end of which are the prisoners, at the other the Inquisitors
 " After a sermon made up of encomiums on the Inquisition, and invectives
 " against heretics, a priest ascends a desk near the middle of the scaffold, and
 " having taken the adjuration of the penitents, recites the final sentence of
 " those who are to be put to death ; and delivers them to the secular arm,
 " earnestly beseeching at the same time the secular power not to touch their
 " blood, or put their lives in danger. The prisoners being thus in the hands of
 " the civil Magistrate, are presently loaded with chains, and carried first to the
 " secular gaol, and from hence in an hour or two brought before the civil Judge ;
 " who, after asking in what religion they intended to die, pronounces sentence
 " on such as declare they die in the communion of Rome, that they shall be
 " first strangled, and then burnt to ashes ; on such as die in any other faith,
 " that they be burnt alive. Both are immediately carried to the Ribera, the
 " place of execution ; where there are as many stakes set up as there are
 " prisoners to be burnt, with a quantity of dry furze about them. The stakes of
 " the professed, that is, such as persist in their heresy, are about four yards
 " high, having a small board towards the top for the prisoner to be seated on.
 " The negative and relapsed being first strangled and burnt, the professed
 " mount their stakes by a ladder ; and the Jesuits, after several repeated
 " exhortations to be reconciled to the Church, part with them, telling them they
 " leave them to the devil who is standing at their elbow to receive their souls,
 " and carry them with him into the flames of hell. On this a great shout is
 " raised, and the cry is, *Let the dogs' beards be made!* which is done by thrusting
 " flaming furzes fastened to long poles against their faces, till their faces are
 " burnt to a coal, which is accompanied with the loudest acclamations of joy.—
 " At last, fire is set to the furze at the bottom of the stake, over which the pro-

"fessed are chained so high, that the top of the flame seldom reaches higher than the board they sit on; so that they rather seem roasted than burnt.— There cannot be a more lamentable spectacle; the sufferers continually cry out, while they are able, *Misericordia per amor de Dios!* 'Pity for the love of God!' yet it is beheld by all sexes and ages with transports of joy and satisfaction."

Is there a man in the whole world, whose heart is not steeled against all the cries of nature, who can read this without feeling his blood run cold? Yet this horrible institution has been restored by that Bourbon, whom we, by our wars, and at our expense, reseatd on the throne of Spain! Aye, and we are now taxed to pay the interest of the enormous debt, contracted for this purpose! And yet, there are men so basely impudent as to assert, that our money was expended in obtaining the *freedom and happiness* of Europe!

GENTLEMEN, even laying the clergymen aside, can you, when you dismiss all prejudice; when you coolly reflect on what has been done; when you consider, that we found the Pope dethroned, the Jesuits scattered, the Bourbons driven out, and the Inquisition put down, and that *our success* has caused them all to be *restored*, and that the wars which produced that effect have reduced the people of England to such misery as to accept of *charity* at the hands of a *Bourbon Prince*; when you coolly—oh, no! not *coolly*, for coolness on such a subject is impossible—but, when you reflect on these things, and, at the same time remember what noble struggles our fathers maintained in the cause of religious liberty, are you not half maddened with shame and confusion? And do you, or can you, either believe or hope, that a state of things so unnatural, so monstrous, can possibly last? If you do, more words are useless; and if you do not I have already said more than enough.

WM. COBBETT.

A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

TO

OLD GEORGE ROSE,

On the Workings of Corruption's Press.—On the Romsey Impostor, JACKSON.—On CHAPPEL, the Pall-Mall Impostor.—On the vile Calumnies published by WALTER of the Times.—On the Saving-Bank Bubble.—On the Scheme for preventing the Labouring People from Marrying.—On his Sinicures.

(*Political Register, January, 1817.*)

Peckham Lodge, January 1, 1817.

Well, GEORGE! how do you feel *now*? Do you not think, that the drama is drawing towards a close? Since the time, when I was shouldering a musket in the army, and when you were serving out grog and slops in the navy, what wondrous events have taken place! We have

both been considerable actors in this grand drama ; and our manner of acting may now be reviewed with a better chance of justice to us both than upon any former occasion. You have received immense sums of the public money ; I have never received a farthing of that money, while I have paid away from my family more than fifteen thousand pounds in taxes. You have written pamphlets to urge the people on to war against the people of France ; you have frequently foretold, in these publications, that the sinking fund would lower the Debt, and that prosperity would be the result of the measures of the Government, in which measures you have had a great share. I have, for more than eleven years, been opposed to all your assertions and opinions ; I have foretold national ruin and misery as the result of those measures ; you have become possessed of immense wealth and fine mansions and estates, while I have been put two years into a felon's jail and have paid TO THE KING a thousand pounds sterling, in the shape of a fine. Yet, GEORGE, I question whether I am not pretty nearly as happy as you are ! I am convinced, besides, that *time* and *events* have not yet done with us. Our hostile assertions and opinions have been pretty well put to the test already ; but, the exposure of the trial is not yet nearly so full as it shortly will be. The approaching Session of Parliament will open millions of pairs of eyes, which have been glued up by false alarms ; for the last twenty-five years. And, here am I, at my post, fresh from the fields, with a brace of sons, bred up in a mortal hatred of all that I so lustily hate, ready to stick fast to the skirts of the system, having only to regret, that Pitt, Dundas, and Perceval are not alive, and most sincerely wishing good health to you, to Canning and to Castlereagh.

In the meanwhile, I think it not unuseful to address you upon some matters by way of preparation to the grand scenes that we are about to behold. And, first, on the *base attempts of Corruption's press*, particularly with regard to myself, and more especially through the means of one JACKSON of Romsey in Hampshire, and of a bookseller named CHAPPEL, in Pall Mall, London.

I was not weak enough to suppose, that, when the Register began to find its way throughout the kingdom to the extent of between twenty and thirty thousand every week, that Corruption's sons would not make a stir. Indeed, when, after a silence of more than seven years, the corrupt proprietors of the Times, Courier, Morning Post, and Sun, were galled into the assertion of that audacious falsehood of Mr. Hunt and myself being engaged in plotting with my Lord Cochrane in the King's Bench Prison, while I was at Peckham in Surrey and Mr. Hunt at Wanstead in Essex, I was not at all surprised. I knew, that there was no falsehood, of which they were not capable ; I knew their minds and hearts to be fashioned to the inventing and the perpetrating of any species and any degree of villany ; and, I was well aware, that the more decided their conduct in this way, the greater they would expect their profit to be.—These vile men appear to have believed, that something like a *treasonable plot* would be *made out*, by hook or by crook ; and, upon this belief, they, at once, ventured upon the infamous assertion before-mentioned, and added, in the most positive terms, that I, having assisted in *contriving* and *preparing* the *plot*, set off to Botley, *the night before it was to be put in execution* ; though I have been in and near London from the middle of November to this day. And yet these atrocious men have the effrontery to call upon the law-officers of the Crown to punish even petitioners as

libellers! Their object in these bold falsehoods, was, to cause the nation to believe, that all who contend for a Reform of the Parliament, have it in view to excite people to *riot* and to commit *assassinations*. About 200 desperate men, consisting chiefly of starving sailors, they magnify into a formidable *insurrection*, and, which men, though they had arms in their hands, did no violence to any body, except in the unlawful seizure of the arms and in the wounding (*if that really was so*) of one man who attempted to stop them, and who laid hold of one of them. This contemptible riot, which consisted of a less number of persons than one-half of the police-officers and constables who were actually on foot, was swelled up into a most formidable *insurrection*, and, though it was well known to every one in London, that the rioters had no connection whatever with the Meeting in Spa-fields, every endeavour was made use of by the corrupt press so to connect the two, that every person of property should feel *alarmed* whenever a Meeting for Reform was about to take place.

The people in the country now know how false and malicious these representations were; but, the people in the country are not yet fully acquainted with the infamy of the corrupt press upon this memorable occasion. As the matter now stands exposed, the exposure will do great good; but, still, justice has not yet been done to it. It is already known, that the first meeting in Spa-fields was called by an advertisement, signed by a person of the name of DYALL; that Mr. HUNT was invited and requested to attend that meeting; and that the meeting was conducted chiefly by him. It is already well known, that the words *plot*, *conspiracy*, and *insurrection*, found in what were called Mr. PRESTON'S "confessions" were *foisted in* by the infamous press, and that Mr. PRESTON never uttered any such words. And is not this a species of wickedness committed by nobody in the world but by the men who conduct this corrupt press? Was it ever before known, that men could with impunity publish a false statement of the examination of a prisoner, brought before a magistrate on a criminal charge affecting the life of the prisoner? Was it ever before known, that men could, with impunity, put into the mouth of such prisoner, words which amounted to a confession of his having been guilty of treason? What means of defence has Mr. PRESTON against the prejudices which these men have thus excited against him? What means has he of obtaining *justice* against them? He must possess a large sum of money, before he can take *one single step towards* the prosecution of them. And, they know that he has no money, while they are wallowing in wealth. *Here*, indeed, is a case which calls for the activity of the *law-officers of the Crown*; for, if a poor man's liberty and life are thus to be assailed with impunity, what safety is there for him?

But, still, base and infamous as the conduct of these sons of corruption must appear, it is not seen in its true colours, until the following curious facts (stated in Mr. HONE'S Account of the Riots, part ii.) are known to the world. DYALL, as appears by this statement, long before Mr. HUNT came to town for the *first* meeting in Spa-fields, was taken before GIFFORD, a police justice. After some talk with Dyall, Gifford got him to show him the petition, or address, or whatever else it was called, which he (Dyall) and his associates *intended to bring forward* at the said *first* meeting. Dyall, who had no idea of anything wrong in what he was doing, suffered Gifford to take a copy of this curious document. "This to Lord Burleigh shall," Gifford seems to have parodied; and away he sent it to Lord Sidmouth, the

Secretary of State for the Home Department! Thus, then, did this very *chief conspirator*, Dyall, actually put the Government in possession of what was meant to be moved upon the occasion! The petition, though it must have been harmless as to *intention*, did nevertheless contain some very gross absurdities, some wild projects, some of those whimsical projects and sentiments belonging to the *Spencean Plan*. Thus was the Government in full possession of all that, as they must have thought, *was going to take place*. But, up came Mr. HUNT and spoiled the whole thing. When he came to the meeting and had the document of Messrs. Dyall and Gifford presented to him: "O, no!" said he, "I will have nothing to do with *that*." In the end, he brought forward a set of resolutions and a petition *framed by himself*; and, of course, the document, the precious document, the "*treasonable*" document, as the Courier and Times called it, and which Gifford had so highly prized, was left to be a monument of the latter's sagacity and vigilance, but into the trammels of which Mr. HUNT's good sense and promptitude and straightforward views prevented him from falling. But, now, mark, GEORGE, and I hope the people will mark it well. The COURIER, which is printed *about the middle of the day*, did, on the day of the meeting, state, that the meeting was at that moment going on, that the petition had just been moved by Mr. HUNT, and that it was very *seditions and treasonable*, containing, amongst other things, a part of which it then *inserted*. But, this part, *was a part of Dyall's document*, no part of which document was ever read at the meeting from first to last! So that it is clear, that, in the full tiptoe expectation that Mr. HUNT would fall into the trammels of Dyall's document, that *document had been given to the proprietor of the Courier beforehand*! Thus, was that son of Corruption ready armed to pour out upon Mr. HUNT the charge of *treasonable* language, and thus did he send that charge forth amongst all the tax-eaters and all the timid fools all over the kingdom! *How* this darling son of Corruption came in possession of Dyall's document; *who* it was that gave it to him; *what* was the purpose which it was intended to answer: of these I shall leave the public to form their own opinion, and I am not at all afraid, that with these facts before them, the great body of the people will derive confidence in the cause of Reform from the fate of this vile attempt to make it a subject of alarm.

From this odious picture of the more general efforts of Corruption's press, I come to the particular instance of JACKSON, at Romsey, which is only a few miles from your own prince-like mansion and estate. This JACKSON has published a paper, price *three half-pence*, the object of which is to *defame* me and to throw suspicion upon my motives. This paper is called a *Register* and *my name* is placed in *large characters*, at, or near, the head of it. So that here, merely in the typography of the thing, is a proof that this JACKSON and his abettors and patrons saw no hope of selling it, unless they could entice purchasers by the lure of *my name*. The manifest intention of the use of these names was to make people believe, that the work was *written by me*. Imposture, however, seldom succeeds in the end; and that this *imposture*, though well enough contrived, has failed, the following curious facts will prove. JACKSON, the dirty tool at Romsey, has, it seems, a brother in London; or, at any rate, a person not ashamed to own that degree of relationship with the Romsey man, went, a few days ago, to Mr. HONE, bookseller, in the Old Bailey, London, and offered him a parcel of the Romsey trash for sale. After some conversation upon the subject, Mr. HONE declined the purchase, giving it as his opinion, that

the thing would not sell in London. He discovered from his brother, who very grossly calumniated me, that the Romsey fabrication *would not sell in the country*; as, indeed, how should it, seeing that it is a tissue of misrepresentation and lies, consisting of garbled extracts from my early writings, and being, altogether, a mass of incomprehensible nonsense, having nothing intelligible to plain honest people, and being, in short, a poor feeble effort at malice against any man whose writings are so clear to the understanding, are so manifestly intended and tending to produce peace and happiness in the country. Brother Jackson, not finding Mr. HONE willing to purchase at a penny each, went on lowering his price, till he came to about a *halfpenny*, observing to Mr. HONE that *money* was not so much the object as *circulation*. At last, though tendered at this low price he was obliged to carry his trash away, *four hundred* of them in number, with a recommendation from Mr. HONE to carry them to the *trunk-makers*! Mr. HONE, however, upon reflection on the baseness of such a transaction, and thinking that justice towards the public required that I should have the means of exposing it, and especially reflecting on what Brother Jackson had said to him about those *who were in the background* in this publication and about *money being no object* in the affair, went to, or sent for, Brother Jackson, bought his 400 papers for *ten shillings and sixpence*, which is a little more than *one farthing each*; and, of these 400 papers Mr. HONE has been so good as to make me a *present*, and I have them now actually in my possession, together with Brother Jackson's *receipt*, in the following words: "Received of Mr. HONE, 27. Dec. 1816, half a guinea, for the bundle of Romsey Register, sent to me for sale, 400 copies." "(Signed) DANIEL JACKSON."

Now, GEORGE, this man told Mr. HONE who were the *real authors* of this base and foolish performance; he told him besides, that he need be in *no fear of any prosecution* for publishing it; and he told him that he would be sure to be *safe in publishing against me*. But, GEORGE, I will not imitate the baseness of my and the people's enemies. I will repeat nothing against any one upon the words of such men as the JACKSONS; but, I will say, that, according to brother Jackson's story, it proves, that I was correct, when I said, that it was impossible for LORD PALMERSTON to be guilty of an act so base, so cowardly, and so infamous. *Who it really was, who was thus guilty*, I will leave the people to guess, and will leave the guilty party to the hearty detestation and contempt of that same people. But, that the party, be he who he might, had *plenty of money at command* will appear clearly enough, if we observe, that the four hundred sheets of paper did not cost less than *sixteen or eighteen shillings*, and that the printing could not have cost less than *sixteen shillings more*, to which if we add *half-a-crown for carriage* and a *shilling for postage*, here is a *loss of one pound five shillings* upon those 400 papers only; and, of course, the Romsey Jackson must be a person of rarely disinterested and most generous devotion to the cause of Corruption, or he must be supplied with money from *some quarter* other than his own purse. Not knowing the man, I cannot decide this question: you, who are his near neighbour, possibly may be able to form a better judgment on the subject.

Base as this trick is, there is one CHAPPEL, a bookseller, in Pall Mall, London, who has been made the tool to play off a still baser trick. This man is a downright *impostor*, without any possible shuffle; for he has advertised a thing called, "*The Friend of the People, an entire NEW*"

Work, by William Cobbett." This is a heap of trash also, a mass of misrepresentations and falsehoods, taking detached parts of my works, written many years ago, garbling them, and disfiguring the whole. But, what a proud thing for me, that the abettors of such men as this CHAPPEL, with all their means, are unable to get people even to *look into* their publications without *cheating* them into it by the use of *my name*, by making them believe that the thing is actually *mine*! What! have I beat them all to this degree? Can they, amongst all the pensioned and sinecure authors, find no one who is able to write any thing that the public will look at, without stealing *my name* to put at the head of their things? If this do not satisfy my desire of fame and victory, nothing can. This imposture of CHAPPEL has, I suppose, been borrowed from the *ass*, who put on the *lion's skin*; and the trick answered very well till the *ass* began to *bray*, or toote; but (and Chappel should remember it) the moment he opened his mouth, *his noise betrayed him*, and the people who had been imposed on by his outward appearance, cudgelled him soundly for his pains.

It has given me much satisfaction to perceive the great efforts which have been made use of to injure my character; because, always knowing the charges against me to be either *false* or *ridiculous*, I have, of course, felt quite able at all times to answer them, while the fact of their *being made* is a clear proof of the *great effect* which my writings are producing, and that is what I have principally in view. The press of corruption, as if it acted under one common command, abstained from even alluding to me or my writings for more than *six years*. This was certainly wise; for, what was the use of showing hatred without being able to *answer*? Now, however, it has been unable to restrain itself. It has been so deeply stung, that it has cried out in spite of all its efforts to keep silence. Like a stubborn and hardened thief, under the lash of the beadle, it long bit its lips and writhed its limbs, seeming resolved not to cry out, but, at last, came a stripe in a tender part, and forth it bellowed its cries, mingled, thief-like, with lies and curses.

That old acquaintance of the Treasury, WALTER, has left a son, who is proprietor of the *Times* newspaper, and who first burst forth upon this occasion. Not with any attempt to *answer me*. O, no! but to defame me *personally* and to excite suspicions as to *my motives*. This never did yet, and never can, weigh a hair against fact and argument. Besides, I have, many times, exposed the falshood of the charges which this man has made against me. Nevertheless, as some of my present readers may not have seen this exposure, and, as it embraces some very *interesting* and very *useful* information relative to the *press* of this country, I will here make the exposure again, and, I choose to make it in an address to *you*, because I mean to state some facts of which you had a perfect knowledge, and to challenge you to contradict me, if you can.

The charges which this man brings against me are these: **FIRST**, that, when about to be brought up for judgment at the time when I was so severely punished for writing about the flogging of the English local militia-men in the County of Cambridge, under the guard of German troops, and for which writing I was sentenced to pass two years in a felon's jail, to pay a thousand pounds to **THE KING**, and when all this had been suffered, to be held to bail for **SEVEN YEARS**, in the amount of **THREE THOUSAND POUNDS** myself and **ONE THOUSAND POUNDS** each my two sureties; when this sentence was about to be

passed, WALTER says that I made a proposition to the Government to this effect ; that, if the proceedings were dropped ; that is to say, that if I were not brought up for judgment, but suffered to remain unmolested, I never would publish another Register or any other thing. Now, GEORGE, suppose this to have been true. Had I not a right to do this? Was there any thing dishonest or base in this? I was under no obligation to continue to write. The country had done nothing for me. I was in no way bound to sacrifice myself and family if I could avoid it. I was in the state of a soldier surrounded by an irresistible enemy ; and has a soldier so situated ever been ashamed to ask his life and to accept of it upon condition of not serving again during the war ?

I might let the thing rest here. This answer would be complete, were I to allow the charge of WALTER to be true ; but, the charge is basely false. *No proposition of any sort was ever made by me, or by my authority, to the Government.* The grounds of the charge were as follows : a few days before I was brought up for judgment, I went home to pass the remaining short space of personal freedom with my family. I had just begun farming, and also planting trees, with the hope of seeing them grow up as my children grew. I had a daughter fifteen years of age, whose birth-day was just then approaching, and, destined to be one of the happiest and one of the most unhappy of my life, on that day my dreadful sentence was passed. One son eleven years old, another nine years old, another six years old, another daughter five years old, another three years old, and another child nearly at hand. You and Perceval might have laughed at all this. It was your turn to laugh then ; but, the public will easily believe that, under the apprehensions of an absence of years, and the great chance of loss of health, if not of life, in a prison, produced nothing like laughter at Botley ! It was at this crisis, no matter by what feelings actuated, I wrote to my attorney, Mr. WHITE, in Essex-street, to make the proposition stated above. But fits of fear and despair have never been of long duration in my family. The letter was hardly got to the post-office at Southampton before the courage of my wife and eldest daughter returned. Indignation and resentment took place of grief and alarm ; and they cheerfully consented to my stopping the letter. Mr. PETER FINNERTY was at my house at the time ; a post-chaise was got, and he came off to London, during the night, and prevented Mr. White from acting on the letter. I suffered my heavy punishment, but I have preserved my life, health, and the use of my pen, and, what I value still more is, that all this family have also had uninterrupted health, are all strong in frame and sound in mind, and have imbibed an everlasting hatred against those corruptions which have finally brought their country into its present state of misery. Now, Mr. FINNERTY, whom I have not had the pleasure to see for some years, is alive and in London. Mr. WHITE is also alive. The public will be sure, that I should not dare to have made the above statement if it had not been true to the very letter. And thus endeth the *first charge* of Walter.

His SECOND charge is that of *inconsistency* ; that is to say, that I formerly held opinions, that I do not now hold ; but, which former opinions were in direct opposition to those which I now hold and which I now promulgate, so much to the sorrow and the annoyance of the corrupt. Now, GEORGE, what a foolish charge is this ! What do we live for but to correct our errors ; to grow wiser from experience ; and to

do better at last than at first? Besides have not I been the first to state not only that I was in error, but to give the reasons for the change. God forbid, that I should rely upon your example as a justification of any part of my conduct; but, have not you, after having, for years, been a strenuous supporter of *friendly societies*, recently declared them to be mischievous, and that *saving-banks* are the thing? Did you not *oppose*, with all your might, the *Corn Bill*, in 1814, and did you not support the same bill, or, at least, *not oppose it*, in 1815? But, has not the Parliament passed scores of laws, and afterwards repealed them upon a change of opinion? However, I choose rather to take, as far as I can without profanity, the example of St. PAUL, who was, at one time, not only *not a Christian himself*, but a *persecutor* of the Church of Christ, and who, notwithstanding this, became at last the *greatest* of all the Apostles, and, in fact, was, more than all other men put together, the cause of the triumph of that religion which he had once so eagerly persecuted. I have never heard any one accuse St. Paul of *inconsistency*; no one, that I know of, has ever called him a *turn-coat*; yet, it would be inconsistent indeed to deny that he was a turn-coat, if I am one. I can remember, when I most firmly believed, that *your pamphlet* about the Finances, which I first read in America, was all *truth and wisdom*; and am I to be called a *turn-coat*, because upon examination, with the advantage of additional knowledge, I find it to be a heap of *falsehoods and nonsense*? I once most firmly believed, that the Ministers, Pitt, Dundas, and their associates, were the most pure and honest of men; but, did I become a turn-coat because I did not look upon them in this light after the exposures of 1804 and 1805? When in America, and for a year or two after I came home, I did not believe that there could be any such thing as *seat-selling*; but, was I a turn-coat, because I did believe it after the famous disclosures of the famous year 1809?

No, GEORGE, this is not being a *turn-coat*; a turn-coat means a wretch, who changes his principles and language for *hire*; and, until WALTER can bring some proof of my ever having received, or asked for, any thing of any sort from the Government, all his trash about my change of principles will avail corruption nothing. It may be a subject of regret with corruption, that I was not fool enough to persevere in error; but it is no subject of regret with the friends of freedom, who, on the contrary, rejoice at it exceedingly.

What has been said is quite enough to satisfy any one, that the charge is foolish and false; but, since I have thought it right to answer the charge, I will not stop here. I will show, I will *remind you*, that, not only have I not changed from any bad motive, but that, if I had been base enough to be a dependent of the Treasury, I might have been in that state, and, doubtless, might have escaped all punishments, and might, like other writers, have grown rich at the public expense, and have quartered my family upon that same public. I will tell my story in plain language, GEORGE, and, if it makes any disagreeable disclosures, thank WALTER, the Romsey JACKSON and his prompters, and others of that description.

When I began writing in America, the country raged with attacks on PITT and on ENGLAND. I was an Englishman, and following that impulse, which was so natural to my spirit and my age, under such circumstances, I took the part of my country, without knowing much, and, indeed, without caring much about the grounds of her war against the people of

France. I had read little at the age of twenty-eight, and I had had no experience in such matters, having been in the army to the age of twenty-six, from the age of sixteen or seventeen. I knew that I was an Englishman, and, hearing my country attacked, I became her defender through thick and thin, always confounding the *Government* of my country with *my country herself*. That I laboured with great effect is well known; and, it is also well known, that, amidst the turmoil of passion which existed in that country, I was finally most unjustly compelled to pay an amount of damages, which together with the consequences of it, actually deprived me of every shilling I had in the world, and sent me home upon a subscription, raised by some very worthy men in Canada.

Now, it has been asserted, and particularly by a base tool of corruption, who publishes a newspaper at EXETER, that, when I came home, I was *disappointed*; that the Government did not receive and reward me agreeably to my deserts; and, that, THEREFORE, I *turned against it*. You, George, know this to be false. However, the facts were these. Very soon after my arrival, I was invited to dine at Mr. WINDHAM's, who was then Secretary at War, and did dine in company of PITT, who was very polite to me, and whose manners I very much admired. At this dinner, besides the brave and honest (though misguided) host, were Mr. CANNING, Mr. FRERE, Mr. GEORGE ELLIS, and some others, whom I do not now recollect. I was never presumptuous in my life, and I regarded this as a great act of condescension on the part of Mr. WINDHAM, and more especially on the part of Mr. PITT; of whose talents and integrity I had then the highest possible opinion; for I, at that time, had no idea of such things as Bank bubbles and Lord Melville's accounts.

What reception could be more flattering to a man who had been a private soldier but a few years before, and who, even then, had not more than six or seven hundred pounds in the world? I was well aware, that Mr. PITT never admitted newspaper writers to such an honour. What reason, therefore, had I to be discontented with my *reception*? However, I might, it will be said, look for something more *solid* than this. You, George, well know that I did not; and you also know, that I had something *more solid offered to me*. And, this it was. JOHN HERIOT, was at that time, the proprietor of two newspapers, called the SUN, and the TRUE BRITON, the former an evening and the latter a morning paper. I had heard that these two papers had been set on foot by *you*, who were then one of the *Secretaries of the Treasury*, and that, when set on foot, the profits of them had been *given* to HERIOT. Now, mark, that Mr. HAMMOND, who was then Under Secretary of State in the Foreign Department, offered to me the *proprietorship* of one of those papers *as a gift*, and I remember very well that he told me, that this offer was made in consequence of a communication with *you*, or your colleague Mr. LONG, I forget which. This was no trifling offer. The very types, presses, &c. were worth a considerable sum. Mr. HAMMOND, who was a very honest as well as a very zealous and able man, had behaved with great kindness to me; had invited me frequently to his house, where I dined, I recollect, with Sir WILLIAM SCOTT, with LORD HAWKESBURY (now Lord Liverpool), and several other persons of rank; and, in short, had shown me so much attention, that I felt great reluctance in giving the following answer to his offer: "I am very much obliged to you and to the gentleman, of whom you speak, for this offer; but, though I am very poor,

“ my desire is to render the greatest possible service to my country, and, I am convinced, that, by keeping myself wholly free, and relying upon my own means, I shall be able to give the Government much more efficient support, than if any species of dependence could be traced to me. At the same time, I do not wish to cast blame on those who are thus dependent ; and I do not wish to be thought too conceited and too confident of my own powers and judgment, to decline any advice that you, or any one in office, may, at any time, be good enough to offer me ; and, I shall always be thankful to you for any intelligence or information, that any of you may be pleased to give me.” Mr. HAMMOND did not appear at all surprised at my answer ; and I shall always respect him for what he said upon hearing it. His words were nearly these : “ Well, I must say, that I think you take the *honourable* course and I most sincerely wish it may also be the *profitable* one.” I ought not upon this occasion to omit to say, that I always understood, that Lord Grenville, who was then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was not one of those who approved of the baseness and dependence of the press.

Now, Mr. HAMMOND is alive ; and, I am sure, if appealed to, he will not deny that what I have here stated is true. I do not mean, of course, to be exact as to every word ; but as to the *substance*, as to the full and fair meaning, I engage that Mr. HAMMOND, whom I have not seen for twelve or thirteen years, will frankly vouch. It is not pleasant for me to name persons in this way ; nor would I do it merely for my own character ; but, when the cause of *my country* is attacked through me, I think myself fully justified in detailing all the circumstances, and in appealing to all the evidence that exists.

There occurred, about the period last spoken of, a circumstance which brought me in contact with *you*, George ; and the statement of it will show how careful I was to guard my fingers against touching *public money*. I had brought home with me a large trunk or two of *old books*. These, when I arrived at Falmouth, the Collector, Mr. PELEW, told me I *ought not to pay duty for*, as they were merely library books and for private use, and not intended *for sale* ; but, that *he* could not remit the duty ; that the trunks must go round to London ; and that, a memorial to the Treasury, addressed to *you*, would give the books *untaxed*. I addressed such memorial to you ; and, I received for answer, that *the duty must be paid*, but that the *Treasury would give me the amount*. No, thank ye, said I. I wanted no communication of this sort. I paid the duty, and left you the money to lay out in some other way. This was a trifling sum ; but, it shows how scrupulous I was upon this head. Little did I imagine, that you possessed an estate in Hampshire at that time, and that I should live to see troops of baronets and country 'squires creeping at your heels !

The newspaper, which I set up, very soon failed. It was not, I found, an affair of *talent* but of *trick*. I could not *sell paragraphs*. I could not throw out hints against a man's or woman's reputation in order to bring the party forward to pay me for silence. I could do none of those mean and infamous things, by which the daily press, for the far greater part, was supported, and which enabled the proprietors to ride in chariots, while their underlings were actually vending lies by the line and inch. For a short time I was without writing at all, when, the change of Ministry having put Addington in place, and Mr. WINDHAM in the Opposi-

tion, the latter, with Dr. LAURENCE, prevailed on me to undertake a *weekly paper*, and they engaged to enable me to set it on foot, for, really, I had not myself the means. But, these advances were made and expended upon the *express* and *written* conditions, that I should never be under the influence of any body. The money was to be looked upon as sunk in the risk; and I was never to be looked upon as under any sort of obligation to any of the parties. It was long before I would consent to the thing at all; but, when I did, it was upon these *express* and *written* conditions. And never did any one of the persons who advanced the money, attempt, in the slightest degree, to influence my opinions, which were frequently opposed to their own.

When the *Whigs*, as they were called, came into power, and when Mr. WINDHAM came to fill the high office of Secretary of State for the War and Colonial Departments, every one thought, that *my turn* to get rich was come. I was importuned by many persons to take care of *myself*, as they called it. But, as soon as I found from him, that he actually *was in place*, I told him, "Now, Sir, to make all smooth with regard to me, I beg you to be assured, that it is my resolution to have no place, and not to touch one single farthing of the public money, in any shape whatever;" and justice to his memory demands that I should say, that he, upon that occasion, told me, that I never should forfeit any part of his esteem by opposing the Ministry; "No," said he, "nor even by any censure that you may think it your duty to pass upon my own conduct." Mr. WINDHAM is not alive to appeal to; but, my Lord FOLKESTONE is, and his Lordship, though not present upon this particular occasion, was well acquainted with all the facts, and, I shall not easily forget, that I was, by Mr. WINDHAM, made the bearer of an offer of a Lordship of the Admiralty to Lord FOLKESTONE, which the latter (will you believe it, George!) declined to accept of, though it was a clear thousand a year for doing little or nothing!

After these transactions came the prosecution under Perceval and by the mouth of Gibbs, of which I have spoken before, and the misrepresentations with regard to which have given rise to this relation. If I am asked how it happened that *Walter* came in possession of the fact of my having written to Mr. WHITE the letter which was recalled by Mr. FINNERTY, I answer, that I cannot tell; but, that I suspect that it was communicated to him (with a suppression of the recalling) by a wretch whom *he knows* to be without an equal in the annals of infamy, not excepting the renowned JONATHAN WILD, and which wretch I will, when I have time, drag forth, and hold him up to the horror of mankind.

Now GEORGE, I am aware, that I have bestowed too much space upon matters belonging to myself; but, there was a necessity for saying something, not for my own sake, as I said before, so much as for the sake of the cause of the country, which has, by the hirelings of the press, been attempted to be stabbed through me, who have now so large a portion of the press in my hands. It would not become me to be answering calumnies every week of my life; but, I beg the public to bear in mind, that if every dirty and foolish attack does not draw me *instantly* forth, they may always confidently rely, that no man will ever be able to bring against me any charge involving *dishonesty* or *dishonour*, that I cannot, and that I will not, *prove to be false*. There is another circumstance, to which the people ought to attend; and that is, that there is such a thing as *envy* as well as *hatred*, and that the *effects* of the former are very

nearly the same as those of the latter. There are writers, who pass for very good friends of freedom, and, indeed, are so very much attached to the cause, that they cannot endure the idea of a *rival*, especially if he carry away, however unintentionally, a considerable part of their readers, that is to say of their *profits*. I have read of a nation of savages, who entertain the strange notion, that when any one murders another of superior strength or talent, the murderer instantly becomes possessed of the envied qualities of the deceased. I rather think that the writers of a paper called the *INDEPENDENT WHIG* are no very remote descendants of this singular nation.

Having disposed of these calumniators *for the present*, and until they have had another *run* of a month or two, I now come, GEORGE, to notice your *Saving-Bank Bubble*. You were for a long time, the great patron of *Friendly Societies*, and procured several Acts of Parliament to be passed for their encouragement. But, as if by inspiration, you, all at once, discovered, that these were bad things; that they collected men together; that when so collected, they got drunk and *talked*, the naughty rogues! Yes, and even talked politics too! And, it might have been added, that they very frequently heard one of their members *read the Register!* It must be confessed, that this was intolerable, and, therefore, no one could be surprised when you came out with your new scheme of *Saving-Banks*, by the means of which the pennies of the poor were to be put together, *while their persons were kept asunder!* What a bubble! At a time, when it is notorious, that one-half of the whole nation are in a state little short of starvation; when it is notorious, that hundreds of thousands of families do not know, when they rise, where they are to find a meal during the day; when the far greater part of the whole people, much more than half of them, are paupers: at such a time to bring forth a project for collecting the *savings* of journeymen and labourers in order to be *lent to the Government* and to form a fund for the support of the leaders in sickness and old age! The Company of Projectors, who, in the reign of George the First, wanted a charter granted them for the purpose of "*making deal boards out of saw-dust;*" this Company just saves you from the imputation of having, in the *Saving-Bank Scheme*, been the patron of the *most ridiculous* project that ever entered into the mind of man. This scheme was, it seems, of *Edinburgh* origin. That seat of all that is servile in politics and religion. That favourite resort of supple slaves and quack critics, whose conceit and impudence are surpassed only by their shallowness and dirty ambition. The object of the scheme was, to make the poor people believe themselves to be *fundholders*, and, thus, to range them on the side of the paper-system. How foolish the scheme was is now seen; but the object of it ought not to be forgotten.

But, let us see a little how the matter would have stood, if you could have prevailed on the labouring people to give up two, three, or four pence a week each. In the space of seven years, at 4d. a week, a man would have deposited 6l. 1s. 0d.; and, if accumulated interest were added, the amount at the end of the seven years, would have been about seven pounds. So that, by pinching a little out of his already too small wages, he would, at the end of seven years, have possessed seven pounds. But, all this time, he must have *full employment*, and must enjoy *uninterrupted health*. However, the curious thing would be, in this case, that, while he was *saving* this sum out of his scanty meals, he

would as things now are, pay *seventy pounds to the Government in taxes*, which at the rate of interest supposed in the former case, would, at the end of seven years, amount to about *eighty-two pounds!*

I have here supposed the case of the common day-labourer who receives no more than seven shillings a week; and, whether we take the beer, salt, leather, soap, candles, tea, sugar, tobacco, spirits, &c., which each family use, or whether we take the number of families and compare it with the total amount of the taxes, we shall find, that every such man really does pay ten pounds a-year out of eighteen pounds of wages, and that Mr. PRESTON's calculation is not at all exaggerated. Mr. PRESTON is a lawyer of great eminence; he has (whether to his profit or not, I do not know), become possessed of a great, or, at any rate, an extensive landed estate; he is a Member of Parliament for a *borough*; and, what is more, he has always been a staunch *Pittite*, and so (with what degree of consistency is not for me to say) remains to this hour. He is, therefore, *no Jacobin*; he does not want *confusion*; he cannot desire to see all property *destroyed*. And yet he distinctly asserts, that, out of eighteen pounds of wages, every labourer pays ten pounds in taxes, and I know that he asserts what is correct, except that he has, very wisely, kept within bounds.

This being the case, what a famous Saving-Bank System might be adopted by taking off the labourer's taxes, and by putting the ten pounds a-year into an accumulating fund! Then, at the end of seven years of health and of industry, the labourer would be possessed of eighty-two pounds, which would be something, indeed, not only to ward off misery from times of sickness and old age, but to give a man a *start* in the world. You will, I know, say, that the Government *stands in need of these taxes*. I know it does, according to *the present system of expense*, which I contend ought to be changed. But, at any rate, this is nothing to my argument; for what I say, and indeed, what I *prove* is, that it is a scheme little short of a sign of madness, to propose to *better* the lot of the labourer by inducing him to pinch his belly to the amount of six pounds in seven years, while, in that same seven years, seventy pounds are paid by him in taxes.

The scheme for *preventing the labouring classes from marrying* has in it an equal portion of folly with the addition of a very large portion of insolent cruelty. The apprehensions of the Government, and of those who depend on it, have given rise to numerous inventions. They are alarmed, and very justly, at the enormous increase of the Poor-rates, which, since the commencement of the war against the people of France, have swelled up from $2\frac{1}{4}$ millions to 8 millions a-year in England and Wales alone; and, we must observe, that these rates have increased in amount *more* within the *last ten years*, than within the *twenty years before*. Besides, there is no probability, that they have not *now* arrived at the pitch of ten or twelve millions a-year. This I have, for *more than eleven years past*, been foretelling; and, I now foretel, that, if the present system be persevered in, and, if a *reform of the Parliament do NOT take place*, the Poor-rates will, in three years from this day, amount to more than the *whole of the rental* of the kingdom, houses, lands and all.

Of this, I believe, many Gentlemen even in Parliament, are now well convinced; and, therefore, divers *schemes* are on foot to prevent this dreadful catastrophe. The only scheme that could be effectual would be

to reduce the taxes to what they were before the French wars; but, this scheme is never mentioned by any of the *schemers*, some of whom have proposed to refuse parish relief to all persons who are *able* to work, whether they can *get work* or not; and, the *Courier* newspaper, in putting forth a justification of this scheme, said, that "we must be *cruel* to be *kind*." Meaning, that the poor must be made to *suffer*, in order to prevent them from *marrying* and *increasing*. One of the Correspondents of the Board of Agriculture reckons the *early marriages* of the labouring classes amongst the chief causes of the national distress, and another proposes to visit with severe punishment the parents of *bastards*. So that here the labouring classes, who *raise all the food*, build *all the houses*, make *all the clothes*, get in *all the fuel*, are to have no share of those enjoyments, which Nature has insured to them by her very first and most imperative laws. But, this doctrine of celibacy, as dished up for the labouring classes, and the origin of which I shall presently notice, would have passed without any particular observation on my part, did I not believe, that it was really intended by some persons, to be *acted upon*, during the ensuing Session of Parliament. One would suppose, that that assembly must anticipate work enough without entertaining such a scheme; but, the scheme is a favourite with all those (who are very numerous), who look upon the poor as *rivals* in the work of *tax-eating*, and who begin to see, that, unless the Poor-rates can be reduced, they cannot go on with their present receipts. The corrupt press, has, too, been busy in putting forth the scheme and recommending it to be adopted. In the *Country*, the *Justices* talk about it. I met one last summer, when the following dialogue took place:—

J.—"Well, Mr. Cobbett, what are we to do with the poor next winter?"

C.—"We must feed and clothe them."

J.—"Something must be done to get rid of this intolerable burden, or else the land must go uncultivated, for no man can pay *rent* and *rates* too."

C.—"Yes, Sir, something must be done; but we cannot *begin* with the poor. They *must* be fed, and they *will* be fed, whether *rents* be paid or not."

J.—"But, do you think, that they *ought* to be allowed to *marry*, and then to come to *others* to *keep their children* for them?"

C.—"That is a large question, Sir. They would want no others to *keep their children*, if the *articles* they consume were not all so *heavily taxed* as to take from them more than the half of their wages."

J.—"Ah! we shall never see the Government-taxes taken off. They are wanted."

C.—"Then, I am quite sure, that our Poor-rates will soon be double what they are now."

J.—"But, Sir, do you not think, that the Poor-laws have been very much *misunderstood*, and that the Act of Queen Elizabeth never meant that the *able* poor should be relieved?"

C.—"The Act meant, that all should be relieved, who were *unable* to procure subsistence themselves; and, common sense appears to me to say, that it is of no consequence whether the *disability* consists in *bodily weakness* or in a want of employment."

J.—"There must be an *Act* passed to prevent the poor from *marrying*. What is done cannot be *undone*; but, they should have *warning*, that

" those who have children in consequence of *future marriages*, will have no relief, and that, if they marry, they do it at their peril."

C.—" An Act so at war with justice and nature never will be passed, and, if it were, it would bring swift destruction on all who attempted to put it in force."

Now, this was a very good sort of man ; by no means one of those harsh and unfeeling men that we sometimes meet with in such offices ; and, I am very sure, that his modesty would have prevented him from making these observations, if the opinions had not become *very current* in his circle. The father of this dreadful scheme was Mr. MALTHUS, a clergyman of the Church of England, who, seeing the alarming increase of pauperism, seems not to have looked at the *real cause*, the *taxes*, but to have cast about him for some means of checking the increase of the *breed* ; as if paupers were a *distinct race* amongst human beings, as wolves and asses are amongst four-footed animals. Mr. MALTHUS, however, has received a complete answer from the pen of Dr. CHARLES HALL,* in a work published by the latter in 1813, and from which work I shall here insert an extract, requesting all *labouring men* as well as all Members of Parliament to read it with attention.

Mr. MALTHUS, after stating the evils of pauperism, and expressing his wish to check them, says :—

" To this end I should propose a regulation to be made, declaring, that no child born from any marriage taking place after the expiration of a year from the date of the law, and no illegitimate child born two years from the same date, should ever be entitled to parish assistance. After the public notice, which I have proposed, had been given, to the punishment of nature he should be left ; the punishment of severe want : all parish assistance should be rigidly denied him. He should be taught that the laws of Nature had doomed him and his family to starve : that he had no claim on society for the smallest portion of food ; that if he and his family were saved from suffering the utmost extremities of hunger, he would owe it to the pity of some kind benefactor, to whom he ought to be bound by the strongest ties of gratitude."

Is not this enough to fill the labouring classes with indignation and rage ? But now let us hear Dr. HALL's able answer :—

" The treatment of this labouring man, I cannot help saying, appears to me not only *inhuman*, to the last degree, but *unjust* and *iniquitous*. I will ask, why is he thus treated ? Because, it will be answered, he does not produce by his labour sufficient to maintain his family. But, I say he produces *six or eight times* as much as his family requires, but which is taken from him by those who produce nothing. What he is entitled to is, all that his hands have made or produced, the whole fruits of his labour, not that pittance his wages enable him to purchase. That he has produced what I assert, is literally true if he is an husbandman ; and if he is an artificer, the labour which he applies in his trade, would, if it was suffered to be employed on the land, do the same. It is not true that he has doomed himself, or that Nature has doomed him and his family to starve ;

* The work here quoted by Mr. COBBETT is one of extraordinary merit, although one, the doctrines of which were not so all likely to be fashionable at the time when it was first published. There were three editions of Dr. HALL's book ; the first published in 1805, the second in 1813, and the third in 1820. These three were, in fact, but one edition, only that the Doctor, finding, most likely, that his book did not sell, brought it out a second and a third time ; with a new title-page. Its original title was, "*The Effects of Civilization on the People in European States.*" To the second publication there was added, "*An Appendix, containing Observations on the Principal Conclusion in Mr. Malthus's Essay on Population.*" And the third title (1820), was, "*An Inquiry into the Cause of the Present Distress of the People.*"—ED.

"that cruel doom is brought on by the rich. If any are to be treated in this cruel manner, it is those who have been rich, and who have never produced any part of all they have consumed. But none ought to receive such hard usage. The poor labourer is to receive no assistance from others, because, it will be said, it will be a burthen on the rich. I say, *he is no burthen on the rich*; and that, instead of receiving any thing from them, he gives them seven parts out of eight of what he produces. He is under no ties of gratitude to them; and if he had sensations of an opposite kind, it might hardly be wondered at. Are the bees who produce the honey under obligation to the drones for eating it? Are the bees a burden to the drones, and not the drones to the bees? But who are the poor men that are to *wait before they marry*, and to *what time are they to wait*? I answer, that not this or that individual, but none of the labourers, or any of the common mechanics, can rear a family without the greater part of them perishing for want, *even with the interest of all the money they can possibly have saved during the time they are single*. Are they, therefore, *never to marry*? Are not those rather to remain single, who do nothing to support themselves or the children they may have? And for whose benefit are the poor to remain single, to be abstemious and continent? For those, I say, who wallow in waste and luxury, sensuality and lust. No restraint can be justly imposed on any, unless they receive all the advantages that may be derived from it."

Let those, therefore, *ponder well*, who have this scheme in their heads. But it is curious that a *clergyman of the Church of England* should have been the father of this doctrine. That Church quarrelled with the Church of Rome, in part, and, perhaps, principally, because the Church of Rome *does not permit her clergy to marry*! And, though Mr. MALTHUS may have forgotten it, one of the *Articles of the Religion* of the Church of England, and in which Articles Mr. MALTHUS has, of course, *sworn* that he believes, reprobates the doctrine of abstaining from marriage, as being *hostile to the Word of God*. The same Article says, that it is "lawful for all Christian men to marry at their own discretion." At the solemnization of matrimony, the Church prays thus: "O, merciful Lord and Heavenly Father, by whose *gracious gift mankind is increased*; we beseech thee assist with thy blessing these two persons, that they may *both be fruitful in procreation of children*, and also live together so long in godly love and honesty that they may see their children christianly and virtuously brought up to thy praise and honour, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And at the churching of women, these words are uttered: "Lo, children and the fruit of the womb, are *an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord*.—Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant: even so are the young children. —*Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them*: they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate."

For what, then, are the *labouring classes* in this kingdom to be shut out of this state of life? Why are they not to have children? Why are they not to possess this "heritage?" Why are they to be deprived of sharing of these *gifts* and these *blessings*?—Why, in short, are they to be considered as brutes; as live stock upon a farm?

But, if this clergyman of the Church and his abettors thought it necessary to check the increase of the labouring people's children, how came they to overlook the increase of the *children of the clergy themselves*? Will they say, that the *poor clergy* do not receive *parish relief*? The clergy altogether receive, according to Mr. ARTHUR YOUNG's calculation, more than *five millions* of pounds a year in England and Wales only, and there is about *fifteen thousand* of them in England and Wales, while there are *millions* of labouring people. But, this is

not all ; for, while the clergy of the Church receive this immense sum annually, and while some of the bishops have more than *twenty thousand pounds a year each*, and many of the other clergy two large livings each, there have been granted, for some years past, *a hundred thousand pounds a year* to assist in the maintenance of the *poor clergy* of the Church of England. This is a mere *gift* out of the taxes, a large part of which taxes are *paid by the labouring classes* ; and, what *insolence* as well as what cruelty and injustice is it, then, to propose to prevent the labouring classes from marrying, lest *they* should become chargeable to the parish, while these poor clergy who marry and have children without any attempt at hindrance, are actually chargeable, and actually receive relief, out of those very taxes, a large part of which come out of the wages of the journeyman and labourers ? Let Mr. MALTHUS answer this question if he can.

And now, GEORGE, in conclusion, let me first observe, that you and your sons (to say nothing of your dependents), receive a very large sum of the public taxes or loans annually, and put this sum into your private pockets. The receipt of *four thousand three hundred and twenty-four pounds* a year by yourself as Treasurer of the Navy is a *salary*, and this is within two thousand of the sum paid to the President or chief ruler of the United States of America, though that nation is nearly as populous as Great Britain, and though she has nearly as much trade and commerce, and is much more difficult to defend than this nation, and more difficult to govern than this nation might be. Next, you have a *sinecure*, which you have secured for your son, GEORGE HENRY ROSE, who is (if all remains tight) to enjoy it *for his life after your death*. This office, agreeably to an account given in by yourself, in 1810, yielded you, upon an average, 4,946*l.* a year, though you stated that you did nothing for it. Next you have a *sinecure* as Keeper of Records in the Exchequer, 400*l.* a year. Next your son, WILLIAM STUART ROSE, has a *sinecure* as Clerk of Exchequer Pleas, 2,137*l.* a year. Your son, GEORGE HENRY, is now, I believe, a foreign minister, and once was, as this nation has good reason to remember, a minister from this country to America, where the charges on his account amounted to much more than the President's salary. You yourself have received in *salary* more than 4,000*l.* a year upon an average of the last twenty-six years. We will leave out the *ambassador*, and then the yearly receipt of you and one son, not including dependents and what we have not in the books, is as follows :

Treasurer of the Navy	-	-	-	-	-	-	£4,324
Keeper of Records	-	-	-	-	-	-	400
Clerk of Parliaments	-	-	-	-	-	-	4,946
Clerk of Pleas	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,187
							<hr/>
							£11,857
							<hr/>

Or, in words, *eleven thousand eight hundred and fifty-seven pounds a year*. This is all paid by *the people*, and, in great part, by the *labouring* people ; and yet no Mr. MALTHUS has the impudence to propose the passing of a law to prevent any of *your* family from marrying !

But, now, let us see what this would amount to if, instead of your

having received it, it had been put into *a saving-bank for the people*. Your *salary* has been more than 4,000*l.* a year for twenty-six years.

The salary, at 4000 <i>l.</i> a year	- - - -	£104,000
The Clerkship of the Parliaments you have had 28 years, at 4,646 <i>l.</i> a year	- - - -	138,488
Keeper of Records, 45 years, at 400 <i>l.</i> a year	-	18,000
Clerk of Pleas (I <i>guess</i>) about 20 years, at 2,187 <i>l.</i>	-	43,740
		<hr/> £304,228 <hr/>

We *leave out* the ambassador, and also all that you have received for *bags and wax!* This last, *without including your salary before you were Secretary of the Treasury*, would make a nice little sum. I cannot find the date when your son, *William Stuart Rose*, got his sinecure place of 2,187*l.* a year, but, I find him in a report dated more than eight years ago, and I take it at *a guess* at twenty years. At any rate, there are a good round *three hundred thousand pounds* in PRINCIPAL MONEY. I have not time to calculate the compound interest of it; but if principal and interest should fall a little short of *half a million of pounds*, you will confess, at any rate, that this money, if it had remained amongst the people, might have formed a very nice *saving-bank!*

Now, GEORGE, begging some parson in your neighbourhood to send me an exact computation of the compound interest on your receipts, and giving the Romsey JACKSON full liberty to put this letter, particularly the last part of it, into print, and to circulate it freely amongst your voters and slaves of Southampton, Christ Church, and Lymington, I remain with such feelings as a man like me ought to entertain towards a man like you,

WM. COBBETT.

AN ADDRESS

TO THE MEN OF BRISTOL,

On the Birth-right of Petition.—On the Gagging Measures proposed by the Sons of Corruption.—On the great Falling-off in the Taxes.—On the probable Fate of the Fundholders.

(Political Register, January, 1817.)

London, 9th January, 1817.

MEN OF BRISTOL,—

You, I mean, who, for many years past have so bravely resisted the combined threats and delusions of the two factions, which have so long been a curse to this country, and have made us almost ashamed to be *Englishmen*, a name which has always heretofore been the proudest of

titles and distinctions. It is to you whom I address myself, and not to those poltroons, who crouch, like beaten spaniels, at every symptom of corruption's displeasure.

It is now about five years since you stood forward so boldly in the cause of *Parliamentary Reform*. At that time, corruption had felt no check ; she was at the height of her flight ; her conceit and insolence were extreme ; to open one's lips against her seemed to be as useless as it was dangerous. Yet, did you, even at that time, make your voices heard ; you protested against the continuance of the war, when there appeared no other object in view than that of restoring the House of Bourbon and all the other despotisms of Europe ; you declared your conviction, that ruin and misery would be brought upon your country ; you exposed the arts which had been made use of to deceive you ; in short, you carried on a contest worthy of freemen, and of freemen, too, breathing an air rendered pestiferous by the breath of slavery.

All your assertions have now been verified ; all your apprehensions have now been proved to have been well-founded. Those assertions which your enemies *then* called *false* and *seditions*, they *now* put forth themselves as *acknowledged* and *notorious truths*. Yet, they have not learned to be *just* towards you. They appear to have derived no profit from the past. And, though these dreadful calamities, which you foretold in 1812, have actually come upon us ; though your enemies acknowledge that they are come upon us, so far are they from confessing their former errors, that they seem, more than ever, resolved to be the persecutors and slanderers of those who warned them of the danger, and who called upon them to prevent it.

My good friends of Bristol, the circumstances attending your recent meeting on Brandon Hill, have excited a great deal of attention, as they exhibit a striking instance of the conduct of the magistrates to public meetings. You had, in a very respectable number, signed a requisition to your Mayor, to be pleased to call a meeting, in order to take into consideration the propriety of presenting a petition to Parliament for the abolition of sinecures and unmerited pensions, for a reduction of the standing army, and for a constitutional reform of the Commons' House of Parliament. To this requisition the Mayor gave a refusal ; and, instead of calling a meeting of peaceable citizens to deliberate on their rights and to send up their petitions in this time of dreadful distress, his worship thought proper to *call a meeting* of a very different sort ; namely, of *troops* of all descriptions, and from all parts of the country !

Now, let us take a full view of this transaction. You will observe that the *right of petition* is, in fact, our only safeguard against being as much slaves as the negroes are ; for if men are not permitted to make their sufferings and their injuries *known* to those who possess the power to see them righted, the rich and powerful may knock out the brains of the poor with impunity. Suppose a rich man were to murder his labourer, and suppose that no officer of justice would do his duty towards punishing such offender. What redress is there for the widow and children of the murdered man ? Why a petition to king, or Parliament, or both, makes the matter known to those who have the power to redress, and proceedings are adopted accordingly. Having endeavoured to *prevent* the people's petitioning was one of the crimes which drove the House of Stuart from the throne of this kingdom. For, as all the world knows, this present family is not the family who are entitled to the throne by

regular hereditary right. They have a much *better* title to it; that is to say, an *Act of Parliament*, which appointed them to reign instead of the Stuarts, who had behaved in so tyrannical a manner, that our forefathers very wisely set them aside for ever, and put up this family in their stead. The tyrant, James the Second, who was the last of the Stuarts, endeavoured to *gag* the people of England, in the same way that the sons of corruption are now recommending that we should be *gagged*. And in that memorable statute, called the *Bill of Rights*, it is expressly declared, that one of the crimes, for which he and his family were to forfeit the crown, was, the *obstructing of petitions*. The same bill declares, that the right of presenting petitions to the king or either House of Parliament, is an *inherent* right, a part of the *birth-right* of every Englishman.

The Mayor of Bristol, was not, that I know of, bound to call a meeting upon your requisition: but, I am very sure, that you had a right to meet, at any time or place, or in any manner that you chose; and, I am very certain also that all those persons acted *unlawfully*, who, by any means whatever, endeavoured to prevent you from meeting, whether by an open display of force, or by written or verbal threats. All those persons who published bills threatening to *punish*, by turning off, &c. the men who attended the meeting, have been guilty of a *conspiracy* to obstruct petitioning: and, therefore, I would very urgently recommend to you to obtain *proof*, I mean legal proof, of their having published such handbills. At any rate, get all the bills, and keep them safe; and, I would advise you, also, to take minutes in writing, and to be ready with evidence to prove, on oath, the fact of *posting of troops round, or near, your place of meeting*. With this evidence ready, a petition to Parliament against these proceedings may be strenuously maintained; and, we shall see, then, what the right of petition really is; we shall see what the *birth-right* is really worth; we shall see, at once, what we have to trust to, in future; we shall see, whether the right of *praying* be, at last, to be denied us.

But, in the meanwhile, what a sight did Bristol exhibit on that day; on the memorable 26th of December. The people in the deepest state of misery, beg their chief magistrate to preside over them, while they agree upon a petition to the Parliament; and their chief magistrate chooses rather to surround himself, and fill the city with *troops*! Upon what *ground* were those troops called in?—There had been no riot. There had been no indication of an intention to riot. In every part of the kingdom had numerous meetings been held, and in no one instance had there been any riot, either before or after the meeting; for, as to the contemptible thing in London, it arose out of the assemblage in the Old Bailey, which had been drawn together by the *hanging of four men that same morning*, and from which spot the rioters, chiefly *starving sailors*, went almost directly to the gunsmith's shop. The meeting of *petitioners*, in Spa-fields, had no more to do with the sailors' riot than you had. The meeting was not even *interrupted* by that riot. It was perfectly tranquil, went through its business, and dispersed without a single breach of the peace. But, this *sham plot* has now been completely exposed. Mr. PRESTON, whom the base proprietors of the COURIER and the TIMES newspapers represented as having "*confessed*" himself concerned in an *insurrection, conspiracy and plot*," is out upon *bail*, though they asserted, that *he had confessed his guilt as a traitor*! The elder Mr. WATSON, whom these same bloody men had asserted to have been

proved to have participated in the robbery of the *gunsmith's shop*, is committed for trial; but, *for what*? Why, for endeavouring, it is alleged, to hurt or maim, a *patrole who seizes hold of him in the dark, out in some fields near London!* Thus, all is blown to air, as I said it would in my Register, No. 24, vol. 31. Thus, the charge against this unfortunate gentleman also was *wholly false*. And yet, it is the *Courier* and the *Times* who cry out against the *licentiousness of the press*. We shall see whether the law-officers of the Crown will stretch forth the arm of protection for Messrs. Preston and Watson, whose lives these bloody men have so directly and so audaciously aimed at. The columns of these papers will prove, that the proprietors have endeavoured, by the means of falsehoods, which they *must* have invented to take away the lives of these gentlemen: and, is there *no punishment for them*? Are they to do these things with impunity?

Thus, then, it has been proved, not only, that there was no rioting on the part of the petitioners in London, but, that they, under the guidance of the very same gentleman, who took the lead at your meeting, remained quiet at their post, while riot was going on in the City. What ground was there, therefore, for the military preparations on the part of the Mayor of Bristol? And, what ground was there for swearing-in 2000 *special constables*? There have been held meetings at which petitions have been signed for a reform of Parliament, by more, I believe, than *half a million of men!* And, at no one of these meetings has any riot taken place. Nay, rioting has *ceased* as meetings for Reform have *increased*. At DUNDEE and in the ISLE of ELY and in SUFFOLK and at BIRMINGHAM, where there have been riots, there have been NO meetings for *petitioning*. In short, meetings for petitioning have put an end to rioting. And, this is very natural; because, when meetings are held, and the people's attention is drawn towards the *real causes of their misery*, they at once see, that the remedy is not a riotous attack upon the property of their neighbours; and they wait with patience and fortitude to hear what answer the Parliament will give to their petitions.

It seems to me, therefore, very wonderful, that those who *have property*, and who do not *share in the taxes*, should not be eager to promote meetings to petition; but the conduct of some of *your* rich neighbours has more than folly in it; it is deeply tinged with tyranny. I allude to the *threats* which they published against all those of their workmen who should attend the meeting on Brandon-hill, and which threats ought never to be forgotten by *you*. But this hatred to the cause of public liberty is, I am sorry to say it, but too common amongst merchants, great manufacturers, and great farmers; especially those who have *risen suddenly* from the dunghill to a chariot. If we look a little more closely into the influence of riches, in such a state of things as this, we shall be less surprised at this apparently unnatural feeling in men who were, but the other day, merely journeymen and labourers themselves. As soon as a foolish and unfeeling man gets rich, he becomes desirous of making the world believe, that *he never was poor*. He knows that he has neither *birth* nor *education* to recommend him to the respect of those who have been less fortunate than himself. Though they pull their hats off to him, he always suspects that they are looking back to his mean origin; and instead of adopting that kindness towards them, and that affability which would make them cheerfully acknowledge his superiority, he endeavours, by a distant and rigid deportment, to extort from their fears

that which he wants the sense to obtain from their love. So, that, at last, he verifies the old maxim: "*Set a beggar on horseback, and he'll ride to the Devil.*"

This is the very worst species of aristocracy. It has all the *pride* and none of the *liberal sentiments* of the nobility and great gentry; and, the *farming* and *manufacturing* aristocracy is worse, a great deal, than the *mercantile*, because the latter must have more knowledge of the world, which is a great corrector of insolent and stupid pride. As to the *farmers*, who have grown into riches all of a sudden, they are the most cruel and hardened of all mankind. There are many of them, who really look upon their labourers as so many brutes; and though they can scarcely spell their own names or pronounce the commonest words in an intelligible manner, they give themselves airs, which no gentleman ever thought of. I have heard sentiments from men of this description, which would not have disgraced the lips of negro-drivers, or of a Dey of Algiers. Such men are always seeking to cause their origin to be forgotten. They would with their hands pull down their superiors and with their feet trample down their inferiors; but, as they are frequently *tenants*, and as their meanness is equal to their upstart pride, as they are afflicted with

"Meanness that soars, and pride that licks the dust,"

their chief aim is to trample into the very ground all who are beneath them in pecuniary circumstances, in order that they may have as few equals as possible, and that there may be *as wide a distance as possible between them and their labourers.*

Such men are naturally enemies to any Reform that would restore the great mass of the people to liberty and happiness; and so blinded are they by these their base passions, that they almost prefer being *ruined themselves*, to seeing their labourers enjoy their rights. Of the same materials a great part of the *master manufacturers* appear to be composed; for, in almost every instance, they have declined to *condescend* to co-operate with the people at large. They will, however, soon see, that their hopes of maintaining their monopoly of happiness and plenty are delusive. They and the upstart farmers have only *begun* to taste the fruit of the system, which they have so long assisted to support. The axe is, indeed, *laid to the root* of their riches: but, as yet, the trunk and branches hardly feel the effects of its blows. They will find, when, perhaps, it may be too late, that prosperous farmers and master manufacturers cannot exist without happy journeymen and labourers; and they will also find, that the measures, which are necessary to preserve their property, are those and those only which will insure to the people at large the enjoyment of all their constitutional rights.

This race of men seem *alarmed* at the idea of their labourers and journeymen having votes at elections as well as they! And why not? Are not those journeymen and labourers *as heavily taxed*? Have they not wives and families? Have they not liberty and life to preserve? The upstart, big-bellied, swell-headed farmer can bluster and bully (*out of his landlord's hearing*) enough about *sinécures* and *pensions*. He can swear and rave on this score like a madman. He can rail against the taxes which he has to pay, and against the tithes too he can curse like a Cossack or Pandour. But bid him *come to a meeting, or put his hand to a petition*, and you soon see what a wretched selfish thing he is. He would gladly enough see the people push forward to obtain a *repeal of taxes*, and to ease him of the weight of *sinécures* and *pensions*; but a *reform*, which would give to this

same people *rights equal to himself*, he does not understand ; he " does not see *what good* it would do ;" though if selfishness had not wholly blinded him, he would see that *no good* can possibly be done *without it*.

You, my good friends of Bristol, who have upon the late occasion, experienced so much annoyance from this description of men, or at least, from men resembling them in point of motives and character, should not fail to bear in mind who the *individuals* have been ; that is to say, you should keep safe all the *threatening* handbills which they published to obstruct you in the exercise of your invaluable right of petition. For, be you well assured, that the *ensuing session of Parliament* will never pass over without something being done to call the conduct of these persons in question. What would have been said of any of you, who should have put up bills, *threatening* to set fire to the warehouses and dwellings of the merchants, if they called in troops, or did any other thing, to prevent you from meeting to petition ? Yet, would this have been *more unlawful*, or *more cruel*, than for them to threaten you with *starvation*, if you persisted in meeting to petition ? To have issued such incendiary threats would, indeed, have been criminal in a high degree, and would have merited severe punishment, because no man has a right to put another man in fear for his life or his property, and I would much sooner forgive a man who should rob me on the highway, or who should steal my sheep or my horses, than a man, who should threaten to destroy my house or goods by fire. What, then, ought to be my feelings towards a man, who, without any provocation, without any offence against him, without any attempt to injure him in any way whatever, and merely because I proposed to exercise my own undoubted right, were to threaten to deprive me of house and home and even of bread for myself and my family ? What ought to be my feelings against such a man ? I leave you to judge. And, when you have decided, you will want no one to tell you what feelings *you* ought to entertain towards those cruel and insolent men, who have published, or uttered, in any way whatever, threats against you upon the late memorable occasion.

Quitting, now, the particular scene before us, I beg leave to call your attention, and also the attention of all who love their country and its liberties and its peace, to the endeavours, which corruption's press is making use of, in order to pave the way, if possible, for the enactment of GAGGING BILLS. Observe, that I am in no fear that these endeavours will succeed, and that I am convinced, that more than one-half of us must be *actually killed*, before such a project could be put in force. But, the *endeavours*, to produce this state of slavery, or this scene of civil war and bloodshed, it is my duty to notice *betimes*, and to warn my country against their pernicious and diabolical authors.

You must have observed, indeed every man with his eyes open must be well convinced, that it is the hope of a *Reform* which has hitherto kept the country in a state of tranquillity under its unparalleled sufferings.— This hope has been excited by public meetings and more especially by *publications*, and amongst these publications, *mine* certainly may claim a distinguished place. Now this being the case, manifestly and notoriously the case, in the usual course of things it would have followed, that the writers who profess to be *friendly* to the Government, would have *applauded* my labours, seeing that the tendency and the real effect of them is to preserve the public tranquillity ; to prevent those crimes which the Judges so severely reprobate, and which they punish very frequently by

a sentence of DEATH, as was the case a little while ago in Cambridgeshire and in one or two other counties, and as is, indeed, generally the case when any serious riot occurs.

But, the *Courier*, the *Times*, the *Sun*, the *Post*, and some others of corruption's sons have discovered an uncommon degree of uneasiness at this tranquillizing work. They have been disappointed. They wanted riots, bloodshed, and hangings and quarterings. These were things which they wanted to see going on; and then, they supposed, that the subject of *Reform* would be lost sight of now, as it was amidst the noise of the riots in London, in 1780, when the late Duke of Richmond actually had brought in a Bill for Annual Parliaments.

Thus disappointed by the good sense, the information, the moderation, and real public spirit of the people, the sons of corruption have become almost frantic. There is another *latent* reason, which I will mention by-and-by; but it is impossible not to see the fact, for it stares us in the face in all their pages. They began more than two months ago. Even then the *Courier* said, that the public, ought to watch that peaceable doctrine that was preached up with so much *malignity*! Did you ever before hear of *peaceable* malignity! The writer, who is a *wicked old hack*, said, that all this calling upon the "*rabble to be peaceable*, was a proof of some *deep design* against the Constitution." The design was indeed somewhat *deep*, for it aimed at a Radical Reform of all grievances, and a digging and rooting up of all corruptions.

After some time, however, these corrupt men, whose papers are read by the fools and knaves of the nation, could no longer refrain from a direct attack on the *Register*, which they asserted, would, if not put a stop to, **SOMEHOW OR OTHER**, overthrow the *Constitution*, and, as they always mean *corruption*, when they make use of the word *Constitution*, their opinion was, I would fain hope, perfectly correct; and I verily do believe, that my little book and corruption cannot live in the same country for any great length of time; and, as I am very sure, that the liberty of the press must be *wholly and openly annihilated*, before the *Register* can be put a stop to, I am not at all afraid to predict, that, in a very short time, corruption will be overthrown to the great benefit of King and Parliament and people.

But, now, let us hear what these men really say upon the subject. The proprietor of the *COURIER*, on the 2nd instant, has these words:—

"We have received from several parts of the country *complaints* of the *mischiefs* done in many places, attempting in all, *by these cheap twopenny-trash publications*. They are addressed to all the bad passions, they *inculcate the worst feelings*,—hatred of Government, want of respect for public authorities, *disobedience and disaffection*. But *Parliamentary Reform is their pretext*, and the pretext of the meetings which they *provoke*. But no one can be deceived as to their real object—the *destruction of the Constitution*. What the OFFICERS OF THE CROWN ARE DOING, OR INTEND TO DO, OR WHETHER THEY DO NOT INTEND TO DO ANYTHING, we know not. But we are quite sure that if *something be not done, and quickly too*, the evil, we will not say will become incurable, but at least, it will be *very, very difficult of cure indeed!* Strange and sorrowful contemplation it is to see *the Constitution*, to which we have owed our safe conduct through the great struggle, which has been the source of our *security* and our *greatness*, treated with *scorn, contumely, and ingratitude*."

In his paper of the next day he complains, that public meetings, "*divert the time and attention of the civil and military authorities from their private concerns and public duties, and compel them to exercise*

“that care and wealth in restraining the turbulent and guarding the public peace, which ought to be directed to *relieving the distressed* and *rewarding the industrious.*” And then he suggests the propriety of *dispersing*, or *preventing* such meetings by *force of arms.* “It is,” says he, “therefore a question that the peaceable inhabitants of all parts are deeply interested in asking, whether *the Constitution* does or does not invest the civil magistrate with authority to *check meetings*, which, be their avowed object *what it may*, prove themselves by the language and sentiments of the speakers, as well as their actual effect on the multitude, to *tend* to nothing but disorder and vice, as an immediate consequence, and ultimately to *sedition and rebellion?*”

Now, my friends of Bristol, bear in mind, that the man who has the impudence to publish this; the man who thus insults us, was, not many years ago, a *journeyman tailor.* His name is STUART, or STEWART, and, from the shop-board corruption has given him a hoist into a chariot. There is a man, who writes for Stuart, whose name is STREET; and, as the times are now growing serious, this man and his employer too must soon be dragged out before the public. No man ought to be suffered, in these times, to throw his poison from behind a curtain! Let the nation know who are the hatchers of plots and the proposers of *Gagging Bills.* Let those who *live* by corruption, come forth and *own her openly* for their patroness. Let them write what they will; but, let them be known to the people as *I am* and as I always have been.

The alarms of these corrupt men are by no means groundless; for the *wounds* that corruption is now receiving will *never be cured.* It is *too late* even now, for those great doctors “THE LAW-OFFICERS,” if they were so disposed, to come to her aid. She may reel along a little while; but she is much about in the state of a wolf, to which the hunter has given the *mortal blow*, and which is dragging his dying carcass into a thicket. This base writer, who has, within these six weeks, been guilty of every crime that a man can commit with a pen, finding himself exposed, and, indeed, finding *his paper falling off in sale*, is eager to set the *law-officers* to work in order to put a stop to the cause of his disgrace and decline. He does not know, he says, “*what the law-officers intend to do, or whether they do or do not, intend to do anything.*” And as he seems so full of curiosity upon this head, I will tell him *what the law-officers do intend to do.* They fully intend to file a *criminal information ex-officio* against the parties concerned in this little book; but they do not intend to do this, until they see something *criminal in it*, and we will take special care, that they shall never see that. This prostituted writer seems to think that it is of no consequence, whether we violate the law or not. He seems to think, that there is no more law for any one who espouses the cause of Reform than there is for a *mad dog.* He seems to look upon the Attorney and Solicitor-General as a brace of bloodhounds, whom he, the impudent varlet, can let loose upon any one, whether there has been a breach of the law or not! I know nothing of the character and disposition of these gentlemen. Hitherto their course has certainly formed a striking contrast with that of their predecessor. But I will bespeak neither their good-will nor their ill-will. I do not know them, and, therefore, I cannot *love* them; and they may be well assured, that I do not *fear* them. Every paper that goes from under my hand has a tendency to promote the peace, and to restore the happiness and honour of my country; and, though I by no means desire the trouble

of grappling with "Law-officers," as the Courier calls them; I fear them not, more than I do the Courier himself; though I will not be so rude and so unjust as to appear to suppose, that there can exist any feeling in common between those gentlemen and a reptile like him.

But, this man seems to despair of *legal proceedings*; for, he has repeatedly said, that he knows not what can be done, but that *something must be done* to put a stop to this publication. Now I can tell him of one sort of thing. When *Cockburn* and *Ross* entered the defenceless city of Washington, and set fire to the *Congress House*, some of their people went to the printing-office of a Mr. *GALE*, who had written on the side of his country, and tore down his establishment and scattered his types about the street. This is *one way* of silencing a press! But, that was in an invaded country, and where there was no law but *law-martial*; and, we shall not, I hope, see this in England; and, if we were to see it, it would not *pay the interest of the Debt*. What, then, would the Courier recommend? Nothing short of an *Act of Parliament*, I dare say! Now, let us suppose him sitting down to frame an act to suit his purpose. I am not supposing, that any minister, nor the underling of any minister, would have the folly or impudence to think of such a thing; but, what may not a man like this be supposed capable of? The following, then, would, I suppose, be the Bill that this son of Corruption would recommend:

A Bill for the better security of Corruption, and for perpetuating the Miseries and Disgrace of the United Kingdom.

WHEREAS one William Cobbett (an old offender in the same way) has for some years last past, and especially within the last three months, been, by the means of a certain weekly trash publication, endeavouring to undermine, and throw down the Corinthian Pillar of Corruption, and, at the same time, to preserve the peace and restore the happiness of the United Kingdom; AND, WHEREAS these efforts tend directly to do great and lasting injury to all those, who, directly or indirectly, live and fatten upon the profits of Bribery, Corruption, Perjury, and Public Robbery, and threaten more particularly to produce the total ruin and final starvation of the proprietors of the Courier, the Times and others their fellow-labourers in the fruitful vineyard of literary imposture and fraud, including, of course, *JACKSON* of Romsey and *CHAPPELL* of Pall-Mall; AND, WHEREAS, sad experience has proved, that though there are about twenty thousand Clergymen of the Church of England, the greater part of whom abhor the said William, and though there are as many Tax-gatherers as receive upwards of three millions a year for the collection and management of taxes, and that though there are many hundreds of persons in offices of various sorts, exclusive of about twenty thousand officers of the army and navy, many of whom have now a great deal of leisure, and that though there are some thousands of Sinecurists, Pensioners, and Grantees, and that though there are vast swarms of Lawyers of all ages and sizes, yet, that no one has been found to answer the writings of the said William, notwithstanding Corruption prevades nineteen twentieths of all the Reviews, Magazines and Newspapers in the Kingdom; AND, WHEREAS it is expedient to prevent the said William Cobbett from proceeding in the said dangerous courses, BE IT, THEREFORE, ENACTED, that the

said William shall write and publish no more, and that he shall neither talk nor think, nor dream without the express permission of the said proprietors of the Courier and Times or of their supporters and abettors.

Though not in this *form*, perhaps, yet to this *amount*, would the wishes of those people go. But, my worthy friends of Bristol, be in no *fear*; for you may be well assured, that, if any such thing were to be *attempted*, such an uproar would be raised as never was before heard in this country; because, in such an attempt, every one would see the inevitable and speedy establishment of downright despotism and *martial-law*, which, as the French saying is, "would leave people of property nothing but their *eyes to cry with*," and, would, therefore, put us all upon a level.

Oh, no! The Ministers are not so very foolish as to be urged, thus, into the very gulf of despotism. They know well, that silencing the press would not enable them to pay the interest of the Debt; and, they ought to know, that to silence the press could not *possibly* produce any other effect, than that desperation, which would, and which *must*, end in general commotion and desolation. Just the same may be said of this vile incendiary's endeavours to urge the Mayors and other *Magistrates* to "*check meetings*," that is to say, to prevent them, by the use of *military* or other *force*. If these magistrates were to act thus illegally; if they were thus to set the Constitution at open defiance; if they were to say to the people, "though you are starving, you shall not meet to petition; the Bill of Rights was not intended for you; you have no pretensions to the *birthright* of Englishmen." If the Magistrates were to act thus, what would be the consequence? Could they flatter themselves, that such measures would be productive of *peace*? I think they are not so infatuated. The Mayor of LEICESTER, in *refusing* to call a Meeting at that town, tells the people, that Meetings "*have been held in other places*, professing similar objects, and have, *ended in riot, sedition, and bloodshed*." I should be glad to know *where* these meetings have been held? Not in *this kingdom*, I will take my oath if it be necessary, as far as any intelligence has reached London. The pretended *plot* in London has been proved to be *wholly false*; it has been now *proved*, in the most satisfactory manner, that the *Meeting* had no connection with the *riot*; that the riot arose out of a mob who assembled to see four men hanged; that the rioters consisted chiefly of, and had for their leaders, a parcel of *starving sailors*; that the Meeting carried its business through without a single breach of the peace, and that it *ended* not in "*riot, sedition and bloodshed*," but in the most orderly and quiet dispersion, at the recommendation of Mr. HUNT, who took the lead during the proceedings.

But so far from this assertion of the Mayor of Leicester being true, it is the *contrary* of the truth; for, as I observed before, where there *have* been "*riot, sedition and bloodshed*," there have been no meetings for Reform. Where is it, that these riots have taken place within the last nine months? Why, in the *Isle of Ely*, in *Wales*, a pretended one at *Birmingham*, in *Suffolk*, at *Dundee*. And, at *none* of those places have there been any Meetings for Reform. Now, what will the Mayor of Leicester *answer* to this? Does it show his cause to be *good* who can make such assertions? And, do the enemies of Reform think, that the friends of that measure are to be silenced by such means? While I think of it, let me ask, where are the *two members* for Leicester? I hope the

meeting at that place will not forget to instruct *them* what to do at the ensuing proposition of the measure to Parliament.

A letter from a gentleman in Glasgow, dated 30th Dec. has the following passage, which may serve as an additional answer to the Mayor of Leicester: "Since I wrote you, there have been Meetings at Airdrie, at Kilbarchan, at Dumbarton, at Carmunnock, at Eaglesham, from all which petitions will be forwarded on the meeting of Parliament. The working people are actually bordering on starvation. A subscription has been set going here for their relief, but from their giving a man only one shilling a week, and if a family, two or three shillings, it has a tendency rather to irritate than to soothe; and, *nothing but the hope, that Parliament will listen to our Petitions is keeping the Country quiet.*" The same accounts come from all parts of the country; and, there never was so general an expectation, that relief and redress will be obtained by the lawful means of *petition*. Can the Mayor of Leicester contradict this? He certainly cannot; and, upon what then, does he ground his assertion?

No, my friends of Bristol, the Courier and Times, and their foolish and wicked supporters, may call for GAGGING BILLS, but no Gagging Bills will be passed. To suspend the *Habeas Corpus Act* must, in time of peace, be regarded as the establishment of a permanent military despotism; and, if the Government were base and tyrannical enough to *wish* for this, which I cannot believe; it never could be so *foolish*; for, what would be the *effects*? The instant annihilation of all *pecuniary confidence*; an end to all *credit*; an end to all *contracts*; a blowing-up of the *funds*; a desertion and abandonment of the country by every one who could possibly *remove his property or industry to America*. These would be *some*, and amongst the *least terrible*, of the effects of those measures which the COURIER and TIMES propose, which they are labouring to pave the way for, but which will not, be you well assured, be adopted. It is *possible*, that there may be a *man or two*, possessed of some influence, who *would drive things to desperation*; but, while I can hardly extend my *belief* thus far, I am *quite sure*, that such influence, if put forth, would be resisted instantly, seeing, that a military despotism, if it could exist in England, openly avowed, for a year, would cut up all funded property, and, indeed, all other property, as completely as they could be cut up by universal anarchy and confusion; and, that, after all, confusion and bloodshed must overspread the land.

Let us be confident, therefore, that the Parliament, seeing the state, into which the country has been brought, seeing the miseries into which it has been plunged, and seeing that a cordial union of us all is absolutely necessary to our salvation, will, at last, yield to our prayers, and give that Reform which the nation has so long sought, and without which, as dear-bought experience bids us conclude, we never can again see happy and honourable days.

The corrupt press itself acknowledges, that the taxes have fallen off in such a degree as that they will now hardly yield enough to pay the charges on account of the Debt, which requires 44 millions of pounds a year. But, one of my ploughmen shall bet the COURIER a hundred pounds, that the whole of the taxes, collected in 1817, do not amount to 35 millions of pounds, unless the value of paper-money be again changed. Now, as the Debt takes 44 millions a year, and the Army, Civil List, &c. have been estimated to take about 26 millions more, how are these to be

paid out of 35 millions? *Something*, then, must take place when the Parliament meets. There must be *some change*, and that a pretty great change too.

Now, Men of Bristol, I hope you will do me the justice to recollect, that, for *eleven years* past, I have endeavoured to make the Government see, that ruin would fall upon the country, unless the squandering of money was put a stop to, and, even, in that case, I always contended, that the nation *never could continue to pay the interest of the Debt in full*. You will please also to recollect, that I have been accused of folly, of wickedness, and almost of robbery for this. To *reduce* the interest of the Debt was called a *breach of national faith*, and I was stigmatized as a *rogue* for supposing such a thing possible, just as if *I myself had owed the Debt!* Well! Keep all this in mind, if you please, and, at the same time, keep your eye on the *acts of the next Session of Parliament*, which, as I have before observed, will, I believe, produce events more important than all the Sessions for the last hundred years.

You will observe, that the Fundholders now receive five pounds a year for every hundred pounds of their principal money. If enough money cannot be raised to pay them so much interest, they must have *less*; or, the estates of the landholders must be seized to be given to the fundholders! Here is a pretty dilemma! Here is a matter quite sufficient, one would think, to engage the attention of all the great men, to whom we pay such handsome salaries. This difficulty, together with the ruin of farming and manufacturing and commerce, are enough to astound the wisest of men; and when to these are added a weight of poor-rates, approaching in amount to that of the whole *rent* of all the land and all the houses, the spectacle is sufficient to strike terror into the hearts of those who have assumed a *responsibility* upon the subject.

Having before our eyes, then, a great nation crumbling into a heap of ruins, have we not a right, now that things are come to this horrid pass, to *pray* to be admitted to choose our representatives? It is very certain, that there must have been a want of wisdom or integrity *somewhere*; for it can never be wise or just to reduce a nation to ruin and misery. For many, many years, the Reformers have been abused as foolish and wicked men. They were *put down by force* in 1794. They have had no power. All their petitions and all their writings have been rejected and despised. Therefore, *they* have had no hand in producing these dreadful calamities. They have suffered in common with all those who have not fed upon the taxes; but they have always been kept from any share in the powers of the Government.

It is very necessary to keep this in mind, because to those who have had the *power* and the *profits* ought the *responsibility* to belong. For, my friends, the word *responsibility* is not a mere empty sound any more than the words *Sinecure, Pension, Salary, Grant, Allowance, Fee, Stipend, Living, &c.* All these words have a *meaning*. They represent a parcel of money received by persons; and why is not *responsibility* to have a *meaning*? Old George Rose, for instance, has received, in *Salaries* alone, more than a *hundred thousand pounds*. Of course, he will be ready to share in the *responsibility*. The king can *do no wrong*; but, his servants may, and it is very certain, that *somebody* has done wrong to this nation; or, at least, has exposed it to terrible sufferings and dangers.

Since writing the last five or six paragraphs, the actual state of the last year's taxes has reached my eye. It appears, that there have been col-

lected, last year, in Great Britain, taxes of all sorts (besides *poor-rates*) to the amount of 57 millions. Now, the Debt required last year, 44 millions and 29 thousand pounds; and as more money was borrowed last year, the Debt this year will require, of course, still more. Here, then, the *Debt alone*, which required only nine millions a year before those wars which have ended in the restoration of the Bourbons and the Inquisition, now demands 44 millions out of the 57 millions. There are 13 millions left, then, for Civil List, Army and Navy, Secret Services, French Emigrants, Colonial Governments, and a hundred other swallow-holes of public money, and all which together will amount to little short of 30 millions, unless the army be disbanded and the pay of the Staff greatly reduced, and unless all the other heads be greatly reduced.

But, I beg you to observe, that, though 57 millions have been raised in *the last twelve months*, 57 millions will not be raised in *the next twelve months*; for mind, there are more than 13 millions which have been raised this last year in *Property tax* and *War-malt-tax*, both of which are *now done away*; so that, even supposing the present year to be as productive in other taxes as the last, the whole collection would amount to only 44 millions, and that would not be sufficient to meet the annual charge on account of the Debt, leaving not one single farthing for army, navy, civil list, and all other expenses.

This is no very consoling prospect for the partizans of the Pitt System. But, very far worse is the *real* prospect before them; for, it is impossible for the taxes of 1817 to amount to any thing *nearly so much* as the taxes of 1816, exclusive of the War-malt-tax and the Property-tax. Exclusive of these two, we have seen, that the whole of the taxes amounted for 1816, to 44 millions; but, in order to obtain those taxes how many men of property have been *broken up*! Distresses, sales of stock, ruin have overspread the country. The taxes have been gotten from these people; but, the man who has been broken up, can pay no *more taxes*. You have read the story of the boy, who had a goose that had laid him a golden egg every day, and who, eager to become rich all at once, killed the poor goose and ripped her up, expecting to fill his bag with gold; but, who found only *one egg* come nearly to maturity, and who thus lost the supply of gold for ever after. Thus it is, and thus it must be, my friends, when the tax-gatherer seizes and sells the farmer's and tradesman's goods and chattels. The demand is satisfied for this once, but no future demand can ever be made. When I was in America on a visit to a very kind friend in the country, my wife and child took a fancy to some chesnuts which were upon a very fine and very lofty tree; and I happened to express my regret, that the fruit *could not be got at*: "Oh, yes," said he, "we will soon get at it." In less than an hour the tree was levelled with the ground. Upon my protesting against this mode of gathering fruit, my friend observed, that he had *more trees of the same sort standing than he had any need of*. And, if we had more able farmers and tradesmen than we have need of to pay taxes, to cut down a part of them by *Distraint* and *Exchequer Process* would be of no consequence; but, not having enough to pay taxes as it is, what must be the consequence of totally destroying a considerable part of those out of whom even the last year's taxes have been squeezed! Men, like oranges, when squeezed dry, can be squeezed no more.

Therefore, taxes, sufficient for the present expenditure, never can be collected in future, unless the value of the paper-money be again changed,

and, even if that were attempted, the fall of the Pitt System of Finance would not be prevented. The amount of the taxes for 1817 will not, I am convinced, exceed thirty-five millions; and even that is an enormous sum to collect in such a state of national beggary. What, then, is to be *done*? Are the Army, the Navy, the Civil List, to go *unpaid*? Or, are the Fundholders to go *unpaid*? These are very serious questions. Many years ago I said it must come to this; and to this it is now come. For, as to *loans* to pay the *interest of a Debt*, I leave you to imagine how dreadfully and how speedily that course must end! It has been proposed to *lower* the interest of the Debt; that is to say, to take from the Fundholders, a *part* of what they receive, which, with some few exceptions, would be very just. But, alas! this will not do any good at all, unless the Army, Civil List, &c. be *reduced from thirty to about five millions a-year*; and, even in this latter case, the Fundholders must have their interest reduced *one-half* at least.

Now, it will be right for the country to bear in mind, that the Reformers have always protested against the system, which has brought the country into this perilous state. *Hundreds of thousands of families*, very worthy, industrious, and most excellent people, now stand tottering on the very verge of utter ruin. Many of these persons have been long deluded into a belief, that we, who opposed this ruinous system, were *their* and our country's *enemies*. They will now see and feel, that we were their *friends*; and that, if they have been plunged into ruin, the fault has, in some degree, been their own. But they were *deluded*. A base and corrupt press deceived them. Let them now join us, then, as the only means of saving a remnant of what they wish to enjoy.

In the years 1810 and 1811, the Paper-system, which, with taxation, have been the causes of all our miseries, was under discussion in Parliament. The OUT party proposed to pass a law to compel the Bank to pay in gold at the end of two years. The IN party said that such a law was unnecessary then; but, agreed, that gold would be paid *when peace came*. While those discussions were going on, I wrote and published a Series of Letters, under the title of PAPER AGAINST GOLD. In that work, Letter XV. (which work is now re-published) I stated, that, if an *attempt* was made to pay in gold, *all the people in trade must be ruined*; or, that the interest of the Debt must be *lowered*, or go *unpaid altogether*. Such an attempt has been made; and the ruin has come. Amongst the whole of the Members of the two Houses, there was, upon that occasion, only Sir FRANCIS BURDETT, who appeared to understand any thing of the matter. He said, that it would be utterly impossible to pay the interest of the Debt, if the paper were raised in value.

But, when all men are beginning to talk about lowering the interest of the Debt, will nobody propose to lower the *Sinecures, Pensions, and Salaries*? I know, that the nation will be unable to pay the interest of the Debt in full; but, I also know, that if the Fundholder cannot be paid, the Sinecurist and Grantee ought not to be paid. A vast deal of money has been swallowed up in this way; and surely it ought not to be overlooked, while so many are proposing to lower the interest of the Debt! No: this will not be overlooked; it must become a matter of serious discussion.

But, after all, what hope is there, that any effectual and permanent relief will take place, except through the means of a *Reform in the Parliament*, that measure so strongly recommended by so many eminent

men for so many years past? I do not say, that even a Reformed Parliament would be able to prevent the Fundholder from experiencing a great loss. I do not say, that it would be able, *all at once*, to make the nation prosperous, which has now been plunged into such a depth of misery. I do not say, that it could work this miracle; but, I have no scruple to express my decided opinion that it would, in a very short time, do *complete justice* to all claimants; that it would, all at once, produce great relief to the distressed of all ranks; and that, in a very few years, it would leave scarcely a single pauper in each parish throughout the kingdom, by putting it in the power of all honest and industrious people amply to provide for themselves and their families. This is my sincere belief. In the Political Register, No. 15 of Vol. 31, I have, as I think, *proved* that a Reformed Parliament would be able to do this; and, therefore, I do most anxiously hope that there will be wanted, on the part of the people in general, no effort that can, in any way, tend to promote this great and important object.

Petition, peaceable petition, is the course. No number of men, in any situation of life, are *too few* to sign a petition. There have been, I believe, more than *half a million* of names signed to such petitions. These may become a *million*, and that would be two-thirds of the *able* male population of Great Britain, excluding those who live on the taxes. I am disposed to believe, that the Parliament, when it finds that this is really the case, will not much *wish* to oppose the desire of the people. At any rate it is the duty of those who wish for a Reform to be vigilant, to be active, to support, by all legal means, those who are willing to take the *lead* in the work, and, above all things, to be ever watchful to defeat the purposes of those, who wish to see the nation plunged into anarchy and bloodshed, of which all the friends of Reform abhor the idea. Let it, too, never be forgotten, that those whose property is now placed in jeopardy, have not the Reformers to blame for it. They have had no hand in any of the measures, which have led to this dreadful state of things; on the contrary, they have always disapproved of those measures; and, as for my own part, no small portion of the last *eleven years* of my life, have been employed in endeavouring to make my countrymen see the gulf which was opening before them, and into which gulf they have now actually been plunged.

Wishing you patience and fortitude to bear up against your present sufferings, and, in the hope, that better days for us all are at hand, I remain, what I have always been,

Your friend,

WM. COBBETT.

AN ADDRESS
TO
THE MEN OF NORWICH.

On the Brunswick Knights.—Lord Sidmouth's Letter to them.—“Glorious Revolution.”—It is not true, that our Old Forefathers were ragged and starving Beggars.—Schemes of mock-Reform.—Meeting of Deputies in London.—Hatton-Garden Work.

“STEWART and WALTER, make haste I implore ye,
Or the Dogs and the Cats will be Knighted before ye.”

PARODY ON PETER PINDAR.

NOTE BY THE EDITORS.—We are now come to what may be called the dismal date of 1817; dismal, both as respects the arbitrary acts of the Government, and the wretched condition of the labouring people. At this period, the *Register* contained a series of Addresses, following up that to “OLD GEORGE ROSS,” which we have just inserted. These Addresses were entitled as follows:—*To the Men of Norwich, to the “Weaver Boys” of Lancashire, to Lord Sidmouth, to the Life-and-Fortune Men, to the People of Hampshire, to Earl Grosvenor, to all True-hearted Englishmen, to the Good and True Men of Hampshire, a Letter to the “Deluded People,” to the Paper-money Men, Mr. Cobbett's Taking Leave of his Countrymen.* This last, the Leave-taking Address, was written upon Mr. COBBETT's going to America, immediately after the suspension of the *Habeas Corpus*.—We select the most material passages of these Addresses. The reader will find them replete with that kind of matter which was calculated to stir the Government up to the desperate measures which were finally adopted, at this period, for the purpose of putting down the Reformers.—That the *Register* very much helped to drive the Government to these desperate acts, may be seen, not merely in the strong writing itself of Mr. COBBETT, and the necessity of its effect upon his readers; but also in some declarations, made by the Government party themselves, some of which will be found embodied in the extracts we are about to insert, and quoted by Mr. COBBETT, from week, to week as they came forth.

(Political Register, January, 1817.)

MEN OF NORWICH,—

London, January 16, 1817.

It is now about a month since I was first informed, that, at Norwich, an Order of *Knighthood* had been established, the object of which was to embody the gallant sons of Corruption to fight under her banners against all Reformers generally, but more especially against *William Cobbett's Register*, which they honour with particular marks of their hatred. This is the foundation of their *Order*; and amongst the *means*, by which their object is to be prosecuted, is, an intended publication, to be entitled: “*The Brunswick Weekly Political Register, in direct opposition to William Cobbett's Work.*” On the 26th of December, the “*Installation*” took place, at the Rampant Horse Inn, Norwich, when an “*Ode*” that is to say, some stupid stuff, which they would call poetry, was, it seems, pronounced, which *Ode* was, as they state, “*Written by one of the Knights.*”

There is something so very contemptibly ridiculous in all this; it is so

much below childishness ; it is so degrading to human intellect ; that I could not, though pressed to it by some worthy friends in Norfolk, consent to notice it in print, feeling that it would be like the using of a sabre against a fly or a maggot. But, things, which may be wholly beneath notice in themselves, may be forced upon one's attention by their being associated with things of real importance, as the *garter* once dropped at a ball from the knee of a favourite of one of our kings has become the ensign of an honour which the greatest of statesmen have been proud of. And, though a very different fate certainly awaits the Order of Brunswick, still that Order having now been associated *in print* with the name, officially given, of the *Secretary of State*, this circumstance has rendered the whole thing of sufficient importance to be laid before the public, especially as some very essential political principles have, in this form, challenged discussion.

The Knights have, it appears, transmitted an account of their establishment and of their installation and principles to LORD VISCOUNT SIDMOUTH, and, of this transmission and of his Lordship's determination thereon, they have *published* the following account, printed by one BALL, of Norwich, in the following words :—

" Published by order of Knights Members of the Brunswick Club, at a Special General Meeting, held at the Rampant Horse Inn, Norwich, Dec. 31st, 1816. Copy of a Letter addressed to ' ARNALL THOMAS FAYERMAN, Esq., Surgeon, Norwich ;' President of the Brunswick Association, from J. Beckett, Esq., Under Secretary of State, in reply to a Letter transmitted to Lord Viscount Sidmouth, enclosing six copies of the second edition of the Declaration of the sentiments of this Assemblage.

" Whitehall, Dec. 30, 1816.

" SIR,—I am directed by Lord Sidmouth, to acknowledge the receipt of your Letter of the 26th inst. and to express the satisfaction afforded him by the *Public Spirit*, and *Constitutional Principles* which have led to the establishment of the Brunswick Club in the City of Norwich ; I am at the same time to add, that Lord Sidmouth's opinion is *in general unfavourable to Political Clubs of any description* ; although there *may undoubtedly be circumstances* under which such Institutions may not only be justifiable but highly useful ; whether or not this is the case of Norwich at this time, it is impossible for him to judge, but his Lordship cannot hesitate to applaud the principles of your Association and the motives which have occasioned it.

" I am, Sir, your most obedient and humble Servant,

" J. BECKETT."

" To Arnall Thomas Fayerman, Esq.,

" Surgeon, Norwich."

Upon the receipt of this Letter, the Knights came to the following resolution :— Resolved unanimously,—That the respectful thanks of this Association be transmitted to Lord Viscount Sidmouth, his Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department, evincing at the same time our grateful feelings for the *very handsome approval of our views and principles* which he has been pleased to express, through the means of an Official Letter from J. Beckett, Esq., addressed to the President ; and that all the Knights Members be required to sign the said Letter of thanks. By Order of the Association.—WILLIAM RACKHAM, *Secretary*.'

Now, my friends of Norwich, where Reformers have met with the Mayor of your City at their head, and where that Mayor stands so honourably distinguished from those, who, instead of complying with the reasonable requisitions of their townsmen, have called meetings of *special constables and of troops* ; my friends of that ancient and always patriotic city, let us now, for a moment, forget the despicable and ridiculous character of these self-created Knights, and even while we are commenting on *those principles and motives*, which Lord Sidmouth is here said to have

approved of, let us not take it for granted, that his Lordship has not been taken unaware upon this occasion; and let us, at any rate, by no means imbibe any disrespect towards the name of *Brunswick*, the use of which has here, as upon so many former occasions, been dishonoured by those, who, under that name, have endeavoured to find shelter from that contempt or indignation which belonged only to their own folly or infamy.

You all remember, that, when the exposures, relative to the DUKE of YORK and Mrs. CLARKE took place, the friends, or rather the pretended friends, of the Duke, instead of candidly acknowledging, that the facts, which could not be refuted, were true; and as sensible men would have done, appealing to the generosity of the nation, by observing, that boundless patronage happening to fall under the influence of boundless passion, the temptation had been too great to preserve the Duke from errors, into which many other men, and with no essentially wicked intentions, might have fallen; instead of taking this line, and instead of advising the Duke to throw himself manfully upon the naturally indulgent feelings of the country, which would have caused the whole matter to have been forgotten in a month, the pretended friends and supporters of His Royal Highness met the first opening of the charges against him by outcries and accusations of *disloyalty* against the author of the charges, and against all those of similar politics, who were accused of hostility to the *House of Brunswick*, of being *Jacobins* and *Levellers*, and they were threatened with *everlasting infamy* if they failed to make their charges good. Thus accused, thus menaced, a very great majority of the nation took part against these unjust and foolish threateners; general politics became mixed up with the question; discovery after discovery was made, and, at last, the Duke had to bear the whole burden, brought on him not only by his own errors and frailties, but also the much greater burden created by the injustice and insolence of his pretended friends. Many men, who felt disposed, at first, to think but little of the matters charged against him, and were inclined rather to laugh than to censure, had their risible propensity turned into scorn and indignation, when they heard charges of selling commissions by a kept mistress and the promotion of a foot-boy from behind her chair to a command in the army, ascribed to a *traitorous design against the House of Brunswick!*

This feeling of scorn and indignation was perfectly natural; but, it unfortunately fell upon the wrong object; for, instead of the Duke, it ought to have alighted upon the heads of those who pretended to be his friends, and who, in fact, while they affected to be defending him, were engaged in the defence of their own corrupt actions, as was afterwards most amply proved. Just such is the case *now*; and, you may be well assured, that, when you hear men bawling so loudly against what they have the impudence to call our *disloyal* endeavours, they have only in view to retain or to obtain profit to themselves out of the public purse; and, it very unfortunately happens, that they appear to succeed but too well in persuading those whose pretended friends they are, that they are their friends in *reality*, and that the people who pay the taxes are their *foes*.

If this be excusable in the Royal Family, who have so small a portion of communication with the people, it is not so easily excused in my LORD SIDMOUTH, who ought to know a great deal of the real state of the public mind, and who, of course, ought to know, that those who are labouring to bring about a Reform of the Parliament, have not only not intimidated, but that they do not entertain, the smallest desire, to trench, in any way

whatever, on the rights of either the nobles or the king ; and, therefore, it does seem very extraordinary, that his Lordship should have given countenance to, or, that he should have taken the smallest notice of the contemptible Knights of the Order of Brunswick, and still more extraordinary, that he should have expressed his *applause* of their *principles*, considering that these, as far as they are divested of downright absurdity, are *hostile* to all those principles which placed the House of Brunswick upon the throne of England.

It would be a waste of time to endeavour to come at a comprehension of all the parts of that confused mass of nonsense, which the Brunswick Knights transmitted to Lord Sidmouth under the title of a *Declaration* ; but I will just take their leading principle, which will be found in the following passage :—

“ Politically speaking, we cannot but view with extreme *pain* and *dread*, the “ active endeavours of violent party men to sow discord and discontent in the “ minds of the lower orders, by the extensive association of clubs, professing the “ principles of JOHN HAMPDEN. It should never be forgotten, that whatever “ injuries, *real* or supposed, this idol of the people sustained from the Govern- “ ment of Charles I., that *no extenuation of the crime of fighting against the “ King* and dying in the field as a traitor *can be found in the laws of either God “ or man* ; therefore, to mislead the people, by artful and specious praises of his “ pretended patriotic conduct in resisting, by force of arms, what he considered “ to be an infringement of his rights and privileges, is to teach the people to tread “ in his footsteps, and to compel the State (regardless of the dreadful consequences “ that might result) *to an immediate submission to all they demand.*”

Now, in the first place, there are no such things as *Hampden Clubs* in the kingdom ; or, at least, they are of so trifling amount as hardly to be worthy of notice, if we except a Club of that name in London, and which Club consists in *reality* of Sir FRANCIS BURDETT and MAJOR CARTWRIGHT. So that, this is altogether a false pretence ; and, as, I dare say if the truth were known, these gallant Knights had *money* in view, when they appealed to Lord Sidmouth, they are, I think, fairly indictable for an attempt at fraud and to *obtain money under false pretences*. For what *other* purpose should these men have applied to Lord Sidmouth ? They could hardly expect that he would send *troops* to their aid ; and as to *writers* against us, they seem to have become extinct, or, at least, so lazy or so dull as no longer to be of any use. What, then, could these Knights apply to Lord Sidmouth *for* ? When writers or loyal club-mongers communicate their schemes to the Government, be assured that they seek money as naturally as a fly does food when it approaches a honey-pot.

It is also a very scandalous falsehood to say, that the HAMPDEN CLUB, or any of the Reformers, endeavoured to urge the people to compel the *State* (the *Parliament*, is meant, I suppose) by *force of arms*, to an immediate submission to their demands. We have uniformly, and, hitherto, most *successfully*, exhorted the people to adhere to a peaceable and orderly conduct. Such a falsehood as this, therefore, merits public execration, though the promulgation of it cannot fail to do good in the end, because it cannot fail to show the badness of the cause of our enemies, who, unless their cause were desperate, would not resort to any falsehood at all.

But to pass over all the rest of the impudence and folly of these men, let us come to their *grand principle* ; namely, that, “ *whatever injuries “ HAMPDEN* sustained from the Government of Charles the First, *no ex-*

"*tenuation of the crime of fighting against the king can be found in the laws of either God or man.*"

Now, my good friends of Norwich, if this be so, the present royal family, and George the First, and George the Second, and Queen Anne, and King William the Third, and Lord Sidmouth, and you and I, and all the people in this nation were and are *traitors* against the house of Stuart and their heirs in the direct line of succession. My firm belief is, that LORD SIDMOUTH never *read* the declaration of these chandler-shop knights; and, I hope, that this will be a caution to him, not to permit any one to use his name in future in *applauding* any thing without first knowing what the thing is.

It signifies nothing, in this case, *what were* the injuries sustained by HAMPDEN, because it is here declared, that *be they what they might*, he had no right to resist by force of arms. Hence it would follow, that, if a king were to dissolve the Parliament and levy taxes by his sole will, or were even to order his army to beat the people in the streets, or to poke out their eyes, the people must stand still and bear it all, without any attempt to *resist*, because to resist would be *to fight against the king!* Oh no! Lord Sidmouth never could have read the paper of these Brunswick knights. The history of JOHN HAMPDEN is, however, too interesting to be wholly omitted here.—Charles the First, who was *beet* by evil counsellors, and who had the misfortune to be married to a Bourbon wife, wished to rule the people of England in an arbitrary way. The Parliaments (which were newly chosen then always when they were called together) opposed his views. He wanted money, and he issued a proclamation to raise taxes, suspecting that the Parliament would not grant him the money. This was contrary to the laws of England. Mr. HAMPDEN, who was a gentleman of Buckinghamshire, would not pay the taxes imposed on him. He was sued before the judges in the King's Courts, who, being subservient to the king, decided against Mr. HAMPDEN. The king's necessities, however, at last compelled him to call a Parliament; and, after long disputes between the king and them, an open civil war broke out, and, in that war, Mr. HAMPDEN lost his life in the field. The king, at last, would have gladly yielded up *much more* than his people *asked for at first*. But his yielding disposition came too late. He lost his life, as we all know, upon a scaffold, upon the charge of *treason* against the English people; and herein he tasted of that injustice and cruelty which his own ministers and judges had, in innumerable instances, practised on his suffering subjects in his name.

One would have thought, that an example so awful ought to have operated on his *sons*; but, so far from it, the second of those sons, *James the Second*, aided by the bloody *Judge Jefferies*, was guilty of acts of tyranny without end. The nation, resolved no longer to endure his ill-treatment, invited William, Prince of Orange, from Holland, who had married one of the king's daughters, to come and take the Government upon him. William came, *with an army*, who had some fighting with the king's troops, but the king, finding that the whole nation were deserting him, *fled to France*. William and his wife were made king and queen, and a law was passed to make every man a *traitor* who adhered to King James. When William and his wife were dead, another daughter of James became queen, *by Act of Parliament*, and that was Queen Anne. Now, observe, James had *sons* alive all this while; but, they were called *Pretenders*, and the Parliament actually compelled QUEEN

ANNE to offer, by proclamation, a *reward for the head* of one of these her brothers. When Queen Anne died, an Act of Parliament had provided for the accession of the present royal family, which was descended from a daughter of James the *First*, who was the father of Charles the *First*, and the grandfather of James the *Second*; and, by the same Acts of Parliament, the family of Stuart was set *aside for ever*.

These were pretty stiff proceedings, and may serve as a record upon the file of the Chapter of the Knights at Norwich. But, as you perceive, there was not only *resistance* to King James, but there was fighting against him by foreign soldiers brought over from Holland for the purpose! And yet your knights tell us, that Mr. HAMPDEN was a *traitor* for fighting against the king, *whatever injuries he might have sustained*. There were men to preach the same doctrine at the time when James the *Second* was revelling in the blood of the people shed by *Judge Jefferies*; but, our forefathers were not so base and so foolish as to listen to those corrupt slaves; they rose against the stupid tyrant; they drove him from the throne; they afterwards set aside his despotic family *for ever*; and they happily succeeded in exalting and supporting the present royal family in their stead. This is what we mean by the "GLORIOUS REVOLUTION," and it is well worthy of note, that, in the PROCLAMATION, issued in 1792, against the writings of your famous countryman, PAINÉ, he was accused of having *attacked* the principles of the "*Glorious Revolution!*"

The ignorance of the chandler-shop knights is equal to their impudence. Not only *since* the Revolution of 1688, above noticed; but, in all times, have the people of England claimed the *right* of resistance to oppression. I cannot quote the very words of Judge Blackstone from memory (and I have not my books near me), but, I know that he, though a *very courtly* writer, maintains this right as an *inherent right* of every people, and observes, that the common sense of mankind will not suffer itself to be insulted by the contrary doctrine. And how was MAGNA CHARTA obtained? Why, by the barons *making open war* upon the king, and compelling him to sign it. This charter, which was a mere recognition of the *then* ancient laws of England, was actually *forced* from the king; and yet these impudent brawlers, these pot-valiant knights tell you, that, let HAMPDEN'S injuries be what they might, it was *treason* in him to resist the king, and that his conduct was not to be justified by the laws either of God or man! The laws of *man*, as we have seen, clearly justify this resistance; and, as to the laws of *God*, if we are to take for his laws what we find recorded in the Scriptures (and I know not where else to look for them), how numerous are the instances in which oppressors were punished, ministers, kings, and 'queens! An instance of each may serve. HAMAN was hanged on a lofty gibbet for his oppressions on Mordecai and the Jews. But the case in point is that of *Ahab* and *Jezebel*. King Ahab had taken a liking to the vineyard of *Naboth*, which the latter refused to sell him, it having descended to him from his forefathers. Jezebel, in order to put her husband in possession of the wished-for plat of ground, contrived to have Naboth seized upon a false charge of blasphemy, and to have him stoned to death. AHAB was, by the command of God, killed in battle for this act, and, his son, AHAZIAH, having succeeded him with the curse still sticking to his family, JEHU, who was an officer in the service of *Ahaziah*, took a chosen band with him, slew the king his master, and afterward the queen-mother,

whom he ordered to be thrown out of a window, "and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and he trod her under foot." Some of the friends of Ahaziah called this "*treason*" on the part of Jehu; but Jehu answered, "Surely I have seen yesterday the *blood of Naboth* and the blood of his sons, and I will *requite thee* in this plat, saith the Lord."

With this I take my leave of the Knights of the Order of Brunswick, being well assured, that they will never again show their faces in the streets of Norwich, unaccompanied with hisses and groans, though they carry, by way of protection, the applauding letter from the Office of the Secretary of State.

Let me now beg your attention to a subject of very deep interest at this time, and with regard to which it is of primary importance that we should all entertain correct opinions. We complain that the people of this kingdom are *worse off* than they used to be. We talk of the *good old times* of our forefathers. We conclude, that we might, under a good system, be *as happy as our forefathers were*; and, this good system we (I do for one) most firmly believe, would be brought about speedily by a reform of Parliament, and this belief we have *proved* to be rational. The sons of Corruption meet us at the threshold of the argument, and assert, in the most unqualified manner, that we are much *better off* than our forefathers were, whom they represent as a set of despicable raggamuffins and vassals. To read the essays upon this subject in the *Courier* and the *Times*, one would suppose, that, until the days of Pitt, or thereabouts, Englishmen were a species of barbarians, clad in skins of wild animals, sleeping amongst fern under hedges, and living upon hips and haws.

Now, if this were the case, the answer would be worth very little, unless it could be shown, that, because a father has been miserable the children ought to be miserable too. But this is not the case. The charge against our forefathers is as false as the hearts of those who make it. Englishmen, until within the last fifty years, when long Parliaments and banking and funding and borrowing and taxing began to produce poverty and misery and crimes, were *always well off*, in the oldest of times. They were always an industrious, an honest, a frank, a sincere race of men, and always bore an unshaken attachment to their political rights. Those, who, like me, are now fifty years of age, can well remember, when it was thought a *sorrowful sight* to see a labouring man apply for parish relief. Will these libellers of the people say, that our *natures* have been changed? And, if we were to allow that, *by what* have they been changed? No: the blood of our fathers circulates in our veins, but the want of what they possessed as the fair fruit of their toil, has compelled us to resort to alms and to parish relief. Well do I remember, when old men, common labourers, used to wear to church good broad-cloth coats, which they had worn at their weddings. They were frugal and careful, but they had encouragement to practise those virtues. The household goods of a labouring man, his clock, his trenchers and his pewter plates, his utensils of brass and copper, his chairs, his joint-stools, his substantial oaken tables, his bedding and all that belonged to him, form a contrast with his present miserable and worthless stuff, that makes one's heart ache but to think of. His beer and his bread and meat are now exchanged for the cat-lap of the tea-kettle, taxed to more than three-fourths of its prime cost, and

for the cold and heartless diet of the potatoe plat. I can well remember when the very poorest of the people would not eat potatoes, and I have lived to see people hanged for forcing them out of a market-cart at their own price! I can remember, when every poor man brewed a barrel of ale to be drunk at the lying-in of his wife, and another to be spent at the christening of the child. Now, I know not the instance of the cheering smell of malt finding its way into his dwelling, where dreariness and dread preside upon occasions which used to produce scenes of pleasing anxiety, congratulation, and innocent mirth. Perhaps many thousands of persons of my own age will read what I am now writing, and, if they have been conversant in the sphere of life to which I am adverting, their hearts will but too loudly tell them that the picture is true.

But, to *what period* will the calumniators of our forefathers go back? I will take them back *four hundred years*, and will draw my description of what our forefathers were *then* from SIR JOHN FORTESQUE's work on the *excellence of the Laus of England*. This gentleman, who was Lord Chancellor in the reign of HENRY THE SIXTH, wrote a book for the instruction of that king's son, one of the objects of which book was to convince him, that it was his *interest* as well as his *duty* to preserve inviolate that excellent system of laws. In the course of his lessons, which are divided into chapters, he gives the prince a description of the *effects* of the good laws of England compared with that of the bad laws of France, which some of the prince's ancestors had endeavoured to introduce into England. This leads him to speak of the *condition* of the English compared with the *condition* of the French; and, here it is, that we find the dresses, the houses, and the food and manner of living of our forefathers described; those forefathers who the COURIER and TIMES would make us believe, were a set of vagrants, living upon pig-nuts and acorns and haws! Alas! The picture which is here given of France, would really be now very nearly applicable to England!

I am your friend,

WM. COBBETT.

P.S.—WALTER of the Times has published what he calls a "CAUTION to the hawkers of Cobbett's Register;" and then he tells his readers, that a man has been committed from the Hatton Garden police-office, for selling the Register in the streets, *without a pedlar's license*.

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
"WEAVER BOYS" OF LANCASHIRE.

On the Manchester Pigtail-Meeting.—False-Alarms of no avail.—The Ministers do not wish for Sham Plots.—Signor Waithman's Show, with all his pegs and wires.—His Letter to Sir Francis Burdett and Major Cartwright.

(Political Register, January, 1817.)

London, January 20th, 1817.

MY FRIENDS,—

The appellation of "*Weaver-Boys*" was, by the sons of Corruption, bestowed on the speakers at the numerous meeting, held at Manchester, in November last, and which Weaver-Boys, it was said, had *belcher handkerchiefs* round their necks. Well! And what then? So much the worse for Corruption; for, if Weaver-Boys possess such spirit and such talent as were displayed upon that occasion against Corruption, how desperate must be her state! I was very much delighted with the whole of the proceedings of the day here alluded to; but, the speech of Mr. FITTON was that part that pleased me most. His just and spirited observations upon the false, upstart pride of those, who call themselves the *gentlefolks* of Manchester, were excellent. His "*Order of the Pig-Tail*" has always been present to my mind, since I read his speech, whenever I have seen, heard of, or thought of, any of the ridiculous vanities of puffed-up farmers or tradesmen. He laid on the lash not only with great force, but just in the tender parts. One would have expected a reformation of manners from such a castigation; but, it appears, that this stupid, this empty, this peacock-like pride is still to live a little longer. These vain persons seem still to entertain the hope, that they are to go on to the end of their days, treating as the scum of the earth those, to whose labour and talent they owe their wealth and all that they possess above the commonest labourer.

If, indeed, the object of any of the recent meetings had been to divulge plans of a *levelling* nature; if any propositions had been made to take from people of property any part of their property; if any scheme had been broached for destroying titles or any other ancient establishment; then there might have been good reason for the *rich* to stand aloof. But, what do we ask for other than our *birthright*? MAGNA CHARTA says, that *no man shall be taxed without his own consent*, and that *Parliaments shall be annual*. Lord Coke says, that *Magna Charta cannot be abrogated even by Act of Parliament*. What do we seek for more than these? And, because we ask for these, are we to be considered as persons aiming at general confusion and destruction?

But, let us, before we proceed any further, hear what the "Social-Order" people of Manchester have to say. The following account of their meeting is taken from the COURIER newspaper of the 18th instant, and a curious account it is. We will not do as our adversaries do. We will read with attention, and examine fairly. TRUTH is our motto, and, not an inch will we go without her sanction.

"A meeting took place on Monday last at Manchester, attended by *the most respectable inhabitants* of that town, Salford, and their neighbourhood; the Boroughreeve, JOSEPH GREEN, Esq., in the chair. *Several Resolutions* were passed with *entire unanimity*, and the following Declaration agreed to, which *cannot be too highly applauded*, and which we trust will be *adopted by all other towns*:—

"DECLARATION.

"We the undersigned, *Magistrates* for the Division of Manchester, the *Boroughreeves*, and *Constables* of Manchester and Salford, and *other Inhabitants* of these Towns and their Neighbourhood, being at all times fully sensible of *the many blessings* of the Constitution under which we live, feel ourselves called upon at this moment to express our *firm attachment to its laws*, as well as our utter detestation of those mischievous attempts which are now pursued with incessant diligence and ardour, to *excite a general spirit of disaffection*. We especially deprecate the circulation of *seditions tracts*, and the adoption of *inflammatory speeches*, to produce an impression amongst the labouring classes, that the present distresses and privations are *attributable to the corruption and misconduct of Government*, and may be removed by a system of Representation, embracing *almost universal suffrage, annual Parliaments*, the unqualified exclusion of all persons deriving emolument from the public, and *consequently of his Majesty's Ministers*.

"The numerous Meetings held for these purposes, both publicly and secretly, the organised system of *Committees, Delegates, and Missivearies*, the contributions levied, particularly for disseminating pamphlets, calculated to mislead and irritate the public mind, the indecorous and highly unconstitutional reflections upon the exalted Personage now exercising the *Regal Authority*, the marked disparagement of the most extensive charitable relief in seasons of unavoidable pressure, the language of *intimidation*, not merely hinted, but plainly expressed, the appointment of popular assemblies in various parts of the Kingdom on one and the same day, after the meeting of Parliament, and the *previous assembling of Deputies in London*; all these circumstances afford strong manifestation of *meditated disorder and tumult*, and bear no analogy whatever to the fair and legitimate exercise of that Constitutional liberty, which is emphatically the *birth-right and security of Englishmen*.

"With these decided sentiments, it is our duty to unite in supporting the *Laws and Constitution* against *those wicked efforts*, which we are convinced must be regarded with equal abhorrence by the *great majority* of his Majesty's subjects in every class and condition of society. We, therefore, severally pledge ourselves to contribute, by the most effectual means our situations may allow, to the *maintenance of the peace and tranquillity of these towns and their neighbourhood*, from the unlawful and nefarious designs of those who are seeking to involve us in *riot and confusion*; and we earnestly solicit the co-operation of all friends to SOCIAL ORDER and good government."

This is the "declaration" of this famous meeting, and, it shall now be shown, that it is a tissue of falsehoods and follies. But, in the first place, where was this meeting of Magistrates, Constables, Boroughreeves, and "most respectable inhabitants" held? What hole, what corner, was the scene of its deliberations? If its object had been fair, and if any argument founded on truth had been at its command, why was not the meeting public like those of the Reformers? Where is the public paper, which apprized the people of such meeting? It was a *secret* meeting to

all intents and purposes, and as such it ought to be regarded.* The "*most respectable* inhabitants" were there, it is said. That is to say, I suppose, the *most rich*. I do not believe the fact; but, if it were so, why did not these respectable inhabitants *attend* the Meeting of the mass of the people in November? They were most respectfully invited to attend; they were pressed to attend; they were urged to come and take the lead, agreeably to their weight in point of property. They, if they thought Parliamentary Reform improper, might have come and shown the people that it was improper. Why did they keep *aloof*, then, and lose the opportunity of *peaceably* effecting, or, at least, endeavouring to effect, that which they can never effect by force? They must have powerful reasons to give against Reform, or they possess no such reasons. If the latter, what can justify their outcries and their accusations against the Reformers? And, if they *have* powerful reasons to urge against Reform, why do they not *fairly meet the people*, and endeavour to convince them of their error? Why do they keep aloof from the Meetings of the people, and, when those Meetings have passed, assemble in this private manner, to accuse and abuse the people? In fact, the only reason for their keeping aloof, is, that their ignorance as well as selfish fears make them *enemies* to Reform, and that they have *no reasons to give* why a Reform should not take place. However, they have the honour to hear their efforts applauded by the sops of Corruption, with which honour they will have to remain content.

This Meeting charges you, whom they call "*Weaver-Boys*," with using "*language of intimidation*." What? "*Weaver-Boys*," intimidate! Who are they to frighten? No: but our adversaries use this sort of language and that, too, in the most open manner. They threatened the labouring classes at Bristol with *starvation*, if they went to the Reform Meeting; the Magistrates in London and Westminster cautioned all *peaceable* people against going to Spa-fields; men have been *menaced* for selling my Register; some have been taken up, under the Hawker's and Pedlar's Act, for selling them without a license; and, I understand, that this has been *threatened* to be done for selling openly in a *market-town on the market-day*, though this is expressly allowed by law. I am informed of one master manufacturer in Lancashire, who has threatened to turn off every man to starve, "*who shall even read Cobbett*." The name of this *petty tyrant* shall be made known as soon as I receive the evidence in detail; for such an execrable despot ought to be held up to public scorn; and, indeed, legal punishment ought to be inflicted on him, and shall be inflicted on him, if I find, that the law will bear me out. I will neglect nothing to expose, and, if possible, to punish legally such men as this, who are not to be allowed, I am sure, thus to treat their workmen as the lowest of slaves. After all this, which has been seen going on in all parts of the country, it is pretty impudent in this Meeting to talk about the "*language of intimidation*," made use of by Reformers!

Come, come! grave gentlemen of the "*Order of the Pigtail*!" you do not *mean* what you say. You know, that it is *we* who have the *majority*, and that, too, a majority of a *hundred to one*! And it is your

* Since the above was written, I have received a letter informing me, that the "*Declaration*" was drawn up and passed at the "*POLICE-OFFICE*" in Manchester, and then handed about for names!

knowledge of this fact which alarms you. Yet, what are you *to do*? What do you propose to *accomplish*? What is the professed *object* of your Association? Do you associate against "*Jacobins and Levellers*?" Alas! there was a "*Loyal Association against Republicans and Levellers*" held at the CROWN-AND-ANCHOR, London, *four-and-twenty years ago*, aided and supported by all the immense means which the Government had in its power, having a settled correspondence with all clergymen and benches of magistrates, and having at its command hundreds and hundreds of spies and informers. This GRAND ASSOCIATION against Jacobins published thousands upon thousands of pamphlets and hand-bills. The *Treasury*, the *Post-Office*, the *Police-officers*, the *Hue and Cry*, almost all the newspapers were at its back. And, after all, what did this famous Association accomplish? Why it succeeded in frightening the rich and timid, in deluding the ignorant, in inflaming thoughtless vigour and zeal, and in causing PAINÉ to be *burnt in effigy* in almost every part of the kingdom. But, mark! At the end of twenty-five years of war and taxation, and loans, the principles of PAINÉ have been established by the fulfilment of his predictions; and if what the *pigtail* meeting at Manchester have *declared*, be true, "*social order*" is in as much danger as ever, and Jacobins and Levellers *more numerous*! What a hopeless task is it, then, to endeavour to get rid of these Jacobins in this way? What! expend more than a thousand millions in taxes, and contract a debt besides of more than another thousand millions; waste half a million of lives of the stoutest and most vigorous of our population; restore the Bourbons and the Inquisition; efface the very name of *republic* in Europe; establish legitimacy and proclaim a *holy league* of kings and emperors; and, after all this, form loyal associations in England against republicans and levellers and enemies of "*Social Order*!"

The truth is, that *principles* are not to be stifled by force of any sort; and, if the nobility, the clergy, and the gentlemen of England do not see this *now*, they never will see it. The very same principles which were on foot in 1792, 3, and 4; the very same principles for which so many scores of men suffered, are now in as full activity as they were then. Messrs. TOOKE and HARDY were tried for their lives, and were *proved* to have been guilty of nothing but seeking for that *Reform* which PITT and WILBERFORCE had been seeking, in co-operation with Mr. TOOKE, ten or twelve years before. We still seek the same thing. MAJOR CARTWRIGHT, who acted with PITT and Mr. TOOKE in those times, is still at his post with the same principles on his lips and the very same publications to enforce those principles. Where, then, is the ground for hope, that these principles are capable of being subdued, especially now that the people have experience of the past and present to bring forward in proof of the misery and degradation which acting against those principles produce?

At the period to which I have just alluded, the social-order men did not content themselves, however, with writing, speaking, and associating. Great as were the advantages that they possessed in this way, they dared not rely upon them. *Bills to suspend the sacred right of petitioning; bills to suspend the Act of Habeas Corpus; bills to make that treason which was not treason before; bills to enable the Privy Council to imprison men for any length of time without trial by jury; bills to license presses and to curtail the freedom of the press.* These were the means

resorted to in order to keep down the Reformers of *that day*. These were the means that came to the aid of the arguments and facts, contained in the pamphlets and hand-bills of the "*Loyal Associations against Jacobins and Levellers*;" that is to say, against those who called for a Reform on the principles of Magna Charta! But do the pigtail order suppose that such means will be resorted to NOW? They are evidently driving at this point; but they do not reflect *far enough*. They do not see how such measures would *operate* now. They do not perceive what complete confusion such measures would create. They do not perceive that all the *pretences* then put forward for the necessity of such measures would now be wanting.

At the time when the above-mentioned bills were passed, the pretences were that the powerful and populous kingdom of France was in a state of hostility against all "regular government;" that the chiefs of those levellers had invited every other people to revolt, and had offered them their assistance; that there were numerous persons in this country willing and ready to obey the call; that the people in France had killed *their* king, and that there were people in England disposed to do the same by *theirs*; that all property had been despoiled and all religion destroyed in France, and that the agitators in England were bent upon the same project, hoping for the assistance of the rebels and atheists in France; that the French had an immense army ready to pour on our coast at any moment of a wind unfavourable to the movements of our fleet; that Ireland was in almost open rebellion; that our property and religion and the life of the king were in imminent danger, and, therefore, the said measures were absolutely necessary to the safety of these and of the very independence of the nation.

NOW all is changed. By our blood, and money, and debt, we have restored the Bourbons; we have re-established "social order" and the Pope in Italy, and "social order" and the Inquisition in Spain; the Republicans of France have all been killed, banished, or silenced; the priests in that country have got all back but the tithes; the French people, the Times, and Courier tell us, love the Bourbons and look back with sorrow and shame on the republican days; that country is in close alliance with our Government; all the republics in Europe are destroyed; there is a holy-league of all the emperors and kings; the divine principle of *legitimacy* is recognised all over Europe; there is nowhere any example or any aid to which republicans and levellers can look; our Government is, we are told, the envy and admiration of the whole world; it has triumphed after a long and most arduous trial. "The play is over," said the COURIER, just after the battle of Waterloo, "and *we may now sit down to supper.*"

WM. COBBETT.

A LETTER
TO LORD SIDMOUTH.

(Political Register, February, 1817.)

London, 30th January, 1817.

MY LORD,

It is now about twenty-seven years, since BURKE, who soon afterwards became a great pensioner for life, with a reversionary pension to his wife, and on whose *executors*, for *three lives*, two large grants of the public money, annually paid out of the taxes, is settled; it is now about twenty-seven years since that man drew his quill against the Parliamentary Reformers, whom he designated by all sorts of foul appellations, and, to stifle the principles of whom, he cried aloud for that war, which, after having, by its final success on the Continent of Europe, restored the Bourbons and the Inquisition, has left this country in a state of misery, which I believe to be without a parallel in the history of civilized man. It is now about twenty-four years, since Mr. GREY (now Lord Grey) presented to the House of Commons a Petition on the subject of the state of the representation, and praying for a Reform of that House. That petition has laid on the table of the House from that day to this, and nothing has been done respecting it. No one has ever attempted to deny its allegations, or any part of them. It is now about twenty-four years since the sword was drawn, and the leagues entered into against the people of France, and since new, and heretofore unheard of, penal statutes were passed to keep down the spirit of *Jacobinism*, as it was called, but which was visible only in the shape of *Reform*.

Now, my Lord, look back over these years of prosecutions, imprisonments, transportings, hangings, quarterings, and bloodshed, in every way in which blood can be shed! Look back across this scene of human woe, and reflect on the situation of this kingdom at the outset of the contest! In the year 1792, before the fatal war begun, the annual expense on account of the *Debt* was less than *nine millions*; that charge is now more than *forty-four millions*. The annual amount of the poor-rates was then about *two and a quarter millions*; that amount was, last year, *eight millions*, and, this year, it will, probably, be nearer twelve millions than eight. *Crimes*, the increase of which is the most certain as well as the most lamentable proof of an increase of the misery and degradation of a people, have increased in a degree equal to the increase of the Debt and Taxes. The whole of the taxes, in 1792, amounted to less than *sixteen millions*. Last year they amounted to nearly *seventy millions*. We do not possess an account of all the *crimes* in so accurate a way; but, from returns laid before the House of Commons up to

1809, it appeared, that, taking the country all through, crimes had increased with the increase of taxes; and, from a paper transmitted to me some time ago by Mr. W. GOODMAN of Warwick, and which paper he also transmitted to Sir Richard Phillips, who has inserted it in his excellent Magazine for this month, it appears, that for the county of Warwick, the number of prisoners tried in 1792, was *one hundred and six*; and that the number of prisoners tried for the same county in 1816 was *five hundred and twenty*. There can be little doubt, that the increase of crimes is in nearly the same proportion throughout the whole kingdom; and, surely, a more melancholy fact never was made known to the world.

When the war was *at an end*; when the "*new doctrines*," as they were called, had been trampled under foot by our Government and its allies upon the Continent, your Lordship must remember into what insolent *strains of triumph* the TIMES newspaper and its readers burst forth! However, these persons, not satisfied yet, then began to put forth their declarations, that the republic of *America* must also be subdued; they said (or, at least, WALTER did), in direct terms, that it was necessary to the tranquillity of the world, that the American Government should be *overthrown*; that "*this mischievous example of the success of Democratic Rebellion*" should be destroyed. And, all the London newspapers published, under the title of a speech, delivered by Sir JOSEPH YORK (one of the Lords of the Admiralty) in the House of Commons, just after the fall of Napoleon, a declaration, that more was yet to do, for that *James Madison was not yet dethroned!*

Alas! My Lord, you know but too well how that war was carried on, and how it ended! And you also know, that Mr. MADISON, after a most glorious career as the Chief Magistrate of a free and happy people, has now retired to spend his old age as a private citizen, beholding his country settled in perfect peace and uncommon prosperity.

And, how does your Lordship, at the end of this quarter of a century of war, find *Old England*? How does she stand at the close of this long contest against the principles of democracy, as we called them? How has peace found her? In 1814, when the kings and "*Old Blucher*" were feasted and huzzaed, and when the country was all in a blaze with bonfires and illuminations and fires to roast oxen; in that hour of the triumph of WALTER and STEWART and all the swarm of corruption; in that hour of drunken joy, I, for my part, not only mourned, but I openly expressed my mourning, and I gave my *reasons* for that mourning, and put them upon indelible record. I saw that my country was ruined; I saw that days of deep and lasting misery were at hand. When the overseer of my tithing came to ask my subscription towards the ox, which had been led by my door, decorated with orange-coloured ribbons: "No," said I, "Mr. HAINES, I will keep my money for the time, when this bawling and feasting and boozing will be turned into cries of distress and starvation, which time is at no great distance." Mr. Haines's civility prevented him from laughing in my face, in which respect he was more civil than the public in general. But, my Lord, a short time has proved my apprehensions to have been but too well founded. I had long seen, that the system of Paper-Money, and Debts and Funds and Standing Armies could not go on in *peace*, without the utter ruin and starvation of all labouring classes. This was *proved* in "*PAPER AGAINST GOLD*," and the principles had been asserted and enforced by me many years before. It was under this conviction, that,

so early as the year 1804, when the annual charge of the Debt was not much more than *the half of its present amount*, I most anxiously laboured to produce *a change of system*. After thirteen years of unpopularity and obloquy, I have lived to see the truth of my opinions *recognised* by ninety-nine hundredths of the people, and not openly *denied*, or, if denied at all, by mere *assertion*, unsupported by any show of argument. I have lived to see *more than a hundred public newspapers* adopting all my formerly reprobated doctrines about the Debt, the Sinking Fund, the Funding System, the effects of Taxation, the Pauperizing degradation, and, indeed, the whole of that set of doctrines, by which I was distinguished only to be censured or ridiculed.

Now, my Lord, this is a wonderful change! It is a complete revolution in the mind of a whole nation. A far more important revolution it is than that of 1688, which very justly expelled one Royal Family and introduced another in its stead; and, if there be any two points, upon which men are now more unanimous than upon any of the others, connected with politics, it is these two: namely; *first, that taxation produces misery, and misery crimes*; and, *second, that the only effectual remedy for these dreadful evils, under which the nation is now smarting, writhing, and groaning, is, a Radical Reform in the Commons', or People's House of Parliament*. Upon these points the public mind is made up. The truth of the positions has been demonstrated so clearly; and the impression of this truth upon the public mind is so deeply engraven, that it is impossible for any human power to remove it.

This being the state of things, it is hardly necessary for me to tell your Lordship, that your Letter to the Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Leicester, as published in the *Courier* of Saturday last, has given me an uncommon degree of pain, and especially as being signed with *your name*. Saving much of disapprobation, which I have often expressed with as much openness as I dared, I have had some things to say in cordial approbation of your Lordship as one of the servants of the King; and, I shall always recollect, that, when, just upon the eve of that trial which ended in so heavy a punishment on me, some of the base wretches of the press had asserted, that you paid me money for writing a paper, in 1803, calling upon the people to defend their country against the menaced attack of the French; I shall always recollect, with what promptitude and kindness your Lordship, in a paper under your own hand, enabled me to refute this base and malignant accusation. There is also another fact, which, in justice to your Lordship, I ought, at this critical moment, to state. And that is, that *GILLRAY*, the caricaturist of St. James's-street, who, when your Lordship became Prime Minister in 1801, exhibited you in such odious colours, confessed to me, that he did it, *because you had stopped his pension of two hundred pounds a year*. I could mention *others*, whose enmity your Lordship was honoured with on the same ground; and, my real belief now is, that if you had had a Reformed Parliament to co-operate with you, England would have recovered from her blows, and would have been, at this day, a flourishing, happy, and contented nation. But, alas! the *system* was too strong for your wishes. You were compelled, either to sink, or to go with the stream.

My Lord, all the means of national wealth, power, and happiness, save and except good laws and liberty, must arise from the *land*. We are not, on this account, to esteem those who own or who till the land more

than we esteem the rest of the community ; but, it is from the land that all must arise. It is notorious that those who till the land of this kingdom are in a ruined state. The average price of farm produce has fallen much more than one-half. And here, my Lord, give me leave to remind you of an expression of your colleague, Lord Castlereagh towards the close of the last session of Parliament. A great deal had been said, by Mr. Western and others, about the want of *price*. The farmers only wanted *price*. The agricultural correspondents, the agricultural societies, all over the kingdom ; the movers of resolutions in the House of Commons ; the authors of numerous pamphlets, in behalf of the poor unfortunate farmers ; Lord Sheffield and his wooll-people at Lewes ; the wool-growing delegates and their convention : all these several individuals, and all these tribes of projectors, called aloud for *high price* ; high price was what they wanted ; give them but high price, and they would continue to pay taxes, to get drunk at the markets, and to swear and ride over people, on their return home. "Well !" said Lord Castlereagh, in the month of May last, "then the distress is *temporary* only ; for I perceive that wheat is rising in price. I see that in Scotland wheat is already got up to eighty shillings the quarter, and it is not likely that it should long keep below that price in any other part of the kingdom. And, when wheat is got up to eighty shillings a quarter all over the kingdom ; I shall be glad know where will THEN be the distress ?"

His Lordship's argument was very fair against Mr. Western, Mr. Coke, and the other gentlemen of *high price*. It was absolutely a *fail* (against which his countryman, Swift, says there is no argument) upon the heads of the silly farmers and their friends : but, as against me, and those who thought with me, the ingenious Lord's argument was not worth a straw ; for I told him, as I had told the Corn-bill gentlemen a year before, that *high price*, unless it were occasioned by fresh bales of paper-money, sent forth by the Old Lady in Threadneedle-street, and her more than thousand children, who are distributed all over the country ; I told them, and had been telling them for years, that, unless prices were kept up by *this cause*, there could be no price, be it as high as it might, which would save the farmer and the tradesman from ruin, and the journeyman and labourer from a state approaching to starvation. And now, my Lord, pray look at the *result*. Wheat is now, not *eighty* shillings a quarter, but a *hundred and ten* shillings a quarter ; and that too, your Lordship will please to observe, while all those *ports are open*, which the silly and greedy farmers were for keeping for ever closed. "Where will *then* be the distress," said Lord Castlereagh, "if wheat gets up to eighty shillings a quarter ?" It has got up to a hundred and ten shillings a quarter, and the distress is greater than ever !

And thus must it go on, unless new bales of paper-money can be got out, or unless taxation be greatly reduced. The fruit of productive labour is now taken and given to unproductive labour in such a large proportion, that production and re-production, with all their wonderful effects, are daily and hourly diminishing. *This* is the cause and the only cause, of the miseries of the country, and of the far greater part of the crimes that now blacken the calendars of the sessions and the assizes. It is curious to observe that His Royal Highness has been advised to ascribe the national distress partly to the "unfavourable state of the

“*season.*” Why, my Lord, it is that very season which has caused that very *high price*, upon the return of which the Corn-bill conjurors most seriously relied, as the infallible means of the renovation of their affairs, and of the restoration of prosperity. So that here we find ourselves in this curiously interesting dilemma, that, while his Royal Highness is advised by his Ministers to lament the existence of a season which has casually produced *high prices*, the whole corps of land-owners and farmers, divided into battalions and platoons throughout the counties and the hundreds, are bellowing with lungs of Stentor, and with the constancy of the pendulum of a clock, for the creation and continuation of *high prices*, as the only remedy for all our difficulties, and as the sole means of restoring the nation to ease and happiness.

WM. COBBETT.

A LETTER
TO THE
LIFE-AND-FORTUNE MEN.

Meeting on Portsdown.—Misery and not Reform the cause of Riots—Funding System the cause of misery—Dreadful state of Islington, Coventry, &c.

(*Political Register, February, 1817.*)

London, February 5, 1817.

LIFE-AND-FORTUNE MEN,—

Being rather in haste to set off to a Meeting on Portsdown-hill, which is to be held on Monday next, you will have, I hope, the goodness to excuse me, if I am not quite so ceremonious as your correspondents generally are.

I have read, and the people have read, not with indignation, for no effort of your venom is now capable of exciting a feeling of so high an order; but we have read, with scorn and contempt, the attack on the Parliamentary Reformers contained in your *Declaration*, issued by a Meeting of you at the London Tavern on the 31st of last month, which meeting is stated to have consisted of *bankers, merchants, traders*, and others, and amongst the names of the persons signing which declaration are several of those who have the management of the affairs of the Bank of England. I shall presently speak more particularly of the terms and assertions of that Declaration; but first, it is impossible to refrain from remarking, that most of you were amongst the *addressers* of 1793, who then urged the Government on to that war, of the expenses and the debts of which this nation is now tasting the bitter, the poisonous, the destructive fruit. You are, in fact, *the same body of men*, the chasms made by time having been filled up as they occurred. Curious this fact is to contemplate! What! At the end of twenty-five years of war and glory against republicans and levellers, do you find it necessary to come forth

again ! *Again*, after more than a thousand millions have been expended in taxes and nearly another thousand millions of debt have been contracted for the purpose of preserving what you call the Constitution ! *Again*, after the Bourbons and the Inquisition and the Pope and the Jesuits have been restored, after all the republics of Europe have been destroyed, and after a holy alliance has been solemnly concluded between all the principal sovereigns ! *Again*, after such volumes of congratulation on the triumph of social order, after all the ox-roasting and temple-building in commemoration of that glorious triumph, and after we have been told that "the *play being over we may now sit down to supper !*" After all this, do we behold you sallying forth *again* with your imputations against Parliamentary Reformers, and with your promises and vows to assist in keeping them down ? But, before I proceed to comment on your declaration, let me first insert it, that the world may hear you as well as me.

The *place* of your meeting is not unworthy of notice. "The *London Tavern.*" Why in a *house* ? why in a hired room, if you meant that your declaration should carry any weight with it as expressing any thing like a *public sentiment* ? It was at this same London Tavern, that the famous position of "a *sudden transition from war to peace*" was blown to air by LORD COCHRANE, and which position is now scouted by the Members of both Houses of Parliament without the smallest degree of ceremony or reserve. The London Tavern was no place to hold a meeting of the *people* of London, and the place of meeting shows, that it was judicious in you not to imitate the language of the Manchester declarers, who insist, that *they* speak the voice of "the *great body, or great majority, of his Majesty's subjects.*"

Your declaration, after the introductory verbiage, is in the following words :—

"We, the undersigned Merchants, Bankers, Traders and inhabitants of London, deem it to be incumbent on us to come forward with a declaration of our sentiments on the present crisis of public affairs. We are far from being insensible to the evils which at present affect every class of the community, more especially the lower orders ; we are anxiously desirous that every practicable means may be used for alleviating their distresses ; and we entertain a sanguine hope, that the embarrassments with which we have to struggle, will, by the exercise of a wise and enlightened policy, be overcome ; and that the agriculture, manufactures, and commerce of the country, will at no distant period revive and flourish.—We are satisfied at the same time, that nothing can tend more to retard the accomplishment of our wishes and hopes, than the endeavours which have recently been exerted with too much success, *by designing and evil-minded men*, to persuade the people that a remedy is to be found in measures which, *under specious pretences*, would effect the overthrow of the Constitution. To these endeavours *may be traced the criminal excesses which have lately disgraced the Metropolis and other parts of the Empire* ; and the still more desperate and atrocious outrage which has recently been committed *against the sacred person of the Prince Regent*, on his return from opening Parliament, in the exercise of the functions of our revered Monarch. We cannot adequately express our abhorrence of these enormities, which, *if not repressed*, must lead to scenes of anarchy and bloodshed, too appalling to contemplate ; and we feel it to be a solemn and imperious duty we owe to our country, to *pledge ourselves individually and collectively*, to support the just exercise of the *authority of Government*, to maintain the Constitution *as by law established*, and to resist every attempt, whether of craft or violence, that may be directed *against our civil liberty and our social peace.*"

Now, you will hardly be so hypocritical and so cowardly as to pretend, that you do not mean the Parliamentary Reformers, when you speak of

"*designing and evil-minded men,*" and that you wish to cause it to be believed (as if any body would or could believe you !) that the "*late riots in London, and other parts of the Empire,* and even the *attack upon the Regent* are to be traced to the endeavours" of the Reformers. Great as may be the hypocrisy of which you are masters, you will hardly attempt to deny, that this is the meaning of your words. And, this being their meaning, was there ever a more audacious falsehood published to the world !

First, as to the "*criminal excesses,*" committed in other parts of the "*empire,*" who told you, that this was *an empire ?*" Where did you pick up that new-fangled slang ? To what half-foreign jargon-monger have you been to school ? This is a kingdom, that is to say, a commonwealth, a political mixed government, having a king for its chief. We acknowledge no *imperial* sway, and, in spite of your jargon, you may be sure, that we never shall ; for before we do that, we must burn all our laws and all our law-books, and forswear all the notions of our forefathers, which we shall not do, in order to follow the example of a set of dealers in paper-money, whose traffic, as we shall by-and-by see, has been one of the great causes of our ruin.

But, not to criticise further, where censure and condemnation are so loudly called for, what proof have you, that "*criminal excesses*" out of London can be traced to the Reformers ? Where have these excesses been committed ? In the *Isle of Ely* ; in *Suffolk* ; in *Wales* ; at *Dundee*. That is all, I believe ; and, you *know well*, that in neither of those places has there been any meeting for Reform. In all those places some misguided and suffering people have made attacks upon the threshing-machines, or have assembled to demand a rise of wages, or have seized on food in bakers' and other shops ; but in no one of those cases has there been, amongst the people so assembling, any *talk* even about Reform. Some of the unhappy creatures have *suffered death* for their "*criminal excesses* ;" their confessions or pretended confessions, have been published to the world ; and, in those confessions not one word is to be found about the influence of Reformers on their minds.

Then as to the riot in London, which was really very criminal, you also *well know*, that Reform and Reformers had nothing to do with the matter. The WATSONS, though persons, until that day, of excellent character, appear to have adopted the *Spencean principles*, which without my troubling myself about them here, are well known as having nothing to do with Parliamentary Reform, whatever any base and malignant and profligately corrupt man may say to the contrary. Nay, so clear is this fact, that Mr. HUNT, who came up the first time to Spa-fields upon the invitation of the Spenceans, without knowing any thing of their projects, *threw aside* the memorial that *they* had prepared, and proposed a petition for Reform and relief, which was laid before the Prince by Lord Sidmouth, and which was soon after followed by a donation, or grant, of five thousand pounds by the Prince, and by that large soup-subscription in the city, which appears never to have been so much as thought of before. It was *then*, and *not till then*, that a meeting took place at the Mansion House ; that so piteous a picture of the state of the poor of Spitalfields was exhibited to the public : *then* Mr. Buxton was extremely eloquent, but, *until then*, he was silent upon the subject. So, that, though I call not in question the motives of any of the individuals engaged in promoting that subscription, but, on the contrary, do most sincerely commend those motives, I say, and I

shall always say, that the subscription and all the relief it has afforded, are to be ascribed to Mr. HUNT more than to any other person. The example of the Prince Regent had, doubtless, a great effect on the subscribers, and I am willing to give it its full due; but, it was Mr. HUNT who was the cause of the deep distress of the people being MADE KNOWN to his Royal Highness, who, had it not been for the Petition from Spa-fields, would, probably, never have heard of them.

Well, but there have been persons seized, and papers seized upon those who were accused of a *plot* upon that occasion. And, even letters from Mr. HUNT have been seized. They have, however, never been *published* nor ever brought forward upon any trial. The fact is, they contained no proof of any wish to produce unlawful acts, but, I dare say, precisely the contrary. The rioters have been *tried*; all the evidence has been produced against them; but not one word about *Parliamentary Reform*. There have, however, been words enough about *distress* and *misery*, and some of these words you shall now have from the lips of the poor unfortunate CASHMAN, when he was asked "*why* sentence of *death* should not be passed upon him?"—These are the memorable words:

"MY LORD,—I hope you will excuse a poor friendless sailor for occupying your time. Had I died fighting the battles of my country I should have gloried in it: but I confess that it grieves me to think of suffering like a robber, when I can call God to witness that *I have passed days together without even a morsel of bread, rather than violate the laws*. I have served my king for many years, and often fought for my country. I have received *nine wounds in the service*, and never before have been charged with any offence. I have been at sea *all my life*, and my *father was killed on board the Diana frigate*. I came to London, my Lord, *to endeavour to recover my pay and prize-money*, but being *unsuccessful*, I was reduced to the greatest distress, and being poor and penniless, I have not been able to bring forward witnesses to prove my innocence, nor to acquaint my brave officers, or I am sure they would all have come forward in my behalf. The gentlemen who have sworn against me must have mistook me for some other person (there being *many sailors in the mob*); but I freely forgive them, and I hope God will also forgive them, for I solemnly declare that I committed no acts of violence whatever."

Where, then, are the grounds upon which you so impudently prefer these charges against us? Is not the country already in a state of distraction, great enough, without your endeavours to excite such powerful feelings of resentment and eternal ill-will amongst such numerous classes of the people?

But, though you cannot trace any of the lamentable occurrences, of which you speak, to the writings, the speeches, or the actions of the Reformers; and though you *will* not attempt to trace them to their true cause; I shall not, my good Life-and-Fortune-Men, be so shy upon the subject; and, therefore, I shall here treat you with my DECLARATION, which I beg you to receive, as an appropriate answer to your own.

DECLARATION.

Whereas, certain Bankers, Stock-jobbers, and others, of the City of London, have recently met, at a Tavern, in the said city; and whereas, being so met, they then and there issued a certain Declaration, in which they falsely and calumniously ascribed the divers riots which have taken place in the several parts of the kingdom to the proceedings of the Parliamentary Reformers, whom they impudently call "*designing and evil-minded men*;" and, whereas it is expedient that the said riots should be traced to their true causes, and as I think myself able to do this with

great simplicity, I, William Cobbett, with a view of doing this, do hereby declare :

FIRST, That it is a notorious truth, that the riots in the County of Suffolk, in the Isle of Ely, in the principality of Wales, at Dundee in Scotland, and in the city of London, have all been carried on, and perpetrated, by persons in great want and misery; that the manifest object, in all these cases (and no riots have taken place any where else), has been to obtain food by means of violent proceedings; for, though threshing-machines were destroyed in Suffolk; though the people in the Isle of Ely demanded a rise of wages; though the people in Wales demanded employment; though the people of Dundee complained of the high price of oatmeal; though the sailors in London broke open gunsmiths' shops in a very unlawful and unjustifiable manner; and though the conduct of all the parties, in all these cases, cannot by any means be defended; still, the fact notoriously is, that all these riots and criminal excesses have had for their immediate cause a greater or less proportion of that terrible and unexampled distress, which now pervades every part of the kingdom, and which, while it astounds the mind of the wise and melts the heart of the humane, can never be mitigated, but must be augmented, by every attempt, whether arising from folly or knavery, to disguise its real and all-powerful cause.

SECOND, That the more immediate cause of this distress and this misery, are, a want of employment, and an incapacity to afford a sufficiency of relief to the unemployed part of the Labouring People, who necessarily have no capital or stock whereon to live.

THIRD, That these evils have arisen, not from a "sudden transition from war to peace," but, from a deep-rooted cause of calamity, namely, a system of fictitious currency, which, by its *sudden transitions* from high to low, and then again from low to high, has ruined, in many instances, has broken down in more instances, and has crippled in all instances, the land-owner, the farmer, the master-tradesman, the ship-owner, the master-manufacturer, and all those engaged in the employment, or protection, of productive labour.

FOURTH, That these *sudden transitions* have arisen from the vast quantity of Paper-money issued by the Bank of England some years ago, and by her nurselings, the Country Banks; and that that immense issue of Paper-money, which at once brought down prices, and raised up taxes and salaries, was owing to the stoppage of Cash Payments at the Bank of England, in the year 1797; and which stoppage arose, as the Records of Parliament inform us, out of an APPLICATION MADE BY THE THEN GOVERNOR AND DIRECTORS OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND TO THE MINISTER OF THAT DAY.

FIFTH, That, amongst the Governor and Directors of the Bank of England of that day, *I find the names of several of the signers of the above-mentioned Declaration at the London Tavern*; and that, therefore, I am clearly of opinion that I have logically "*traced*" the late "*criminal excesses*" to those worthy gentlemen themselves.

This is declaration for declaration, and I am not at all afraid to submit them, side by side, to the common sense of mankind. But, my worthy *Declarers*, I am not going to stop here. It is now very nearly *fourteen* years since I stood alone, and for thirteen years I stood alone, in

declaring it to be my fixed opinion that the total ruin of the country, that the upsetting of all property, that the miseries of confusion, must ultimately ensue at no very distant period, if a stop were not put to the increase of the Debt and the Paper-money. This period is not yet arrived indeed; but it will require very great wisdom, and very resolute measures with regard to the Debt and the expenditure in general, to prevent its arriving.

I now hear gentlemen and noblemen enough in the two Houses of Parliament ready enough to adopt and to utter many of my sentiments on this subject, which sentiments were, for many, many years, held in derision by some, and considered as criminal by others. I have heard my Lord Grey now say, that *the taxes* which were *imposed in one* currency, are now *collected in another* currency; and his Lordship might have added, and, perhaps, did add, though it is not in the report of his speech, that the same remark extended to rents, tithes by composition, leaseholds, ground rents, annuities, bonds, mortgages, marriage settlements, and all the other transactions between man and man; and, surely, if the taxes were *imposed in one* currency, and are now *collected in another* currency, all that large part of the *Debt* which has been borrowed since the year 1797, was *lent in our* currency, and ought not to be *paid in another* currency.

Every man who has only common sense, *now* sees that the Funding System has produced all the mischief. To it we owe *all* our calamities. This is now evident to the nation at large; and, in my work of *Paper against Gold*, I have proved, step by step, not only that the Funding System has been the cause of our calamities; but I have also proved that, from its very *nature*, it must be the cause of such calamities. All our troubles would vanish in a moment, if this system were at an end. The Ministers themselves would gladly get rid of their *standing army*; for, what is the use or pretended use, of this army at home in time of profound peace? Why, it is said, to preserve the tranquillity of the country. And what disturbs the country? Why, the miseries of the people. And what makes the people miserable? Why, the great weight of taxes, and the fluctuations in the currency. And what makes the great weight of taxes and the fluctuations in the currency? Why, the Debt and the paper-money. And what makes the Debt and the paper-money? Why, the *Funding System*. Thus it is to this system that we owe the standing army and every evil that oppresses us; the whole of that combination of evils which now astounds even me, who have been anticipating those evils for many years.

Reformers, indeed! It is not *Reformers*, men, generally speaking, without riches, who can thus agitate society and shake a great State to its very foundations. It must be something far more powerful than *speeches* and *writings* to produce effects like these. Besides, Reformers have been at work for forty years, and they once had Mr. PITT and the DUKE of RICHMOND at their head. No: it is the *Debt*,—the *Funding System*; these are the causes of all the dangers, which the ancient establishments of the country now feel. The *Church* complains of an *intended* law levelled against it. The Clergy are called upon, in the *St. James's Chronicle*, to meet in the Deaneries *all over the kingdom*; to hold *ad-journed meetings*, and to protest against the *intended* law. And, meet they will, too, and not one moment too soon. What has produced this intended measure against their property? Why, the sufferings of the

farmers; and, as was before shown, these sufferings have arisen from the *Funding System*.

What folly, as well as what impudence, then, is it, to cry out against *Reformers!* As if they could add to, or lessen, the great dangers which hang over the State. There is a *green bag* full of papers, it is said, laid before Parliament, proving the existence of plots against the "*whole frame and laws of the Constitution.*" So says the *COURIER*, who appears to have had his nose in the bag, even before it was carried down. There may be, for anything that I know to the contrary, some wild projects on foot for altering the frame of the Government; but I am very sure, that they are all vanity and nothingness, when compared with the *Funding System*; and, if a clear statement relative to the Debt and the taxes, and the effects of these, had been put into the Green Bag, and had been strongly recommended to the attention of the two Houses, it would, it appears to me, have been much more likely to tend to the preservation of tranquillity than any other step that could have been taken.

Put down *meetings*, indeed! Alas! if such a measure, painful as it is to one's feelings as an Englishman, could *possibly* tend to restore the nation to happiness, or to lessen its unparalleled miseries, I would hail it as a boon; for, now the suffering is too dreadful to be thought of without deep mental affliction. *You* affect to "*trace*" all appearances of *discontent* to the *Reformers*. It is true that *you* feel no misery; but, is there none any where else? A few plain facts will suffice; and they now lie before me *in print*.

"The poor-house at Bilston is so full of occupants that there is not room for them all to sleep at the same time; but an equal number of them retire to rest *in rotation.*"

"At a meeting of the inhabitants of Wilton, held on Monday last, for the purpose of considering of some mode of alleviating the distresses of the town, which were occasioned by the increase of its poor-rates, it was ordered, that the poor should be employed by *sending them in rotation to the different householders*, in proportion to what they were rated at. This mode of employment is called, by labourers in husbandry, '*working on the stem.*'"

In the City of Coventry, on a population of about 20,000, there are more than 8000 *paupers*.

In some parishes, the poor men are *lodged* and kept *separately* from their *wives*.

But as an authentic and ever-to-be-remembered statement of shocking facts, and as an incontrovertible proof of the awful consequences of a *Funding System*, I insert the following paper, word for word.

"*Condensed Statement of the Poor of St. Mary, Islington; as prepared by the Committee appointed for that purpose, Jan. 31, 1817.*"

"From examination of the different District Reports, it was found, that

"730 Poor Families, consisting of

"1371 Adults,

"1712 Children, comprising a total of

"3083 individuals, had been visited, a large portion of whom required, and had received relief.

"It also appeared that there were *totally* out of employ about 300 persons, who were *not only* out of employ, but almost naked, without a bed to lie upon, and WITHOUT A PENNY TO PURCHASE BREAD.

"In addition to those totally out of employ, the cases of many, who are only partially employed are numerous and very distressing, some of them earning only a few shillings a week, with six or eight helpless children.

"There are 93 families that have from five to nine children.

"There are also 181 families that receive parochial relief, the total amounting to 21*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.* per week. This does not include the casual relief given by the parish-officers, nor what is distributed by the different benevolent funds in the parish.

"To assist in ascertaining the distress of the parish, inquiry was made into the amount of goods pledged, and it was found to be as follows :

Districts.	Number of Families.	Amount.
1st	120	£209 3 0
2nd	44	39 9 0
3rd	78	27 0 0
4th	220	400 0 0
5th	138	291 13 6

"To ascertain exactly the amount of goods pledged has been found impossible, but considering that three-fourths of the 4th district remain unreported in this particular, and one-fourth amounts to 400*l.*, there is no doubt of the amount being at least 1500*l.* in the whole parish, comprising pledges for various sums, from THREE HALFPENCE to 20*l.* The article here alluded to, was the property of a *poor but respectable widow*, who travelled nearly three miles, from the extremity of the parish where she resided, TO PROCURE THREE HALFPENCE UPON IT!!

"The Committee intended to have given some particular cases of distress, to convey to the parish some idea of their nature and extent, and of the NECESSITY FOR FARTHER CONTRIBUTION; but they have found the cases of extreme poverty and privation SO NUMEROUS, that they must confine themselves to a general representation of facts, and in doing this, for reasons which will be sufficiently obvious, they will avoid the mention of any particular names.

"The Committee have met with unfortunate tradesmen of irreproachable character, sinking, and pining in secret, with numerous young children, as five to seven, the wife ready to lie in, the husband in ill-health, rent and many little debts owing, without any means to pay them. Other families where the husband is nearly 70 years of age, the wife ill in bed, a child or two to maintain, and the whole earnings not exceeding 7*s.* a week. Others, where they have by distress been obliged to pawn almost every necessary, to provide in the interim a little sustenance, who are willing to work, but can find no employment; and some families have been found, where the poor people, with hardly anything to cover their nakedness, have not even a bed of the poorest kind, but lie upon straw or shavings—all their little earnings being unequal to the cravings of hunger.

"Among these are many people who have seen better days, and have endeavoured by every means to avoid becoming burthensome to their parish or their neighbours, and who, it is to be feared, would have actually perished, but for the investigation to which the present institution has given rise.

"Some of these cases, with a little pecuniary aid, might be enabled again to become useful members of the community; but such is the extent of the present distress, that the first object should be to meet those cases of distress, under which, without relief, the sufferers are in danger of perishing. The liberality of the parish will, it is hoped, effect this; and if, in addition, some relief of the kind hinted above could be extended afterwards to DECAYED AND UNFORTUNATE TRADESMEN, who by a little pecuniary aid could be restored to usefulness, the benefit would be incalculable."

"(By Order) R. OLDERSHAW, Jun. and N. THOMPSON, Jun.
"Secretaries."

And yet (O impudence!) the Reformers are accused of *exaggerating* the distresses of the country, and the COURIER abuses Lord Grey for dwelling on the public *distress*, as being the real cause of the prevailing discontents! Alas! my good Life-and-Fortune Men, it is not *your* lives and fortunes that have been sacrificed. You pledged *your* lives and fortunes to carry on wars and make loans; but, it is not *your* lives and fortunes that have been in danger.

Alas! what can Green Bags, or the result of the opening of their contents; what can these do towards the restoration of happiness to the people? If all meetings, all petitioning, all writing, all printing, all speaking, all whispering, were instantly put a stop to, not one single moment would that measure retard that steady march which great causes are now keeping on towards great and inevitable consequences. This march might, in my opinion, be checked by a Radical Reform in the Commons' House of Parliament; but, without that Reform, my decided opinion is, that it cannot.

You seem to imagine, that the *people* are wholly ignorant of the real source of their calamity. Read, then, the following paragraph in the resolutions that preceded an excellent petition just agreed to in the *City of Coventry*.

"That whilst the holders of every article, purchased or manufactured when *bank-notes were depreciated*, have been compelled to reduce their price to the standard of *sterling money*; whilst every individual charged with debts contracted at the same period, has been also obliged to pay their full nominal amount in sterling money, thus sustaining a loss equivalent to the difference in the real value of the currency, at the respective periods: The distress, consequent upon this natural operation of causes over which the sufferers had no control, is considerably increased, by their still being called upon to pay in *taxes*, their share of the *full interest of the debt* (called national) contracted by the Government, *principally in the depreciated currency.*"

Thus, you see, the matter is understood by the people at large. They can "*trace*" as well, and a little better, than you can, or, at least, than you choose to do it; and, though the members of the two Houses have not yet spoken out, you may be sure that they will do it *before they separate*. You seem to imagine that the leading men amongst the Reformers wish to carry their views into execution by *assault*. They must be great fools if they do, seeing what an evident tendency there is, in all the circumstances of the times, to assist their views more and more every day. It is right to petition for Reform; it is right to endeavour to obtain it by all lawful means; it is right to bring forward the measure in a fair and distinct form. But, it is wholly unnecessary to be *impatient*, seeing that it *must* come at no very distant day, and that, too, with very little opposition. Whatever may be your *hopes*, this agitation about the Reformers and the Spenceans will not last many weeks. It is not the green bag, but the *budget*, which will soon become the interesting object, and we shall see, before this session of Parliament is over, whether the political economy of Mr. Colquhoun, the police justice, or mine be the most sound and rational.

WM. COBBETT.

A LETTER
TO THE
PEOPLE OF HAMPSHIRE.

WHAT DOES WILD INNOVATION MEAN?—A LIST OF INNOVATIONS.—SURRENDER OF SINECURES.

(*Political Register, February, 1817*)

London, 11th February, 1817.

COUNTRYMEN,

The things we pray for are called *innovations*. The word *innovation*, which merely means the introduction of *something new*, is a very pretty word, though it only serves as a blind on this occasion. To make a dirty narrow street into a wide clean street is an *innovation*; but there is no harm in it. To make an impassable lane into a turnpike-road is an innovation. So that an innovation may be a very *good thing*, though, as in the case of the enclosure and private appropriation of the beautiful Forest of Bere, which has destroyed hundreds of thousands of growing oaks, within a few miles of our greatest naval arsenal, in order to make way for the growth of miserable crops of straw with little or no corn, an innovation may be a very *bad thing*. But, at any rate, we propose *no innovations*. We propose nothing that has not been before in our country. We propose *Annual Parliaments*, and that every man *who pays taxes* shall have a vote choosing those *who lay the taxes on us*; and we are ready to prove that these are not *new*, but very old indeed.

But, for the argument's sake, if we did propose an innovation, I should be glad to know what objection that would be to us, supposing the proposition to be *good in itself*? Is every thing to go on undergoing changes except such changes as may favour the people of England? To hear this objection, especially in the House of Commons, one would imagine, that our laws had never been changed since the island was first settled by a civilized people. Far different, however, is the fact, as a short list will show.

1. There is now a law to *license* printing-presses, to punish men who make use of presses not licensed. Every Printer, Type-maker, and Press-maker is compelled, under a heavy penalty, to keep an account of all the authors and others who employ them, and to be ready to give evidence, against them, if called upon. Is not *this an innovation*?

2. Every Printer is compelled to print his name and place of abode at the bottom of every thing that he prints ; he is compelled to keep a copy, in order to its being produced, if called for, to the Secretary of State ; any publisher, printer, and proprietor of a newspaper are compelled to go to a place called the Stamp-office, and there *swear*, that they are so, and they are also obliged to make oath to their several places of abode ; and the publisher is obliged to deposit one copy of every number of the paper in the Stamp-office, where it is ready to be produced against all the parties, at any time, in prosecutions for libel ; so that the parties are thus compelled, under heavy penalties, to furnish, in case of prosecution, evidence against themselves.
3. *Special Juries* are also an innovation, especially in matters of a criminal nature. A Special Jury consists of forty-eight men, *nominated* and *appointed* by the *Master of the Crown-office*, of these forty-eight the man who is to be tried for a libel may strike off twelve, while the Attorney-General's man or the Government prosecutor does the same, and the first twelve who come into the box out of the remaining twenty-four make the Jury to try the cause. But, what is the use of this *striking off*, when the master of the Crown-office *appoints the whole* ? Observe what a difference here is from the case of a *Common Jury*, who consist of a great number of men, called together by the summonses of the constables from all parts of a county, all the names of whom are put into a box, and, when a man is going to be tried, the ballots are taken out promiscuously, and the first twelve are the jury to try the case. Here the officers of the crown have no power of choosing ; but, in the other case, they have the full power of *nominating* and *appointing* the jury ; that is to say, out of all the men in Middlesex, for instance, who are in the sheriff's book, they may take, and do take, just the forty-eight which they please and no other. And this is the sort of jury, by which every man is tried, if he be prosecuted by the Attorney-General. And, you will bear in mind, that juries were intended to protect men's lives and property against any undue bias that might exist in persons in authority.
4. The stamping of newspapers, and, thereby, checking the circulation of information as to matters connected with politics.
5. The compelling of all publishers of *pamphlets* to carry a copy of each and lodge it at a Government-office, in order that the Government may have it in its power to know what every man is about in this respect ; in order that it may see what is circulating amongst the people ; and, in order that it may know who to *prosecute*, if it thinks proper.
6. The Attorney-General's powers are tremendous. He can, at any time, bring an accusation against *any body*, by what is called an *ex-officio information* ; he can compel the party to plead ; he can bring him to trial, or he can put the trial off as long as he pleases, and may keep a charge hanging over a man's head during the whole life of such man. When he has brought the man into court, he can stop the proceedings upon the spot ; he can go on with them ; he can, in any stage of the matter, forgive the man by wiping away the charge against him. He can, if two men publish the same thing, prosecute both, and let the one off without actually bringing him to

punishment, while he brings the other to punishment ; and this was actually done only about five or six years ago. After a man has even been convicted on an information of the Attorney-General, the latter can even then let him off by not bringing him up for judgment ; or, he may let the poor wretch remain in a state of uncertainty *for years* ; and, after that, bring him up and have him punished. He may *commence* a prosecution against a man this year, as was done by the late Lord Thurlow against Mr. Horne Tooke, and never bring him to trial for years afterwards, and never at all, if he does not like it. But, these powers, though they are all *innovations* on the Common and Ancient Law of the land, have received, of very late years, and in the Attorney-Generalship of Sir Vicary Gibbs, a most dangerous addition ; namely, the power of *holding to bail*, or *sending to prison* in default of bail, the moment an information *ex-officio* is filed ; and, observe, that this may be done, too ; and it actually was done by Sir Vicary Gibbs in the year 1803, *without at last bringing the party to trial* ! He filed an *ex-officio* information against a man, he called the man up to give bail, the bail was not to be had, the man was ACTUALLY IMPRISONED, and he NEVER WAS BROUGHT TO TRIAL ON THE INFORMATION !—This terrible power has not existed more than about *eight or nine years*.—Yet, our revilers and slanderers talk about the *danger of our innovations*, as they have the impudence to call them. But about the innovations that I am here talking of, they say not a single word.

7. In all informations, such as I have been speaking of, for what are called *libels*, that is to say, writings which the Attorney-General chooses to prosecute men for, the charge against the accused was, formerly, that he had put forth something FALSE, *scandalous* and *malicious* ; but, of late years, that is to say, within about fifty years, the word *false* has been *left out* ; so that, though the publication may be all *true*, it, nevertheless, according to this new practice, may be very *criminal*.

All the above things, except some of the powers of the Attorney-General, are *innovations* of very modern date. Special Juries, as applicable to criminal cases, are not more than of about sixty or seventy years' standing ; and all the Licensing of Presses and Stamping Laws, as far as relates to the press, are of not more than twenty-five years standing, except a trifling part of the newspaper stamp.

8. The *whole* of the *Game Laws* are an *innovation* upon the common and ancient law of the land ; many of them are of very modern date ; and that law, by which a man may be TRANSPORTED for being engaged in poaching, after a certain hour in the evening, and before a certain hour in the morning, was passed *only last year* !—Is not this an innovation ?
9. The *whole* of the *Excise Laws* are an *innovation* upon the common and ancient law of the land, which held, that *every man's house was his castle*, whereas these laws authorize officers to go into many persons' houses at any hour of the day or of the night ; and, in some cases, the Excise officers may actually *keep the keys of people's premises* ! And, though some of these laws are of more than a century standing, the far greater part of them, including

the penalties of fine, imprisonment, banishment, and even death, are of modern date, and are a complete and most awful *innovation*.

10. Paper-money and all the laws relating to it, all the hanging laws for *forgery*, all the whole train of this terrible system is an entire *innovation*; things wholly unknown a hundred and twenty years ago.
11. The Debt, the Funds, the Stocks, and all the laws relating to them, the mortgaging of the taxes; all are an *innovation*.
12. The Civil List is an *innovation*. The Kings of England maintained their splendour out of the produce of their own Royal Domains, such as the New Forest, &c. They had now and then grants from the people, but in the main, they lived upon their own revenues. It is not till very lately that this has been changed, and in my opinion, to the great injury of the King and his Family, whose estate has been taken by what is called "the *public*," but of the *produce* of which estate I can never discover that "the *public*" receive any thing worth speaking of.—Is not this an *innovation*?
13. The *Police Justices* and all the whole of that establishment is an *innovation*. England was until the time of Pitt, too happy to need an establishment of this sort. Ordinary Justices of the Peace, Gentlemen of the Counties, Constables, Tithing-men, Mayors, Aldermen, Bailiffs, Beadles. These were quite sufficient, without resorting to a *Police*, the very sound of which word was hateful to English ears, because it was well known to be a dark and inexorable instrument of tyranny in France and other despotic countries.—About twenty-three years ago our *Police* was established; that is to say Justices were hired at a *salary*, and officers hired to serve under them at a *salary*. These Justices may be *turned off* and deprived of their salaries whenever the Crown is advised to turn them off. They have not only the power to take up and commit thieves and robbers and murderers, but to *license public-houses*, to *refuse licenses to public-houses without cause assigned*, to impose fines under the Excise-Laws, Game-Laws, Stamp-Laws, Hawker's Act, and, in short, to do every thing that the ordinary Justices of the Peace may do; and, as they are very *numerous* and are enabled to act as Justices of the Peace throughout the Counties of Middlesex, Surrey, Kent, and Essex, they have, in fact, a most monstrous degree of power. They can and do sit at the *Quarter Sessions* in all those Counties, and, of course, they possess more power in all these Counties than can reasonably be expected to be possessed by all the Gentlemen in the same Counties, who serve as Justices of the Peace without salaries.—Here is an *innovation*, if people want to find *innovations* to cry out against!—If the necessity of the times; if the vast increase of the Metropolis; if these require a set of thief-takers by profession, and persons to be paid *salaries* to exercise certain powers of Magistrates, surely it cannot be necessary, that these same persons should have the power of licensing and refusing to license public-houses, that they should have cognizance of cases under the Excise-Laws, the Stamp-Laws, and the Poor-Laws.—It is said, in the newspapers, that these powers are going to be taken from them by Act of Parliament; but, as the thing now stands, this alone is an *innovation* of most fearful magnitude and most terrible effect.

14. I could make this dozen of innovations into twenty dozen; but, at present, I will stop with the *Bank of England* and its cash stoppage. The Bank itself (the greatest evil that this or any other nation ever experienced) is only one hundred and twenty years old; and we Reformers ask for nothing that is not five times as old. But the *cash stoppage* is the thing, and that is only *twenty years old*, come the 27th of this very month of February.—The Bank had always put forth notes which were *payable* to the bearer, on demand, in *gold*, or *silver*. But, in February, 1797, when people began to like gold and silver better than the notes of the Bank, they went to the Bank to get their money. The Bank Company, that is to say, the Governor, Directors and the other persons who had put forth the bank-notes, found that they had not wherewith to pay their notes. They were very *hard run*, and they applied to the Minister, Mr. Pitt, to inform him that they were in alarm for the *safety of their concern*.—In short, they refused to pay their notes on the 27th of February, having obtained an Order in Council to do so—“Well,” you will say, “but the holders of the notes sued them for payment, did they not?” No, faith! for an Act of Parliament was soon afterwards passed to protect the Bank Company against all such suits of their creditors, and to screen them from the effects of their having violated the law!—This protection and this screening has been carried on, by divers Acts of Parliament, *from that day to this*; and though it is written upon every bank-note, that the Bank will pay so much or so much to the bearer on demand, it does not mean that it will pay him one single shilling in *gold* or in *silver*, but that it will give *another note*, or *other notes*, in exchange!—And (yet hear it, O! Englishmen!) when you ask for a Reform of the Commons’ or people’s House of Parliament, you are called wild, visionary, misguided, and, above all things, you are called *innovators*!*

Now, then, without going any further, what have the corrupt to say? Will they say, that these are *not innovations*? Will they say, that *time* and a change of circumstances have rendered those innovations necessary? And, if they say this, why do they cry out against us for proposing what *they call* an innovation? For, if we were to allow it to be an innovation, why should our proposal be rejected upon that ground, seeing that no other alteration of the laws and usages of the country has ever been objected to with success upon that ground? The whole history of the Bank stoppage is contained in my little book called *PAPER AGAINST GOLD*; but I have here given enough of fact to show what the nature of that memorable transaction was, and also enough to make good the allegations contained in the eleventh paragraph of our petition.

It is very curious, that the surrender, or, rather, the dropping of *Lord Camden’s great sinecure*, should have been announced directly after the

* In this Register Mr. COBBETT quotes the speech of Earl Grosvenor, made in the House of Lords, February 14th, 1817, in which his Lordship, in speaking of the “designs” of the Parliamentary Reformers, and the manner in which the Reformers were being treated, says:—“I consider the Septennial Act (passed in 1817), a direct infringement on the Constitution, and a violation of the rights and liberties of the people.”* * * The Act repealed itself, and ought not to remain on the “statute-book.”—Ed.

presenting of the Hampshire petition. I do not mean to say, that one was *produced* by the other; but certainly the surrender has been produced by the petitions of the people. However, it is an *abolition* of all sinecures and all pensions and grants, not fully merited by well known public services; this is what we pray for; and, I am fully persuaded, that this is what we shall very soon see take place.

WM. COBBETT.

A LETTER
TO EARL GROSVENOR.

Thanks for his Lordship's Defence of the People.—Fair Play's a jewel.—The Question of Reform fairly argued.—Annual Parliaments.—Universal Suffrage.—Mr. Brougham's Sincerity.—Foul Conduct of the Corrupt Writers.—Green Bag and Cheap Publications.

(Political Register, February, 1817.)

London, February 19th, 1817.

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's speech, as given in the newspapers of last week, has given great satisfaction to every candid man in the country, and to no man more than to him who has now the honour of addressing you. If people are in error, it is not by misrepresentations and revilings and abuse that they are to be convinced of their errors. This desirable end is not to be arrived at by imputing to the leaders seditious designs, and to the people the grossest of ignorance. This is not the way to silence the former, nor to gain over the latter. If we, who hold for *Annual Parliaments* and *Universal Suffrage*, be in error, your Lordship has taken the right course to make us patient, at least, and to wait to hear what can be urged in opposition to our opinions. The flippancy and rancour and affected contempt, with which we have been assailed by corrupt and scrambling men, have only tended to excite our just resentment against them, and, which is worse, to make us confound with those corrupt scramblers, all other persons, who appear to be co-operating with them in general.

The course, which your Lordship has pursued, is precisely the opposite of that of the persons here alluded to. The mildness of your language, the justice of your sentiments, the whole tenor of y^our manly declarations call upon us to listen to you with the greatest respect, and if we still retain our opinions, to show by fair statement and reasoning that the grounds of those opinions are such as to warrant us in differing, as to those opinions, from those which your Lordship has so explicitly and fairly expressed.

You have been, in your reported speech, pleased to observe, my Lord,

that a Reform of Parliament of *some sort* is necessary and just; and, that you consider the *seven years Parliament* "as a *direct infringement of the Constitution, as a violation of the rights and liberties of the people,*" and that the Act, sanctioning those Parliaments, *ought not to remain in the statute-book;*" and, your Lordship is pleased to add, that you would give your support to a bill for *Triennial Parliaments*; but, as to *Annual Parliaments*, you do not think them agreeable to the Constitution; and, as to Universal Suffrage, you cannot help calling it *universal impracticability*. But, though you differ with us in opinion upon these points, your Lordship's words, which I cannot help repeating here, convince us, that while you would leave our minds free, you have a mind of your own, open to receive whatever we have to urge in defence of our opinions.

"But because he differed with others on that subject, was he therefore (as was well expressed by a noble person on a former evening, in a most eloquent and convincing speech) *to wish to see those with whom he differed, imprisoned and gibbeted, hung, drawn, and quartered?* Was he to wish to see a Judge *Jefferies*, or one acting in the spirit and power of a Judge *Jefferies*, placed on the Bench, for the purpose of committing a legal murder on these people? For instance, should he wish to see MAJOR CARTWRIGHT, whom he understood to be a most respectable person, because he entertained such contrary sentiments, and endeavoured to propagate them through the country, *should he wish to see his mouth closed, not by argument and fair discussion, but by the bloody hands of an executioner?*—The thought was *shocking, monstrous, and diabolical!* As the fortitude of the people had been great under their difficulties and privations and sufferings, *so had their conduct in all places, where meetings for retrenchment and reform had been held, been most exemplary;* and, indeed, it was *remarkable and even surprising that it should have been so, considering the great numbers that have been assembled in various places, and the warmth that naturally arises in large bodies when assembled from various quarters to discuss matters, where grievances are felt. This was at least no symptom of disaffection, and he trusted, from such patient discussion, much good would arise."*

My Lord, these words will endear your name to the people of this kingdom; for it is nothing short of the *whole people*, in the proper sense of the word, of whose conduct your Lordship has here spoken; and I venture to assure your Lordship, that the satisfaction, which the people will derive from your just description and your high commendation of their own conduct, will still fall short of their gratitude to your Lordship for the manner in which you have been pleased to speak of that venerable patriot, that learned, able, wise, disinterested, brave, unconquerable, true-hearted Englishman, MAJOR CARTWRIGHT, whose private life has been as amiable and as spotless as his public exertions have been long, arduous, and valuable. It is indeed "monstrous and diabolical" to think of *answering* such a man by the hands of an executioner, and scarcely less monstrous, or less diabolical, to think of *answering* him by *shutting his mouth* by force of any sort, or to think of answering *any body else* by similar means. The *folly*, too, is equal to the wickedness of such attempts; for, is it possible to suppose, that, if the people have been induced to *believe* anything, no matter what, they will be induced to *unbelieve* it by the use of *force* to compel their teachers to hold their tongues? or to lay down their pens? No, my Lord, there is something so unfair, so unjust, so tyrannical, and so insolent in all propositions tending to encourage such attempts, that the very tamest drop of blood in the very tamest of hearts is roused into resentment at the very idea.

In your Lordship we have a fair, an open, a manly, a truly noble adver-

sary, not of us, but of some of our doctrines; and, therefore, my Lord, I shall proceed, with great respect, to state to you the reasons on which I conceive those doctrines to be well founded; and this I shall do much less with a desire to triumph in the dispute, than with the hope of contributing some little matter towards gaining over to our side a person of such great weight and such high character as your Lordship.

In so manfully and truly stating, that *seven-year Parliaments* are “*a direct infringement of the Constitution, and a violation of the rights and liberties of the people,*” you have spared us the trouble of contending, that we have a *right to a reform of some sort*. Nor is this a small matter, seeing, that, for years past, *all reform* has been in another quarter, asserted to be *wholly unnecessary*, and that the whole thing, as it now stands, is *agreeable to the Constitution*.

Seeing, then, that the thing, as it now stands, is, “*a direct infringement of the Constitution, and a violation of the rights and liberties of the people,*” we come naturally to consider what sort of a Reform would reinstate the people in the possession of those rights and liberties, of which possession they are now deprived? We say *Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage*; your Lordship thinks that the former are *not agreeable to the Constitution*, and that the latter is *impracticable*. These are the two points, which with great respect and submission, I propose to argue with your Lordship; and, not to argue them upon mere precedent or ancient usage, but also upon the ground of equity, and of the fitness of the things, considered in their natural effects under the circumstances of the nation in these times in which we live.

That Parliaments *annually chosen* were the ancient law of the land is, I think, evident from the very words of the Statute of the 4th year of Edward III., Chapter 14, passed in the year 1331; for though the word *holden* once a year is made use of, it is, nevertheless, clearly proved by Mr. Grauville Sharp, in his “*Declaration of the People’s Rights,*” and which was published in 1775, that Parliaments were *newly-chosen* every time that they were called. He has there cited several instances of new Parliaments being summoned *year after year successively* by a *new writ of election*; he mentions some years in which *two, or more, new Parliaments* had been summoned by *different writs of election*, in the space of a *single year*. And, that learned and venerable lawyer and excellent man, Mr. BARON MASERES, in speaking upon this subject, says: “*so that it may truly be affirmed, that, in those ancient times, the people enjoyed the privilege of electing new representatives in Parliament, either once in every year, or more than once, if the King found it necessary to have another Parliament before the end of the year.*”

These remarks of Mr. BARON MASERES are to be found in a new quarto edition, published a few years ago by White, in Fleet-street, of GENERAL LUDLOW’s famous Letters in defence of the Long Parliament in their conduct against Charles the First, in which Letters also LUDLOW insists upon the people’s rights to “*Annual Parliaments.*”

Now, my Lord, were LUDLOW and GRANVILLE SHARP, and is Mr. BARON MASERES; are these to be looked upon as “*wild and visionary men?*” Are they, too, to be considered as “*designing and evil-minded persons?*” Or, are they to be numbered amongst the “*deluded*” and the “*seduced?*” Where will Mr. Perry, and Mr. Brougham be pleased to station Mr. Baron Maseres? will they place him upon the list of the “*knaves*” or upon that of the “*fools*” of the day.

However, my Lord, I am ready to acknowledge, that, though the ancient laws and usages of the land are decidedly for Annual Parliaments, such Parliaments ought not to be contended for, if it can be shown, that the restoration of them would now be *unfit*; that it would be productive, or tend towards, any mischief to the nation, or to any of the great and settled laws and establishments of the land; and especially if it were at all likely to introduce that strife, confusion, and anarchy, of which our virulent opponents affect to be so much afraid. But, my Lord, *why* should annual elections lead to such consequences? It is the opinion of Mr. BARON MASERES, that Annual Parliaments would have a precisely opposite tendency and effect.

"Now," observes that truly learned man, "if this good old law were to be revived, would there be any danger of such violent and expensive and often ruinous contests, at the time of elections, as are seen in the present mode of proceeding, when the general elections occur only once in about six years? For, as the representatives would be *constantly disposed to cultivate the good opinion of their constituents*, and, by their conduct in Parliament, to promote their interests and wishes, as far as their own consciences and judgments would allow them; in order to be re-elected by them in the next year, it is probable that there would be much fewer contested elections, and changes of the representatives, than there are at present. And from *the harmony that would generally subsist between the members of Parliament and their electors, the dignity and respectability of the House of Commons would be increased, and the confidence of the people, in the wisdom and uprightness of their measures would be restored*; and the resolutions that would be taken by them would be generally allowed to be in reality, what they are now *often called and pretended to be*, the true expressions, or declarations, of *the sense of the people at large*, on the subjects to which they relate. It seems probable, therefore, that the revival of this good old law, *for choosing new Parliaments every year, would be attended with very happy consequences, and give general satisfaction to the nation.*"

I think your Lordship will agree with me, that these are the reflections of a sober-minded friend of his country; and, indeed, my Lord, the truth of them appears to me to be so obvious, that I cannot help thinking, that it must strike every one who reads with impartiality. Was it ever known that the *shortening of the duration of any obligation to obedience* tended to discontent, restiveness and violence on the side of the *bounden party*? Men who have the power of choosing new masters *weekly*, are much less disposed to serious discontents than those who can choose them only yearly, and those who can choose them *yearly*, require a much less rigorous law to bind them than is required to bind those who are held to their masters for *seven years*, though there is in this case a sort of prize at the end of the term of obedience.—Your Lordship has seen how readily soldiers have enlisted for a *limited time*, and how backward they have been to give up their right of choice for *life*. In short, it is notorious, that men submit for a *short time*, peaceably and quietly, and even cheerfully, to that which they would die rather than submit to, if the period of submission were known to be of long duration, and the mere chance of redress removed to a distant day.—"*Never mind! It is only for a few months!*" Is not this the language of all mankind? Is not this the language of every human being, who is aggrieved, or who thinks himself aggrieved, and who knows that the day of redress, or of his seeking redress, is at hand? Is not this the effect, the *invariable effect*, of a short duration of every kind of obligation to submission or obedience? How often has every gentleman,

every employer of every description, every occupier, every landlord, every guest at an inn, said, "No matter! It is *not worth while to quarrel*. I shall be rid of the connection by *such a time*, and I will take care *to avoid the same in future*." How often, how many scores of times, has every man, be he who or what he may, said this during his lifetime!

Why, then, should it be supposed, that this tranquillizing effect would not be produced by Annual Parliaments? Why should it be supposed, that the very cause of content and tranquillity in *all other cases* should be the cause of discontent and uproar and confusion in this particular case? Why should it be supposed, that the laws of nature herself would become perverted and produce their opposite in the breasts of Englishmen? I will not insult your Lordship by appearing to believe, that you will adopt, much less act upon, any such supposition.

If there are people to suppose, that the House of Commons would, by annual elections, be so *varying* for ever in its members, that the laws would be *continually changing*, I beg your Lordship, besides the weight of the observation of Mr. BARON MASERES, to remember the old maxim, that "*short reckonings make long friends*," than which a truer maxim never dropped from the lips of wisdom; and the experience of all mankind shows, that those quarrel least who have the most frequent power of adjusting their affairs. The Legislative Assembly of Pennsylvania, for instance, is elected by new writs annually; and, I venture to assure your Lordship, that new faces and changes of laws are much less frequent there than in the House of Commons in England. The government of Pennsylvania is no very *new* thing. It is as it was originally formed by the famous Englishman, whose name the State bears. He carried to those deserts the *laws of England*. He built his government upon those laws, while the Stuarts were trampling them under foot at home. *He* knew that Annual Parliaments were the law of the land. He planted them in his new domain; there they have lived and flourished, and under them a system of sway, which has produced a scene of social tranquillity and happiness such as is to be found in no other part of the world. Because I refer to this instance in support of my argument, I am not to be supposed to desire *other* changes here after the model of Pennsylvania; but, as far as the instance goes, it is, I presume, entitled to all the weight to which any case in point can be entitled.

As I am not aware of any objection, save those that I have here noticed, against Annual Parliaments, I shall now proceed to the *second point*, mentioned in your Lordship's speech, namely, *Universal Suffrage*. And, here, suffer me to take the liberty to refer your Lordship to the *Hampshire Petition*, which not only prays for suffrage to this extent, but which also briefly states the grounds on which the prayer is founded, and points out the futility, as the petitioners deem it, of the objection with regard to its *impracticability*.

It is, my Lord, a well-known maxim of the Constitution, that no man shall be *taxed without his own consent*. Every man is now *taxed*; therefore, if he has no voice in choosing those who make the tax-laws, he *must be taxed without his own consent*. But, this is not *all* that the law of the land says in support of our claim. The laws of England have always held, that every man not a *bondman* (and there are no bondmen now) ought to have a *voice in making, or assenting to*, the laws, either

by himself or his representative in Parliament. Sir THOMAS SMITH, who, as your Lordship need not be told, was a great lawyer and a Privy Councillor in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, in a work called "*The Commonwealth of England*," has this passage: "*Every Englishman is intended to be present in Parliament, either in person, or by pro-curation and attorney, of what pre-eminence, state, or quality soever he may be, from the prince to the lowest person in England, and the consent of Parliament is taken to be every man's consent.*" This old lawyer, though he was a Privy Councillor to a Queen who had very high notions of her prerogatives, still called England a "*Commonwealth*," and talked not of *Monarchy* and *Legitimacy*, which words are become so fashionable now-a-days!

The *Book of the Assizes*, which, as your Lordship knows, is a book of great authority, says, that "*Laws, to bind all, must be assented to by all.*" And how are *all* to assent to laws, if only a part, and that, too, a very small part, have a voice in choosing those who have power to make the laws.

FORTESCUE, who wrote in the reign of Henry the Sixth, always talks of the Parliament as the representatives of *the whole kingdom, the whole realm*, and the like; and never seems to suppose, that *any man* is excluded from voting.

BLACKSTONE, who was a *Court-lawyer*, and in modern times too, could not blink this great principle without over-setting the whole of his commentary. He says, in Book I., chap. 2, "*Every man is, in judgment of law, party to making an Act of Parliament, being present thereat by his representatives.*" But, the grand principle, which is the clencher of all that any one has ever written on the subject, is in Book IV., chap. 1. "*The lawfulness of punishing criminals is founded upon this principle, that the law by which they suffer was made by their own consent.*"

Now, my Lord, what can be urged in answer to this? How is it possible to explain away the meaning of these plain words? How is it possible to root out of men's minds principles like these, if once implanted there? And, is it just, my Lord, to call our principles *novel, wild, and visionary*, and to accuse us of a wish to throw the country into confusion, because we inculcate these same principles? Are we "*designing and evil-minded men*?" are we "*deluders and seducers*?" are the Reformers what an impudent man has called them, "*knaves or fools*," because they have presumed to attach to plain and definitive words a plain and definitive meaning?

But, it is not the *law* of the proposition for *Universal Suffrage*, which your Lordship appears to dispute; it is the *practicability* of the thing; and, it would be unreasonable as well as rude in me to treat this objection of your Lordship lightly, seeing that I had such doubts of the *practicability* of it as to induce me, at a late meeting of Deputies in London, where Major Cartwright presided, to make a motion, proposing to stop at *householders*, and not to go so far as to embrace *every man of twenty-one years of age*, that being, as your Lordship knows, what is meant by the shorter phrase, "*Universal Suffrage.*"

Upon the occasion here referred to, I stated all the difficulties, which, after long reflection, had occurred to my mind. I did not see how men who had no settled and visible dwelling in the safety of which they were interested, and which must be well known, could be polled with accuracy

at an election, especially in populous places. I did not see how large crowds of men could be prevented from marching from one parish to another, and thereby voting twice or thrice in the same day, and for five or six different members. In short, I was lost in the mist of confusion which this scene presented to my mind, and I, therefore, proposed to stop at *householders*, really seeing in the other proposition, that "*universal impracticability*," which your Lordship appears to perceive.

Some persons in the Meeting agreed with me, but the majority were clearly on the other side, though my objections had, as I thought, not been removed. At last a very sensible and modest man, whose name I am sorry I have forgotten, and who came from *Middleton* in Lancashire, got up and gave an answer to my objections, in somewhat these words: "Sir, I cannot see all, or any, of the difficulties, which Mr. Cobbett believes to exist in the way of taking an election upon the principle of Universal Suffrage. I have seen with how much exactness the lists of all male inhabitants, in every parish, *inmates* as well as *householders*, have been made out under the *militia-laws*, and I see no reason why regulations, which have been put in force universally for calling us forth to bear arms in defence of the country and of the estates and property of the country, should not be put in force again, and by the very same officers, for calling us forth to exercise our right of suffrage at elections."

This was enough for me. The thing had never struck me before. And, my Lord, what *difficulty* can there be in making out the lists of all men of twenty-one years of age, in every parish every year, two or three months before the day of election, and of having those lists ready to check the poll on the day of that election? It would be simply the *names* and the *age* that would be to be ascertained. Whereas in the case of the *militia-laws*, there are, besides these two facts, the circumstances of marriage, of number of children, of parochial settlement, of previous service, of substitution, of pecuniary means, of height, of bodily ability, and other circumstances, all to be inquired into and ascertained. Yet all these are ascertained under the *militia-laws*, and they become the foundation of proceedings affecting the personal liberty of every man, above eighteen and under fifty years of age. And, if all this could be done, and done so effectually too, shall it be pretended, that correct lists cannot be made out in each parish of *all the names of all the male inhabitants*, living in the parish on any given day? It would be even *easier* to do this than to take an election by *householders*; because, it would, in populous places, be very difficult to ascertain, who *were*, and who *were not* householders. The man who really *rented* a house might not be the man who lived in it. Two or three, or more, families might live in the same house. The *fact* of residence would be accompanied with numerous others all of a doubtful or questionable character in many instances; and, then, it never could be endured, that a pauper householder should have a vote, while the independent single lodger should have none. Houses might be let for a month or a quarter. In short, the difficulties would be far greater than in the other case, the mode of ascertaining all the facts of which are so easily ascertained, being liable to no exception, except the single one of *under age*.

And, my Lord, what is so easy as to *take* an election with all the names of the voters ready prepared, and arranged in alphabetical order, and posted up before hand at the church-doors? There could arise no dis-

putes at the hustings. There could be no contests about good votes or bad votes. There would be nobody bribed, because no purse would suffice for the purpose. There would be none of those scenes of wickedness which now disgrace elections. The time of the members and of the House would not be wasted in the deciding on election contests. All would be fair, regular, and effectual, and the laws could not fail to be held in veneration, when every man should feel that he himself had had a voice in making them.

The *equity* of extending the suffrage to every grown-up man is, I think, equally clear. Every man *pays taxes*. I take the calculation of Mr. PRESTON, because I would avoid the charge of exaggeration. He states, in his pamphlet, that every labourer, who earns 18*l.* a year, pays 10*l.* of it in taxes. It is very certain, that every man pays a large portion of his wages away in taxes; and, as I never have heard it pretended, that the ancient law of the land did not make suffrage go hand in hand with taxation, it appears to me impossible to deny, that every man has, agreeably to that principle, a right to vote for Members of Parliament.

And then, my Lord, there is the *military duty*. Every man able to bear arms, has been made liable to serve as a *soldier*; to submit to martial law; to submit to military discipline; to leave his home, his parents, his wife, and, in some cases, his children; to quit his trade or calling; and, if it were necessary, to *risk his life*. These are not slight sacrifices, my Lord, and you well know to what an extent they have been made by the people of England, Ireland, and Scotland. And *for what* did they make these sacrifices? For the defence of their country and of the property in the country. Is it too much, then, to allow those who were called upon to make those great sacrifices to have a voice in choosing their representatives in Parliament? Is it *safe* to trust them with *arms* in their hands to defend the property of the country, and not *safe* to trust the sound of their *voices* in the choosing of those who are to make laws affecting their own lives?

Thus, then, my Lord, we have not only *law* but *reason* to offer your lordship in support of what we pray for; and, is it not right to *answer* us, before abusing us as if we were *incendiaries* and almost *traitors*? Besides, it is nothing *new* that we propose. The same was proposed by the late Duke of Richmond nearly forty years ago. And, so serious and so much in earnest was he upon the subject, that he actually brought a bill into Parliament to make a Reform upon the principles of *annual elections* and *universal suffrage*, of which Bill the following were the TITLE and PREAMBLE:—

“ A BILL ENTITLED,

“ *AN ACT for declaring and restoring the natural, undeniable and equal Right of ALL THE COMMONS of Great Britain (infants, persons of insane mind. and criminals incapacitated by law, only excepted) TO VOTE IN the Election of their Representatives in Parliament: For regulating the manner of such Elections: For restoring ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS: For giving an hereditary Seat to the Sixteen Peers which shall be elected for Scotland: And, for establishing more equitable Regulations concerning the Peerage of Scotland.*

“ PREAMBLE.

“ WHEREAS, the LIFE, LIBERTY, AND PROPERTY, of every man is or may be affected by the law of the land in which he lives, and every man is bound to pay obedience to the same.

“ AND WHEREAS, by the Constitution of this kingdom, the RIGHT OF MAKING laws is vested in three estates of Kings, Lords, and Commons, in

"Parliament assembled, and the consent of all the three said estates, comprehending the whole community, is necessary to make laws which bind the whole community.

"AND WHEREAS the House of Commons represents ALL THE COMMONS of the realm, and the consent of the House of Commons binds the consent of all the Commons of the realm, in all cases on which the legislature is competent to decide.

"AND WHEREAS NO MAN is, or can be, actually *represented* who hath not a Vote in the election of his Representative.

"AND WHEREAS it is the RIGHT of EVERY COMMONER of this realm (infants, persons of insane mind, and criminals incapacitated by law, only excepted) *to have a vote* in the election of the Representative who is to give his consent to the making of laws by which he is to be bound.

"AND WHEREAS the number of persons who are suffered to *vote* for electing the members of the House of Commons, do not at this time amount to *one-sixth* part of the whole Commons of this realm, whereby far the greater part of the said Commons are deprived of their right to elect their Representatives; and the consent of the majority of the whole community to the passing of laws is given by persons whom they have not delegated for such purpose; and the majority of the said community are governed by laws made by a very small part of the said community, and to which the said majority have not in fact consented by themselves, or by their Representatives.

"AND WHEREAS the state of election of members of the House of Commons, hath, in process of time, so grossly deviated from its simple and natural principle of representation and equality, that in several places the members are returned by the property of *one man*; that the smallest boroughs send as many members as the largest counties; and that a majority of the representatives of the whole nation are chosen by a number of voters not exceeding *twelve thousand*.

"Now FOR REMEDY of such partial and unequal representation, and of the many mischiefs which have arisen therefrom: and for restoring, asserting, and maintaining the RIGHTS of THE COMMONS of this realm, be it declared and enacted, and it is hereby declared and enacted, by the King's most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same: *That every Commoner of this realm* (excepting only infants, persons of insane mind, and criminals incapacitated by law), *hath a natural, unalienable, and equal right to vote in the election of his Representative in Parliament*.

"AND WHEREAS it was accorded by statute in the fourth year of the reign of King Edward the Third, 'that a Parliament should be holden every year once, and more often if need be;' which statute was confirmed by another statute, passed in the 36th year of the reign of the said King Edward the Third; and the practice in ancient times was for writs to issue for the election of a new Parliament every year.

"AND WHEREAS FREQUENT ELECTIONS are indispensably necessary to enable the Commons to alter and amend the choice of their representatives as they may see occasion; and such elections ought to be as frequent as may be consistent with the use of a representative body; and the ancient practice of annual elections is well calculated for such purpose.

"AND WHEREAS *Triennial* and *Septennial* Parliaments, by rendering the exercise of the right of election less frequent, tend to make the Representatives less dependent on their Constituents, than they always ought to be; and also deprive the Commons for many years after they come of age, of their franchise of electing their own representatives; Be it declared and enacted by the authority aforesaid, *That the ELECTION of members to serve in the House of Commons ought to be ANNUAL.*"

Now, my Lord, the late Duke of Richmond was a man of great talent, wisdom, and of uncommon industry, attention, and knowledge of the customs, manners and dispositions of the people of this country. He had been a soldier, a minister, a member of Parliament; he was a Lord-Lieutenant of a county; as a magistrate and a country gentlemen, as a

patron of the industrious and a friend of the distressed; in all these capacities and qualities he was surpassed by very few men that ever lived. This nobleman, whose death was the death of his neighbourhood, co-operated with that very MAJOR CARTWRIGHT, of whom your Lordship has spoken so justly, and against whose spotless reputation so many vipers are sending forth their venom. This nobleman what was he? Was he an "evil-minded and designing man?" Was he a *deluder*, or was he one of the "seduced?" Was he one of those "*poor creatures*," as the insolent PERRY calls the *million* of petitioners for Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage? The Duke of Richmond is of himself a *great authority* as to the *law* of the case, and what can be more full and clear than his Grace's title and preamble? Is it not, then, a little too much, my Lord, to treat all those, who now hold the same opinions, as being either "*poor, ignorant, deceived creatures*;" or as "*designing and evil-minded men*," who wish to stir up confusion and produce bloodshed? Did the Duke of Richmond wish to produce confusion and bloodshed? Did he desire to see *revolution and destruction*?

The Duke is himself a high authority; but, if your Lordship will be pleased to refer to the works of Mr. Granville Sharp, Mr. Baron Maseres, or to another work, lately published by ALLMAN, Prince-street, Hanover-square, entitled, "*Common Consent, the Basis of the Constitution of England; or Parliamentary Reform tried by the tests of Law and Reason*," your Lordship will find it *proved*, that the right of every freeman (that is to say, every man not a bondman) to vote for Members of Parliament, and the right to *annual new Parliaments*, are *birthrights* of Englishmen, however contemptuously the idea may be treated by Mr. PERRY, under the title of speeches of Mr. BROUGHAM. The publications, here alluded to, that is to say, publications put forth by Mr. PERRY, purporting to be speeches recently delivered by Mr. BROUGHAM, and levelled immediately at LORD COCHRANE, have contained more bitter attacks on the Reformers than have come from any other quarter. This gentleman has been made to represent *Annual Parliaments* and *Universal Suffrage* as the wildest of nonsense; as "*little nostrums and big blunders*;" as mischievous in themselves, and as *mischievously intended*; as put forth by *bad men*, and sucked in by *foolish men*.

After this, my Lord, and after many direct personal attacks on Lord Cochrane, in the way above-mentioned, what has been the surprise in London, and what will it be all over the country, at hearing, that Mr. BROUGHAM himself, under his *own hand-writing*, did most decidedly pledge himself to these very "*little nostrums and big blunders!*" But, let me clearly state to your Lordship the circumstances under which this decided pledge was given.

About *five or six years ago*, Mr. BROUGHAM, in a paper which was printed, declared himself *hostile* to Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage. But in the month of June, 1814, just at the time when Lord Cochrane was expected to be expelled from the House of Commons, and of course, when a *vacancy* for Westminster was expected to take place, there were certain individuals, who had formed the design of introducing Mr. BROUGHAM to fill his Lordship's place. But there were other persons, who were resolved to oppose the attempt, unless Mr. BROUGHAM would explicitly declare for *Annual Parliaments* and for *suffrage co-extensive with taxation*; and one gentleman, in particular, Mr. PLACE of Charing-cross, wrote to the friends of Mr. Brougham this determination. Imme-

diately upon this, there was a meeting of the Livery of London, to which Mr. BROUGHAM was invited. At that meeting he made a speech, which speech he, two days afterwards, *wrote out in his own hand*, which so written out in his own hand, was kept by some persons of the Westminster committee, as the pledge of his principles, and which speech, which I have seen in Mr. Brougham's own hand-writing, was in the following words ; to wit :

" Mr. Brougham returned thanks, and said, that the last time he had met the Livery, two years ago, he had declined making professions or promises, because he saw them so often broken ; but had desired the Livery, if it were worth their attention, *to mark his conduct*, and if it *betrayed his declaration*, to punish him next time they met by drinking to the memory of his *departed principles* :— that time was now come, and he met them without any conscientiousness of having forfeited their favour. These two years had been pregnant with important events ; and infinitely various as these were, they all agreed in this, that they had mightily redounded to the honour of the cause, and the confirmation of *our principles*. The fundamental maxim of liberty had been solemnly recognised in the face of the world, that *all power is from the people* ; and that they have a *right to choose their government, and dismiss their rulers for misconduct*. They had done so in France, and it was a lesson that could not be forgotten in the rest of Europe. The saying that '*laws are silent in the midst of arms*,' had failed for once ; and this fundamental principle had triumphed over the triumphs of the allied armies. So much for the honour of the cause. But the principles of Reform had been assisted also in their progress. Where is now the *gag*, with which our mouths had for five-and-twenty years been stopped, as often as we have required that Parliaments should be *chosen yearly*, and that the *elective franchise should be extended to all who pay taxes* ? We have been desired to wait, for the enemy was at the gate, and ready to avail himself of the discords attending our political contests, in order to undermine our national independence. This argument is gone, and our adversaries must now look for another.—He had mentioned the two Radical doctrines of *yearly election*, and the franchise enjoyed by *all paying taxes* ; but it would be superfluous to reason in favour of them here, where *all were agreed upon the subject*.—However as elsewhere they may speedily be discussed, he should take leave to suggest a fact, for the use of such as might have occasion to defend their principles. It was one for the truth of which he might appeal to his honourable friend, the Member for Middlesex (Mr. BYNG), who knew as well as he did, that there was a great improvement always observable in the conduct of the House of Commons, towards the *last year of a Parliament* : inasmuch, that he had heard it observed, *that more good was done in that year*, than in all the other *five or six*. The reason of all this he should not presume to state ; but some persons were of so suspicious a nature, as to insinuate, that it might be the knowledge of the members, that at the end of that session they must meet their constituents, such of them as had any, and give an account of their trust. He avowed that this fact had been one of the chief grounds of his conviction of the expediency of *yearly elections* : and if any one thought this *unsafe*, he should answer, [that such frequent recurrence and such extension of the franchise as should accompany it, is the *best check upon profligate expense*. If any other check was wanting, it might be provided also. He had talked of such members as had constituents, being reminded of it by the manner in which the toast had been given out by a mistake—he hoped not an ominous one. It had been said, '*a full, fair, and free representation in Parliament*,' leaving out '*the People*.' Now this is just what is done *elsewhere*. There is '*a full, fair, and free representation in Parliament*'—we need not drink to that. There is a full representation of the *aristocracy*—a fair representation of the *landed interest*—a free representation—a free ingress of the *Court*,—but not much representation of the people—they are left out, as they were to-day. It *must*, however, be otherwise *soon*. While they bear the burdens of the State, they *must*, as of *right*, share in its government ; and to effect *this reform*, all *good men* must now unite. He lamented the absence of his friends now detained elsewhere ; but he knew they would come, the moment their duty permitted. Messrs. Whitbread, Brand, Creevey, Bennet, Grattan, Lord Ossulston,

"Lord A. Hamilton, he knew, were most anxious to join the meeting. What they were now about he could not precisely say; but he guessed they were not supporting the Court at that particular moment."

Strange, my Lord, is it not? And is it not a pity, that this gentleman should have been exhibited to the world by his friend, Mr. PERRY, as calling Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage "little nostrums and big blunders?"

But, I have not yet finished the history of the Westminster Seat-scheme. That scheme was put aside in 1814, by that sense of justice and that high sentiment, which led the people of Westminster to *re-elect Lord Cochrane*, though he had been expelled by the House of Commons, and the good effects of that re-election they and the whole country now feel. But though frustrated for this time, the connection was carefully kept up with some persons in Westminster; and, at a meeting in Palace-yard, about a year ago, upon the subject of the Property-tax, a regular plan was laid, in concert with himself, for *introducing* Mr. Brougham to the people of that city. He was so introduced; but, it falling to the lot of Mr. HUNT to speak *before* the part of Mr. Brougham came to be performed, the former gentleman so prepared the way for the latter, that he thought it prudent to *withdraw*, and magnanimously to forego the sort of applause which awaited his debut. Mr. Brougham, upon being afterwards reminded of this sudden retreat by Lord Castlereagh, said that he did *not intend to speak* at the meeting, he not being an inhabitant of Westminster. I have it not *under his own hand*, indeed, that he *did intend to speak* at the meeting, but a gentleman, on whose word I can rely, assures me, that Mr. Brougham (though not an inhabitant of Westminster), did attend at a previous select meeting where the resolutions were prepared, and that it was at that meeting settled that *he* should speak upon one of the resolutions.

Frightened away from his game here, the gentleman does not seem, however, to have wholly abandoned the chase; for, at a dinner, on the 23rd of May last, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, at which dinner I was, the name of Mr. Brougham was inserted in the *List of Toasts* immediately after the names of the two Members for the City. I, seeing this name so placed, and finding *Major Cartwright's* name at nearly the bottom of the list, intimated to the stewards, that, unless Major Cartwright's name was placed *before* that of Mr. Brougham, I would *oppose the toast*; and that this alteration *was made accordingly*. Nor did I stop here, for I read to the company at dinner a paper, the purport of which was, that if a vacancy in Westminster should happen, *Major Cartwright*, and *no other man*, ought to be the person to fill it, and *one of the objects* of which paper was well known to be, to guard the City against the schemes and intrigues which had long been going on in favour of Mr. Brougham. At this dinner, and coming with views similar to my own, was Mr. HUNT; and, one of the committee told that gentleman and me, that though Mr. Brougham had *by letter*, said that he would be at the dinner, he had left word, that *if Mr. HUNT came*, information should be sent to him of it. We were also told, that such information had been sent to Mr. Brougham; and, in about half an hour afterwards, came an *apology* from Mr. Brougham, saying that he could not attend *on account of his duty in the House of Commons*, a motion of Sir Samuel Romilly's being just about to come out!

I will leave your Lordship to judge in what degree these transactions

may have given rise to those bitter reproaches, which have been cast on the "*little nostrums and big blunders*" of the "*designing and evil-minded*" leaders of the "*poor, deluded, duped creatures of Reformers;*" and also, in what degree these transactions may have tended to draw forth the imputations cast on the "*prompters*" and "*abettors*" of Lord Cochrane. But, I must beg your Lordship well to note the fact, that, in *May last*, Mr. Brougham's hopes as to Westminster were *completely destroyed*; and, I will leave your Lordship to judge if you can, as to the *precise time* when the mind of this gentleman returned to its *old state* of dislike to Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage.

Your Lordship knows, that the above inserted manuscript speech of Mr. Brougham, was read in the House of Commons by Lord Cochrane on Monday last; and his Lordship did this, as he does every thing, in an open and manly manner, and also with great ability and effect. The *answer* of Mr. Brougham has been published by Mr. PERRY, in these words :

"It had often been observed, and indeed with great justice, that there was not perhaps, a *more painful and irksome situation*, than where a man was obliged to *speak of himself*. In proportion to that painful situation, and in compassion to it, the indulgence of the House had always been extended, and he hoped it would be so on the present occasion. (Hear, hear! from all sides of the House.) He trusted it would not, however, be thought that he was courting anxiously an opportunity of going into detail, or that on the contrary he wished to avoid such details, for he felt it his duty to say, that he expressed *his warmest thanks* to the noble Lord for the frank and open manner in which he had afforded him the opportunity of going into the subject. A *more groundless aspersion* had, he believed, never been brought forward against any individual. He did not accuse the noble Lord, however, or those out of doors, who had put the *brief* into his hands, of uttering any *falsehood* in the statement which had just been submitted to the House, but he decidedly accused them of *rashness and imprudence*, and of not waiting for only a few days longer, when they would have had a full and fair opportunity of hearing his opinions on this most momentous and important subject, and then they would have found whether he was or was not inconsistent. (Hear, hear, hear.) Had those *out of doors*, whose *tool the noble Lord was*, but waited those few days, they would then have known what his real sentiments on the question were, having, as the House well knew, reserved to himself the right of then speaking what he felt on the subject. (Hear, hear.) How then could the noble Lord, how could they *in whose hands he is*, presume to know what were the opinions he (Mr. B.) had formed on this most interesting question? How do they know that he would not have stated his opinion then in the very terms which had just been read? That they should have ascertained his sentiments was a moral impossibility. (Hear, hear.) But the noble Lord had given a *mis-statement* of what took place, and he should now endeavour to give the House the particulars of the case. A dinner was given at the London Tavern to the friends of Parliamentary Reform, at which he (Mr. B.) attended, with his friend the Member for Middlesex, with the late truly respected and much-lamented Member for the town of Bedford (Mr. Whitbread), with the Member for Hertfordshire (Mr. Brand), and the Member for Shrewsbury (Mr. Bennet). In the course of what passed there, some observations fell from him *similar to what had been read by the noble Lord*. The chief motive he had in correcting what he had there stated, was to prevent the possibility of his words on this dangerous and yet important question being misrepresented. He then said, *or at least meant to be understood as saying*, what he still maintained, that it was consonant to the genius and spirit of the Constitution and expedient in every sense of the word, that the *power of elections should be limited to those who paid direct taxes*. He corrected what he had said on the subject, as he was aware of the mistakes of reporters. He again repeated, and wished it to be understood, that what he then said the same he now maintained, viz. *that the payment of direct taxes ought to be the limit of the elective franchise*. He did not wish to compete with the noble Lord, but this was his meaning when he so spoke. He should wish to say one word

upon what had been said respecting his advocating the cause of a moderate and gradual Reform. Six years ago it would be remembered he had repeatedly said, both within and without the House, that it would be proper for those who wished for *Annual Parliaments* to unite with those who were *more moderate*, and thus *secure a footing*. There was no reason for their stopping short, and he did not hold it to be inconsistent in the friends of *Annual Parliaments* to unite with the more moderate Reformers, and to obtain, *in the first instance, a beginning*. This was the opinion he then held, and he had never deviated from it. The noble Lord was much mistaken when he supposed that the mere production of a speech delivered by him (Mr. B.) at a tavern, would make him swerve from the line of duty merely from the foolish and childish desire of keeping up an appearance of consistency. If he supposed him (Mr. B.) to do so, he was much mistaken. The House had heard him declare his intention to reserve his right of being heard, when the question was brought fully under the consideration of the House, and he could only add, that he would still reserve to himself that right uninfluenced by any thing the noble Lord had said. He again repeated, that when he spoke of the extension of suffrage, it should be to those who had paid direct taxes only, for he never *dreamt* of it going further. As to the *miserable motives* alleged to have actuated him, as if he could prostitute himself at one time to deliver opinions which were not the sentiments of his heart for the purpose of being carried into the House *on the shoulders of a rabble* (hear, hear), and at another time to bend to prejudices he might have to contend with in the House, all he should say was, that he treated such charges with *the contempt they deserved*. The only pain he felt, was when he contemplated the *folly* and the *madness* of some *wild theorists*, and the *base expedients* and false practices they made use of *to divide the people from the Constitution*, merely to gratify party purposes and to compass objects in which *the good of the country was neglected*, while *the interests of one or two individuals was the all in all*. (Hear, hear, hear.) This gave him more pain than all the noble Lord had said or could say. (Hear.)”

There needs little comment. The calling of Lord Cochrane “*a tool*” in the hands of others; the calling the paper a “*groundless aspersion*,” the “*warmest thanks*” to his Lordship for bringing forward such aspersion; the “*contempt*” expressed at the imputation of the “*miserable motive*” for making the pledge; the *disdain* expressed at the idea of a desire to be “*carried to the House on the shoulders of a RABBLE*,” the assertion about the *folly* and *madness* of some *wild theorists*, who were making use of *base expedients* and *false practices* to divide the people from the Constitution for the mere *private interests of one or two individuals*: All these, my Lord, shall pass for what they are worth; and, I fancy, the full value of them will be found in the *pity* of a nation, naturally good-natured, and never prone to triumph over a fallen adversary.

But, as to the two great points; *Annual Parliaments* and *Universal Suffrage*, what explanation is here given? Why, as to the first, as to *Annual Parliaments* no explanation at all. Indeed it was utterly impossible. Ingenuity equal to that of Lord Peter in the Tale of a Tub could not have got rid of that point. And, what is *suffrage co-extensive with taxation*; what is that short of universal suffrage, when *every human creature in the country* pays heavy taxes? Oh! says Mr. Brougham, but I meant “*direct taxes*.” Meant! Why did you not say so then? Meant! You meant what you said, to be sure; and so it was understood unquestionably. Besides, my Lord, be pleased to consider the occasion of writing this famous paper. It was the gentleman’s *creed*; it was his political confession of faith. Lawyers are not apt to be careless in their use of words; they are not very much in the habit of leaving their meaning dubious from a desire to abbreviate. And, upon an occasion like the one here mentioned, was it likely that the gentleman would deliberately, after two days of reflection, put upon paper *that which he did not mean*?

Yet it is not of the *change of opinion*, though under such *peculiar circumstances*, that any reasonable man will find fault; it is, as Lord Cochrane truly said, the *attacks* on those who *now* entertain the same opinions; the charges of *wildness, madness, mischievousness, of evil designs and base motives*, preferred against those persons, and the abuse heaped upon them (in the Chronicle Speeches), under the name of Mr. Brougham, day after day. This was too much for flesh and blood to bear, and the noble Lord had resented it in a most able, manly and effectual manner. "A few days!" The gentlemen who held the pledge, were to wait a few days, till Mr. Brougham should declare his sentiments? What sentiments? He had declared that those who proposed *Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage*, were *deluders*, and those who listened to them were *deluded*; he had called these propositions, "*little nostrums and big blunders*;" he had spoken of the promoters of the petitions as *wild, mad, mischievous men*. Was not *this* a pretty full declaration of his sentiments? What more were the holders of the pledge to wait for?

I am not sorry to perceive, however, that the learned gentleman received, in the hour of his altered tone, the kind condolence of his friends. Mr. BRAND is reported to have said, "that his learned friend had vindicated—he ought rather to say he had *completely repelled the uncalled-for and undeserved attack* that had been levelled at him." Mr. LITTLETON went still further, as appears from the report; for he "not only thought that his learned friend had *completely vindicated himself*, but said that he (Mr. Littleton) was quite ready to *share in any odium* that might attach to his honourable and learned friend for his conduct on "this important question." Upon which I can only say, my Lord, that I envy the gentleman his generosity rather than his taste.

Now then, my Lord, what is the sum and substance of all that I have, to your great fatigue, I am afraid, submitted to the consideration of your Lordship? Why, it is this: that there are both *law and reason* on the side of *Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage*; that this plan of reform has actually been, within these forty years, brought before Parliament, in the shape of a Bill, by one of the first peers of the realm; and that those who have been the most harsh in their censure of the present Reformers, were, a very little while ago, the most decided advocates for this very plan of reform.

We contend, that we are right. We *may*, nevertheless, be wrong; but we want fact and argument to convince us of our errors, and shall never be convinced by *abuse*. We shall never be convinced by the Sinecure Placemen, who write in the Quarterly Review, and who actually propose the silencing of us by *force*. In short, my Lord, they use these infamous words: "The press may combat the press in *ordinary times* and upon *ordinary topics*; a *measure of finance*, for instance, or the *common course of politics*, or a point of *theology*. But in seasons of *great agitation*, on those *momentous subjects* in which the peace and *security of society*, nay the very existence of social order itself is involved, it is absurd to suppose, that the healing will come from the *same weapon as the wound*." Then, after saying that the people receive my Journal "with entire faith; that it serves them for law and for gospel, for their creed and their ten commandments; that they talk by it and swear by it; that they are ready to live by it, and to die

“ by it.” After this, these writers propose, that it should be *put down by force of law*, and they must mean *new law* too.

Can your Lordship form an idea of any thing more foul, more base than this? If the people do swear by my little book, they must, I hope, be in the right way; for never did any man more sedulously propagate precepts of peace, harmony, patience, fortitude, and obedience to the laws. I do feel proud, I must feel proud, at the wonderful extent of my writings; but I feel much more proud in the reflection, that those writings; without appealing to the low passions of men, but relying for success on the force of truth and reason, have greatly tended to enlighten the understandings of the people, and thereby to prevent those violences which have always heretofore, in this country and in all other countries, been the inseparable companions of great national misery. Your Lordship has truly observed, that the conduct of the people is meritorious beyond all example. Indeed, the spectacle of probably *four millions* of people having, at different places, met in large bodies to petition on the subject of grievances, without a single riot or act of violence, is one of the most grand as well as most affecting, that ever presented itself to the mind of man; and, it is so honourable to our national character, that we must hate and abhor the wretch, who calls himself an Englishman, and who can see it without delight. Yet, these Sinecure Placemen of the Quarterly Review, would have an *impri-matur*, a prohibition, enacted against the writings, which, above all others, have contributed towards the producing of this most admirable effect.

Your Lordship has heard enough about the libellous bill posted up against Mr. HUNT; you have read also of a placard, posted up to excite riot at the last Spa-fields Meeting, and from the examinations before the Lord Mayor, you have seen that placard traced to its *source*. I could prove, that a posting-bill against *me* was issued out, in the hands of five bill-stickers, from the Courier Office, to be stuck up in the *dead of night*, and that some of these people, having been taken into custody by the watch, were released by the constable of the night upon their telling him *who were their employers*. What can your Lordship, what can any honourable man, think of these transactions?

Is it my Lord, *inflammatory* matter that I have here been doing myself the honour of addressing your Lordship? Yet of this very stamp have all my writings been for many years past. The subjects that I treat of, and of which to treat is my taste and my delight, are all of a nature to produce thinking, and to call forth the reasoning faculties of the mind. How much have we heard of plans, and how many hundreds of thousands of pounds have we seen expended, in order to *enlighten* the people! And, if this be really the object of the promoters of those plans, what praise, is not due from them to me, who am endeavouring to communicate to the people at large all that I have acquired from a life of application and experience; who am, in short, endeavouring to take one head, full of useful knowledge, and to clap it safe and sound upon every pair of shoulders in the kingdom?

“ The race that write,” are my, Lord, but too generally speaking, full of *envy*. The partiality of mothers for their children is a trifling weakness, compared to that of authors for their works; and, in both cases, the partiality is usually strong in proportion to the worthlessness of its

object; because parental fondness steps forward as a compensation for the neglect or contempt or hatred of the world. But, unhappy authors, not content with blindly doating on their own unsuccessful progeny, always endeavour to avenge their disappointments and shame on those of a different description. This is the case, at this moment, with the Quarterly Reviewers, and with many, many others! They would tear me to pieces for writing; they would tear the people to pieces for reading; they would chop off my hand, and pluck out the people's eyes; and, this, or something very near to this, they, or somebody else, must do, before I shall cease to write, or the people cease to read

This very moment a Second Edition of the COURIER comes kindly to inform me, that the *Green Bag* has brought forth, amongst other things, a report relative to "the publication of *inflammatory* and *seditious* works " at a CHEAP rate, the end and intention of which is to root out all " feelings of *religion* and *morality*, and to excite a hatred and contempt " for the EXISTING STATE OF THINGS." Ah, ah! Say you so! Well! But are there not plenty of *laws* already for the punishment of *seditious* writings, and also of *irreligious* and *immoral* writings? Oh, yes! *My work* cannot be meant, then! Yet there is that ugly word CHEAP! Why, in the name of goodness, dislike *cheap* publications? I thought that all the *kind*, all the *benevolent*, all the *religious*, all the *moral*, all the *philanthropic*, all the good, dear Bible and Religious Tract Societies, were endeavouring, by all the means in their power, to send forth CHEAP publications. What! It surely cannot be an objection to a publication, that it is CHEAP! How are the people to get at reading, if they cannot have it CHEAP? These CHEAP publications do, it seems, according to the Courier's account of the *Green Bag*, tend to excite a hatred and contempt for the EXISTING STATE OF THINGS. This is a very large phrase. If it had said for the *King*, for the *Parliament*, for the *Lords*, for the *Church*, for the *Laws*, there would have been a clear meaning; but, the *existing state of things* may mean *Sinecures*, *Pensions*, *Grants*, *Standing Army*, a certain mode of *getting Seats*, it may mean the *Pauperism* and *Misery* that now overspread this formerly happy country. However, my Lord, if a law were to be passed against CHEAP publications, I can assure your Lordship, that no *general classification* would hide the *real object*. All the people in England would understand most clearly what was meant. But, my Lord, *nothing short of a TOTAL BREAKING UP OF THE PRESS* could sever the people of England from my writings. If a law were passed to make my writings of *high price*, the people would *club their twopences* to get at them, and they would value them the more, and seek them with more avidity, on account of what they could not but regard as a prohibition. Whether any attempt of the sort will be made is more than I can say; but, of one thing I am very sure, that *nothing short of a direct imprimatur*; *nothing short of a censorship*; that is to say, *nothing short of the Government having the power to examine works before they be printed*, and to *forbid their being printed if it chooses*; *nothing short of this*, will, can, or shall, keep my writings from the eyes of my suffering countrymen. More than a MILLION of my little books have been sold within the last six months; and, though the people are tormented with the gnawings of starvation; though this is acknowledged and proclaimed in Parliament as well as out, not one riot, not a single breach of the peace, has occurred at any of those numerous and multi-

tinuous assemblages, where the principles of my little book have been held forth and acted on.—Hundreds of gentlemen are ready to attest, that it is their firm belief, that the exemplary patience and fortitude of the people and the consequent peace of the country are to be, in a great degree, ascribed to the influence of this little book; and, yet, in the face of all this—but, it is useless to talk; nothing short of an *imprimatur* will, can, or shall keep my writings from the eyes of my suffering and faithful countrymen, who will, I have no doubt, in many places, send up *petitions* in time against any such measure.

In the full conviction, that your Lordship will hold in abhorrence all these attempts at foul play, and in the anxious hope, that you will do me the honour to lend your patient attention to what I have here written,

I am, with the greatest respect,

Your Lordship's most obedient servant,

WM. COBBETT.

A LETTER

TO ALL

TRUE-HEARTED ENGLISHMEN.

The Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.—The Sedition Bills.—The Petition of Mr. Cleary.—The Petition of Mr. Hunt.—The Defence of Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage by the Duke of Richmond.

(*Political Register*, March, 1817.)

London, 25th February, 1817.

COUNTRYMEN AND FRIENDS,

Before this Letter will reach your hands, Acts of Parliament of the most tremendous importance to us all will probably be passed, such Acts being at this moment before the House of Commons in the shape of *Bills*; from which shape they are changed into laws in a few days, and which laws most deeply affect our liberties and lives.

I will first explain clearly what the *Habeas Corpus Act* is. You all know that, according to the laws of our country, no man can be sent to any prison until he has been brought before a Magistrate; and then the

Magistrate cannot send him to prison unless there be *evidence upon oath* against the accused party, nor until the accused party be made fully acquainted with the *nature of his alleged crime*, and has been *heard in his defence*, and confronted, or placed *face to face* with his accuser before the Magistrate. Then, when the man is, after all this, sent to prison, there must be a *written warrant of commitment* sent with him; and in that warrant the *nature of the man's alleged crime must be clearly expressed*.

This is this law of the land, and most excellent is the law; for if a man could be seized and sent to prison without these precautions, who would be safe? And, in order that this most necessary law may be duly attended to, there is another law for preventing any neglect of the observance of all these matters; and this law is usually called the *Habeas Corpus Act*. It is so called because the *writ*, which I shall speak of presently, begins with these two latin words, *Habeas Corpus*. This Act enables any man who may be put into any prison, or confined in any manner, to apply to a Judge for what is called a *writ*, or command to bring such man before the Judge, that the Judge may hear his complaint; and then the Judge, if he finds that the man has been sent to prison, or confined, *without all the necessary evidence and forms before-mentioned*, is obliged to order the prisoner to be discharged; and the prisoner may then prosecute the persons who have imprisoned him, or kept him shut up, though it be only for a short space of time.

Now, you will see how valuable, how precious a part, this is of our laws. This Act of Parliament is justly called the *Personal Safety Act*; for, without it, as you will clearly see, no man's person is safe, except accidentally; for, if Magistrates, or any body else, can take up any man they choose, and send him to prison without *evidence upon oath*, without his being *heard in his defence*, without his being *confronted with his accusers*, without a *written warrant stating the nature of his offence*, without *any limit of time*, and without being able to get a writ to be brought out before a judge to *have the cause of his imprisonment inquired into*; if this be the case, what man can possibly regard his *person as being in safety*? And, my countrymen, this is the state, in which every man of us must be placed by the SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT, that is to say, by making that Act of *no force*, while the suspension lasts, and by enabling the Ministers to imprison, and to keep in prison, any body that they shall think proper.

Amongst all the excellent provisions of the laws of England, those which provide for the perfect *safety of our persons* are the most valuable. It is, indeed, principally owing to these provisions, that this Government has been so much boasted of in comparison with the governments on the Continent of Europe, where men are taken up, crammed into prisons, and remain sometimes for years, without ever being told their crime, and, sometimes, without their relations and friends ever knowing what is become of them. This was the case in France before the Revolution, and it may be the case again now for what I know. It was the case in Spain and in all countries where the Inquisition existed. A man, woman, any body, is taken up, put into prison and there kept as long as the persons in power choose! In the case of the Inquisition the wives or children of unfortunate creatures, so seized, do not dare so much as to *inquire* after the husband or father. They *go into mourning*, and

always *speak of the poor wretch as being dead!* In France, there was one particular prison, called the *Bastile* in which wretched victims of power used to be confined; and *Mr. Arthur Young*, who is the Secretary of the Board of Agriculture in London, relates in his account of the causes of the French Revolution, that a Scotchman had been confined in this *Bastile for more than twenty years*, without ever having been told for what he was confined! He says, that he was *forgotten*; and that it was by mere *accident*, that he was at last released at the request of an English Ambassador. People used to be confined in this cruel manner in virtue of what was called a *Lettre de Cachet*, that is to say, a *Secret Letter*, in which the devoted victim was merely named and ordered to be shut up. Mr. Young tells us, that this was carried to such a length, that these *Secret Letters* were, at last, actually sold in the reign of Louis XV. to any individuals who would pay a sufficient sum for one of them; so that, any rich man, or woman, who had a spite against another man, or woman, might get such person shut up in a cold prison for any length of time.

I am not supposing, that things will ever be carried to *this length* in England, or to any thing like this length. I will say, too, that I do not believe, that *any one wishes* to see us reduced to this state of intolerable slavery, degradation and infamy. But, the *suspension*, even for a day, of this valuable, this *sacred law*, is so serious a matter, that, really, it is a subject fit to make the whole nation put on crape, sackcloth and ashes. Before I go any further, I beg you to attend to what Mr. BLACKSTONE, who was a Judge, has written upon this law of *Habeas Corpus*, or personal safety.—

“Of great importance to the public is the preservation of this personal liberty: for if once it were left in the power of any, the highest magistrate to imprison arbitrarily whomever he or his officers thought proper (as in France it is daily practised by the Crown,) there would soon be an end to all other rights and immunities. Some have thought, that unjust attacks, even upon life, or property, at the arbitrary will of the magistrate are less dangerous to the commonwealth, than such as are made upon the personal liberty of the subject. To bereave a man of life, or by violence to confiscate his estate, without accusation or trial, would be so gross and notorious an act of despotism, as must at once convey the alarm of tyranny throughout the whole kingdom. But confinement of the person, by secretly hurrying him to gaol, where his sufferings are unknown or forgotten, is a less public, a less striking, and therefore a more dangerous engine of arbitrary government. And yet sometimes, when the State is in real danger, even this may be a necessary measure. But the happiness of our Constitution is, that it is not left to the executive power to determine when the danger of the State is so great as to render this measure expedient. For the Parliament only, or legislative power, whenever it sees proper, can authorize the Crown, by suspending the *Habeas Corpus* Act for a short and limited time, to imprison suspected persons without giving any reason for so doing; as the senate of Rome was wont to have recourse to a dictator, a magistrate of absolute authority, when they judged the republic in any imminent danger. The decree of the senate, which usually preceded the nomination of this magistrate, ‘*Deus operam consulæ, nequid respublica detrimenti capiat*,’ was called the ‘*senatus consultum ultimæ necessitatis*.’ In like manner this experiment ought only to be tried in cases of extreme emergency; and in these the nation parts with its liberty for awhile, in order to preserve it for ever.”

Now, then, the question is, whether such case of “*extreme emergency*” does now exist. You have read, in the public papers, the Reports of the Secret Committees of the two Houses, upon which this Suspension Bill

is founded. When the Bill was introduced in the Lords by Lord Sidmouth, he expressed his *great pain*, and his *shame* for his country, at thinking it his duty to do it, and deep *pain* was also expressed by Lord Castlereagh, who introduced it into the Lower House. It is impossible not to believe them sincere upon this point; for, good God! what a thing it is to think of! At the end of a twenty-five years' war against revolutionary principles, to come, in this most solemn manner, to a declaration, that this most tremendous measure is absolutely necessary to the preservation of the English Government, that Government, which has so many thousand times been called "the *admiration* and the *envy* of the world," and which, in its full scope and powers, without any adulteration, really is worthy of the admiration of the world! For the American Government, though its form and name are different from those of ours, is really, in substance, the same as to its *laws*. There is Magna Charta, there is the Bill of Rights, and there is the sacred Act of Habeas Corpus; and, a circumstance which I, as an Englishman, used to be monstrously proud of when I was in America, was, that one of the State Constitutions consists principally, and almost solely, of the declaration, that "the good people of this State shall enjoy *the laws of England*;" and, in every one of their wise constitutions special care has been provided, that the law called *Habeas Corpus* shall be regarded as the *birth-right* of the people, and shall be held *sacred* accordingly.

I have no room at present to say more upon this subject. I am fully convinced that the Ministers have been deceived by designing persons, and that they think that dangers exist, which do not exist. The silly *Spenceans* have been going on with their nonsense for more than *ten years*. Their notions are foolishness itself. There are *other Bills* about to be passed, one for the better protection of the Prince's person; another for *preventing public-meetings*, unless called by sheriffs, magistrates, or persons in authority; and another for the putting down of clubs and associations; and another to punish with death all attempts to seduce soldiers from their allegiance and duty. With respect to the *first* and *last* of these, I hope they are wholly unnecessary. With regard to the preventing of *public meetings*, that appears to me to be also unnecessary and a lamentable curtailment of our rights; and with regard to clubs and associations, I do not see where the prevention is to stop. We have *Pitt* clubs, whig clubs, clubs to suppress vice, clubs to detect and punish thieves, bible clubs, school clubs, benefit clubs, methodist clubs, Hampden clubs, Spencean clubs, military clubs, naval clubs, gaming clubs, eating clubs, drinking clubs, masters' clubs, journeymen's clubs, and a thousand other sorts of clubs and associations. Be this as it may, however, you, my readers, will know that I have *always* not only not recommended any sort of clubs or societies, but that I have *always* most earnestly endeavoured to persuade the public that clubs OF ALL SORTS were of *mischievous tendency* in general, and, *in no possible case*, could be productive of *good*. The reasons, on which this opinion is founded have often been stated by me; and, since the question of *reform* has been so much agitated, I have taken particular pains to endeavour to discourage all sorts of *combinations, associations, affiliations, and correspondencies* of societies having that object in view; and I have said, upon these occasions, that if the object were not to be obtained by the general, free, unpacked unbiassed, impression and expression of the public mind, it never could be, and never ought to be obtained at all. That is still my opinion.

The subjoined Petitions on the subject of the *Reports* I beg you to read with attention ; and, if any doubt can yet remain in the mind of any human being, as to the *law* or the *fitness* of *Annual Parliaments* and *Universal Suffrage*, that doubt must, I think, be removed by the incomparable letter of the Duke of Richmond.] Let it be recollected, too, that this famous letter was addressed to a Colonel of Volunteers to be communicated to whole bodies of Volunteers, and that, a *Convention of Delegates*, from all the Counties in Ireland, met to promote reform upon the very principles of this letter ! Nay, it is a fact, that Lord Castlereagh himself came first into Parliament upon a test to promote parliamentary reform. Mr. Pitt was a reformer, his father was a reformer ; and, are we now to be told, that we aim at the utter "*subversion of the Constitution*," because we ask for a *reform* upon the principles of this memorable and matchless letter of the Duke of Richmond ? And are we, who write as I write, to be called little short of traitors, because we, in a strain of sober arguments, endeavour to maintain these same principles, and give our *reasons* for believing, that, by acting upon these principles, the miseries of our unhappy country would be the more speedily and effectually changed into a state of prosperity and happiness ? Oh, no ! A love of truth and of fair play, so natural to all mankind ; reason, justice, human nature itself, all cry aloud, no, no, no !

WM. COBBETT.

P. S. There is to be a County Meeting at Winchester, on the 11th of March, called by the Sheriff. I hope that every *Hampshire man*, who can possibly go, will go to that meeting, at which I shall certainly be, if I am alive, as well as Lord Cochrane, who has signed a Requisition for it.

To the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of Thomas Cleary,* Secretary to the London Union Society,

Humbly sheweth,—

That it is with great reluctance, as well as humility, that your petitioner offers himself to the notice of, and prays for a hearing from your right honourable House ; but that your petitioner, though a very humble individual, feels himself impelled by a sense of imperious duty, to beseech your right honourable House to pause, and to hear further evidence, before your right honourable House proceed to adopt legislative measures upon the Report, now on the table of your right honourable House, from your late Secret Committee.

Your petitioner begs permission humbly to state to your right honourable House, that he has read in the afore-mentioned Report of the Secret Committee of your Lordships, the following passage ; to wit :

" Others of these Societies are called Union Clubs, professing the same object of Parliamentary Reform, but under these words under-

* These petitions were written by Mr. COBBETT.—ED.

“ standing Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments—projects which evidently involve not any qualified or partial change, but a total subversion of the British Constitution. It appears that there is a London Union Society, and branch Unions corresponding with it, and affiliated to it. Others of these Societies have adopted the name of Spencean Philanthropists; and it was by members of a club of this description that the plans of the conspirators in London were discussed and prepared for execution.”

Your petitioner presumes not to oppose his opinions against those of a Committee of your right honourable House; but, he hopes, that he may be humbly permitted to state, that, when a bill was brought before your right honourable House by the late Duke of Richmond, laying it down as a matter of principle, that Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage were the inherent and unalienable rights of Englishmen, the noble Duke was not accused of a desire to produce a total subversion of the British Constitution.

It is not, however, on matters of opinion, but on matters of most important fact, that your petitioner humbly appeals to the candour, the wisdom and the justice of your right honourable House, and on matters of fact, too, with regard to which your petitioner is able to submit to your right honourable House the clearest and most indubitable testimony.

Your petitioner's entire ignorance of the views of the Secret Committee of your right honourable House, as well as his profound respect and extreme deference for every thing done within the walls of your right honourable House, are more than sufficient to restrain your petitioner from attempting even to guess at the reasons for your Committee's having so closely connected the “ London Union Society,” with the Societies of “ Spencean Philanthropists;” but, your petitioner humbly begs leave to assure your Lordships, that he is ready and able to prove at the Bar of your Lordships, that there never has existed, between these Societies, the smallest connection of any sort, either in person or design, the object of the former being to obtain “ a Parliamentary Reform, according to the Constitution,” while that of the latter, as appears by the Report of your Lordships' Committee, has been to obtain a *common partnership in the land*: and that, therefore, any evidence which may have been laid before the Secret Committee of your Lordships to establish this connection, is, as your petitioner is ready to prove at the bar of your Lordships, wholly destitute of truth.

But, the facts to which your petitioner is most anxious humbly to endeavour to obtain the patient attention of your right hon. House, relate to that *affiliation and correspondence*, which your Lordships' Secret Committee have been pleased to impute to the London Union Society, by observing that “ it appears that there is a *London Union Society*, and *Branch Unions, corresponding with it, and affiliated to it* ;” a description which seems, in the humble conception of your petitioner, to resemble that which was given of the London Corresponding Society in 1795, and which, as your petitioner humbly conceives, point to measures of a nature similar to those which were then adopted; and your petitioner, though with all humility, ventures to express his confidence, that the evidence which he doubts not has been produced to your Lordships' Secret Committee to justify this description, is wholly and entirely false, as your petitioner is ready to prove, in the most satisfactory manner, at the bar of your right honourable House.

Upon this important point your petitioner humbly begs leave to represent to your right honourable House, that the London Union Society was founded in 1812 by Mr. Edward Bolton Clive, Mr. Walter Fawkes, the late Colonel Bosville, Mr. Montague Burgoyne, the present Lord Mayor, Mr. Alderman Goodbehere, Mr. Francis Canning, Mr. William Hallett, Sir Francis Burdett, Major Cartwright, Mr. Robert Slade, Mr. Timothy Brown, Mr. F. J. Clarke, and several other individuals equally respectable; that it continued to hold meetings but a very short time; that it never did any act except the publishing of one address to the nation on the subject of Reform; that it never had any one "*branch*;" that it never held any *correspondence* either written or verbal with any Society of any sort; that it never was *affiliated* to any society or branch or any body of men whatsoever; finally, that it has not even *met* for nearly *three years and a half* last past; and, of course, that it is not now in existence.

What, then, must have been the surprise and the pain of your humble petitioner, when he saw, in the Report of your Lordships' Secret Committee, this London Union Society represented, not only as still being in existence, but busily and extensively at work, establishing branches and affiliations, carrying on an active correspondence, infusing life into Societies of Spencean Philanthropists, and producing, by these means, plans of conspiracy, revolution and treason! And, though your petitioner is too well assured of the upright views and of the justice of every Committee consisting of members of your noble and right honourable House not to be convinced that very strong evidence in support of these charges must have been produced to your Lordships' Secret Committee, your petitioner cannot, nevertheless, refrain from expressing most humbly his deep regret that your Lordships' Committee should not have deigned to send for the books and other testimonials of the character and proceedings of the London Union Society; and your petitioner humbly begs leave to observe, that this omission appears singularly unfortunate for the London Union Society, seeing that the Secret Committee of your Lordships appear, in another part of their Report, to *lament the want of means of obtaining the written proceedings of Societies*, and seeing that it was natural to expect, that a Society having branches, an affiliation and an active correspondence, had also a copious collection of written documents.

Your petitioner is aware, that he has trespassed too long on the patience of your Lordships; but, well knowing that your Lordships seek only for *truth* as the basis of your proceedings, he humbly hopes that you will be pleased to excuse the earnestness of his present representation, and he also presumes humbly to express his hope, that your Lordships will be pleased, in your great tenderness for the character and liberties of his Majesty's faithful subjects, to consider whether it be not possible that your Secret Committee may have been misled, by what they may have deemed good evidence, as to other parts of their secret Report; and, at the least, your petitioner humbly prays that your Lordships will, in your great condescension, be pleased to permit your petitioner to produce all the books and papers of the London Union Society at the bar of your right honourable House, where your petitioner confidently assures your Lordships that he is ready to prove all and singular the allegations contained in this his most humble petition.

And your petitioner will ever pray,

THOMAS CLEARY.

To the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of Henry Hunt, of Middleton Cottage, in the County of Southampton,

Humbly Sheweth,—

That your petitioner, who had the honour to be the mover of the petitions at the recent Meetings held in Spa-fields, one of which petitions has been received by his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, and two of which petitions have been presented to, and received by, the honourable the House of Commons, has read, in the public prints, a paper entitled a Report of the Secret Committee of your right honourable House, and which Report appears to your petitioner, as far as his humble powers of disentanglement have enabled him to analyse the same, to submit to your right honourable House, as solemn truths, the following assertions; to wit:

1. That the first public meeting in Spa-fields, which had for its ostensible object, a petition for relief and Reform, was closely connected with, and formed part of, a conspiracy to produce an insurrection for the purpose of overthrowing the Government.
2. That Spa-fields was fixed upon as the place of assembling, on account of its vicinity to the Bank and the Tower; and that, for this same reason, "care was taken to adjourn the meeting to the 2d of December, by which time it was hoped that preparations for the insurrection would be fully matured."
3. That, at this second Meeting, flags, banners, and all the ensigns of insurrection were displayed, and that, finally, an insurrection was begun by persons collected in the Spa-fields, and that notwithstanding the ultimate object was then frustrated, the same designs still continued to be prosecuted with sanguine hopes of success.
4. That a large quantity of pike-heads had been ordered of one individual, and that 250 had actually been made and paid for.
5. That *Delegates from Hampden Clubs in the Country* have met in London, and that they are expected to meet again in *Murch*.

That, as to the *first* of these assertions, as your petitioner possesses no means of ascertaining the secret thoughts of men, he cannot pretend to assert, that none of the persons, with whom the calling of the first Spa-fields Meeting originated, had no views of a riotous or revolutionary kind; but he humbly conceives, that a simple narrative of facts will be more than sufficient to satisfy your right honourable House, that no such dangerous projects ever entered the minds of those who constituted almost the entire mass of that most numerous Meeting. Therefore in the hope of producing this conviction in the mind of your right honourable House, your petitioner begs leave to proceed to state: that he, who was then at his house in the country, received, a short time before the 15th of November last, a letter from Thomas Preston, Secretary of a Committee, requesting your petitioner to attend a Public Meeting of the distressed inhabitants of the metropolis, intended to be held in Spa-fields on the day just mentioned; that your petitioner thereupon wrote to Thomas Preston to know what was the *object* of the intended meeting;—that he received, in the way of answer, a newspaper

called the Independent Whig of November 10th, 1816, containing an advertisement in these words; to wit: "At a Meeting held at the " Carlisle, Shoreditch, on Thursday evening, it was determined to call a " meeting of the distressed manufacturers, mariners, artisans and others " of the cities of London and Westminster, the borough of Southwark " and parts adjacent, in Spa-fields, on Friday the 15th instant, precisely " at twelve o'clock, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning " the Prince Regent and Legislature, to adopt immediately such mea- " sures as will relieve the sufferers from the misery which now overwhelms " them. (Signed) JOHN DYALL, Chairman, THOMAS PRESTON, Secre- " tary;"—that your petitioner upon seeing this advertisement, hesitated not to accept of the invitation;—that he attended at the said meeting:—that he there found ready prepared, a paper, called, to the best of his recollection, a *memorial*, which some persons, then utter strangers to him, proposed to move for the adoption of the Meeting;—that your petitioner perceiving in this paper, propositions of a nature which he did not approve of, and especially a proposition for the Meeting going in a body to Carlton House, declared that he would have nothing to do with the said memorial—that your petitioner then brought forward an humble petition to the Prince Regent, which petition was passed by the Meeting unanimously, and which petition, having been by your petitioner, delivered to Lord Sidmouth, that noble Lord has, by letter, informed your petitioner, was immediately laid before his Royal Highness the Prince Regent. And your petitioner here begs leave further to state, upon the subject of the aforementioned Memorial, that *John Dyall*, whose name, as *Chairman* of the Committee who called the Meeting (and of which Committee *Thomas Preston* was Secretary), having, *before the Meeting took place*, been called before *Mr. John Gifford*, one of the Police Magistrates, had furnished *Mr. Gifford* with a copy of the said Memorial, and that that copy was in the hands of *Lord Sidmouth* at the moment when the Meeting was about to assemble, though (from an oversight, no doubt) neither the Police Magistrates nor any other person whatever gave your petitioner the smallest intimation of the dangerous tendency or even of the existence of such Memorial, or of any improper views being entertained by any of the parties calling the Meeting, though it now appears, that the written placards entitled "*Britons to Arms*" are imputed to those same parties, though it is notorious that that paper appeared in all the *public prints* so far back as the month of *October*, and though, when your Petitioner waited on Lord Sidmouth with the petition of the Prince Regent, that noble Lord himself informed your petitioner, that the Government were fully apprized beforehand of the propositions intended to be brought forward at the Meeting. So that your petitioner humbly begs leave to express his confidence that your Honourable House will clearly perceive, that if any insurrection had taken place on the day of the first Spa-fields Meeting, it would have been entirely owing to the neglect, if not connivance, of those persons who possessed a previous knowledge of the principles and views of the parties with whom that Meeting originated.

With regard to the *second* assertion, namely, that, "*care* was taken to adjourn the Meeting to the 2nd of December," your petitioner begs leave to state, that it will appear upon the face of the proceedings of that day, that there was nothing like previous *concert* or *care* in this matter; for, that a resolution first proposed to adjourn the Meeting to the day of the

Meeting of Parliament, and then to meet in *Palace-yard*, of course *not so much in the vicinity of the Bank and the Tower*; and that when this resolution was awarded so as to provide for a meeting on the 2nd of December on the same spot, it was merely grounded on the *uncertainty* as to the time when the Parliament might meet. Your Petitioner further begs leave to state here, as being, in a most interested manner, connected with this adjournment of the Meeting, that, when your Petitioner waited on Lord Sidmouth with the petition to the Prince Regent, he informed his Lordship that the Meeting was to re-assemble on the 2nd of December, when your Petitioner had engaged to carry his Lordship's answer and deliver it to the adjourned meeting, and, that his Lordship, so far from advising your Petitioner not to go to the said Meeting, so far from saying any thing to discourage the said Meeting, distinctly told your Petitioner, that your Petitioner's presence and conduct appeared to his Lordship to have prevented great possible mischief. Whence your Petitioner humbly conceives, that he is warranted in concluding that there did, at the time here referred to, exist in his Lordship no desire to prevent the said Meeting from taking place.

Your Petitioner, in adverting humbly to the THIRD assertion of your Secret Committee, begs to be permitted to state, that the persons who went from Spa-fields to engage in riot on the 2nd of December, formed no part of the Meeting called for that day; that these persons came into the fields full two hours before the time of meeting; that they left the fields full an hour before that time; that they did not consist, at the time of leaving the fields, of more than forty or fifty individuals; that they were joined by sailors and others, persons going from witnessing the execution of four men in the Old Bailey; that your Petitioner, who had come up from Essex in the morning, met the rioters in Cheapside; that he proceeded directly to the Meeting, which he found to be very numerous; that there a Resolution was immediately proposed by your Petitioner strongly condemning all rioting and violence, which Resolution passed with the most unanimous acclamations; that a Petition, which has since been signed by upwards of twenty-four thousand names, and received by the House of Commons, was then passed; and that the Meeting, though immense as to numbers, finally separated, without the commission of any single act of riot, outrage, or violence. And here your Petitioner humbly begs leave to beseech the attention of your honourable House to the very important fact of a *third* Meeting having taken place on the 10th instant, on the same spot, more numerous than either of the former; and that, after having agreed to a Petition, which has since been received by your honourable House, the said Meeting separated in the most peaceable and orderly manner; which your Petitioner trusts is quite sufficient to convince your honourable House that, if, as your Secret Committee reported, *designs of riot do still continue to be prosecuted with sanguine hope of success*, these designs can have no connection whatever with the Meetings for retrenchment, relief, and reform, held in Spa-fields.

That, as to the *pike-heads*, your Petitioner begs leave to state to your right hon. House, that while he was at the last Spa-fields Meeting, an anonymous letter was put into the hands of your Petitioner's servant, who afterwards gave it to your Petitioner; that this letter stated that one Bentley, a smith, of Hart-street, Covent-garden, had been employed by a man, in the dress of a *gamekeeper*, to make some spikes to put round

a fish-pond; that the gamekeeper came and took a parcel away and paid for them; that he came soon afterwards and said the things answered very well, and ordered more to be made; that, in a little while after this, the said Bentley was sent for to the Bow-street Office, and, after a private examination, was desired to make a pike, or spike, of the same sort, and to carry it to the office, which he did. That your Petitioner perceives that the information which it contains may possibly be of the utmost importance in giving a clue to the strict investigation, which he humbly presumes to hope will be instituted by your honourable House into this very interesting matter.

That as to the FIFTH assertion, that *Delegates* have assembled in London from *Hampden Clubs* in the country, your Petitioner has first to observe, that these persons never called *themselves* Delegates, and were not called *Delegates* by anybody connected with them; that they were called, and were, "*Deputies from Petitioning Bodies*" for Parliamentary Reform; that your Petitioner was one of them, having been deputed by the petitioners at Bristol and Bath; that these Deputies met three times, and always in an open room, to which newspaper reporters were admitted; that an account of all their proceedings was published; that they separated at the end of three days, *not* upon a motion of *adjournment*, but of absolute *dissolution*, which motion was made by your Petitioner, who is ready to prove that your Committee has been imposed upon as to the fact that these Delegates, or Deputies, are expected to meet again in March.

That your Petitioner is ready to prove at the bar of your right hon. House all the facts and allegations contained in this Petition, and that he humbly prays so to be permitted there to prove them accordingly.

And your Petitioner will ever pray.

HENRY HUNT.

TO THE
PEOPLE OF HAMPSHIRE.

On the Reports made to Parliament.—On the Habeas Corpus suspension.—On the Sedition Bills and Treason Bills,—On the State to which we are Reduced.

(*Political Register*, March, 1815.)

London, March 5, 1817.

MY GOOD NEIGHBOURS,

Yesterday the Act passed the Royal Assent! It is now a *law*; and to this law we must now submit! For many, many years, I have been warning my country against the measures, which have finally brought us

to this pass; and, those among you, who have been in the the habit of attending the Meetings at Winchester, will remember how the greater part of the farmers and of all those who seemed to be in rather higher life than the rest used to scoff at me, when I foretold to you all what would be the end of the things which I used to complain of.—Those persons must now begin to feel some degree of alarm and shame; but this feeling comes too late.

I have no scruple to say, that this is the most important event that has taken place in the world for hundreds of years; because it changes, in the most important part, the state of this nation, which is, and long has been, of greater consequence than any other nation. The event itself being so awfully important, you, and every Englishman, ought to know what has produced it. When our children's children shall read of this event, they will be all anxiety to know *what was the cause of it*; what was the cause of putting, for several months at the least, the *personal safety of every man*, however innocent he may be, within the *absolute power* of a Secretary of State, or of Six Privy Councillors.

This measure was proposed to the two Houses, in consequence of a Report to each House, made by a *Secret Committee* of each House, and these Reports were made upon certain *evidence*, produced to those *Secret Committees*. The progress of the proceedings, in the House of Commons, for instance, was as follows:—

1. The Prince, in his Speech, speaks of *designing* and *evil-minded* men, who are endeavouring to *seduce* the people into unlawful acts; and he expresses his confidence, that Parliament will cordially *co-operate* with him in suppressing this evil.
2. The Ministers bring, by the Prince's order, a *Bag*, containing a parcel of papers, which, they say, prove that there is a design to make a revolution and destroy the Government; and upon this they moved for a *Secret Committee* to inquire into the contents of the *Bag*, and to make a Report to the whole House upon the subject, and to say *what ought* to be done in consequence of those contents.
3. The Committee was appointed in this way:—It was to consist of *twenty-one members*. Each Member of the House put twenty-one names upon a bit of paper, and then put that paper into a glass, or box. Then the whole of the papers are taken out, and the twenty-one men, whose names are upon the greatest number of bits of paper, are the Committee! So you see, that on whichever side the majority of the House is, that side must have the choosing of the Committee. This is called choosing by *ballot*; but, what people in general think about *ballot* is, that *the names of all the Members in the House are put into a glass*, or box, and then the first twenty-one, taken out *promiscuously*, like a *jury*, are the Committee. You see, that this is no such thing; and, indeed, it was so well known *who* would be the members of the Committee, that Mr. Brougham actually read the twenty-one names to the House *before the papers were put into the box*.
4. This was the Committee, to whom the papers were referred. They assembled, looked at the contents of the *Bag*, which contents had been collected by the Ministers.
5. They made a *Report*; that is to say, they drew up an account, founded on these papers, and laid it before the House. And, in both

Houses of Parliament, the Report concludes with stating, that the laws, as they now stand, are not sufficient to preserve the peace of the country.

6. The Ministers come and propose *new laws*; one to make it *death* to attempt to seduce either soldiers or sailors from their duty; another to make it *treason* to do certain acts relative to the endangering the person of the Prince Regent; another to prevent public meetings unless under new regulations, and for checking the circulation of certain pamphlets, &c.; and another, which is the *all-in-all*, for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, and, thereby, putting every man's *person* in the power of the Ministers, to enable them to shut it up *at their absolute pleasure*, without any limit whatever, except that the Act, as it now stands, is to last only till *July next*; but, this Act may be *renewed* before July next, and, that it *will* be renewed, who can doubt? For, can the country possibly be *more quiet then* than it is *now*?

After this brief history of the proceedings, which have more immediately led to this shocking state of things, it will only be necessary to insert the Reports themselves, in order to enable you to form a correct judgment as to the grounds of the laws that have been passed. These Reports are *immortal documents*.—They should be read by you all, and preserved as you would preserve your eye-sight. Read them over and over again; put them by, and then take them out again. How you, my good neighbours, and all the people of England, will be surprised to find, that, upon these Reports of Committees formed as above described, and without *any evidence of any sort* submitted to *their own inspection*, the two Houses have, by vast majorities, proceeded to take away even our *personal safety*, and to make it possible for any man, however innocent, to be taken out of his bed and carried away to a prison, without any *hearing* even before the Secretary of State who shall sign the warrant for his imprisonment.

In order to rouse the nation to make all the legal efforts in their power to obtain a repeal of this terrible law of *suspension*, the first thing is to make them *clearly* understand the grounds on which it has been passed; to make them see the *alleged* grounds, and to enable them to form an opinion as to the *real* grounds. When that is done, they will have the matter full in their minds; and they will see what it is that has produced the evil.

It is said that the Habeas Corpus Act *has been suspended before*, so that this is *no new thing*. This, therefore, is a point of great moment. The Act has been *suspended before*; but, under what circumstances? It was suspended in the reign of George I. when there was a Pretender to the throne living in France, and supported by the King of France, and when there were many powerful men in England who were plotting with that Pretender to bring him over, and to put down the Family then upon the throne. Were these circumstances like those of the present day? A French army was *then* in readiness to come over to assist that Pretender, and it was very well known, that many men, and men of weight too, were *ready to join that French army*. It was, therefore, necessary to give great powers to the Government in order that they might, upon any sudden emergency, lay hold of any man suspected of a design to aid in such an enterprise; because, if suffered to remain at

large, he might join the enemy and greatly add to the danger and the bloodshed. But, does any such cause of fear exist *now*? We are at peace, and in close alliance, with all the Kings of Europe; their subjects are all in a state of quiet submission; there is no Pretender; no man at home, who has any weight at all, proposes, or even hints at, any change in the established things of the country; there has been no attempt of any sort to effect Reform by violence; and, therefore, there is no sort of resemblance in the circumstances of the two cases.

In the reign of George II. the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended; but then, not only was there a Pretender living in France and encouraged and supported by the King of France, but he actually landed in Scotland, was joined by large numbers and by several Noblemen, marched towards London at the head of an army, and got as far as Carlisle. Under such circumstances it was the duty of the Parliament to empower the Ministers to seize and keep safe persons suspected of a design to join the enemy. But, to attempt to justify the suspension *now*, because a suspension took place *then*, would be like proposing to cut off a man's arm on account of a pin-scratch upon his finger, *because* a man's arm had once been cut off on account of a mortification of his hand.

The Act was suspended during the first war against the French Revolutionists. But, at that time, we were at war with a very populous and powerful nation, who had destroyed their Church and Nobility, put their King to death, declared their country to be a Republic, and had offered their assistance to any other oppressed people to enable them to do the same in *their* country. This was denied to aim at England; but, at any rate, there was this *pretence*. Then it is certainly true, that Delegates from Societies in England had gone to, and been received by, the French Convention. This was another *pretence*. It is also certain, that, in many publications and speeches it was openly avowed, that it would be desirable to erect a Republic in England. Most men of liberal minds opposed most strenuously the suspension even *then*. Yet taking into view only the circumstance of *war*, and the *character of the enemy*; and supposing no Republican designs to have really existed; taking the matter in this light, how *very different* are the two cases! Not only are we at *peace* now with all the world; but a war is almost impossible. Not only are the French *not Republicans*, but they are become *Royalists* after having tried Republicanism, and we are daily and hourly told, that they are happy under their return to a Kingly Government; and, so far from their King being our enemy, he is our *friend* and *ally*. Not only have we nothing from without to encourage any body here to think of a change in the form of Government; but the very men, who, through the press, justify this suspension of our liberties and even our *personal safety*, tell us, in the same breath, that we live under a Government, which is the *admiration* and *envy* of the world!

Therefore if I were to allow, which I do not, that the *suspension* was justifiable during the war against the French Republicans, I should for the very same reasons, amongst many others, deny that it was justifiable *now*. Thus then, the assertion, that the suspension is *not a new thing* is all sophistry; it is a base attempt to deceive the people, to blind them, to hush their well-grounded fears, and to reconcile them to a measure, which, if it remain any considerable time in force, must, as every one must see, be the cause of endless misery and degradation.

I am well aware, that there are people enough to say: "What is the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act to me? I am on the side of the Ministers; or, *I never meddle with politics*. I shall be as safe as if the Act had never passed. The Act will be a dead letter as far as relates to me." So it will, perhaps, as to *direct effect*; and it certainly will be so far as relates to horses, oxen, mules, asses, hogs, dogs, cats, poultry, fish, posts, and stones; but, the man, who does not perceive, that this Act will affect him indirectly, and who does not feel pain and shame at seeing it passed under the present circumstances, is, in the scale of animal life, far inferior in merit to a horse or a dog. The truth is, that every man, be he who or what he may, unless selfishness has made him a brute, does feel deep sorrow and shame upon this occasion; and, these miserable pretences of being contented under this state of things, and of not being affected by it, arise out of a desire to hide the pain and shame that they feel; to hide the feeling from their neighbours, and, if it were possible, from themselves; just as we always hear men endeavour to console themselves for the loss of things which they see no prospect of preserving or regaining; though the very same things had been but a little while before the pride and the happiness of their lives. This pretence, however, will become every day more fashionable. To affect to despise the Personal Safety Law will be as much in fashion as it is amongst cast-off lovers to affect to despise their former sweethearts; and, in a very short time, if the Suspension Act be permitted to continue in force, we shall hear it applauded as a *lucky measure*, just as we did the stoppage of cash-payments at the Bank, which, for a little while, was regarded as the most ruinous measure that ever was adopted, and which, *now*, it has proved to be, that measure being the great cause of all the present miseries, and even of these last fatal measures of restraint.

When that measure was first adopted, it was only for *six weeks*; then for *three months*; then for *a year*; then to the *end of the war*; then for the *first year of peace*; then for *one more year*; then for the *new war*; then for *a year of peace*; and now for *two years*: and thus it has already gone on for *twenty years*! And, if the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act be suffered to be renewed but *once*; if it be not repealed indeed almost immediately, what hope can any man of sense entertain, that it will *ever* be repealed? Can the country ever be *more quiet* than it is now? Can it be *more prosperous* and less miserable as long as the funding system to its present extent shall last? Will commerce, manufactures, and agriculture, revive under that load which has crushed them to pieces? *When*, then, if not now, is this Act *ever* to be repealed? It has been passed in a time of *profound peace*; it cannot be denied that the patience of the people has been unparalleled; they have met in immense multitudes all over the kingdom to petition; they have been guilty of no outrages, no breaches of the peace; goaded and provoked in all sorts of ways, they have made no attacks on the persons or the property of the rich; and, if the Act be called for *now*, when, I again ask, is it to cease? *When* is to come the time, when it will not be called for, and when there will not be found persons to justify its continuance?

Let no one, therefore, deceive himself with the expectation of a return from this path at *some future time*. The petitions for a *repeal* must be sent up *now* or *never*. It will be a striking fact in history, that, on the

very night that this Bill made its last appearance in the House of Commons, there lay upon the floor of that House, nearly *six hundred petitions* signed by *one million and sixty thousand men*, praying for *Parliamentary Reform*. They had been carried down in *hackney-coaches*, and had been carried in by Sir Francis Burdett and Lord Cochrane; and when the two Masters in Chancery came in to announce that the Lords had finished the Bill, they were unable to approach the table, the whole space of several yards, from the bar to the table, being filled with this immense heap of petitions! There had been petitions, with several *hundred thousand* names, presented before, and praying for the same thing; and Sir Francis Burdett, when the Bill came down from the Lords, emphatically observed, "That Bill is the *answer* to these petitions;" an observation which history will not forget in recording the occurrences of these disgraceful times. I believe, that, in the whole, more than *one million and a half of men* have signed petitions for Parliamentary Reform, upon the principles of *Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage*; and, this has been done in the most fair and open manner. In the eleven millions, or thereabouts, of the natives of England and Scotland, there cannot be more than about two millions of active, sturdy men. However, suppose the *families* to be *two millions and a half*, and that there be one *active man* to each family, a *majority* of the active men of the nation have petitioned upon this occasion, notwithstanding all the efforts that have been made to prevent petitioning. But, the truth is, that a considerable part of the petitions are not yet come in; and, if no measures of prevention, no menaces, no *undue* influence, had been made use of, there would, I am convinced, have been *nine-tenths* of the names of *all the men in the country* to these petitions.

This, therefore, is THE PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE. Let our adversaries say or do what they will, this is the PEOPLE'S PRAYER; and, though corruption may call it an attempt to overthrow the Constitution, this prayer, I am fully convinced, will be *finally* heard. I, for my part, as far as I have power, will always contend for this as our *right*. We have by reference to *law* and by an appeal to *reason*, proved it to be our right; and we have received *no answer*.

It was my intention to enter here into a description of the *other Bills* that are now passing; but, I have not room in this Number, and it is absolutely necessary to publish the *reports*, because we are now entering upon a *new sort of rule*, and the time will come when we shall have to refer to the sources from whence it has sprung. Keep this Number, I beg of you; for we shall *often have to speak of it*. In entering upon this new state of things we ought first to trace the *causes of it*, and then to get at a clear notion of *what it is*. This we shall do in the course of the next Number; and then we shall have to make all the legal exertions in our power to get rid of this deep disgrace on ourselves and our country.

I am, your friend,

WM. COBBETT.

TO THE

GOOD AND TRUE MEN OF HAMPSHIRE.

Meeting at Winchester.—Outrageous Parsons.—Dreadful Row.—Lockhart the Brave Challenge of Lockhart the Brave to Mr. Cobbett.—The Sinecure Crew's Flight.—Mr. Cobbett chaired.—No Address agreed to by the Meeting.—Cashman's Death.—Arrests in Lancashire.

(Political Register, March, 1817.)

London, 13th March, 1817.

MY WORTHY COUNTRYMEN,

The necessity of going into Hampshire will compel me to confine myself this week within very narrow limits; but in my next I shall resume the discussion relative to the *famous Bills*, which have totally changed the situation of every man in this country, and shall endeavour to put the whole of that matter in so clear a light, that no human creature, who reads what I write, shall want any more information relative to it. In such a case, the main thing is, to give the great mass of the people a clear and true idea of what the things *are* which have been done; for, when that is once fixed in their minds, never, no, *never*, will it be *got out again*. There it will live as long as life shall animate the frame.

Few comparatively of you were at the Meeting, but you must all hear the story of *Lockhart the Brave*. However, this story must come in at its proper place of the proceedings of the tumultuous eleventh of March. You will bear in mind, that the Meeting was called by *Mr. Fleming* (late *Willis*) who is the HIGH SHERIFF, in consequence of a requisition signed by the Marquis of Winchester, who is Groom of the Stole, the Marquis of Buckingham, whose father was a Teller of the Exchequer, Old George Rose, who is every thing, Lord Palmerston, who is Secretary at War, Mr. Sturges Bourne, who is a Lord of the Treasury, Mr. Garnier, who is Apothecary-general, Earl Malmsbury, who has a heavy pension, Lord Fitzharris, who is Governor of the Isle of Wight *for life*, and several other persons. There was a requisition sent to the Sheriff *before* the one here mentioned was sent to him; but, this other was carried to him by my son John a few days before he *was Sheriff*. My son wished to *leave* it with him. No. That was not approved of. It might be brought to him again the next *Monday*; but, when carried to him again, *another had been brought to him along with his patent of Sheriff!* Ours was therefore set aside, though it had been *tendered first*; and when my son suggested, that *both might be inserted* in the call, as was done last year by poor talking BOSANQUET, the impartiality of Mr. FLEMING induced him to refuse to do it, though he very condescendingly offered to have our *names*

put under the requisition of the Groom of the Stole, the Apothecary-general, and Old George Rose, an honour, of which we had too much modesty to accept.

Upon this occasion every nerve appears to have been strained by the whole of the nobility, gentry and clergy in the country, and upon my arrival in Winchester (from London) at ten o'clock in the morning, news assailed me from all quarters, that there was a plan resolved on for effectually preventing LORD COCHRANE and all those who might take part with him from *being heard*; and when the Meeting was opened, we soon discovered, that this plan was, if possible, to be carried into execution. There was good sense in it on the part of our adversaries; for they were *sure* to be beaten, if we were heard, and they could only be beaten if we were not, and as to *shame*, you will soon see, that that formed no obstacle in their way.

When the HIGH SHERIFF had read the requisition and opened the Meeting, I offered myself to the Meeting with a paper in my hand. It was a copy of our requisition, and my object was merely to state, on that subject, what I have above stated to you. But, the Sheriff did not, and could not, know what it was. It might be *an address*; and, as I had the first word, it was his duty to let me proceed. He insisted that *I should not*; and that another address should be moved first by Sir CHARLES OGLE, a gentleman fixed upon, probably, for his inoffensive and amiable character. I insisted on my right, and now began a scene of uproar such as I never before witnessed. I besought the little dull Sheriff to let me only say ten words to explain the affair of the two requisitions. No. He was in hopes that I should not get a hearing. There we stood for half an hour. Noise on both sides so that not a word could be heard.

The people were assembled in the court-yard of the Castle, on one of the sides of which is the Grand Jury Chamber, having *four windows*, from which the speakers were to speak. The chamber was at once filled full, to the amount of, perhaps, a hundred persons, consisting chiefly of clergymen, custom-house people, barrack-people, and the like, who, with sticks and umbrellas, and heels of shoes, and with shoutings, groanings, hissings, *spittings*, and other means of annoyance, endeavoured to stun and overwhelm us. However, all would not do. Our friends without returned the charge with interest, and nothing could be heard. At last came forward Sir CHARLES OGLE with the Address, *ready engrossed upon parchment*. I suppose he did read it, for, being at the next window, I saw *his lips move*; but, I am sure, that he himself did not hear the sound of his own voice, and I must do him the justice to say, that he appeared heartily ashamed of the part that he had been selected to act. Mr. ASHTON SMITH came forward to second that which nobody had heard read. He put his hand a little way out of the window, but, as if struck by the arrow that fieth by day, he drew it in under a shout of disapprobation enough to kill a gentleman dead upon the spot, when he reflected that it came from the lips of his own neighbours.

As yet the Meeting knew nothing of what had been done. But, LORD COCHRANE, who had obtained a *look* only at a copy of the Address, now began to move another Address as an *amendment* to it; and here it was that the mortification and rage of our opponents, particularly of those *within*, began to discover itself in symptoms bordering very closely on those of hydrophobia, or dog-madness. It was now most

curious to observe the workings in the minds of different descriptions of the audience. A great number of the *tenants* had been pressed into the service of our opponents; some of their *tradesmen*; many *dockyard* people and taxing people. In the minds of many of these, there was a real *inclination* on our side; and, in the minds of many more, *curiosity* was too powerful, for the moment, at least, for the sense of *obedience*. So that the Parsons and some few others finding the task of interruption devolving upon themselves, and having hardly any but their own voices, became shy; and *silence* was produced. His Lordship began by inquiring into the conduct of the little SHERIFF in preferring the other requisition to that which his Lordship had signed, and stated, as a probable reason for the preference, that some of the persons, who had signed the former requisition, *had received out of the public money more than enough to pay all the poor-rates of Hampshire for ten years!* His Lordship, after a variety of most excellent remarks, was proceeding to read his amendment, when the SHERIFF interrupted him by saying, that, as those subjects were not *proposed in the requisition*, they could not, and *should not*, be put to the Meeting. If the little man's ears have recovered the salute, which he received upon this, he is happy, at any rate, in his hearing faculties, though, to me, deafness would have been far preferable to the receiving of sounds more than sufficient to kill a man of any feeling.

The contest now was, whether LORD COCHRANE should be allowed to propose his *amendment*. The Sheriff insisted that he should not, and a vast majority of the people insisted that he should. What the amendment was I could not precisely discover; for I was at the right-hand window, the Sheriff at the second, and LORD COCHRANE at the third. To get at his Lordship was impossible. About *twenty Parsons* had placed themselves at his back, and would suffer no one to approach him. I asked to be permitted to do so, and, upon observing to one of the Parsons in the rear rank of this true Church Militant, that I wanted to *speak* to his Lordship: "I know you do," said he, "and *I want that you shall not!*"

After this state of uproar had lasted for about half an hour, there was a *new actor* put forward. It was Mr. LOCKHART of the Honourable House. His name was announced. *Uncertainty* produced silence. A *lawyer, a Member of Parliament, a learned friend*. He would surely put us into the right path! He began by a declaration of his *impartiality*. He stated broadly, that nothing could be regularly proposed to the Meeting, which had not been announced in the requisition; and that, therefore, the Noble Lord had discovered "*gross ignorance*" of the mode of proceeding upon such occasions, when he introduced subjects, which had not been announced in the requisition, out of the limits of which we were not permitted to travel in the smallest degree. Mr. LOCKHART had begun his speech by observing, that he was sure he should not incur the displeasure of the Meeting, and that the only favour he had to beg of them was not to *interrupt* him by their *applauses*, a favour which was readily granted; for, no sooner was it perceived, that his object was to prevent LORD COCHRANE from moving his amendment, than he became an actor in *dumb show*.

LORD COCHRANE had spoken, and had been heard too, till, with the noise at his back and all together, he appeared to be nearly exhausted; and, besides, my tongue really ached to be at this Learned Friend.

Curiosity was now more powerful, in consequence, partly, of my announcing my object to be to answer the Learned and Honourable Member. The silence was complete. I took Mr. Lockhart upon his own ground; said that I was willing to agree to the Address as far as it was strictly conformable to the requisition; and, even if I found, that it did depart from the gentleman's own rule, I would agree to it, provided, that its meaning were made clear, and that nothing amounting to downright nonsense was left in it. First, then, I begged to be furnished with the Requisition, which the Sheriff very sulkily handed down to me from his window, and which I read in the following words: "We, the undersigned freeholders of the county of Southampton, request you will fix an early day for a County Meeting, to consider of an Address to his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, on the outrageous and treasonable attack made upon his Royal Highness on his return from opening the Session of Parliament." Then I obtained a copy of their Address, which confined itself to the nobility, gentry, clergy, and freeholders, instead of going to "inhabitants in general," which words, for the reasons which I stated, I proposed to introduce. Next, to get rid of a small portion of nonsense, I proposed, that the Address should be "laid before his Royal Highness," instead of being laid "at his Royal Highness's feet." Next, this Address, which Mr. Lockhart had asserted to be strictly confined to the matters propounded in the Requisition, contained "a pledge to support the religion and constitution of the country." For religion I had no objection to substitute tithes, if Mr. Lockhart would give his consent; but I said, from what I had read, that I, who was a true churchman, was afraid he would not! This threw the Learned Friend into utter confusion, and even made the parsons prick up their ears and dart a look at him from all quarters! The farmers pricked up their ears too, and began to smirk and to look sideways slyly at the parsons, bringing their chins down upon their cravats at the same time. The little Sheriff himself was at a loss what course to pursue. All was dead silence, while I, in a low, solemn, and sort of prophetic tone, bade the parsons take warning, that, before that day two years, they would have cause to remember my words, and would see how foolish, beyond all foolishness, their conduct had been in opposing a Reform of the Parliament, and in so rancorously pursuing its advocates. Lord FITZHARRIS is, in the *Morning Chronicle*, reported to have said, that nothing could be heard at the Meeting. His lordship could not have been there. Never was silence more complete; never was impression deeper. Mr. LOCKHART was in vain invited to answer. Not a word had he to say; and an attempt which he had made to explain, that by religion was meant the Prince, the Prince being the head of the Church, was turned into such ridicule, and excited such bursts of laughter, even amongst our opponents, that the learned expositor seemed to be absolutely sinking through the floor. He skulked back from the window and took shelter amongst the parsons, who seemed to avoid him, as the herd always shun a wounded or hunted deer.

But, Mr. LOCKHART's mortification was not even yet at its height; for if the word religion meant the Prince, constitution, which we were also to pledge ourselves to support, could not mean the same thing, and besides, the learned expositor had said, that by Constitution were meant king, lords, and commons. Here, then, the Address had travelled out of the Requisition, or the learned expositor had been wrong in his exposition; and I had to leave it to the Meeting to decide, who had discovered the

"*grosses ignorance,*" the learned Member or the noble Lord. This, however, being so loose a phrase as to admit of so many interruptions, I proposed to amend the Address by inserting, after the word *constitution*, "as established by *Magna Charta, the Bill of Rights, and the Act of Habeas Corpus, for which our forefathers fought and bled,*" with which amendment I was willing for the Address to pass unanimously.

There was something so moderate, so reasonable, so manifestly just and proper in this, that our opponents could not for very shame object to it. Mr. LOCKHART was called upon by the whole Meeting to come forward. He had the merit, though a lawyer, of discovering some degree of reluctance to oppose a thing so manifestly right. But after taking time to rally his spirits, he put his head forth, and said: "Gentlemen, if you adopt Mr. Cobbett's amendments, you will declare *against loyalty*, and for every thing that is *sedition and wicked.*" Upon which, I said, "Now, Gentlemen, I am happy to say, that however we may have been misled by our passions this day to express our differences in so violent a manner, upon one point I am sure we shall be perfectly unanimous, and that is, that Mr. Lockhart has been guilty of the *foulest misrepresentations* that ever was made by mortal man." Whereupon one big parson, under the window exclaimed, "Not half *foul enough!*" but with that single exception, such a roar of indignation as was then uttered against the learned Friend as I never before heard in my life; and most assuredly he merited it, as you will clearly see by looking at the words by which I had proposed to amend the Address, and which words I had wrote down upon paper in the presence of witnesses, which words I repeatedly read from the paper, and from which paper I have copied the words now. This shout of indignation produced the *challenge* from Lockhart the Brave, of which I shall speak by and by.

Mr. HUNT seconded the amendments, and was heard very well for about half an hour. Great impatience was now manifested by our opponents to *put an end* to the Meeting. "Pray, Mr. Sheriff, *dissolve*; pray, Mr. Sheriff, *adjourn*;" resounded from the quarters of the parsons, and custom-house, and dock-yard people; but, all at once, from the *fourth window*, out bolted Mr. Henry Marsh, who, in a speech of half an hour's duration, and, as I was told (for he was too far off for me to hear) replete with *wit* and *humour* of the best sort, turned the conduct of our opponents and the matter of their illiterate and slovenly Address into such ridicule, that scarcely a man could refrain from laughing in the most immoderate manner. The Sheriff strained his throat in vain to call Mr. Marsh to order; the latter put it to the vote, whether he should be heard or not; the Meeting decided that he should, and on he went amidst an uproar of laughter as loud as the shoutings and groanings which saluted the ears of the Sheriff and his back, Mr. Lockhart, whenever they attempted to interfere. The parsons and tax-eaters cried out, "Treason! take him up. He turns the attack on the Prince into ridicule. Hear him! hear him! Go on! go on! O, Lord!" And then such laughter as never, I verily believe, was heard before in the world. Some of the farmers and tradesmen and labouring people I could see putting their hands to their sides and laughing till they were ready to tumble down. The women and girls, of whom the number was not small, were convulsed with laughter, till at last it was more like screaming than laughing.

It was nearly five o'clock, the Meeting having began precisely at twelve. The Sheriff now saw, that his power was of no avail, and that,

unless something was speedily done for the poor Address, it could not have even the *semblance* of being agreed to. He, therefore, poked out his head to put the Address. We called for the *amendments* to be put, as all the world knows they ought to have been. He and Mr. Lockhart refused! They would *not put* the amendments. Not a word was heard, except by us who stood near the little gentleman. The uproar was renewed. But, having carried our point; having got a hearing, and given a most famous lashing to our opponents, we waved our hats to our friends and produced a division. The Sheriff decided that the Address was carried *three or four to one*; and I am most sincerely persuaded, *that the majority was on our side.*

LORD COCHRANE, though standing within one window of the SHERIFF, had got at no knowledge as to *the subject of the division.* His Lordship concluded, of course, that my amendments had been put, and, as the people in the room said, "Cobbett is *beaten*," his Lordship then began to move *his amendment*, which was to set aside the Address altogether. But, behold, while he was speaking with this object in view, the SHERIFF *packed off*, followed by the Parsons and Tax-eaters, who ran down the street amidst hisses, groans, and every mark of popular contempt and indignation! And Lord Cochrane was *actually speaking*, when the Under-Sheriff came, and told us, that, if we did not *disperse*, he was *ordered to take us into custody!* And yet, the Morning Chronicle makes Lord Fitzharris say, in his place in Parliament, that an *unanimous vote of thanks was given to the Sheriff!* No: nor would any one have been heard for a moment upon such a subject. There was no vote directing *who* should *present* the Address. It was *no address at all.* It was never *heard read* from first to last. Indeed Lord Fitzharris is made to say, that *nothing was heard.* How, then, could the address be *the Address of the Meeting?* The *thanks to the Sheriff* and the order for *presenting* the Address, was, I suppose, voted at the *inn* after dinner; but, at the *Meeting* neither was ever so much as *heard talk of.*

The proceedings closed as I have stated. The Winchester correspondent of the COURIER, who tells all sorts of falsehoods, concludes thus:—

"N.B. I forgot to tell you, that when Mr. Cobbett left the Castle, a *few men* proposed that they should *borrow* a chair to carry him on their shoulders to the inn in the city; he *actually waited* till they *procured one*, and *suffered himself* to be carried in an *old arm-chair* to the Black Swan, amidst the hisses and groans of the Freeholders."—Yes, he had *forgot* to mention this in his letter! He would have *forgotten* it in the postscript too; but he was afraid, that somebody else might *remember* it. Whether it was a *few men* or *many men*, whether it was in a *borrowed* chair or a *bought* chair; whether the chair were *old* or *new*; still the reader will perceive, that *nothing* of this sort was done for our *opponents.* The truth is, that I was not at all apprized of the matter; that an immense crowd surrounded me to shake hands with me, and the kind and honest hearts of the owners of those hands it would comfort me to think that I had with me, if I were thrown down to the bottom of a dungeon. I could not get along for the crowd. All at once a chair was brought, into which I very cheerfully got, and, when I alighted from it I said: "My kind and honest countrymen, I am proud of the honour you have done me for my own sake; but, I am much more proud of it as I deem it a strong mark of your unshaken attach-

"ment to those undoubted and unalienable rights to which I have endeavoured to convince you that you are entitled, and which, whatever becomes of me, I trust nothing will ever induce you to abandon. Be assured, that while my mind retains its faculties, and limbs enjoy that liberty which innocence ought to ensure to every man, I never will cease to maintain our cause to the utmost of my power."

While this was going on, while all was joy and exultation in our breasts, very different were the feelings of *Lockhart the Brave*. He had come to me in the Grand Jury Chamber soon after I had charged him so justly with "*foul* misrepresentation." He said, he had not been accustomed to receive language like that. I told him to come to me after the Meeting was over. As we were going out of the Chamber, he came again. The thing would admit of *no delay*. I told him to come to the inn. He did so, with *two men as witnesses*. I then told him, that I would have no communication with him, except it was in *writing*. They wanted to sit down in the room, where Mr. Goldsmith, Mr. Hunt, and other gentlemen were with me; but this I told them that I would not suffer; and bade them go out of the room. They did so; and then a correspondence took place, which I insert here word for word and letter for letter, and, if the Learned Friend should feel sore at seeing his *agitation* exposed in his illiterate notes, let him thank his own folly and imprudence for the exposure.

SIR— as you requested me to put in writing the object of my requesting a meeting with you, I beg to inform you it was with a view to your retracting the word *foul* which you applied to me, by stating I had been guilty of a foul misrepresentation." I did not hear whether you said "of your language or intentions—I am Sir your obedient Servant—

J J Lockhart

SIR, *Winchester, 11th March, 1817.*
I did not say that it was "a *foul* misrepresentation," which you had made, but "the *foulest* misrepresentation that ever was made by mortal man," an opinion which I still entertain, and always shall, until you shall fully express your sorrow for the effects of that mortification, which, I hope, led your tongue beyond the cool dictates of your mind.

I am, Sir,

Your most humble,

And most obedient Servant,

WM. COBBETT.

SIR— I have received your answer which leaves no alternative except that of my insisting on that satisfaction which you owe me as a Gentleman, and which I wish you would empower some friend to arrange this evening.

I am Sir your obedient Servant

J J Lockhart

March 11, 1817—

I shall remain in Winchester this evening for this purpose until 8 o'clock and a friend will deliver this Letter to you, to accept your arrangement—
To Wm. Cobbett, Esq.—

SIR, *Winchester, 11th March, 1817.*
If I could stay here another day, I would amuse myself with some fun with you, but having business of more importance on hand, I must beg of you to renew your pleasant correspondence, upon our arrival in town. In the meanwhile I remain,

Your most obedient,

And most humble Servant,

WM. COBBETT.

Now, my good neighbours, a few plain facts will enable you to form a perfectly correct judgment of this man's conduct and character.

FIRST, he knew, that I had written many essays reprobating, in the strongest terms, *the practice* of duelling.

SECOND, he knew, that I had held it as a species of suicide for a man, in my situation, to fight a duel, seeing, that, if one *missed* me, another would be found, till some one should *hit* me.

THIRD (and *this* was his rock of safety), he knew well, that if I *accepted of his challenge*, I must forfeit instantly *five thousand pounds sterling*. He knew this well, for he, who is a *lawyer*, mind, knew that I had been bound in recognisances for *seven years* from the year 1812.

This was his safeguard! You often hear of people, who are going to fight duels, taken before magistrates and *bound over*. That puts an end to the affair. But, he knew, and *well knew*, that I was *bound over beforehand*, and in a monstrous and ruinous sum; and, when you are told, that he brought *two witnesses with him*, you will easily guess what were his *real intentions*.

When men *mean to fight*, they go to work in a very different way. They send a *single friend* to tell the party of it in a *whisper*. They do not go to the party and take *two witnesses* with them. They do not run blustering about and making a noise; and, my real belief is, that, if I had done anything, which would have amounted to a breach of the peace; if I had accepted of a challenge, and had appointed a time to fight, Lockhart the Brave would have taken care to have us both bound over, and would have also taken care, that this breach of the peace should have cost me five thousand pounds! This is my belief; but you have the facts before you, and I leave you to judge for yourselves.

It was my intention to offer you some remarks on the *Death of Cashman*, and on the *Arrests in Lancashire*; but, I shall be very late as it is, and must now conclude with expressing to you my unalterable attachment and respect.

WM. COBBETT.

A LETTER

TO THE "DELUDED PEOPLE."

(*Political Register, March, 1817.*)

"Unhappy men, whom schoolmasters for spite,
Or cruel parents, taught to read and write!
Why need you read? Why were you taught to spell?
Why write your names? A mark would do as well."

CHURCHILL.

London, March 20th, 1817.

"POOR DELUDED PEOPLE,"

In writing the last Number I was pressed for time. The Hampshire parsons and Lockhart the Brave had taken up those hours, which ought

to have been devoted to a better purpose. However, as that was the *last* public meeting under the old laws of the land, and, as the conduct of our adversaries was somewhat singular and discovered their temper, it was not altogether useless to put an account of it upon record.

We now live, those of us who may be said to live at all, under a *new set of laws*. First, every man and woman is now liable to be seized at any moment, and to be put into a prison, and kept there for any length of time, cut off from all communication with friends, wife, children, or any body else whatever; and also from pen, ink, paper, books, in short, any man or woman may now be taken up, sent to any prison in the kingdom, however distant, without any charge being made known to them, without their knowing what is alleged against them, without having any idea of who is their accuser; without having even a *hearing* from any body, and without their very children knowing how they are treated, or what prison they are in. And after all, if a man outlive these sufferings; if he do not die in prison, his time of remaining there is quite uncertain. It *may* be for a short, or for a long time; and, if the law be continued in force, it may be for many, many years. The absolute power of imprisoning men in this way is lodged in any one of the Secretaries of State, or, in any six Privy Councillors. This, therefore, is the state, in which we are *all* now placed, except the Members of the *two Houses of Parliament* themselves, who cannot be thus imprisoned, without the House being first *informed of the cause*, and without the consent of the House, who would, of course, hear the accused party in his defence. But, all the rest of us are liable to be taken out of our shops, fields, or beds, and imprisoned and kept in prison, in the manner that I have above described.

The *next* Act makes it DEATH to attempt to *seduce* SOLDIERS or sailors from *their duty*. Now, therefore, my "poor deluded" friends, you ought to bear in mind, that, if any one of you were to ask a soldier to quit his post, or to refrain from doing anything that he had been ordered to do, or to do anything that he had been ordered not to do, you would be liable to be *hanged* upon the oath of that soldier. If, for instance, any man, sitting in a public-house with a soldier, were to hold a conversation with the soldier, however carelessly, which might be construed to have for its object to induce the soldier not to obey any command of his officers, such man would be liable to be *hanged*. If a mother, wife, or sweetheart, were to endeavour to induce a son, a husband, or lover, to desert, she would be liable to be *hanged*. If a wife or daughter, were to endeavour to induce a soldier to wink at the escape of a husband or a father, in pursuit of whom that soldier had been sent, such wife, or daughter, would be liable to be *hanged*. If a son, seeing a soldier about to plunge a bayonet into the body of his father, by command of his superior (as in case of riot, &c.); if such son were to endeavour to persuade the soldier not to obey the command, such son would be liable to be *hanged*. Supposing a son to be the soldier in such a case, and his mother were to fling herself before him and scream out to him to spare his father's life, such mother would for such offence, be liable to be *hanged*. And, observe, this law is now made *perpetual*; that is to say, it is intended not to last for any *limited time*, but to be *always the law in future*.—Therefore, take care. These are cases which *may* never exist; but such is the letter of the law.

The *Third* Act relates to public meetings, to clubs or societies, and reading-rooms and other places for reading. As to public meetings,

there can be no more, *except such as the sheriffs, mayors, and magistrates approve of*; and, *deluded as you are, you know very well what sort of meetings they will allow of. Seven householders may call a meeting by public NOTICE*; but, they must sign their Notice and lodge it with the clerk of the peace; and, when the meeting takes place, *any single magistrate may come, and, if he chooses, disperse it*; and, if any speaker utter any thing which the magistrate *may think calculated to stir up the people to hatred or contempt of the Government*, the magistrate may take such speaker into custody. And, if any number of people exceeding twelve remain together after the meeting is ordered to disperse; or, if any one resist the authority of the magistrate in any way upon these occasions; all such persons are to *suffer death*. So that, as you see, no meeting can now be held without the consent of sheriff, mayor, magistrate, or some person in *authority*; for, to suppose, that, under such a law, any *other sort of meeting will take place is nonsense*. Suppose, for instance, that seven of us, in Hampshire, were to call a meeting by public notice, Parson Baines of Exton, or any other magistrate, might come to it, and if he choose, order us all to disperse in an hour upon pain of *death*. Or, when any of us began to speak, if we talked about *sinecures, taxes, or seats, or any thing else, no matter what, which Parson Baines might think calculated to bring the Government into hatred or contempt*, he might *seize us and imprison us*; and, if any one resisted the seizure, he would be liable to *suffer death*. This being now the law, I leave you to guess, whether any meetings will be again held, except those, which are called by persons in *authority*; and what sort of meetings those are you know well enough.

As to *clubs and societies* none can now exist for any *political purpose*. I do not see how it is *possible for any man to belong to any such society, without subjecting himself to the pains and penalties of this law*.

Then comes the part of the law that is levelled against the *press*. There are many places, where people *meet to read*. They used to meet to read the Register. One person *read*, and the rest *listened*, so that a single Register served for a hundred or two of persons; and by this method the heavy expense occasioned by the *stamp, &c.* was so divided as to make it nothing at all. There are what are called *reading-rooms* all over the kingdom. In most large towns there are several of these. At these places books, pamphlets, and newspapers are bought into a common stock by the subscribers to the room, who go when they like and read at the room. The books, pamphlets, and newspapers are bought, or taken in, by a vote of the majority of the subscribers; and in most cases, the publications inculcate different political principles and views, because, generally, men like to hear both sides. The magistrates and parsons have long had great sway in these rooms, and have kept out of them, very frequently, every work that they disliked. The Register, for instance, has long been banished from the most of them, as it has been from the mess-rooms of the army and navy; and my "*Paper against Gold*," which now surpasses in sale any publication that ever was heard of in London, except the Register, and which is so well calculated to enlighten the nation upon the most important of all subjects at this moment, and the events so clearly foretold in which are now developing themselves in such a tremendous manner; even this work, which is purely on political

economy, and has nothing at all to do with party politics; even this work was shut out of the reading-rooms with the most persevering obstinacy. Still, however, there was no *positive law* to prevent any particular work, or works of any description, from being read in these rooms; and, the truth is, that the change of times and circumstances began to open these places to works in favour of economy and *reform*. Now therefore this new law puts all *these rooms*, as well as all *places for lecturing*, whether *house, room, other building, or field*, under the superintendence and power of *the magistrates*. There is now to be no reading place, or place for giving out publications to be read, no lecturing place, no debating place, without a *license*, granted at the *sole pleasure* of the magistrates; and, the magistrates may, whenever they please, revoke and *put an end to the license*. If the magistrates find that any publications, which *they may deem* to be of an irreligious, immoral, or seditious TENDENCY, is kept in any such place, they may take away the *license* and put an end to the business of the man who keeps the room or place for reading. The magistrates are, therefore, to be the *sole judges* of what ought to be read in such places and of what ought not to be read. They can *refuse* a license to any man; and they can take a license *away* from any man after he has got it. They are authorized by this law to *demand admittance* into every such place, in order, of course, that they may hear, or see, what publications the man keeps to be read, or given out to be read, and, if they are *refused admittance*, they may, at once, put a stop to the man's business as keeper of such reading place. It is quite clear, then, that no publications can now be kept in any of those places, *except such as the magistrates shall approve of*. If, for instance, a reading-room at Southampton has taken in the Register, it is not very likely, that the magistrates there will suffer the master of the room to have a license, unless upon condition of his throwing out the Register; and, if he suffer it to come in after he has got his license, it is not very likely, that he will be permitted to retain his license. So on with regard to all other publications which the magistrates do not like; for, to be sure, *they will look upon all such publications as having a tendency of an immoral or seditious sort*. Hitherto it has been deemed sufficient to punish severely the authors, printers, and publishers of irreligious, immoral and seditious publications. If the works could be *proved* to the satisfaction of even a *special jury* to be libellous, the works were stopped and the parties punished. But, *now*, though a work be ever so *innocent* in the eye of the libel-law, it may still be not so in the eye of a *magistrate*, and then it is to be shut out of these rooms, and the keepers of these rooms may possibly be ruined for suffering them to come into their rooms, though brought in *by a vote of their subscribers*.

Under such circumstances, it is quite obvious, that there will be no works, not even newspapers, suffered to be read, or kept, in reading-places, except such as the magistrates, the most active of whom are the parsons, approve of. It is quite obvious, that *they will now have the absolute power of selecting works for the gentlemen and tradesmen to read at all these numerous places*; and that they will let them have no works to read, which the Government do not like they should read, there can, I suppose, be very little doubt. One consequence of this will be, a great diminution of the *subscriptions* to reading-rooms; for, it is impossible to believe, that the subscribers will not revolt at the idea of

placing themselves voluntarily under this odious species of superintendance and dictation; and, as to those, who have *now subscribed*, they have clearly a right *instantly to withdraw*, and not to pay one farthing from the day of the passing of the Act, seeing that the Act nullifies their previous engagement, and leaves them not to that free choice of publications, which they enjoyed under their contract with the master of the room. With respect to public-houses, inns, coffee-houses, and the like, as the *granting or refusing* of their *licenses* depend already upon the *absolute will and pleasure* of the magistrates, it would be foolish indeed to suppose, that any newspapers would, in future, be received in them, which the magistrate shall *think* to contain any thing of an *irreligious, immoral, or seditious TENDENCY*. And, only think of the extent of this word *tendency*! Only think of the boundless extent of such a word, and of such a word being left to the interpretation of thousands of men! Suppose the editor of a newspaper to insert an article, which article recommended the *reduction of the Salt-tax*. What does this *tend* to? Why, to be sure, a magistrate might *think*, to make the people *discontented* with the Salt-tax; to make them discontented with the Salt-tax would be, he might think, to make them discontented *with those who compel the people to pay it*; those who compel the people to pay it are *kings, lords and commons*; and, therefore, here is an article which *tends* to make the people *discontented with kings, lords, and commons*, and which, of course, *tends* to produce hatred of them, and to bring about insurrection, treason, revolution, and blood and carnage. There is no bounds to this word *tendency*, and that, too, as left to the mere *opinion* of the magistrate. Therefore it is manifest, that while the *direct* power will overawe and regulate and control the reading-rooms and such places, the *indirect* power will banish from *public-houses* of all sorts, every publication, which is at all hostile to the views of the Government; and, in short, that there will, in none of these places, be any reading, except on one side.

Hence will follow a great falling off in the bookselling and newspaper trades, in the amount of the newspaper and paper duty, in the paper-making trade, and in all the various emoluments, to which the making of paper, and the printing and binding and circulating of books and papers give rise. Another consequence will be, a disregard, a total disregard, for all that is permitted to be read. Those who disapprove of these new restraints will consider all that is now *permitted* in the reading places as partial trash, intended to be crammed down their throats; and, even those, who have been mortified at the growing influence of opinions which they disliked, will soon begin to sicken at the effects of the accomplishment of their own wishes. They will soon begin to feel, that to triumph over argument by the force of penal statutes, is a thing not to be *proud* of. They will very soon be *ashamed of their success*. They will very soon lose all relish for reading that which the law permits *not to be controverted*. They will soon perceive, that they are placed in the situation of a man, who being upon the point of defeat in a *boxing* match, has saved himself by resorting to the protection of a *dagger*. They will see their adversaries *retire* indeed, but retire amidst the applause and admiration of all the good and the brave, while they themselves have nothing to keep them in countenance but the unconsoling tears of sophistry, selfishness, servility, and of cowardice without a parallel in the history of mankind.

This is the shameful state to which our adversaries are now reduced.

The triumph is *ours*, not *theirs*. It was a combat of *argument*, and they have taken shelter under the shield of *physical force*. Yet, Mr. CANNING, amidst loud cheering, as is reported, accused *us* of foul play! He said, that we, who have *written in the cause of Reform*, have poisoned the sources of education; that we have turned the *capacity to read*, amongst the labouring people, to a most mischievous account; that we have acted like an enemy, who, too cowardly to meet our adversaries in the field, have attacked him *secretly* by putting poisonous drugs into the *wells and springs of water*!

This comes with decency indeed from one of those, who have resorted to a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act! If, indeed, we had stopped the hawking of our enemy's publications while our own were permitted to be hawked freely; if I, for instance, had seized numerous poor creatures and put them in prison for selling corruption's pamphlets, while I protected the sellers of my own; if I had caused scores of lying publications to be sent forth and *given away*, while corruption had contented herself with a fair sale; if I, unable to *answer* corruption, had sent out placards to be posted up against her in the dead of the night, while she scorned to resort to any such means against me; if this had been the conduct of the parties, then, indeed, I might justly have been accused of the most infamous foul play. But, exactly the reverse has been the fact. I have relied solely upon the power of *truth and of reason*; I have had no other aiders and abettors than these; I have trusted wholly to the honesty and the sound understandings of the people; and, *how have I been answered?*

But, if the people, if millions of people, if nine-tenths of the whole nation, really are "*poor deluded creatures*," why has the delusion not been prevented? There are twenty thousand parsons, four or five thousand lawyers, the two Universities, the two Houses of Parliament, many thousands of magistrates, many hundreds of writers for pay. What! and could not all these, with all their learning, and with all their weight, counteract the effect of one poor *twopenny pamphlet*? For, you will observe, that *this* it was, which, at bottom, was the *main thing*! Lord Sidmouth, in his speech, clearly pointed it out, though he did not actually *name* it. He said, that *cheap* publications had found their way into the very cottages and hovels. And, he said very truly; but, what reason was this for suspending the Act of Habeas Corpus? He said, that the pamphlets had been submitted to the law-officers, and that they were found to be written with *so much dexterity* that he was *sorry to say*, that, hitherto, the *law officers could find in them nothing to prosecute*! And, what then? Why he proposed, in that very speech, the *suspension of the Act of Habeas Corpus*! I would even now willingly disbelieve this report of the speech of Lord Sidmouth; but, from what has passed since, I am afraid that it was but too much like what the newspapers have reported.

Why not *name* me at once? Why not order me *not to write any more*? Mr. ELLIOT, one of the friends of Burke and of Lord Fitzwilliam, said, on the second day of the session, that the *designing men* were sending forth *poison* in their "*venomous weekly publications*." I will not tell this gentleman of what I might tell him; nor will I call his observations *venomous*; but I ask him if it was a venomous act to *put a stop to all the violences against machine-owners and against bakers, butchers, and farmers*?

Ten thousand of such men as he would not have been able to do this,

which I alone did, and that, too, in the space of one month, and by the means of that publication, which he was pleased to call "*venomous*." But, again, if it was venom, that I was sending forth, why was not the antidote administered? Or, does this gentleman suppose, that the superintendance of reading-rooms, or the suspension of our personal safety, is the proper *antidote*? Is this the way to convince either me, or my readers, that we are in *error*? Are errors ever corrected in this way?

Oh, no! Mr. ELLIOT you may be well assured, that if the people have been "*deluded*," they are not to be put right by means like these; but, on the contrary, they will now not even *listen* to anything that shall be written to them on the other side. If I were to be rendered silent, they would still, more firmly than ever, adhere to my doctrines. They would, and they will at any rate, treasure up all the *little books* that they have got.—They will sooner part with their shirts than they will part with them. As measures to close the people's eyes against these books, the new laws have come *too late*. That which you call "*venom*," and which I call wholesome food for the mind, has *already been received* to repletion. Little more could have been done in the way of *inculcating principles*; if nothing at all were done in addition, those principles will never be eradicated, and never cease to actuate the minds of Englishmen; and though at the bottom of a dungeon, I shall always have the consolation to reflect that more, *many more*, than a *million* of my little books are in the hands of my countrymen.

Towards me above all men this treatment is most foul. I have never practised *delusion*; I have never courted *popularity*; I never fell into the cry against tithes, or that against the Corn Bill; I have never endeavoured to set the poor against the rich; I have never been guilty of an attempt to practise delusion of any sort. My hostility to the funding system has been long and persevering; I have proposed the checking of its mischiefs to every man in high station, to whom I have ever had an opportunity of speaking. Fourteen years ago, when the interest of the debt was only just half what it is now, I urged the adoption of this measure. A thousand times did I endeavour to impress upon the mind of Mr. WINDHAM a sense of the extreme danger of this terrible system, and this is a fact very well known to Mr. ELLIOT, who did not then appear to look upon my sentiments as "*venomous*." I laid a plan before Mr. Windham, which, if it had been adopted, would have insured, at this day, tranquillity, happiness and liberty, instead of what we have the sorrow and the shame to feel. It was not a subject congenial to his turn of mind. He thought my apprehensions groundless. He used to say, that it would be time enough to jump over that ditch *when we came to it*; but, I answered, that, if we stayed till we got to the ditch, we *never should be able to jump over it*. I told him a thousand times, that if the Funding System were not effectually checked, this nation *must be enslaved*. I told him, that at last, the thing would become wholly *unmanageable*; that it would roll backwards and forwards like the billows of the troubled ocean, swallowing up a certain portion of happiness at every roll, and that at last, it would *produce* the very thing that the war and that all his endeavours had been intended to *prevent*.

And, have I, then, my countrymen, *deluded* you as to this subject, upon which all others depend? Have I told you anything, as to this greatest of all points, more than I told this statesman many years ago? The only difference is, that you have listened to me, and he did not,

because I could not make him see the danger. The application for a Reform of the Parliament we have proved to be just and expedient ; but, this is a matter which still admitted of *discussion*. The misery, however, produced by the funding system came and *mixed itself* with the question of Reform. And, whose fault was that ? Not mine ; for, I would, long ago, have effectually prevented the misery by checking the funding system ; and that, I know, could be done even *now*. But, because the misery existed, were we not to urge our claims for Reform in a peaceable and orderly manner, and with the observance of all the forms and ceremonies prescribed by the Constitution ?

No : you have not been *deluded*. It is not a *misfortune* that you have been able to *read*. You have read, and you understand, and will long remember, what you have read. It is quite impossible for any man to foresee what will now take place ; but, it must be clear to every one, that the measures which have been adopted will not operate as a cure for any part of the evils that oppress the country. My real belief is, that a few *conciliatory words* would have done much more than all these laws ; and, besides, the mere *absence of tumult* is not *tranquillity*. That tranquillity which is worth anything must have a source other than that of force and of fear. Prosperity never can return under these laws, which, if they continue in force for any length of time, will infallibly reduce the nation to a state of feebleness such as it never before knew. Its character will sink very fast, and, along with its character, its resources and its power. There are now a million people, men and their families, supported by *subscription*, exclusive of the paupers usually so called. In such a state of things, how is it possible that the people should not become utterly degraded, while, at the same time, the means of employment are daily growing less and less ?

These are *all* the natural and inevitable consequences of a Funding System. A Funding System has never existed in *any* country, without producing indescribable misery. PAINÉ most aptly observed, that such a system gave *unnatural vigour* 'till it arrived at its climax, and then it produced unnatural poverty and *feebleness*. This has been precisely the case here ; and, as to the nonsense about "a *sudden transition from war to peace*," it is only the offspring of sickly brains. Here is a great cause of misery and feebleness at work, and nothing can restore happiness and energy except the removal of that cause. Mr. CANNING and his fellow-labourer Mr. ELLIOT may scold about my "*poison*" and "*venom*" as long as they please ; but to my shop they must come at last, or the malady will end in a most dreadful convulsion.

Before I conclude, let me notice a famous falsehood, which has appeared in the *Morning Post* of the 18th instant, in the following words :

"COBBETT CHASTISED.—In one instance, at least, this hectoring bully has met with his deserts. Understanding that he passed the night of Sunday at Mr. Timothy Brown's at Peckham, Mr. LOCKHART repaired thither early yesterday morning, with the intention of chastising the Reformer for his insolence at Winchester. Before Mr. L. had reached the Bricklayers' Arms, he met Cobbett returning to town, and, being furnished with a tremendous horse-whip, he applied it, sans ceremony, to the broad and well-adapted shoulders of his antagonist. COBBETT escaped into the shop of Mr. Jones, the apothecary, where he remained for two hours. His sconce appears to have suffered considerable damage, as he was seen to leave the apothecary's shop with an enormous plaster over his left eye."

Now, who, at a distance from London, would not believe this to be

true? Who would not believe, that there was, at least, truth in *some part* of it? Who would not believe, that, at any rate, I was at *Mr. Brown's on Sunday*? Who would believe, that it was *wholly false*? Nevertheless, I never was within several miles of Peckham last Sunday; I slept at No. 8, Catherine-street on that night; I never was out of that house on the Monday; and I have never seen *Lockhart the Brave* since he came to me, with the *two witnesses*, at the Black Swan at Winchester!

This is "*delusion*" indeed! It is the readers of these vile publications who are "*deluded*." This is, however, only a specimen of what corruption is capable of, and of what she has long practised. It is, after this, hardly necessary to say, that it would be foolish, and even base, in my readers, ever again to listen for one moment to anything which corruption's press may say *against me*, be it what it may, and be it stated with whatever solemnity. I have often said, that these men would not stick at *false oaths*, and, I am persuaded, that the public will now be of my opinion. Can any one believe, that a wretch, who could sell himself to a purpose like this, would not *sell his oath*, if he could get a good price for it? I have often said, and I repeat, that those who have the power over the greater part of the London press, are *the very basest of mankind*. The wretch, who publishes this "*venom*," is a staunch partizan of the late measures, and a gross calumniator of the friends of Reform. There needs no more upon the subject. The nation will judge him all in good time.

I am, my worthy Countrymen,

Your friend,

WM. COBBETT.

TO THE

PAPER-MONEY MEN.

The great cause of the Nation's sufferings—How this cause has violated contracts.

What is the meaning of National Faith.—What Justice now demands at the hands of the Government.—What will be the end of all this?

(Political Register, March, 1817.)

Botley, 26th March, 1817.

PAPER-MONEY MEN,

The First Lord of the Treasury has lately said, that the *Funds rose in consequence of the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act*; and the late Lord Chatham said, more than forty years ago, that the spirits of the

Fundholders and Money Dealers always rose in the same proportion as the liberty of their country fell. More than thirteen years ago, I said, that, unless a stop was put to the Funding System, this country must become a *den of slaves*; for, that it would, in process of time, become impossible to carry on the System, with a great and permanent military force, and without putting an end to every fragment of the people's freedom.

This consequence was unavoidable. To collect taxes to pay the interest of such an enormous debt must necessarily produce inexpressible misery. Out of this misery must necessarily arise great discontent in the most numerous classes of the people. Out of this discontent would necessarily, in the natural course of things, arise tumults and acts of violence. Such *did not* arise, because hope was cherished in the breasts of the people by those "*evil minded*" men, the *Leaders of the Reformers*. But, unless a Reform took place, it was clear, that something in the way of *coercion* would be adopted. To be prepared for this coercion an *army* was necessary. Thus the *whole* of the intolerable burden arises from the funding system; and the loss of all, even the very last of our liberties, is ascribable to the same all-destroying cause.

Lord HARROWBY, at the opening of the session, said, that this system had *saved* the country. *Saved* it! What! Is it *saved* then? With a press under the superintendance of the Magistrates; with a new treason bill revived; with the Habeas Corpus Act suspended in time of profound peace; with millions in a state of starvation; with a ruined commerce, manufactures, and agriculture! With all these notoriously existing, can the country be said to be *saved*? The *Sinecures* have, indeed, been saved; the *Pensions* and *Grants* have been saved; and the *Boroughs* have been *saved*; St. Mawe's, St. Michel's, Old Sarum, Gatton, have been *saved*: but, to such a degree have the nation been ruined, that one half of the people, in many places, have become paupers, and we read in the public papers, that a Deputation is coming from the opulent town of Birmingham to inform the Ministers, *that rates can no longer be raised to feed the poor*, and that the town *prays for assistance*! And yet, says Lord HARROWBY, the paper-money system has saved the country. His Lordship's notions about *country* are very different from mine.

If, indeed, the *peace* had brought what the Pittites promised us that it should bring; if it had brought us only the same degree of prosperity that existed before the war; if the peace had brought a peaceable government, and the usual blessings of peace, then, indeed, it might have been said with some colour of reason, that the nation had been *saved* by the paper-money, seeing that it was that paper-money, which enabled the government to carry on the war. But, as the thing now stands, what could have happened *worse* from not going to war? It is now very clear to me, as it was to Sir Francis Burdett and many other persons at the outset, that peace might have been preserved, with all possible advantage to this country. But, at any rate, what *worse* could have taken place than has now taken place? What could remaining at peace have produced *worse* than what has been produced by the paper-money war? Could remaining at peace have done any thing *worse* than destroy all our liberties and make us a nation of wretched, ruined people? No civilized nation was ever in *so miserable* a state as this nation now is. This is notorious. This is denied by nobody. Only read a paper in this Number relative to the *Watchmakers*, and another relative to the *diseases of the*

poor. Only read the petitions to Parliament relative to the *poor-rates*. And, then say whether nation was ever before in a state of such complete misery. And, in these pictures of wretchedness, we have a view of only a *part* of the suffering, and by no means of the most afflicting part. It is the anxiety, the heart-achings, the agonizing forebodings of the fathers and mothers in the middle classes of life, whose days have been divided between the caresses of their children and their own incessant industry to provide for their support and respectability. Let Lord HARROWBY look at a father and mother of this description, when the former, after all his struggles to overcome his reluctance, has just communicated to the latter the fatal intelligence of his ruin. Let him behold the death-like gloom on their countenances. Let him hear their sighs, when their children, with inquisitive tenderness, ask the cause of that gloom. Let him, if he be capable, bring his mind to the contemplation of a scene like this. Let him reflect, that such scenes are now to be beheld in a great proportion of the farmers' and tradesmen's houses in the kingdom; and then let him say again, that the country has been *saved* by that paper-money system, which has produced all these dreadful effects.

The talk about *national faith*, as applied to the funds, is the most foolish that ever was heard. What! can national faith demand the payment of *double what was borrowed*? It is the same sum in *name* indeed; but, as I have a hundred times proved, it is double the sum in *reality*. And, this is the *real breach of faith*; and this breach of faith has been occasioned, *not by the nation*, but by you, the Men of Paper-Money, who solicited and obtained from Pitt a protection against the law of the land; who thereupon issued immense quantities of the Paper-Money; who thus debased the currency; and, when you had lent *this* debased currency to the nation, then at your own arbitrary will, raised the value of the currency by diminishing its quantity, and now demand your payment in this raised currency, and by this demand the people are crushed to death. Who, then, has broken the contract? Who has been guilty of a breach of faith? The breach of faith now exists: it is destroying the nation: it has been committed by you: justice demands that you make good the loss of the nation: and make it good you must, or this nation will be wholly ruined and its power destroyed.

To alter the value of the currency of a country has always been held to be a most wicked as well as a most fatal measure. Very bad Kings, before Paper-Money Men were heard of, used, sometimes, to play such tricks with the *coin*; but it never was done, in any reign, or in any country, without exciting great discontent and producing infinite mischief. The following document of pretty ancient date, will show what were the opinions of our ancestors upon this most important subject. It is very interesting, and well worthy of public attention. It is part of a Speech of Sir ROBERT COTTON, made to the Privy Council in the reign of CHARLES II. —

“ A SPEECH

“ TOUCHING THE ALTERATION OF COYNE.

“ MY LORDS,

“ Since it hath pleased this Honourable Table to command, amongst
“ others, my poor opinion concerning this weighty Proposition of Money,

" I most humbly crave pardon ; if with that freedome that becomes my
 " dutie to my good and gracious Master, and my obedience to your great
 " command, I deliver it so up.

" I cannot (my good Lords) but assuredly conceive, that this intended
 " Project of enhauncing the Coyne, will trench both into the Honour,
 " the Justice, and the Profit of my Royall Master very farre.

" All Estates do stand *Mugis Fama quam Vi*, as *Tacitus* saith of
 " Rome ; and Wealth in every Kingdome is one of the Essentiall marks
 " of their Greatnesse ; and that is best expressed in the Measure and
 " Puritie of their Moneies. Hence was it, that so long as the *Romaine*
 " Empire (a Pattern of best Government), held up their Glory and
 " Greatnesse, they ever maintained, with little or no charge, the Stand-
 " ard of their coyne. But after the loose times of *Commodus* had led in
 " Need by Excesse, and so that shift of changing the Standard, the
 " Majesty of that Empire fell by degrees. And as *Vopiscus* saith, the
 " steps by which that State descended were visibly known most by the
 " gradual alteration of their Coyne. And their is no surer symptome of
 " a Consumption in State than the Corruption in money.

" What renown is left to the Posterity of *Edward* the First in amend-
 " ing the Standard both in purity and weight from that of the elder and
 " more barbarous times, must stick as a blemish upon Princes that do
 " the contrary. Thus we see it was with *Henry* the Sixt, who after he
 " had begun with abating the measure, he after fell to abating the
 " matter ; and granted commissions to *Missenden* and others to practise
 " *Alchymy* to serve his Mint. The extremity of the State in general,
 " felt this aggrievance besides the dishonour it laid upon the person of
 " the King, was not the least advantage his disloyal Kinsman took to
 " ingrace himself into the People's favour to his Sovereign's ruin.

" When *Henry* the 8. had gained as much of power and glory abroad,
 " of Love and Obedience at home, as ever any ; he suffered shipwrack of
 " all upon this Rock.

" When his Daughter Queen *Elizabeth* came to the Crown, she was
 " happy in Council to amend that Error of her Father : For, in a
 " Memorial of the Lord Treasurer *Burleigh's* hand, I find that he and
 " *Sir Thomas Smith* (a grave and learned man) advising the Queen
 " that it was the honour of her Crown, and the true wealth of her Self
 " and People, to reduce the Standard to the antient parity and purity of
 " her great Grand-Father King *Edward* 4, and that it was not the
 " short ends of Wit, nor starting holes of devises that can sustain the
 " expence of a Monarchy : but sound and solid courses : for so are the
 " words. She followed their advice, and began to reduce the Monies to
 " their elder goodness stiling that work in her first Proclamation, *Anno* 8.
 " *A famous Act*. The next year following, having perfected it as it after
 " stood ; she tells her people by another *Edict*, that she had conquered
 " now that *Monster* that had so long devoured them, meaning the
 " Variation of the Standard : And so long as that sad Adviser lived she
 " never (though often by Projectors importuned) could be drawn to any
 " shift or change in the Rate of her monies.

" To avoid the trick of Permutation, *Coyne* was devised, as a Rate and
 " measure of Merchandize and Manufactures ; which if mutable, no man
 " can tell either what he hath or what he oweth, no contract can be
 " certain ; and so all commerce ; both publique and private, destroyed ;
 " and men again enforced to permutation with things not subject to wit
 " or fraud.

“ The regulating of Coyne hath been left to the care of Princes, who are presumed to be ever the Fathers of the Common Wealth. Upon their honours they are Debtors and Warranties of Justice to the Subject in that behalfe. They cannot, saith *Boden*, alter the price of the monies, to the prejudice of the Subjects, without incurring the reproach of *Faux Monnoyeurs*. And therefore the Stories terme *Philip le Bell*, for using it, *Falsificateur de Moneta*. *Omnino Moneta integritas debet quæri ubi vultus noster imprimitur*, saith *Theodoret* the *Gothe* to his *Mint-Master*, *Quidnam erit tutum si in nostra pecetetur Effigie ?* Princes must not suffer their faces to warrant falshood.

“ Although I am not of opinion with *Mirros des Justices*, the antient book of our Common Law, that *Le Roy ne poit sa Mony Empeirer ne amender sans l'assent de tous ses Counts*, which was the greatest Council of the Kingdome; yet can I not passe over the goodness and Grace of money of our Kings: (As *Edward* the 1. and the 3., *Henry* the 4. and the 5. with others, who, out of that Rule of this Justice, *Quod ad omnes spectat, ab omnibus debet approbari*, have often advised with the People in Parliament, both for the Allay, Weight, Number of peeces, cut of Coynage and exchange;) and must with infinite comfort acknowledge, the care and Justice now of my Good Master, and your Lordships Wisedomes; that would not upon information of some few Officers of the Mint, before a free and careful debate; put in execution of this Project that I much (under your Honours Favour) suspect, would have taken away the Tenth part of every man's due debt or Rent already reserved throughout the Realme, not sparing the King; which would have been little lesse then a Species of that which the *Romaine* Stories call *Tabulæ novæ*, from whence very often seditions have sprung: As that of *Marcus Gratidianus* in *Livie*, who pretending in his *Consulship*, that the Currant money was wasted by use, called it in, and altered the Standard; which grew so heavy and grievous to the people, as the Author saith, because no man thereby knew certainly his Wealth, that it caused a tumult.

“ In this last part, which is, the Disprofit this enfeebling the coyne will bring both to his Majestie and the Common Wealth, I must distinguish the Monies of Gold and Silver, as they are Bullion or Commodities, and as they are measure: The one, the Extrinsicke quality, which is at the King's pleasure, as all other measures; to name; The other the Intrinsicke quantity of pure metall, which is in the *Merchant* to value. As there the measure shall be either lessened or enlarged, so is the quantity of the Commodity that is to be exchanged. If then the King shall cut his shilling or pound nominall lesse than it was before, a lesse proportion of such Commodity as shall be exchanged for it must be received. It must then of force follow, that all things of Necessity, as Victuall, Apparell, and the rest, as well as those of Pleasure, must be inhaunced. If then all men shall receive, in their shillings and pounds, a lesse proportion of Silver and Gold than they did before this projected Alteration, and pay for what they buy a rate inhaunced, it must cast upon all a double losse.”

Thus, then, my notions upon this subject are by no means *novel*, though they have been so loudly reprobated by the clans of 'Change Alley. Here this learned man, and faithful and honest counsellor of his king, shows how nations have been ruined and oppressed by arbitrary changes in the Value of money; and all that is here said of coin is equally applicable to

paper. My good Paper-money Men, you will perceive, that the *breach of faith* is here ascribed to *him who changes* the value of the money; and, have not *you* been guilty of *this* breach of faith? It was not the nation, it was not those who borrowed, who changed the value of the money. It was you; and, you see, that one of these old lawyers would have called you *clippers and counterfeiters*. "No contract can be certain," says this great man, if the value of the money can be changed; and I am clearly of his opinion, that all contracts, effected in this way, are, in fact, broken by a force, with regard to which the parties contracting have no control.

Is the nation, then, bound, is any individual bound to adhere to the letter of a contract, which has thus been broken by a force not to be resisted? *Good faith* requires, that the interest of the Debt should instantly be lowered *one-half* in amount; and yet we constantly hear it said, that to lower it all would be a *breach of faith*! Sir ROBERT COTTON had very different notions upon this subject. He regarded it as a *crime* in any man, or any body of men, even to *talk* of a *change in the value of the currency*; and, in speaking of the *punishment* due to this crime, he seems to have *cast his eye forward*! It may possibly be useful to you to hear what he says upon this very *ticklish* part of the subject.

"And His Majesty shall lose apparently by this alteration of monies a 14th in all the silver, and a 25th part in all the gold he shall receive: so shall the Nobility, Gentry, and all others, in all their former settled *rents, annuities, pensions, and loans of money*. The like will fall upon Labourers and workmen in their *yearly wages*: and as the receipts are lessened thereby; so are their issues increased, either by raising all prices, or disfurnishing the market, which must necessarily follow. For, if, in the fifth year of Edward the Sixth, the third of Mary, and fourth of Elizabeth, it appeareth by the Proclamations, that a *rumour* only caused these effects, punishing the author of these reports with *imprisonment and pillory*; it cannot be doubted but the *projecting a change* must be of *farre more consequence and danger to the State*, and would be wished that the *Actors and authors* of all such DISTURBANCES in the Commonwealth, at ALL TIMES HEREAFTER, might undergo a punishment *proportionable*.

Thus, then, my good Paper-Money Fellows, we turn the table upon you! You, it is, who have made all the "*disturbances in the Commonwealth*." You are the evil-minded and designing men. You are the seducers. You, it is, who have been working to produce an utter "*subversion of the laws and constitution*" of the country. But, faith! it is not a *rumour* that you have set forth; it is not the *projecting of a change* of which you have been guilty; it is the *making of the change itself*, and that, too, both forward and backward, which you have been guilty of. What, then, ought, according to this learned man, be *your punishment*? If merely spreading a *rumour* of such a change being intended, merited *imprisonment and pillory*; and if the *projecting* of such a change merited a *far greater punishment* than prison and pillory; *what* ought to be the punishment of those who have *actually made such change*, and that, too, as I have before proved, over and over again, *to their own benefit*? Come, now! say yourselves what punishment such men deserve. You are a pretty sort of people to combine and issue out *Declarations* against those who are suffering the pangs of ruin and hunger from your changes of the currency, while you are wallowing in wealth, and lending to the Bourbons the fruit of the land and the labour of England! You

are a pretty sort of people to talk of your *loyalty* to your King and your anxiety for the peace of your country! You, who have produced the slavery, the distress, the misery, the abject and disgraceful condition of a people once so free and so happy.

And, do you think, you are to carry things thus *for ever*? Do you think that you are to *continue* to convey the earnings of the people of these unhappy islands over to the Continent, there to fructify the soil, and to give wealth and strength to those who hate and will seek to destroy us? Do you think, that you are *always* to be gay, and to chuckle with delight at the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act? Do you think, that the misery and slavery of the nation are *always* to be with you subject of sport? Do you think, that your tauntings and revilings of the Parliamentary Reformers are never to recoil upon yourselves?

I would advise you to be more moderate in your joy at the suspension of the people's liberties, and their (to you) apparently everlasting subjugation. For, take my word for it, that this state of things will not last *for ever*; no, nor for two years. Your *props* are at their wit's end. They have two things to look to, *money*, and the *means of getting it*. All that you look to is the money. But they must consider a little about the means; and they will soon discover, that, though a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act has *raised the funds*, it will not assist in *raising taxes*.

Your case is plain. Every body understands it. Every body wishes to see the principles of Sir ROBERT COTTON acted upon. But, here is the true history of your being supported so long. The *Borough Gentlemen*, those worthy, those loyal and public-spirited souls, would demolish you right quickly; but, *then!* What *then!* Why, the springing of the mine under this main bastion of corruption, would make a breach through which the Reformers would enter! This is the true history of the thing. You are as necessary to the Seat-owners as the Seat-owners are to you. You hate one another most cordially. They hate you, because you are keeping them poor; because their lands are upon tick to you; because you stick yourselves up along side of them, out-do them in expense, thrust your noses in their face, and, like the bailiffs in the play of the "*Good-natured Man*," humble them in the eyes of each other, by your freedom and familiarity, which, were it not for the length of your purses, would earn you a beating from the hands of their groom. For these reasons, they *hate you*; and you hate them, because they have titles, and particularly *family pretensions*, which the possession of millions of "*Consols*" (what a word!) will never give you. You do get, and have already got, a good many of their manors and mansions and parks; but, you cannot get the *family names* of the owners, and the family pretensions. Your wives and daughters may twist up their mouths and talk about the "*peasantry* and the *population*," in speaking of the *people*; they may put on all the airs of the gentry, and, if they do not find an old *Gothic mansion* to their hands, they may make you *build one* out of the gains of your Scrip; but, still, they know, that the old gentry soon *smoke* you. Country people are very inquisitive. You may have a thousand fine things about you; your wives may dress as fine as the cream coloured horses; but, the old gentry will trace you back to Mincing-lane in a twinkling. This they do; and, in revenge for your display of wines and plate and fineries, they now and then, as it were by

accident, kindly invite you to talk a little about *your fathers and mothers*. For this you hate them, and all the Boroughmongering tribe.

Still you pull together, because your union of effort is necessary to prevent Reform. Part, however, you must, in the course of a very few years, or you will be a mutual destruction, as you have been a mutual support; and, when that *parting* comes, then comes happiness to the country.

For the reason before mentioned, it is not to be expected, that the Parliament will do anything, in the way of reduction of interest, till *the last moment*. But, there are so many *projects* on foot; so many nostrum-mongers are at work; there is such a shifting of plans and grounds, that the thing cannot possibly go on long. Besides, the mischief is so busily and so powerfully at work in all the walks of life. The poison is so active, and is of so deadly a nature, that a cure, or death, must speedily come. And, that there is no cure short of a sponge, general or partial, I am certain. The scheme for getting the journeymen and labourers to make *savings* to put into the *funds*, and, thus, to make them all *fundholders*, would, if it could succeed, only induce them to array themselves *against the landholders* and not leave them either acre or stump of tree; but, it is too ridiculous to talk of, except as it is, amongst many others, a proof of the desperate quackery that is on foot.

However, *time* will show us what is to be done; and, for the present, I leave you to your dear associates and your agreeable reflections.

WM. COBBETT.

MR. COBBETT'S TAKING LEAVE OF HIS COUNTRYMEN.*

London, 21st March, 1817.

MY BELOVED COUNTRYMEN,

Soon after this reaches your eyes, those of the writer will, possibly, have taken the last glimpse of the land that gave him birth, the land in which his parents lie buried, the land of which he has always been so proud, the land in which he leaves a people, whom he shall, to his last breath, love and esteem beyond all the rest of mankind.

* This is the last paper that Mr. COBBETT wrote before his departure for America in 1817. He dictated it in a very short time, on the evening of the 21st of March, at No. 8, Catherine-street, in the Strand, the house at which his *Register* was then published; and he then sat out with that part of his family which was in London, making arrangements for his family to follow him in the autumn. At five o'clock on the morning of the 22nd he left London, with his two eldest sons, WILLIAM and JOHN, and proceeded to Liverpool, whence on the 27th he and they embarked on board the *Importer*, American vessel, and reached New York on the 5th of May.—Ed.

Every one, if he can do it without wrong to another, has a right to pursue the path to his own happiness; as my happiness, however, has long been inseparable from the hope of assisting in restoring the rights and liberties of my country, nothing could have induced me to quit that country, while there remained the smallest chance of my being able, by remaining, to continue to aid her cause. No such chance is now left. The laws, which have just been passed, especially if we take into view the real objects of those laws, forbid us to entertain the idea, that it would be possible to write on political subjects according to the dictates of truth and reason, without drawing down upon our heads certain and swift destruction. It was well observed by Mr. BROUGHAM, in a late Debate, that every writer, who opposes the present measures, "must now feel, that he sits down to write with a halter about his neck;" an observation the justice of which must be obvious to all the world.

Leaving, therefore, all considerations of personal interest, personal feeling, and personal safety; leaving even the peace of mind of a numerous and most affectionate family wholly out of view, I have reasoned thus with myself. What is now left to be done? We have urged our claims with so much truth; we have established them so clearly on the ground of both law and reason, that there is no answer to us to be found other than that of a suspension of our personal safety. If I still write in support of those claims, I must be blind not to see that a dungeon is my doom. If I write at all, and do not write in support of those claims, I not only degrade myself, but I do a great injury to the rights of the nation by appearing to abandon them. If I remain here, I must, therefore *cease to write*, either from compulsion or from a sense of duty to my countrymen; therefore, it is *impossible* to do any good to the cause of my country by remaining in it; but, if I remove to a country where I can write with perfect freedom, it is not only *possible*, but very *probable*, that I shall, sooner, or later, be able to render that cause important and lasting services.

Upon this conclusion it is, that I have made my determination; for, though life would be scarcely worth preserving, with the consciousness that I walked about my fields, or slept in my bed, merely at the mercy of a Secretary of State; though, under such circumstances, neither the song of the birds in spring, nor the well-strawed homestead in winter, could make me forget that I and my rising family were slaves, still there is something so powerful in the thought of country, and neighbourhood, and home, and friends; there is something so strong in the numerous and united ties with which these and endless other objects fasten the mind to a long-inhabited spot, that to tear oneself away, nearly approaches to the separating of the soul from the body. But, then, on the other hand, when I asked myself:—"What! shall I submit in silence? Shall I be as dumb as one of my horses? Shall that indignation which burns within me be quenched? Shall I make no effort to preserve even the *chance* of assisting to better the lot of my unhappy country? Shall that mind, which has communicated its light and warmth to millions of other minds, now be extinguished forever; and shall those, who, with thousands of pens at their command, still saw the tide of opinion rolling more and more heavily against them, now be forever secure from that pen, by the efforts of which they feared being overwhelmed? Shall truth never again be uttered? Shall her voice never again be heard, even from a distant shore?"

Thus was the balance turned; and, my countrymen, be you well assured, that, though I shall, if I live, be at a distance from you; though the ocean will roll between us, not all the barriers that nature as well as art can raise, shall be sufficient to prevent you from reading some part, at least, of what I write; and, notwithstanding all the wrongs, of which I justly complain; notwithstanding all the indignation that I feel; notwithstanding all the provocations that I have received, or that I may receive, never shall there drop from my pen any thing, which, according to the *law of the land*, I might not safely write and publish in England. Those, who have felt themselves supported by power, have practised towards me foul play without measure; but, though I shall have the means of retaliation in my hands, never will I follow their base example.

Though I quit my country, far be it from me to look upon her cause as desperate, and still farther be it from me to wish to infuse despondency into your minds. *I can serve that cause no longer by remaining here*; but, the cause itself is so good, so just, so manifestly right and virtuous, and it has been combated by means so unusual, so unnatural, and so violent, that it *must triumph* in the end. Besides, the circumstances of the country all tend to favour the cause of Reform. Not a tenth part of the evils of the system are yet in existence. The country gentlemen, who have now been amongst our most decided adversaries, will very soon be compelled, for their own preservation, to become our friends and fellow-labourers. Not a fragment of their property will be left, if they do not speedily bestir themselves. They have been induced to believe, that a Reform of the Parliament would expose them to plunder or degradation; but they will very soon find, that it will afford them the only chance of escaping both. The wonder is, that they do not see this already, or, rather, that they have not seen it for years past. But, they have been blinded by their foolish pride; that pride, which has nothing of mind belonging to it, and which, accompanied with a consciousness of a want of any natural superiority over the labouring classes, seeks to indulge itself in a species of vindictive exercise of power. There has come into the heads of these people, I cannot very well tell how, a notion that it is proper to consider the labouring classes as a *distinct caste*. They are called, now-a-days, by these gentlemen, "the *peasantry*." This is a new term as applied to Englishmen. It is a French word, which, in its literal sense, means *country folks*. But, in the sense in which it is used in France and Flanders and Germany, it means, not only country people, or country folks, but also a *distinct and degraded class of persons*, who have no pretensions whatever to look upon themselves, in any sense, as belonging to the same *society* or *community*, as the gentry; but who ought always to be "*kept in their proper place*." And, it has become, of late, the fashion to consider the labouring classes in England in the same light, and to speak of them and treat them accordingly, which never was the case in any former age.

The writings of MALTHUS, who considers men as *mere animals*, may have had influence in the producing of this change; and, we now frequently hear the working classes called "the *population*," just as we call the animals upon a farm "the *stock*." It is curious, too, that this contumely towards the great mass of the people should have grown into vogue amongst the country gentlemen and their families at a time when

they themselves are daily and hourly losing the estates descended to them from their forefathers. They see themselves stripped of the means of keeping that hospitality, for which England was once so famed, and of which there remains nothing now but the *word* in the dictionary; they see themselves reduced to close up their windows, live in a corner of their houses, sneak away to London, crib their servants in their wages, and hardly able to keep up a little tawdry show; and, it would seem, that, for the contempt which they feel that their meanness must necessarily excite in the common people, they endeavour to avenge themselves, and at the same time to disguise their own humiliation, by their haughty and insolent deportment towards the latter: thus exhibiting that mixture of poverty and of pride, which has ever been deemed better calculated than any other union of qualities to draw down upon the possessors the most unfriendly of human feelings.

It is curious, also, that this fit of novel and ridiculous pride should have afflicted the minds of these persons at the very time that the working classes are become singularly enlightened. Not enlightened in the manner that the sons of Cant and Corruption would wish them to be. The conceited creatures in what is called high life, and who always judge of men by their clothes, imagine that the working classes of the people have their minds quite sufficiently occupied by the reading of what are called "*religious and moral tracts.*" Simple, insipid dialogues and stories, calculated for the minds of children seven or eight years old, or for those of savages just beginning to be civilized. These conceited persons have no idea that the minds of the working classes ever presume to rise above this infantine level. But these conceited persons are most grossly deceived: they are the "*deluded*" part of the community; deluded by a hireling and corrupt press and by the conceit and insolence of their own minds. The working classes of the people understand well what they read; they dive into all matters connected with politics; they have a relish not only for interesting statement, for argument, for discussion; but the powers of *eloquence* are by no means lost upon them; and, in many, many instances, they have shown themselves to possess infinitely greater powers of describing and of reasoning, than have ever been shown generally by that description of persons, who, with MALTHUS, regard them as mere animals. In the Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Lords, it is observed, that, since the people have betaken themselves to this reading and this discussing, "*their character seems to be wholly changed.*" I believe it is indeed! For it is the natural effect of enlightening the mind to change the character. But, is not this change for the better? If it be not, why have we heard so much about the efforts for instructing the children of the poor? Nay, there are institutions for teaching *full-grown persons* to read and write; and a gentleman, upon whose word I can rely, assured me, that, in a school of this sort, in Norfolk, he actually saw one woman teaching another woman to read, and that both teacher and pupil had *spectacles* upon their noses! What, then! Has it been intended, that these people, when taught to read, should read nothing but HANNAH MORE'S "*Sinful Sally,*" and Mrs. Trimmer's Dialogues? Faith! The working classes of the people have a relish for no such trash. They are not to be amused by a recital of the manifold blessings of a state of things, in which they have not half enough to eat, nor half enough to cover their nakedness by day or to keep them from perishing by night. They are

not to be amused with the pretty stories about "the bounty of Providence in making brambles for the purpose of tearing off pieces of the sheep's wool, in order that the little birds may come and get it to line their nests with to keep their young ones warm!" Stories like these are not sufficient to fill the minds of the working classes of the people. They want something more solid. They have had something more solid. Their minds, like a sheet of paper, have received the lasting impressions of undeniable fact and unanswerable argument; and it will always be a source of the greatest satisfaction to me to reflect, that I have been mainly instrumental in giving those impressions, which, I am very certain will never be effaced from the minds of the people of this country.

Do those who pretend to believe that the people are *deluded*, and who say that these laws are not aimed *against the people*, but merely against their *seducers*; do these persons really imagine, that the people are *thus to be deceived*? Do they imagine, for instance, that the people who read my Register, will not in this case, regard any attack upon me, as an attack upon themselves? It is curious enough to observe how precisely the contrary the reasoning of these persons is in *all other cases*. An attack upon the Clergy is always deemed by them to be an attack upon Religion. An attack upon the King is always deemed by them to be an attack upon the Nation. And it is very notorious, that in all criminal cases, the language of the law is, that the offence has been committed against the peace of the realm, and in contempt of the king, his crown, and dignity. Yet, in the present case, the *leaders* of the Reformers are to be supposed to have no common interest with the Reformers themselves; and it appears to be vainly imagined, that millions of men, all united in petitioning, in the most peaceable and orderly manner for one particular object, will be easily persuaded to believe, that those *who have taken the lead* amongst them may be very properly sacrificed, and that, too, *without any injury at all to the cause!* What should we think of an enemy in the field, who were to send over a flag of truce, and propose to us to give up our *Generals*? Only our *Generals!* That is *all!* The enemy has no objection to *us*: it is only our *Generals* that he wants; and, then, we shall have *peace* with him at once. There was once, the Fable tells us, a war between the *Wolves* and the *Sheep*, the latter being well protected by a parcel of brave and skilful *Dogs*. The Wolves set on foot a negotiation, the object of which was everlasting peace between the parties, and the proposition was this on the part of the Wolves, that there should be *hostages* on both sides; that the Wolves should put their *young ones* into the hands of the Sheep, and that the Sheep should put their *Dogs* into the hands of the Wolves. In evil hour the Sheep agreed to this compact; and the very first opportunity, the Wolves, having no longer any *Dogs* to contend with, flew upon the fleecy fools and devoured them and their lambs without mercy and without mitigation.

The flocks of Reformers in England are not to be "*deluded*" in this manner. They will well know, that every blow, which is aimed against the men who have taken the most prominent part in the cause of Reform, is aimed against that cause itself and at every person who is attached to that cause, just as much, just as effectually, as a blow aimed at the head of a man is aimed at his fingers and his toes.

The country gentlemen, therefore, will never see the day when the

working classes will be again reconciled to them, unless they shall cordially take the lead amongst those working classes. This, I am in hopes, they will do; for, every day of their lives will make their own inevitable ruin more and more manifest. But, whether they do this or not, the consequences of the present measures will, I am convinced, be the same. They will only tend to make the catastrophe more dreadful than it would otherwise have been. The Funding System will go regularly on producing misery upon the back of misery, and irritation upon the back of irritation. It is that great cause which is constantly at work. Nothing can stop its progress, short of a reduction of the interest of the Debt; and as that measure seems to be rejected with obstinacy as persevering as are the destroying effects of the system itself, nothing can reasonably be expected but a violent dissolution.

The nation will recollect how confidently the Ministers spoke last year of a speedy restoration to prosperity. Mr. Vansittart talked in a very gay and flippant style, about the raising of fourteen millions in taxes, in order to keep up the Sinking Fund, which fourteen millions, he said, would return back to the country to enliven manufactures, commerce, and agriculture. The words were hardly out of his mouth, when I told you, that, if the fourteen millions did return back to the country, it would only be for the purpose of transferring fourteen millions worth more of the property of the Landowners, the Shipowners, the Manufacturers, the Farmers, and the Traders, from them to the pockets of the Fundholders and the Sinecure Placemen and Pensioners, together with all those who lived upon the taxes. But, all the former classes are now become so reduced in point of property; all their property has so fallen in value, that they have now nothing to offer in pledge for the money which the Fundholders have to lend them; and the consequence of this is, that we now behold the curious spectacle of a loan made by the Fundholders to the *Government of France*. This loan is stated at *ten millions sterling*. And now, my friends, pray observe what a traffic is here going on! These ten millions of money have been raised in taxes upon us to pay the interest of the debt or part of it. The Fundholders, having got this money into their possession, lend it to the Government of France, because we, who pay the taxes, are become too poor; our property is fallen too low in value for the Fundholders to lend it to us; and thus ten millions-worth of the income of the gentlemen and of the fruits of the labour of the people, are conveyed over to another nation, which must tend to give life to agriculture and trade and manufactures in that nation, in just the same degree, that the operation tends to depress and ruin our own country. To make this as clear as daylight, let us suppose *the Isle of Wight* to be cut off from all trade and all interchange of commodities with the rest of the kingdom. Let us suppose that all the people in the Isle of Wight are compelled to pay a great portion of their incomes and of the fruit of their labour every year to be sent over and expended in the rest of the kingdom; and that no part of what they thus pay is to go back again to the Isle of Wight, except the *interest* of it. Is it not evident, that the Isle of Wight must shortly become most wretchedly poor and miserable? Will not the proprietors there get rid of their property as fast as they are able, and will they not get away into the other parts of the kingdom? Yes, and this is what the people of England are now doing with regard to France.

The property of England is now going away, and all those who are able, and who do not live upon the taxes, are following the property as fast as they can. To take a single instance; suppose me to be living in the parish of Botley, or rather, to suppose something nearer the reality; suppose Mr. EYRE, who does live there, and who having a landed estate to the amount, perhaps, of two or three thousand pounds a-year, and who, being a very good master, very hospitable and kind to all his neighbours, employing great numbers of them, and expending the greater part of his clear income amongst them, were, instead of so expending his income, to lend it to the Government of France, and to receive from that Government the *interest* only every year. It is clear, that instead of *two thousand* pounds a-year to expend among his neighbours, he would have only *two hundred* pounds a-year to expend amongst them. Here would be a falling-off of eighteen hundred pounds a-year, which, at thirty pounds per family, would take away the means of living from *sixty families*. If this mode of disposing of Mr. EYRE's income would deprive sixty families of the means of living, the loan which has been made to the Government of France *by the Fundholders*, through the agency of the *Barings* and others, must deprive of living *thirty-three thousand three hundred and thirty-three families!* And this is a truth, my good and perishing countrymen, which I defy the WILLIAM GIFFORDS, the apostate SOUTHEYS, and all the herd of sinecure and hired writers to controvert. The *interest*, you will perceive, will come back again to England, and may possibly be expended amongst the people of England, but all the principal will be expended in France to animate French manufactures, commerce, trade, and agriculture, all of which will be fed by the ruin of England.

The same will be going on, in other shapes, with regard to other foreign countries, and especially with regard to America. For can it be believed, that men, in the *farming* and *trading* line, will remain here to give their last shilling to the Fundholders, and to see their families brought to the workhouse, while a country of freedom extends its arms to afford protection to their property as well as to their persons? At this very moment hundreds of *farmers* are actually preparing to remove themselves and their property to America, and many are now upon the voyage. Now, then, let us see what will be the effects of operations of this sort. A man, who *rents* a farm, we will suppose, determines not to remain any longer under such a state of things. He sells off his stock, amounting we will say, to five thousand pounds. He turns this stock into money, and he carries the money to America. In England he gave employment and paid in Poor-rates the means of supporting about twelve or fourteen families. Whence are to come the means of supporting these families when he is gone? There is no one to *supply his place*; for there are thousands of farms now lying waste. These families, therefore, must go to augment the already intolerable burden of the Poor-rates; they must go to add to the immense mass of misery already existing, while the farmer himself, though he has lost, by the low price of his stock, two-thirds of his fortune, carries away the remainder, together with his valuable industry and skill, to add to the agriculture of America; to give employment to families there, to add to the population and power of that country; and to congratulate himself on his escape from ruinous taxation, and his family upon their

escape from the horrors of a poor-house. And who can *blame* such a man? He must still love his country; but the first law of nature, *self-preservation*, imperiously calls on him to abandon it for ever!

Yet, such is the attachment to country, in the breast of every good man: so great are the powers of those feelings which bind men, and particularly the country-people, to the place of their birth; so numerous and so strong are the ties which restrain them from an abandonment of their homes, that emigration is a thing which they would have avoided as they would have avoided death, under any circumstances but the present; but now, when they have no prospect of an end to the calamities of the country; when instead of that *relief*, which peace was promised to bring, they feel their burdens not only already *doubled* by the operations of the paper-money and funding system, but daily and hourly increasing; when they see the ablest and most industrious of their labourers daily dropping into the ranks of the paupers; when they see their former wealthy and provident acquaintances reduced, one after another, to bankruptcy, and their families taking shelter here and there under the roof of charity; when they behold all this, and when to all this is added the reflection, that, in a time of profound peace, and without any insurrection or any commotion in the country, laws have been passed to take away the personal safety of every man, to expose free conversation to the malignant construction of spies and informers, to render the intercourse between man and man dangerous and even perilous, and, in short, to embitter and to curse every moment of their lives, there is no room for balancing; remove they must, if they have any spirit left in them, and if they have the means to remove; for to remain is certain misery, more than probable ruin, and possible death, though every action of their lives may be perfectly innocent, and even meritorious.

From these causes and many others that might be mentioned, the country must, as long as this state of things lasts, go on declining and perishing. Its means of meeting the demands of the unrelenting funding system will daily diminish; and, therefore, there is no remedy, let Mr. CURWEN talk as long and as big as he will, but that of reducing and nearly annihilating, that thing which is called the *National Debt*, and also reducing the expenses of the army to a *tenth* part of what it now is. And, indeed, it is the Debt which has created and which keeps up the army, for which there would be no occasion were it not for the weight of the taxes, which weight of taxes, is the effect of the Debt.

The great question now to be determined is, WHETHER THE BOROUGHMONGERS CAN CARRY ON THE MILITARY AND SUSPENSION SYSTEM AFTER THE FUNDING SYSTEM IS DESTROYED. This system, this order of things, an immense standing army, with corps of yeomanry established all over the country, with the Press under the superintendence of the Magistrates, and with the personal safety of every man taken from him; this system I call the *Boroughmonger System*, it having been notoriously adopted *in order to resist and to crush the petitioners for Parliamentary Reform*. Now, then, I am quite sure that the funding system *cannot* last long. I am quite sure of that. I know it with little less certainty than I know, that winter will follow the next summer. It may last two years, perhaps, and it may not expire wholly before the end of three or four years; but I defy any measures, any powers, or any events, to save it from destruc-

tion at the end of a few years. The question, therefore is, *not whether the funding system will be destroyed*; nor is it a question, whether the boroughmongering system will continue as long as the funding system continues; for I am convinced *that it will*, seeing that it appears to me impossible to carry on the funding system any longer without the boroughmongering system. But, the *grand and vital question is*, whether the boroughmongering system *can support itself amidst all the uproar and turmoil of the breaking up of the funding system*; and whether it can go on and *consolidate and perpetuate itself in this country*. This is the great question, my countrymen, upon which you have to exercise your judgment. This is the question, the solution of which will determine the fate of England; and I frankly own to you, that it is a question which appears to me more difficult to settle than any one which ever before presented itself to my mind. You may have perceived a great change of tone in those who formerly talked so boldly about the endless resources of the country. They begin now to falter in their accents. They are frightened at the work of their own hands. They have surrounded themselves with all the securities which an army and the absolute power of imprisonment at pleasure can give them; but, be you assured, that they tremble within. They are scared at the desolation which they have brought upon the country. They are compelled to smile upon the fundholders; and yet they would fain that there were no such people in existence! Baffled in all their projects and prospects, they know not which way to turn themselves. Their progress seems to be like that of the Gamester in Hogarth, and their situation at this particular stage is nearly approaching to that of his, when, having ventured and lost his last desperate stake, you see him gnashing his teeth, holding up above his head his two clenched fists, stamping upon the floor, and muttering curses, while the fundholders, who sit round the table, are sneering and scoffing at his demoniac agitations.

Some time ago, it was their project to cause the Bank to pay again in specie; and, agreeably to that project, they issued the new silver currency. It appears to be *now* their project to get fresh quantities of paper again afloat; and, if they can do that, the first effect of it will be the disappearance of the new silver currency, which, though inferior to sterling value, will never long continue to circulate amidst such additional quantities of paper as will produce any sensible effect in the raising of prices and in the lowering the real amount of taxation. I do not clearly see the *possibility* of augmenting the quantity of paper in circulation, seeing that the proprietors of lands and of goods have nothing to offer in pledge for it. But, besides, if it were to be effected, what tremendous mischief would it produce! Suppose the paper thus put out to reduce the value of the currency one-third. A man who has made a contract to-day to receive three hundred pounds at a distant day, would in fact receive only two-thirds of what he had contracted for. This real breach of contract would take place with respect to all bargains made at this time, or recently made; all mortgages, bonds, leases, annuities, yearly wages of servants, and every thing else of that description. Goods, sold on long credit, would share the same fate; and as there is perhaps many millions-worth of goods always sent to foreign countries upon long credit, when the money comes to be paid, it would be paid in a currency of one-third less in value than the currency calculated upon when the goods were sold. Thus a merchant abroad,

who must now send three hundred pounds sterling to discharge his debt to his creditor here, would, in fact, have to send only two hundred pounds sterling in real money; because, two hundred pounds in real money would purchase three hundred pounds in the paper that would then be afloat.

Here, then, the waves of the system, by suddenly taking a roll in this new direction, would overwhelm a new class of the community; and by this time, the discredit of the paper would become so notorious to the world, that the people of all foreign nations would keep aloof from it; would begin to shake their heads, and exclaim, "*Babylon the Great is fallen!*"

What I am disposed to think, however, is, that this project for getting out new quantities of paper-money will not succeed; and yet, without it, the interest of the Debt cannot be paid out of the taxes; for though standing armies, and Sedition Bills, and Habeas Corpus Suspension Bills, are dreadfully powerful things, their power is not of that kind which enables people to pay taxes. In all human probability, then, the whole of the interest of the Debt and all the sinecures and pensions and salaries, and also the expenses of a thundering standing army, will continue to be made up, by taxes, by loans from the Bank, by Exchequer bills, by every species of contrivance, to the latest possible moment, and until the whole of the paper system, amidst the war of opinions, of projects, of interests, and of passions, shall go to pieces like a ship upon the rocks. And THEN comes the question: CAN THE BOROUGHMONGERING SYSTEM OUTLIVE THIS TREMENDOUS WRECK? If it can; if the army can still be kept up, and if the personal safety of all the people can still be suspended, if this breach between the two systems does NOT LET IN REFORM, it is hard to say how very low this country is to be sunk in the scale of nations. It would, in that case, become so humbled, so poverty-stricken, so degraded, so feeble, that it would, in a few years, not have the power, even if it had the inclination, to defend itself against any invader. The people would become the most beggarly and slavish of mankind, and nothing would be left of England but the mere name, and that only as it were for the purpose of reminding the wretched inhabitants of the valour and public spirit of their forefathers.

Let us hope, however, that this is not to be the fate of our country. Let us hope that she is yet to be freed of the mill-stone that hangs around her neck. As for me, I shall never cease to use the best of my endeavours to save her from the dangers which threaten her utter destruction; and, I hope you will always bear in mind, that, if I quit her shores for awhile, it is only for the purpose of being still able to serve her. It is impossible for any man not to see clearly, that the sole choice now is between *silence* and *retreat*. Corruption has put on her armour and drawn her dagger. We must, therefore, fall back and cover ourselves in a way so as to be able to fight her upon more equal terms. The Giffords, the Southey's, the Walters, the Stuarts, the Stoddarts, and all the hireling crew, who were unable to answer with the pen, now rush at me with their drawn knife, and exclaim, "*Write on!*" To use the words of the Westminster Address, they shake the halter in my face, and rattle in my ears the keys of the dungeon, and then they exclaim, with a malignant grin, "*Why do you not continue to write as you coward?*"

A few years ago, being at Barnet fair, I saw a battle going on, arising out of some sudden quarrel between a butcher and the servant of a west-country grazier. The butcher, though vastly superior in point of size, finding that he was getting the worst of it, recoiled a step or two, and *drew out his knife*. Upon the sight of this weapon, the grazier turned about and ran off till he came up to a Scotchman who was guarding his herd, and out of whose hand the former snatched a good ash stick about four feet long. Having thus got what he called a *long arm*, he returned to the combat, and, in a very short time, he gave the butcher a blow upon the wrist which brought his knife to the ground. The grazier then fell to work with his stick in such a style as I never before witnessed. The butcher fell down and rolled and kicked; but, he seemed only to change his position in order to insure to every part of his carcase a due share of the penalty of his baseness. After the grazier had, apparently, tired himself, he was coming away, when happening to cast his eye upon the *knife*, he ran back and renewed the basting, exclaiming every now and then, as he caught his breath, "Dra thy knife wo't!" He came away a second time, and a second time returned and set on upon the caitiff again; and this he repeated several times, exclaiming always when he recommenced the drubbing, "Dra thy knife wo't!" Till, at last, the butcher was so bruised, that he was actually unable to stand, or even to get up; and yet, such, amongst Englishmen, is the abhorrence of *foul fighting*, that not a soul attempted to interfere, and nobody seemed to pity a man thus unmercifully beaten.

It is my intention to imitate the conduct of this grazier; to resort to a *long arm*, and to combat Corruption, while I keep myself out of the reach of her knife. Nobody called the grazier a *coward*, because he did not stay to oppose his fists to a pointed and cutting instrument. My choice, as I said before (leaving all considerations of *personal safety* out of the question) lies between *silence* and *retreat*. If I remain here, all other means will be *first* used to reduce me to silence; and, if all those means fail, then will come the *dungeon*. Therefore, that I may still be able to write, and to write *with freedom*, too, I shall write, if I live, *from America*; and my readers may depend on it, that it will not be more than *four months* from the date of this Address, before the publication of the weekly pamphlet will be *resumed in London*, and will be continued very nearly as regularly as it has been for years past. My main object will be to combat Corruption; but, I shall also be able to communicate some very useful information; especially as I shall now have, at one and the same time, the situation of both countries under my eye. If it be said, that I cannot expect to get any one *here* to print, or publish, what I write in America, I ask, then, what is the use of *writing here*, seeing that the same obstacle would exist as to what should be written in England. Besides, I shall be as careful as I have been, not to write any thing that even a special jury would pronounce to be a *libel*. I have no desire to write libels. I have written none here. Lord SIDMOUTH was "*sorry to say*," that I had not written any thing that the law-officers could prosecute with any chance of success. I do not remove for the purpose of writing libels, but, for the purpose of being able to write what is *not* libellous. I do not retire from a combat with the Attorney-general, but from a combat with a *dungeon*, *deprived of pen, ink, and paper*. A combat with the Attorney-general is quite *unequal* enough. That, however, I would have encountered. I know too well what a trial by *special jury* is. Yet

that, or any sort of *trial* I would have stayed to face. So that I could have been sure of a *trial* of whatever sort I would have run the risk. But, against the absolute power of imprisonment without even a *hearing*, for time unlimited, in any jail in the kingdom, without the use of pen, ink and paper, and without any communication with any soul but the keepers; against *such a power* it would have been worse than madness to attempt to strive. Indeed, there could be *no striving* in a case, where I should have been as much at the disposal of the Secretary of State as are the shoes which he has upon his feet. No! I will go, where I shall not be as the shoes upon Lord Sidmouth's and Lord Castlereagh's feet. I will go where I can make *sure* of the use of pen, ink, and paper; and these two Lords may be equally sure, that in spite of every thing that they can do, unless they openly enact or proclaim a *censorship* on the press, or cut off all commercial connection with America, you, my good and faithful countrymen, shall be able to read what I write. In my letter to *Earl Grosvenor*, I said that something *very near* to the *chopping-off of my hand*, or the *poking out of your eyes*, should be done, before I would cease to write and you would cease to read. What has been done would not be *very far* from this, if I were to remain here; but, when I wrote that sentence, I had a *full knowledge of what was going to be done*, and I had also resolved upon the course to pursue in order, as far as related to myself, to defeat its intention.

And now, my countrymen, before I set off, let me caution you against giving the smallest credit to any thing that Corruption's press may assert of me. You have seen what atrocious falsehoods it has put forth in my *presence*; what, then, will it not do in my *absence*? I have written thousands of letters to various persons in all parts of the kingdom. I give any one leave to *make public any letter of mine*, accompanied by the certificate of any respectable friend of mine, that it is *in my handwriting*. I challenge all those whom I ever conversed with to say, that I ever uttered a *wish* to see overthrown any one of the Constitutional establishments of the kingdom; and, I most solemnly declare, that I never associated with any man, who professed, even in private, to entertain any such wish; but, on the contrary, all those, with whom I have ever been intimate in politics, have always had in view the preservation of all the establishments and orders of the kingdom as one of the objects of a *timely Reform* of the Parliament.

The *sacrifice* I make would, under any other circumstances, be justly considered as enormous. The ceasing of a profit of *more than ten thousand pounds a year* from my works; the loss of property of various sorts, left scattered about in all manner of ways; the leaving of numerous friends and of local objects created under my own hands, and affording me so many pleasing sensations. But, all this weighs nothing, when compared with the horrid idea of being *silenced*; of sneaking to my farm and *quietly* leaving Corruption to trample out the vitals of my country, while her infamous press was revelling in unexposed falsehoods and calumnies levelled against myself and my friends: compared to this, no loss of fortune, no toils necessary to support a numerous family, no poverty, no bodily suffering; there is nothing of this kind that must not appear trifling, and even wholly unworthy of notice, when compared with the loss of that satisfaction which I shall now derive from still retaining the power of combating Corruption, and from the hope that I

shall never cease to entertain of returning to my beloved country in the day of the restoration of her freedom.

Every species of falsehood, deception, imposture, will Corruption now resort to, in order to blacken my character, to disfigure my motives, and to diminish the effect of my writings. But, my countrymen, if you have witnessed so much of all these while I was *present*, I need not fear that you will believe in them when I am *absent*. In more than ten publications, the writers have taken *my name, and made me the author* ! They will now play off this trick more than ever. But, the *matter* of their publications will soon undeceive you. Nothing will be sent by me but "*Cobbett's Weekly Political Pamphlet*," and nothing will be of my writing, which will not have at the foot of it the name of the same gentleman, whose name will appear as the publisher of the address. However, I am not much afraid of your being imposed upon in this way, for, amidst the crowd of writers, I hope you will now as easily distinguish my voice as a lamb does that of its mother, though there be hundreds of others bleating at the same moment.

A mutual affection, a powerful impulse, equal to that out of which this wonderful sagacity arises, will, I hope, always exist between me and my hard-used countrymen : an affection, which my heart assures me, no time, no distance, no new connections, no new association of ideas, however enchanting, can ever destroy, or in any degree enfeeble or impair. The sight of a free, happy, well-fed and well-clad people will only tend to invigorate my efforts to assist in restoring you to the enjoyment of those rights and of that happiness, which are so well merited by your honesty, your sincerity, your skill in all the useful arts, your kind-heartedness, your valour, and all the virtues which you possess in so supereminent a degree. A splendid mansion in America will be an object less dear to me than a cottage on the skirts of Waltham Chase or of Botley Common. Never will I own as my friend him who is not a friend of the people of England. I will never become a *subject* or a *citizen* in any other state, and will always be a *foreigner* in every country but England. Any foible that may belong to your character, I shall always willingly allow to belong to my own. All the celebrity which my writings have obtained, and which they will preserve, long and long after Lords Liverpool and Sidmouth and Castlereagh are rotten and forgotten, I owe less to my own talents than to that discernment and that noble spirit in you, which have at once instructed my mind and warmed my heart ; and my beloved countrymen, be you well assured, that the last beatings of that heart will be, love for the people, for the happiness and the renown of England ; and hatred of their corrupt, hypocritical, dastardly and merciless foes.

WM. COBBETT.

P.S. There will, of necessity, be about three months before the *Weekly Political Pamphlet* will be revived ; but, in the meantime, my readers will find occupation in reading over and over again what I have addressed to them within the last five or six months. I beseech them to keep all the nice little books that they have got ; not to be humbugged by any of the publications of Corruption ; they will find all my foretellings *come true*. I exhort them to exercise all the patience and fortitude they are masters of ; and not to be inveigled into any foolish and

fruitless attacks upon bakers and butchers and the like; never to give up one jot of their right to Parliaments chosen annually, and to a vote for every man twenty-one years of age; and never to give up the hope that this right will be restored to them along with that happiness to which their industry and honesty and public spirit justly entitle them. They may be assured, that if I have life for only a year or two at farthest, I shall be back with them again. The beautiful country, through which I have so lately travelled, bearing upon every inch of it, such striking marks of the industry and skill of the people, never can be destined to be inhabited by slaves. To suppose such a thing possible would be at once to libel the nation and to blaspheme against Providence. Let my readers not fear my finding out the means of communicating to them whatever I write. They will see the Political Pamphlet revive and be continued, until the day when they will find me again dating my addresses to them from London or from Botley.

W^M. COBBETT.

Liverpool, March 28, 1817.

A HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS OF ENGLISH FREEDOM,

Ending with the Passing of the Absolute-Power-of-Imprisonment Act, in the Month of March, 1817. Addressed to Mr. John Goldsmith, of Hambledon, and Mr. Richard Hiasman, of Chilling, who were the Chairman and Seconder at the Meeting of the People of Hampshire on Portsdown Hill, in the Month of February, 1817, to Petition for a Redress of Grievances, and for a Reform in the Commons House of Parliament.

(Political Register, July, 1817.)

LETTER I.

North Hampstead, Long Island, June 10, 1817.

MY WORTHY AND BELOVED FRIENDS,

A Revolution the most extraordinary has taken place in our country. The Revolution of 1688 was a nothing, in point of importance, compared with that which we have now witnessed. Then the Royal Family and the line of descent of the Crown were changed, because a tyrant had grossly violated some of the fundamental laws of the land; but now, all the fundamental laws of the land stand *abrogated* by Acts of the Parliament. In England, in that same England, which was the cradle of real liberty and just laws, or, at least, which was the spot, where law and justice and freedom were preserved while despotism reigned over the rest of the world; in that England, which was so long held by the world to exhibit an example of all that was desirable in politics and in juris-

prudence; in that England, whence the wise and brave men who first settled this now happy country brought all those principles of law and of government, which, by being adhered to, have been the cause of that happiness and virtue which are here everywhere apparent; in that same England what do we now behold? The very thought, though I am here beyond the reach of the evil, wrings my heart. We behold a system of taxation that has spread ruin, madness and starvation over the land; a band of Sinecurists, Pensioners, Bankers, and Funders, who strip the land of all its fruits, except the portion which they share with the standing army who aid them in the work of seizing on those fruits; a people who have no voice in the choosing of those, who make laws affecting their property and their lives; a House of Commons, the sale and barter of seats in which has, within its own walls, been acknowledged to be as notorious as the sun at noon-day; and, finally, in answer to the nation's petitions for a redress of this enormous grievance, the cause of every calamity, we behold Acts passed by this same House of Commons, which have taken from the people all liberty of the press, all liberty of speech, and all the safety which the law gave to their very persons, it being now in the absolute power of Ministers to *punish* any man *whom they may please to punish*, in the severest possible manner short of instant death, not only without any trial by jury, but without any trial at all; without *hearing* him themselves in his defence; without letting him know *the cause* of his punishment; without telling him who are his *accusers*; and without *any appeal*, now or hereafter, from their decisions! They, or any one out of three of them, have the power to send for either of you at any hour; to cause you to be conveyed away to *any jail* in the kingdom; to be put into any dungeon or cell; to be deprived of pen, ink and paper; to be kept from all communication with wife, child, friend, or any body else; to be locked up in a solitary cell; to be kept in a damp or stinking hole; and to be kept without *any limit as to time*, other than what their own sole will and pleasure may dictate.

Such is the present state of England, and, thanks to the virtue and valour of our brethren on this side of the Atlantic, I have the power to describe that state to the world, a power, which I certainly should not have had, if the people of this country had not successfully resisted the attempts of our Government in 1814 and 1815, when Sir JOSEPH YORKE said, in the House of Commons, that there was Mr. PRESIDENT MADISON yet to be put down; and, when the TIMES newspaper told the then deceived people, that *regular Governments never could be safe*, until the world was deprived of the "*dangerous example of successful democratic rebellion*;" or, in other words, that the Boroughmongering System never could sleep in quiet, while there was *one free country left on the face of the earth*. The TIMES was right. The "*Holy Alliance*" is of no avail as long as this country remains what it now is. Hither, at last, all the oppressed, who harbour the just desire to resist, may come; and, in the end, resistance would go from here, if it were to arise from no other quarter.

The Revolution which has taken place in England is not seen in its true character without our taking some time to look at all its parts. We are too apt to speak of it merely as a *Suspension of the Act of Habeas Corpus*; but, this is by no means doing the thing justice. That Act is, indeed, rendered nugatory; but, that is merely *incidental*. That Act, which was passed so late as the reign of Charles II., merely

provided some checks to false imprisonment, and more clearly defined the remedy; but, in all times, since England has been England, the law of the land was, that *no man could be imprisoned, except by due course of law*, and due course of law included all the circumstances of informations, warrants by ordinary magistrates, previous examinations, confronting with accusers, commitments stating the precise crime, and a delivery or trial at the next Sessions or Assizes. This was the *due course of law* in England long before the Norman Conquest, and it always continued to be due course of law. The Act of Habeas Corpus only defined more precisely the *remedy* in case of violations, or neglect of observance of this due course of law.

Therefore, the Absolute-Power-of-Imprisonment Act does not call itself an *Act to Suspend the Act of Habeas Corpus*, which would have left the law as it stood before that Act was passed. Those who have made the Revolution knew what they intended too well to give their Act that title or that effect. They call it an Act to "empower *his Majesty* to imprison any person that *he* may suspect to be guilty of treason, or treasonable practices." We all know, that his Majesty has nothing to do with the matter; and, the provisions of the Act very explicitly state that this dreadful power is lodged in other hands.

It is clear, then, that (without going into the Acts against the liberty of speech and of the press) by this one Act, *all* the fundamental laws of the land are effectually put an end to, seeing that it places every one's *person* at the absolute disposal of the Ministers, and, if the very *body* of a man be not safe, what absurdity is it to talk about *property*! That man, who has no safety for his person cannot be said to *possess any thing*. We are told by the hirelings of the press, that it is only the "*disaffected*" that this Revolution need to make uneasy. That is to say, *only* those whom the Ministers and Boroughmongers may *dislike*. But, what more is asked for by the Dey of Algiers, or by any Bourbon that ever existed? They do not want to kill or imprison *all* their people. That would not suit their purpose. They do not destroy even those whom they know to hate them, provided they be *still* and give them no annoyance. But, the moment any one, who possesses the means, discovers the inclination to oppose or thwart them, that moment they begin to *suspect* him, and then they proceed to *punish*. They want to do nothing *more*. This is all that arbitrary government has ever wanted to do; and this is what the Ministers in England are now *empowered to do by Act of Parliament*! That they will not exercise this power against the "*well-affected*;" that is to say, against their own partisans, is sure enough; nor will they exercise it against *sham* opponents like the *Morning Chronicle*, nor against *impotent* opponents like the Independent Whig. But, it is not less sure, that they will exercise it against every man, who possesses the *means*, and the *will* at the same time, of opposing their unjust, and exposing their foolish measures.

Why were there laws to *protect* men's persons and property? Why was there a trial *by jury* for every alleged offence? The reason was, that no man should be in danger from the power of those who exercised the great functions of administering law and justice. These laws were not intended to *protect* those whom the Government had no dislike to, but those whom it might dislike. These laws were not intended to protect those who *stood in need of no protection*, but those who *did stand in need of it*. These laws were intended to

prevent men in authority, or powerful men of any description, from hurting those whom they might regard as "disaffected" towards them; and, yet, forsooth, we are to think nothing of the abrogation of all these laws, because they put in jeopardy "only the disaffected!"

The Dey of Algiers proceeds against his "disaffected" by chopping off their heads, and our Ministers proceed against their "disaffected" by shutting them up in prison during their pleasure, in any jail in the kingdom, and deprived of light, warmth, and all communication with relations and friends, if they please. That is all the difference, and, of the two, the Dey's power is, according to *Bluckstone*, the less hateful and dangerous. There is this further difference indeed: that the Dey's power extends to every person in his dominions, whereas the Borough-mongers, in giving the Ministers this dreadful power over the rest of the nation, not excepting the females of the Royal Family, have made an express clause to except their *precious selves*! At least, no Member of either House can be shut up without a notification to the House, and, of course, without a *hearing* of some sort or other.

You will want nothing to convince you, then, that a real and *total Revolution* has taken place in England; and, it is a duty which we owe to mankind, to our country, to ourselves and our children to trace, if we possess the means, this great event to its true causes. This is what I shall now do in the best manner that my abilities will enable me. I intend, after a short view of the previous period, to give a minute account of the transactions of the *Last Hundred Days of English Freedom*, in which transactions I was so principal an actor, and of every thing belonging to which I was so well acquainted. And, I address myself to you, my friends, upon this occasion, because you are amongst the men, for whom I have the greatest personal regard, for whose public spirit and understandings I have the greatest respect, and because you were my associates in the proposing and carrying of that memorable *Petition*, which the honest people of our country approved of and signed upon Portsdown-hill, which *Petition* contains a fair and modest statement of the chief of the nation's grievances and desires, by which *Petition* I am sure you will stand to the last moment of your lives.

You, who live constantly in the country, and who are necessarily engaged in your own private affairs the far greater part of your time, had no knowledge of many things, which took place in London, during the interesting period of which I mean to treat, and the detail of which, as it is necessary to you, and, in some instances, will fill you with astonishment, is, of course, much more necessary to be communicated to the people of England at large.

But, before I proceed to the performance of this duty towards my country, it is necessary that I say something of what I am doing *in order to take care of myself and family*, which will not only be extremely interesting to you, but, I flatter myself, will be not uninteresting to many, many thousands of my countrymen, to many of whom (wholly unknown to me personally) I have to return my unspeakable thanks for their attention and their offers of service, *solid substantial service*, to my wife, who was left behind me in circumstances so very trying. Indeed, the wife and children of a man, chiefly for the purpose of stifling whose writings (loyal and legal as every line of them was) a Revolution has been made in the government of a great nation, may reasonably be deemed objects of interest and of care with men, who know how to estimate talent and

zeal, who love truth, justice, and fair play, and who mourn over the disgrace of their country, exhibited in the at once mean and outrageous acts of its Government in opposition to the talents of one single man, unassisted and unsupported by any thing on earth but the resources of his own mind, and those, too, unassisted by any trick, any craft, any finesse, any disguise of any sort, or by the employment of any blandishments or flatteries towards any human being.

For the future, my kind and good friends, my mode of reasoning, my intentions, and my prospects, are these. I will be as frank with you and with the world as I would be with my own bosom.

It is impossible that England can remain *long in its present state*. That is altogether impossible. *More* must be done, or that which is done must be *undone*; and, if the latter take place, and I am alive, I shall return. If the former take place: if a *direct censorship* of the press be adopted, which it must be very soon, and if it become evident, that this sort of Bourbon government is to remain as long as force will uphold it, I shall, of course, not go to live under that government, knowing very well that the warrants of Lords Sidmouth and Castlereagh are much more to be dreaded even than the thunderbolts that struck the ship, in which I sailed beyond the reach of those warrants.

In the *meanwhile*, that is to say, while I wait to see the events which will arise out of the Bourbon measures and out of the workings of our good old friend, the National Debt, I must *eat* and *drink*, say you. Very true, and, though a little serves me and all belonging to me, I have not the least doubt that we shall be able to get a plenty of both from *the earth*, which is never niggardly towards those, who will apply to her with earnestness and with care. To the earth, therefore, the *untaxed earth*, I will apply. It would be affectation to pretend, that I have not the means of *living* here by my *pen*; but it is my intention to be a downright farmer, and to *depend* solely upon what I can get in that way. I begin by *counting* upon nothing but what I can raise from the ground. If any thing else does come my children will be so much the richer, though they may not, perhaps, be so much the happier. I shall, I trust, set an example to my children, that, though suddenly bereft of fortune, no one need despair, who has freedom, industry and health.

Whatever I send to be published in England I shall publish here in some shape or another, and, as you will see, though I have been so ill-treated by those who govern England, I shall never turn my back upon my country or my countrymen. There are persons here, who will think well of no Englishman, who will not only distinctly and explicitly disclaim all allegiance to the King, but all regard for his country. I will do neither. I owe allegiance to the King as much as any American owes allegiance to the laws of his country. I cannot, if I would, *according to the laws of England*, get rid of it. And, as to my country and my countrymen, my attachment to them can never be equalled by my attachment to any other country or people. I owe a temporary allegiance to this country, and am bound to obey its excellent laws and Government. I am even bound to assist in repelling my own countrymen, and to consider them as enemies, if they attack this country. All this I owe in return for the protection I receive. I owe, besides, great gratitude to this sensible and brave people and to their wise, gentle, and just Government for having preserved from the fangs of despotism this one spot of the globe. I owe to them my freedom at this moment. I owe to them that

I am not shut up in a dungeon instead of being seated in safety and writing to you. These are great claims upon my gratitude, and my feelings towards the Government and the People are fully commensurate with those claims; but, as to the changing of allegiance, or the denying of my country, it is what I shall never do. England, though now bowed down by Boroughmongers, is my country; her people are public-spirited, warm-hearted, sincere and brave; common dangers, exertions in common, long intercourse of sentiment, and the thousands upon thousands of marks of friendship that I have received, all these have endeared the people of my own country to me in a peculiar manner. I will die an Englishman in exile, or an Englishman in England free.

I was well aware of the violent hostility, in some persons, to the very name of England, before I left my country; and I resolved, accordingly, not to place myself in the way of disappointing any one who might expect me to become her assailant. It was this reason which induced me to leave the City of New York in twenty-four hours after landing in it. I came over to this island the next day after my landing, and here, I dare say, I shall remain as long as the National Debt and the Bourbon System will exist, unless I make a tour into New England, where I never have been, and which country I have a great desire to see.

Here, then, we are with mutton not so fine as that of Hainbledon, and lamb, less early and fine than that of Chilling; but, we have many good things which you have not; and, what is better than all the good things put together, we have not only no Secretary of State's Warrants, but *of all the good things every man, woman and child has an abundance.* The salt, the *very salt*, which our neighbour CHIDDEL sells you for 20 English shillings a bushel, is *brought here and sold to us for three English shillings a bushel.* But, then, we here have not the honour to see any such man as our neighbour GARNIER, whose grandfather was an honest coachman to George the First, and who, for a long life, has had a *sinecure of twelve thousand pounds sterling a year*, paid him out of those taxes, which make neighbour CHIDDEL's salt so dear in England, and which tax being taken off when the salt is exported, makes us buy it so cheap.* Is there *never* to be an end to these things? Are they to be endured *for ever*? Mrs. HINKMAN might here lend her pony to a friend for a week without her husband being *surcharged* and made, on that account, to pay the horse-tax for a year. Here your wives might, as good farmer's wives did in England in former times, and as they do here now, turn their *fat into candles*, and their *ashes and grease into soap*, without your being either *fined* or *imprisoned* for the deed. Here poor CHALCROFT of Cager's Green would have no need to pull down, in consequence of an *exciseman's threat*, the hop-poles that the hops were climbing up out of his garden hedge. Here you might, without any risk of loss of estate or of ears, turn your own barley into malt, and your honey into metheglin. Here you might travel from Jericho to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to Babylon (for all these places are in this Island) and never meet, not only not a *beggar*, but scarcely a person *walking on foot*, as almost every body *rides* in some way or other. And here my son Wil-

* In my letter to Lord Sidmouth, I stated the price at 4s. 6d. a bushel; but now find, that we give only 3s. sterling.

liam's pretty little miniature mare, which has taught my children to ride, would not have cost me *one hundred pounds sterling in tax*, as she has done in England, when the original cost of herself was only *four pounds, saddle and all*.

But, though I say, and I mean, to place my sole *dependence* for a *living*, upon the fidelity of the *earth*, I beg you not to suppose, that I mean to cease, for one moment, in my efforts to aid in the restoration of the freedom of my country. *That* shall be the constant object of my life. *That* nothing shall prevent me from pursuing, and by all the means, of all sorts, that my mind can invent, or that it can avail itself of. If the Bourbon system be rendered so complete as to make it impossible for any one to publish my writings in *England*, you may depend on their being always *published here*. They will find their way to England somehow or other; and, though the circulation will not be so wide, it will be *something*. And, all this while, how will the Boroughmongers stand? They have stripped me of a large fortune; but for how long can they do it? As long as they can uphold the Bourbon system, and not one moment longer.

The sons and daughters of Corruption harp a good deal upon the circumstance of my having taken away a few hundred pounds in ready money, when I said, in my notification from Liverpool, that I carried away nothing but my wife and my children. What! did they imagine that I counted it *any thing* to carry with me money enough to pay my passage and to furnish me with food and lodging for a few months? Did they imagine it to be *any thing* to have the means of putting myself on shore, when I left behind me a farm covered with stock of all sorts; a house full of furniture; an estate which, with its improvements, had cost me forty thousand pounds and which was mortgaged for less than seventeen thousand; copyrights which were worth an immense sum, and a current income from my writings of more than ten thousand pounds; under these circumstances was it too *much* to have a few hundred pounds in my own pocket, and to leave sufficient at the command of my wife for the purpose of bringing her and her children over to me? Did the sons and the daughters of Corruption grudge us this? Did they really expect that, in abandoning a fortune larger than has ever been possessed by Lord Sidmouth or any of his family; did they imagine that in making this enormous sacrifice, or, rather, in being driven from these the fair fruits of my industry and talents, I was going, not only to lead the life of a mendicant, but, which was of much greater importance, to deprive myself of the means of having a place where I might have room and warmth to carry on the struggle against the Boroughmongers? If they did imagine this, they were as ignorant as they are well known to be greedy and merciless.

However, if the Boroughmongers adopt measures which shall wholly and entirely prevent the circulation of my writings, I shall still possess the means of living happily and easily, and the Boroughmongers will live as happily as they can under their new system. While I was enjoying a comparatively trifling income in England from my writings; and had lost, during the last three or four years, large sums annually by my agricultural pursuits and by my purchases of land, in common with others, who were situated in that respect like myself; that is to say, who had been severely robbed, and thousands of them wholly ruined and brought to a jail, by the arbitrary change in the currency and by the

other operations of the banking and funding system ; as long as I remained in this state, Corruption took little notice of me. She knew very well, that the tax-gatherer would take care to keep me in a situation sufficiently humble as to pecuniary matters. But, when she saw that the resources of my mind had not only enabled me to set all the country to reading, and that, too, at so cheap a rate as to drive from the field all the tribes of "Religious Tracts" and "Moral Tracts" and "Amusing Tracts" and "Tracts for the Poor" and the "Lancastrian Tracts" and the "National Tracts;" when Corruption saw that my little publication had not only swept all these from the field, and had made the people, in the space of three short months ashamed of their own folly in having been amused by the puerile effusions of fanatics and the crafty baits of hypocrites ; when she saw that my talents had not only produced this wonderful effect in so short a space of time, but had also opened to me a mine of wealth, in spite of the lowness of my prices and liberality of my allowances to dealers, which partook of that carelessness about money which has characterised all the transactions of my life ; when Corruption saw that I must be rich in spite of myself, and that my fame and my riches were going on increasing together, *then* it was that she, aided by her infernal associate, ENVY, set herself to work ! For some time Corruption knew not what to do. She tried various underhand means, in all of which she had the cordial co-operation of Envy. At last, driven to extremities by my perseverance in a strictly legal and loyal course, she resolved on open violence, which, however, she could not commit upon me without committing it, at the same time, upon the laws of the country. In the commission of these acts of violence, BALEFUL ENVY was her constant associate ! And even at this moment the country owes all the acts that have been committed against it, as much, and even *more*, to envy than it does to corruption herself. Had it not been for the base, the detestable feelings of envy which prevailed at the opening of the present session of Parliament, those Acts which have been passed, never would have been passed. Of this matter I shall speak more in detail another time ; but I repeat here, that the cause of Reform has suffered more from this detestable feeling of envy than it has suffered from all other enemies put together. When I say that it has suffered, I mean *for the present* ; for as to the future, neither corruption nor envy can prevent its success. All that was contained in the Register was, with Envy, "Verv good indeed ; very true, very " powerful ; but *Cobbett* ; the people talked of nobody but *Cobbett* ! *Why* " should *Cobbett* know more than any body else ? why should *he* have " all the praise ?" The truth is, that I did not want it ; that I never sought for it ; that no man living was ever so ready to give praise to others, labouring in the same cause, as I have been ; that no man living ever took such pains to draw public applause down upon the heads of others as I have ; and, what is still more, that no other man living ever stood silent and heard so many others applauded to the skies, admired beyond all bounds of expression, for the very plumage IN WHICH HE HIMSELF HAD DECORATED THEM. How often, good God ! have I, after having put words into men's mouths ; after having made wisdom come forth out of the mouths of babes and of sucklings ; how often have I quoted these very words of my own as being their words, and took merit to myself for having had the diligence to select and republish their wise sayings ! How often have I acted thus ! How scrupulous have I

been in observing the most impenetrable silence upon these matters, and, at last, to see Envy exerting all her malignant influence; keeping at one time, a glum silence, and, at another time, endeavouring to mar by her doubts and hesitations the cause of the people; merely because the spontaneous and universal sentiment of the nation had placed me at the head of that cause! To see this at last after all my ten or twelve years of disregard of fame; after all the millions of proofs that I had given of having no envy in my own disposition, was a little too much for me patiently to endure. It was very natural for men to wish themselves in my place. It was natural for them to wish that all the people in the kingdom should be reading and repeating their words; but it was not natural for them to say, or to act as if they had said: "Perish the cause of the people, rather than let it succeed without our being considered as the prime instrument of its success." This was as unnatural, as unmanly, as base, and every way as wicked, as any of those acts of which we have ever complained. But, Envy will not succeed in the end. Nay, she has not succeeded even thus far; for, the very measures of which she has secretly approved, in the producing of which she has so mainly assisted, and in the adoption of which she has, within herself exulted, because they tended to check, and, as she hoped, to destroy the progress of that influence, the sight of which her eyes could not endure; those very measures have only the more loudly proclaimed my fame to the world, seeing that there is not one single individual in England, who does not well know, that all the new laws; that all the provisions in those laws; that all the reports, all the imprisonments, all the hatched plots, all the schemes and all the contrivances have been principally levelled at my writings. This is so well known, that every man in England would be deemed an idiot who affected to doubt it. Therefore, Envy, as far as things have gone, has only laboured to defeat her own purposes; and her ladyship may be well assured, that *the part, which she has now to act*, is a more difficult one than any she has ever acted before. To give her open approbation of what is going on at this time, she dares not. She cannot very well be silent while it is going on. Yet, if it goes on, it will be seen how *impotent* she is; and if it ceases, she has me and my writings back again to mortify her more than ever. * * * And now let us proceed to our history of the last hundred days of English freedom.

The cause of Reform was the subject of discussion. Disguise the matter how they will; talk as long as they please about *plots* and *Spenceans*, it was Reform that approached the Boroughmongers in such a formidable shape, and, against this it was that they armed themselves. This was no new cause: very far from it. The principle, that *no man shall be taxed without his own consent* is as old as England is, or at least, as the very oldest of the laws of England. This was, in fact, the cause of HAMPDEN, the cause of SIDNEY; it was the cause of the Revolution in 1688, and it was the cause at the Revolution in 1817.

The American revolutionary war had the same basis. The Boroughmongers would insist upon *taxing the Americans without suffering them to send Members to Parliament*. These latter resisted, and their gallant and legal resistance was crowned with success. That war had brought on the nation such a burden of taxes, that the people looked to a *real representation* as their only safeguard for the future. The subject of Reform was agitated. Mr. Pitt, the Duke of Richmond, and hundreds of others, then stood forward in the cause of Reform. The latter, as you

well know, brought a Bill into the House of Lords to effect this grand purpose. Mr. Pitt declared, that "*no honest man* could be minister without a Reform in the Commons' House." Mr. Wilberforce, too, was a Reformer. Pitt's alliance with Dundas made him forget all his notions about Reform. But, so late as the year 1793, Mr. GREY, Mr. SHERIDAN, the late and present Dukes of Bedford, and many others, signed a petition, which was presented to the House of Commons, in which they state, that they are *ready to prove at the Bar*, that the people had no voice in choosing a majority of that House.

The *French Revolution* had now begun, and, as a real *representative government* had been established there, it was easy to see, that it would be quite impossible to keep the people of England quiet without a Reform, if the limited kingly government and a freely-chosen assembly were suffered to exist in France. *Therefore*, and for no other cause, it was resolved to go to war with the new Government of France, having first stimulated other powers to begin that war. The war succeeded in restoring the Bourbons, and in destroying freedom wherever she had raised her head on the Continent. But, in performing this work, the Boroughmongers contracted such a load of debt, that, at the close of the war, they found the nation completely ruined. They expected fine sunshine days for the rest of their lives; but, behold! they were worse off than before they began their war! They thought, that they had stifled the spirit of Reform for ever, but, they found, that all the evils of the country were *speedily traced to the old source*. Men asked each other what was the cause of this unexampled misery after so glorious a war. The *taxes* was the answer. And why not *lessen the taxes*? They are wanted for the Debt, the Standing Army, and the Staff and the Sinecure People and Pensioners. And *why* do all these exist in so enormous a degree? Because the House of Commons will not lessen the four latter, and because they have voted the Debt and used the money. And *why* have they done this? Because they have, for the far greater part, an interest in so doing. *Why* not choose *other Members then*? Because it is not the people who pay the taxes, who have the choosing. *Why* have they not then?

Thus was the matter brought *home*, and Reform again began to be rung in the ears of the honourable House, who, as it were to convince the people of the absolute necessity of that Reform, had, by a monstrous majority voted, only a few years before, that they would not *hear* evidence against Perceval and Castlereagh charging them with the actual sale of a seat in the House.

This was the position of things in the spring and summer of last year. Yet, it was *my own opinion*, that it was not prudent to urge on the question of Reform *at that time*. In the winter of last year, and about the month of February, I stated this my opinion very clearly to Major Cartwright, who had been for some time reproaching me with a *backwardness* in that cause. He, in a good-natured way, reprov'd me for wasting my great talents, as he was pleased to call them, on questions of *political economy*, in exposing the state of the finances, and in discussions about the Funding System, concluding with saying: "*Let them settle their accounts as they will: let us have our rights.*" "Yes," replied I, "but, my opinion is, that, until they have *settled* their *accounts*, we never shall have our rights; or, at least, until all the *world sees* clearly that *they never can pay in full the interest of the*

"*Debt.*" This was my opinion for many years, and, therefore, I bent the greatest part of my force to this object: the making the subject of the Debt, in all its parts and bearings, familiar to the people. And, the knowledge, which is now possessed in England is quite surprising.

It was impossible to believe, that men, who *possessed the seats*, that is to say, who possessed all the real powers of the Government; who had, *in fact*, the appointment of the Ministers, the filling of all places of profit and of trust; the giving of all the commissions in the army and navy; the bestowing of all honours at the bar; the bestowing of the livings in what is called the gift of the Crown; and who, in short, possessed every thing in the country, having the power of taxing the people wholly in their hands: it was impossible to believe, that men so vested with power, and having a great standing army at their nod, would ever give up this mass of power and this mass of possessions, merely at the *solicitation* of an unarmed people. It was like petitioning an able man to give up his talents to you, or a handsome woman to give you up her beauty.

But, if some event were to happen, which would *shake the Borough-mongers by their own means*; some event which would make them stagger under their own weight; some event which would bring them to a stand, not knowing which way to turn themselves; then, indeed, they must give way, and do the people justice. I could suppose many events, that would have operated thus; but the event, which I was sure would be effectual, and which I was also sure would, sooner or later, take place, was the blowing up, or, at least, the total discredit of the Funding System, by a *failure in the means of paying the interest of the Debt in full*.

It was, therefore, my opinion, that it was not prudent to urge on the cause of Reform to what might be called a *pitched battle* with its enemies, until those enemies were at war amongst themselves; that is to say, until the Boroughmongers found themselves compelled to break with the Fundholders. Whenever that should happen, I saw, that the Boroughmongers would not only lose their best allies, but that those allies would be amongst the bitterest of their enemies; and that then, a Reform must take place, and in all human probability, in a peaceable and orderly manner.

To this opinion I held during the last summer, and now I draw near to that series of transactions, which have finally produced the Bourbon System in England. But this letter is already too long; I shall, therefore, not enter on these topics till my next; and, in the meanwhile, I remain your sincere friend,

WM. COBBETT.

P. S. I have this moment had pointed out to me by one of my sons a paragraph in the *INDEPENDENT WHIG* of the 30th of March, which I will notice here, merely because it contains a calumnious imputation, which may deceive some persons who have not been attentive observers of my conduct. The main object of the paragraph is to make the people of England, or that very small portion of them who read the *Independent Whig*, believe, that I had *long planned* my departure for America, and that I had long been writing in praise of everything American, *in order to pave the way for this step*. The income from my *Register* was never less than *fifteen hundred pounds a year I believe*. Not a thing to be

cast off upon a speculation of better fare, with a sea voyage for a whole family as a prelude. But, let us hear this *wise* and *patriotic* WHIG, well worthy to belong to the faction, whose name he has chosen to take.

“ Our readers will perceive, in another department of our paper, a letter from ‘ Mr. COBBETT to the Public,’ dated Liverpool, March 26, the contents of which, we are inclined to think, cannot excite much surprise, in those who have been accustomed to read the writings of that gentleman. It is to be recollected that Mr. Cobbett commenced his literary life in America. Without entering at present into any review of him as a public character, we feel, that to prove that he *has long contemplated this act*, we need only refer those who have been accustomed to read his lucubrations, *to re-peruse his numerous letters, not long since published, to the American People—to the unqualified praise of everything American contained in those letters, and to the particular manner in which he had expressed himself, previous to the dreadful and arbitrary measures which the Ministers have resorted to, and which the Parliament had so fatally sanctioned, when predicting, as he did, with confidence, the success of the cause of Reform, and scouting, as he did, the idea of the enactment of the Gagging Bills, &c. It was clear to us (and we have for months past stated that such was our opinion), that Mr. Cobbett was satisfied in his own mind, that tyranny, and not liberty, would prove the result of his truly injudicious zeal.* Let the Reader refer back to his late Publications, and he will find that Mr. Cobbett, when scoffing at the Courier for holding out the threat of coercive laws, as constantly as he adverted to that subject, invariably opposed the menace of the Courier, with the prediction of the loss of one-half of the population of the country, either in being killed in the opposing the enactment of such laws, or in emigrating to America, to elude their vengeance. It was clear to us, when we observed this kind of writing adopted by Mr. Cobbett, that he *had made his own mind up to a voyage to America*, and that all his *political writings had for their object the promotion of his views in that country.* We were additionally led to indulge this belief *from the information we possessed that one of Mr. Cobbett’s sons had been for some time past, actually settled in America, as a Bookseller, and publishing his Register, printed here, in that country.* Our opinion of Mr. Cobbett and his writings are upon record—we broached that opinion not only when he was here to defend himself, but when he was in the enjoyment of the climax of his popularity. We then stated that we considered he had *greatly injured the cause of Freedom and Reform*—such being our sentiments we placed them with our reasons upon record, as became us as Journalists, fearful of nothing so much as an abandonment of our public duty in *any pitiful compromise of our independence.* The solemn question that now remains for us to discuss, as it regards the political character of Mr. Cobbett, is, whether after having taken so active and conspicuous a part in the cause of Reform, and having taken so much pains to *make proselytes, to his own constantly wavering opinions, the quitting his country and turning his back upon the thousands whom he had succeeded in making converts to his opinions, is the act of a Patriot?* Previous to our entering upon this inquiry we will wait for the publication promised by Mr. Cobbett, which is to explain his own motives, and after we have had the opportunity of perusing it, we will, with the strictest liberality and impartiality, place upon record our undisguised and genuine sentiments.— We have as decided a hatred to tyranny as Mr. Cobbett, or any other man in existence can have.— We would rather perish the *first* of Freemen than live the *last* of Slaves, but the love we have been taught to cherish for our country has instructed us to consider it our first and most imperious duty to exert, at all risk, the best energies of our minds in the defence and support of the common freedom of our countrymen.— The hour of danger is the time for *the brave man to be at his post.*— When the country most *wants the service* of a patriot, that, of all others, is the moment to try his zeal and prove his fidelity.— Were every public-spirited writer to follow the example of Mr. Cobbett, and fly to the shores of America, because such men, such drivellers of Statesmen as Castlereagh and his aspiring crew, have succeeded in the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus and the enactment of Gagging Bills, &c.— to what a state of degradation would the character of Englishmen be reduced.”

POPE says, that “ a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.” SWIFT says, that if a man of real talent comes forth and commands general attention, “ straight a swarm of dunces rise up, and endeavour to sting

him to death." SOLOMON says, that there is *nothing new under the sun*. All which sayings the Independent Whig has done his best to verify.

Now, as to the "*long-contemplated act*," Mr. Hinxman knows that I *last year* sowed about a million of *ash seeds*, and that, this last winter I caused to be collected many bushels more to sow *next year*, as they lie one year in sand previously to being sown. And this I was doing while I was writing those letters to the Americans, which excited the suspicions of the sagacious Mr. WHITE, of the *Independent Whig*. And, as for that "SON" of mine, whom this sharp-sighted gentleman had discovered to be settled in America and *republishing my Registers there*, if he had been sober for any portion of the last twelve months, he must have known that *son* to be a *nephew*, that he was sent out to publish *what I dared not publish in England*, and that all the plan and the departure of my nephew, and the whole thing was publicly stated in the *Register* in England, in February 1816. He may know further, if he will, that, in *January last*, I sent for this nephew and his partner (whom I used to call my *embassadors*) to *come home to England*, and that one of them was *upon the point of sailing when I myself arrived at New York!* So much for the "*long-contemplated act*." But, how this poor envious man must have blushed, if blushing had not long forsaken him, when he saw, in the next week's Address, that I explicitly state my resolution *never to become a citizen of America!* He would then, I should hope, blush too for saying that I had "*turned my back upon many thousands of converts*." You, my worthy friends, and my countrymen in general, will have seen by this time, whether I have *turned my back upon England*, or upon Englishmen.

But *he* (brave man!) will remain at *his post!* And there he may remain as quietly as one of his staring posting-bills, and without attracting any more attention from the Ministers than those bills do from the public. *He*, indeed! What danger is *he* in? His very *abuse of me is a sufficient security to him*, and that he knows very well. He need not, however, resort to such means: his intrinsic impotence is quite enough to protect him against the warrants of Secretaries of State. It is the *mastiff* and not the *mouse* that those gentry wish to muzzle. He will (generous creature!) be always at the *service* of his country, but *what service?* I have caused to be published, since my departure, more of that one Address (to maul which he was preparing his fangs), *in one single day's sale*, than he publishes of his paper *in a whole year!* And, in all probability there has been more sold of that Address before now, than he will publish of his paper in *three years*. So that, supposing my matter to be equal to his in *quality*, and, surely one may suppose that without any very great degree of presumption, I have only to write and send over *one Register in three years* to equal this devoted patriot in point of magnitude of *service* to my country. He asks to what a state of degradation the character of Englishmen would be reduced, if *every public-spirited writer were to follow my example*. If every such writer (and there are many such) could do it, he would do it. For, what is it to my *readers*, whether I am at Botley, or in London, or on Long Island; unless, indeed, we could suppose, that, while they applauded the writings, they liked to know that the writer's personal liberty, and perhaps his life, were in continual danger? And, if what I write *here cannot be published* in England, of what *service* to my country would it be for me to have remained in it?

The truth is, that, of all the envious men in the world, this man is the

most shameless in the exposing of his envy. When he talks of the *effects* of his having abused me sometime back, he speaks *feelingly*; for it cost him one-half of his readers. Yet, I never rejoiced at this. On the contrary, when people from the country have spoken to me about dropping his paper, I have always said: "O! no! Though he says "spiteful things of me, he now-and-then publishes good things. Don't drop his paper. He is an ill-conditioned, envious man; but, I dare say, his paper will do *you* no harm, and I am sure it will do *me* "none." I have used almost these very words to twenty different persons. I knew very well that his paper was sold to the Whig faction; but I thought his senseless rant against us would do us good rather than harm.

Mr. BELL, in his Weekly Messenger, had the candour and wisdom to observe, on the same 30th of March, that my taking up my *Citizenship* in America would be *allayed* by the payment of 5000 dollars, the amount of a fine imposed on me for a libel in this country. Poor Mr. BELL was deceived. His envious malice blinded him. I have no *Citizenship* to take up, Mr. BELL, and no fine to pay and never had. I paid 5000 dollars for an *American* having, in my paper, condemned the late Dr. RUSH's practice of physic, which practice, as far as I recollect anything about it, consisted in bleeding people to death to save their lives. But, I can excuse you, Mr. BELL. A man does not like to be left without readers, and particularly without *payers* for reading. Your falling off has been too shocking for any man to endure with patience. But, come, do not despair. A little veering about, if it does not recover your readers, may bring you your old grist from the Treasury: only, pray bear in mind, that an honest Parliament may call you to account and make you *refund*. WALTER and STEWART will have a long account of this sort to settle; and, though Stewart affects to treat *seriously* the charge of the Stamp-Office against my son, he must end his career pretty quickly, or, I verily believe, that that very son is likely to be one of those who will make a *real charge* against him for what *he* may be found indebted to the people of England. Indeed, these hirelings smell danger at a great distance. Their efforts in support of corruption are *now*, in their motive, like those which passengers on board a ship make to keep her from sinking. They are all now embarked in the same bottom with the Borough-mongers, and they must sink or swim with them. However, it will be prudent in them to begin to *prepare their accounts*, which are of very long standing, and which *must* be settled. I would hunt the money in their hands to the last penny. I have seen a letter in WALTER's father's own hand, in which he states, that the Treasury paid him *seven hundred pounds* for his fine and expenses, *on account of a libel on the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York!* This was a pretty use for these loyal gentlemen to apply the public money to. Let them all prepare their accounts, I say, and that will furnish amusement for them in these dull times of the Gag. The people do not know one-half of the motives of these men for supporting corruption. But, a little time will bring the whole to light; and then we shall see the stuff that their *loyalty* is made of. It is very hard that they should be riding about in their carriages, while those who have paid the taxes that have enriched them are starving. These impudent men always speak of the mass of the people as if they were speaking of so many brutes. They have no idea of a day of reckoning. That vile wretch of the TIMES spoke of poor CASHMAN as if he had

been a dog. If the poor fellow had had his two hundred pounds instead of Walter's father having received seven hundred for libelling two of the Royal Family, he would now have been alive, in all probability, and doing well. *Time*: time; give us only a *little time*; and justice will be done to everybody.

A HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS OF ENGLISH FREEDOM, &c.

LETTER II.

*Continuation of the History down to the Opening of the Parliament.—POSTSCRIPT.
Base Calumnies of MR. PERRY.—MR. CURWEN'S Poor-law Project.—Report
on Sinecures.*

(*Political Register, August, 1817.*)

North Hampstead, Long Island, June 13th, 1817.

MY WORTHY AND BELOVED FRIENDS,

Such, as I described it in my last letter, was my opinion, in the summer of 1816, upon the expediency of urging on the question of Reform. As the autumn approached, those persons who had been before so pressing upon the subject, became more and more pressing, and they began to make an impression upon me. The cause was *always good*; it was, *at all times, just* for us to demand our rights; it was at *all times* clear that the nation never could be happy till those rights were restored; but, though it be *right* and *just* to demand a thing, the *expediency* is also to be taken into view. It is at all times *just* to endeavour to destroy an enemy that has landed on the shores of our country; but the *time* of making the attack upon him may be so manifestly ill-calculated to produce the desired effect, that such attack may almost be criminal.

Mr. HINXMAN will recollect, that, as he and I went from Botley to Appleshaw fair, in *October* last, I stated to him all my doubts as to the success of the cause of Reform, as long as the Boroughmongers should be able to raise money enough to pay the fundholders in full. Yet, such was the state of things as to the general distress and misery of the nation, that the time, in all other respects, seemed to be propitious; and at last, after long debating in my mind, I determined on yielding to the pressing request of others and to *try* what could be done. And, here it will be observed by the Ministers and by their hirelings, that I acknowledge the truth of their charge, in and out of Parliament; that we *took advantage of the distressed state of the people*. To be sure we did; and had we not a *right* so to do? Were we not justified in this by

every principle of morality and by every consideration of duty? Was it not our duty to call upon the people to demand a Reform, when they were tasting of all the evils of a want of Reform; was it ever yet deemed unfair to assail an enemy at a moment when his affairs at home were in a difficult state? Did not the kings of Europe first sow the seeds of trouble in France, and then fall upon the Republican Government? We had not sown the seeds of trouble. We had brought no evils upon the country. It was the Boroughmongers themselves who had brought all the sufferings upon the people; and, were we not to take hold of the occasion to call upon the people to demand those rights, the having been deprived of which was the grand cause of all these sufferings? Besides, I had, for twelve years, been predicting, that the nation would be brought into this state unless a Reform was adopted: and, when this state was actually arrived; when all my predictions were amply accomplished, was I to hold my tongue? Was I, who had always contended that this great object of Reform was the main object to be attained, to say no more about it because the moment was arrived when all the evils of a want of it were felt? It was no further back than the Battle of Waterloo when I had been abused, insulted, *scoffed* at, for my predictions as to the miseries that would arise from the funding system, particular pains were taken by many to insult me by *anonymous letters*. To abuse me in the vilest terms. To ask me what was now become of all my *prophecies*. And when the hour of distress *actually* had arrived, I was to hold my tongue! Again it is very notorious, that, during the wars against France, and afterwards against America, the most sedulous and most successful efforts were made to deceive the people; to keep them in the dark; to mislead them; to render them wholly insensible to the voice of truth and of justice. And, now, when sad experience of the effects of those wars came to my aid, I was to be silent; I was to reject the powerful aid of such an ally: and was to leave, as far as my silence would contribute to that effect, the people to ascribe their miseries to any cause but the *true cause*! And, all this, into the bargain, to accommodate my good friends, the Boroughmongers, by whom I had myself been persecuted almost to death!

So much for their charge of our having *taken advantage* of the distresses of the country, which charge, in one short phrase, is no other than what a murderer might bring against his prosecutor, who should produce the evidence of surgeons in support of his case. But, though our cause was *just*; though it was *fair* to take advantage of the state of the country to forward that cause; still there was the consideration of *expediency* as to *time*; and my own opinion was, that the time was not come to urge on the question with the best chance of success. But, pressed very much by those for whose opinions I had, and still have, a very great respect, I thought it right to devote a paper or two to the subject; and, therefore, as I had no business myself at Appleshaw fair, Mr. HINXMAN went thither without me, while I remained at Middleton Cottage and wrote that essay which is entitled, "What *good* would a Reform of Parliament now do?" This was No. 15, of Volume 31, and is dated at Middleton Cottage, 12th of October, 1816. The succeeding Number, which was written from home, was to show, "In what manner a Reform can take place without creating Confusion."

These two Numbers, though at the old price of *one shilling and a halfpenny*, produced a very great effect. No. 17 was an Address to the

Reformers in general, having for its object to enforce what had been before said. No. 18, which was dated at Botley, on the 2nd of November, was the *first cheap Register*, and the history of its origin will show what mighty effects may spring from causes merely accidental. During the Spring and Summer of 1816, there had been many acts of violence committed upon bakers, butchers, millers, and other dealers in the first necessities of life. *Threshing-machines* had been destroyed; *mole-ploughs* had been burnt; *mills* had been destroyed; and, while in the towns, the people, in the fury of their hunger, were falling upon the shops of bakers and butchers, they had, in many places in the country, laid furious hands on the barns and ricks of corn and hay. The fatal result of the disturbances in the *Ile of Ely* was fresh before our eyes; and it became a subject of deep lamentation with me, that *every part of the people* did not clearly see *the real causes of their misery*, and that they should be thus induced to commit acts of violence upon their innocent neighbours and fellow-sufferers. At the same time, the hirelings of the press, especially the *TIMES*, the *COURIER*, and some of the *WEEKLY PAPERS*, were labouring constantly to persuade the people, that the dealers in the necessities of life *charged too high a price*, in which they were aided by *many of the magistrates*; and, of course, the remedy for the people was to *compel* those persons to charge a lower price, and, as that could be done only by acts of violence, acts of violence were committed, and then these same writers were the first to cry out against *rioting*, and to call for the *blood of the rioters!* What I have stated here, as to fact, is notorious throughout the kingdom.

Some time in the month of September, and about two months previous to the epoch of the famous No. 18, I was conversing on this subject with a neighbour, and, we both agreed that, if the people could but be enabled to see the matter in *its true light*, there would be an *end to all such acts of violence at once*, and, of course, to the ignominious deaths of fathers and sons, and the miseries of wives, children, and parents, produced in the end by those acts of violence. My neighbour was of opinion that it was in *my power* to effect this desirable purpose by writing an essay upon the subject. But, though I had a strong desire to do it, I was aware that the *high price* of the *Register*, though it had not prevented it from being *more* read than any other publication, still, it prevented it from being so generally read as would be necessary to put the people right upon this important subject. Hence came the observation from one of us (I forget which), that if, for this one time, for this particular purpose, the price could be by some means or other, reduced to *two-pence*, then the desired effect would be produced at once. I said, before we parted, that this should be done. But, as it was impossible for me to *prove* to the people what was *not* the cause of their misery, without proving to them what *was* the cause of their misery; and as it was impossible for me to show them the real cause of their misery, without pointing out the *remedy*; as the remedy, at last, came to a *Reform of Parliament*: and, as I still feared, that the best time was not come for urging on this grand question, I *delayed*, from time to time, the fulfilment of my promise to my neighbour, who, on his part, never saw me without pressing me hard upon the subject; and, on the 2nd of November, I wrote the No. 18, being an "*Address to the Journeymen and Labourers*," on the afore-mentioned subjects.

As the topics had long been a passing through my mind, they came

very naturally and easily into their place upon paper ; and, as I most sincerely felt the truth and justice of all that I wrote, I wrote with as much *force* both of language and argument as I had, in any case, at my command.

The arrangements had been made the week before for the *manner* and *price* of the publication ; and I felt quite confident not only of a *great sale*, but of a very great *effect*, my object, as my Publisher can prove, being, upon that occasion *not to receive any profit at all*, but merely to pay the *expenses* of printing and publishing, though I had every reason to expect that this Cheap Edition would, for that one week at any rate, *diminish* the profits of my regular publication, seeing that the contents of both would be precisely the same.

This Number was written on Wednesday, sent off on Wednesday evening to London and published on the Saturday. *After* the manuscript was gone off, my fears of *premature effect* returned ; and, after two days resolving, and re-resolving, and misgiving, I sent off my son John by the night-coach to prevent the *Cheap Edition* being published for a short time at any rate. But, on the Sunday morning, instead of his informing me that he had obeyed my orders, he informed me that *six thousand* of the Cheap Edition had been sold *before his arrival*. It was too late now to balance ; it was too late to calculate any longer about time. I had put myself before the wind, which I well knew would prove too strong to suffer me to stop, or to slacken my pace.—It was impossible now, in this new scene, to remain at Botley. I went off to London in a few days, and remained there, except when I went into Hampshire to the Portsdown Meeting, and to Winchester to the Meeting there, until my final departure for Liverpool ; and, of the eventful days of my eventful life, these were certainly the most eventful.

The effects of No. 18 were prodigious. It occupied the conversations of three-fourths of all the active men in the kingdom. The whole town was in a *buz*. The labouring classes of the people seemed as if they had never heard a word on politics before. The effect on their minds was like what might be expected to be produced on the eyes of one bred up in the dark, and brought out, all of a sudden, into broad day-light. Every body was permitted by me, expressly to *republish* this Number ; and, in town and country, there were, in two months, more than *two hundred thousand* of this one Number printed and sold ; and this, too, in spite of all the means which the Government, the Church, the Military and Naval Half-Pay, and all the innumerable swarms of Tax-gatherers and Tax-eaters, were able to do to check the circulation, not forgetting their fast allies, the great Manufacturers, Loan-Jobbers, and some of the Yeomanry.

Amongst the striking and *instantaneous* effects of this Cheap Register was the *unlocking of the jaws* of the London Press with regard to me and my writings. For nearly *five years* I had been unable to extort a word from this press. The hirelings of the *Ministry* hated me because I exposed the acts of the Ministers ; the papers attached to the *Whig* faction hated me because I proved that that faction was as hostile to the people as the Ministers themselves ; and the papers which took, as to object, the same side with myself, though they could not, if they spoke at all, refrain from approving, *chose to say nothing*, so that the silence was as complete as if it had been the result of a direct and most *solemn convention*. There were a few exceptions as to the weekly papers, and

one as to the daily papers; but, these were too trifling to amount to much; and, nothing short of a degree of industry and perseverance, such as I possessed, could have kept up a publication under such circumstances. There were besides, what the French call the *Chutchments* or the *Whisperings*, to contend with. And it is quite surprising how these are managed, and what effects they produce in London, and thence throughout the kingdom. The word starts from WHITEHALL, and away it goes in every direction. A gentleman in Berkshire was pointing out to a *Parson* in that county in the summer of 1816, something to read in "Cobbett." "Cobbett!" said the other, "does *he* write now?" The crafty Priest knew well enough that I did, but it was his business to cause it to be believed, that I was *become of no consequence*.

Upon the appearance, however, of No. 18, away went all the *Chutchments*, and all the pretendings of ignorance; and the corrupt part of the press, instead of its apparently *sworn silence*, treated the public with volleys of lies and execrations against me that never had a parallel in the world. It seemed as if the curses of these hirelings had, for years past, been kept *without sound*, like those of MANDEVILLE's sailors, which having been uttered during a terrible *hard frost*, filled the air with their crackings when the *thaw* came. No. 18 seemed to have a similar effect upon the long-suppressed falsehoods and execrations of Walter, Stewart, Perry, and others in London; and the very air was filled with the sound of their abominable abuse. To all this abuse I opposed nothing but the conscientiousness of my integrity. At last, however, at the end of *two months*, I gave, in No. 1 of Volume 32, entitled "*A New Year's Gift to George Rose*," an *answer* to every calumny that carried anything of weight in it; and, here it was that I experienced the good effects of *long endurance of calumny*; for the indignation of the people against my base and malignant calumniators, and their applause of my own conduct and character, were boundless; and these were expressed in a way that I never can remember without the deepest sense of gratitude.

Soon after the publication of No. 18, the first meeting in *Spa Fields* took place, of which I shall speak more fully, when I come to treat of the "*Pluts*" that formed the subject of the contents of the Green Bag. In the meanwhile the Cheap Register went on, and the Government went on with its efforts to check it. At first the opinion appears to have been, that I was to be beaten *by the press*, supported by the Government. A set attack upon me in the *Times* newspaper was distributed at the price of a *half-penny*, though the paper must have cost a *penny*. Great numbers of this paper, reprinted by CLOWES, printer of the *Tax-papers*, and, of course, in the employ of the Government, were carried, in the night, to the office of the *COURIER*, where a great number of *PLACARDERS* were assembled, who, at two o'clock in the morning, were sent out to stick them up, for the doing of which they were to be paid *fifteen guineas*. Two of these men, having been taken up by the *WATCH*, were taken to the Captain of the Watch, and were by him released upon their informing him that they were doing "*a Government job*." All this I had it in my power to prove before a court of justice, and, I trust, that the opportunity of doing this will yet be afforded me.

About this time, which was early in December, Mr. BRACKET, the Under Secretary of State to Lord Sidmouth, said, in answer to a proposition for silencing me in some *very atrocious* manner, "No: he must be *written down*." Accordingly, up sprang all the little pamphlets at

Norwich, at Romsey, at Oxford, and at many other places, while, in London, there were several, one of which could not cost less than *two thousand guineas* in advertising in large and expensive placards, which were pulled down, or effaced, the hour they were put up, and which were replaced the next hour, as one wave succeeds another in the sea. At last, after all the other efforts of this kind, came "ANTI-COBETT," published at the same identical office which George Rose originally set up with the public money, and one-half of which, as intended partner of JOHN HERRIOT, was offered to me on my return to England from America, and which I refused, as stated in the "New Year's Gift to George Rose." This "ANTI-COBETT" was written "by a Society of Gentlemen," amongst whom, I was told, were CANNING, WILLIAM GIFFORD, and SOUTHBY. The expenses attending it could not fall short of *twenty thousand pounds* before I left England. Not content with advertisements in three hundred newspapers; not content with endless reams of placards; the managers of this concern actually sent out *two hundred thousand* circular letters, addressed to persons by name, urging them to circulate this work amongst all their tradesmen, farmers, workpeople, and to give it their strong recommendation; and this they were told was *absolutely necessary* to prevent a *bloody revolution*!

These efforts of the suborned press were, however, all in vain. They did produce effect; but it was this: amongst candid people, even though opposed to me as to political views, they produced shame at the unwarrantable means that my enemies resorted to, and they awakened in the minds of many such persons the first dawns of a suspicion that I was, after all, *in the right*. Amongst the mass of the people these publications produced indignation to see so foully treated a man, from whose writings they had derived so much information, and whose own conduct had been so open and so fair, who had never disguised any point of force in the arguments of his adversaries, and who had always been the first to acknowledge the errors into which he himself had, at any time, fallen. Amongst *all* classes, not excepting the tax-eaters themselves, these atrocious publications, thrust upon the public with so much earnestness, excited a high opinion of the powers of my pen, and a consequent desire to see, at any rate, some of its dreaded productions.

By the beginning of January, or thereabouts, the Government had discovered, that it was quite useless to carry on any longer this contest with the *pen*. But, though *open force* appears now to have been resolved on, it was very hard to make out any pretext for employing such force. The machinations for the obtaining this pretext I shall speak of by and by, it being first necessary to speak of the *line which the Reformers pursued*. And here I shall first answer those, who thought, that we went *too far at once*. The fact is, that the Boroughmongers must, they well knew, *refuse all, or yield all*. A Reform, to be *effectual* as to any rational purpose, must take from them the whole of the power that they had usurped. They must *cease* to have the power of filling the seats in the Commons' House, or they must *still have* that power. It was nonsense, therefore, to think of any *compromise*. Such a scheme could only *amuse* the people, and open the way for *new delusions*. The Boroughmongers would yield *nothing*; or they would yield *all*; because they very well knew, that if they yielded *any part* of their unjust power, they must, and that too, at no distant day, yield *all the rest of it*; and, the only QUESTION, with regard to *their disposition*, was, whether they would

be disposed to yield *now*, in order to prevent being *compelled* to yield at some future day; or whether they would positively *refuse* now, and rely upon *force*, both for the present and the future? As to my own opinion upon this question, I expected them to adopt the *latter course*; I expected that they would do *what they have done*; but as I shall show by and by, it was just and right for me to act as I did, notwithstanding this opinion, which I never scrupled to communicate to any body.

As to those who proposed *Triennial* Parliaments, and who wanted to stop at the mere enlargement of some of the Boroughs; they were either excessively foolish or very insincere. Such a change would have done no good, if it could have been effected; and, that man must have been wholly ignorant of the state of the public mind, who did not know that the mass of the people, all the whole mass of petitioners, all the whole mass of those who were in downright earnest for Reform, would have treated with scorn, would have considered as the grossest of insults, any proposition of this sort.

There were points of difference amongst the Reformers themselves, at first, of greater nicety. The question of *ballot* or no *ballot*, and the question of *householders* only, or *all men twenty-one years of age*. The ballot was a matter of little consequence. But, the latter was of great consequence in the *principle*, though it would have been of no effect at all, if we had come to the practice. When the *Deputies* met in London, I myself proposed the restriction to *householders*, and Major CARTWRIGHT did not object; but, as he knows well, it was done merely because it was hoped that Sir FRANCIS BURDETT would bring in a *Bill* for a Reform, and because I knew, that he would not consent to what is called *Universal Suffrage*. However, finding that the *Deputies* from the country were not only decidedly for universal suffrage, but that they were prepared with good and sound arguments in favour of it, we gave way, as it became us to do.

Thus, then, all the people, *nine-tenths* of the active men in the nation, were unanimous for a Reform of the Parliament upon the fixed principles, "That no man ought to be taxed *without his own consent*; and that Parliaments ought to be *annually chosen*." The arguments in favour of the restriction to householders melted into air before the fact, that every journeyman and labourer paid *ten pounds a year in taxes* out of every *eighteen* pounds that he earned and expended. In the presence of a fact like this, all the talk about *householders* shrunk into fanciful niceties, which were instantly rejected by common sense.—And, besides, we had the *letter* and the *bill* of the late DUKE OF RICHMOND, the latter recognising our principles, and the former most clearly proving them to be bottomed upon reason as well as upon the Constitution and laws of England. To stop at householders nobody could find arguments to support, other than such as rested upon the *impracticability* of taking an election by Universal Suffrage; and, this *impracticability* was soon found not to exist.

Those who would confine the votes to *visible property* of any sort, or in any degree; those who would confine it to *householders*; neither have any *principle* or any *law* for their guide. We have both; and to that has been owing the humiliation of the Boroughmongers; for, *humbled* they are in exact proportion to the outrages they have been compelled to commit, in order to avoid yielding to the force of reason and of justice.

As to the *carrying of our point* ; as to the policy of our proceedings ; is there a man on earth, whose imagination, however whimsical, can invent a reason for his believing, or affecting to believe, that the Borough-mongers would not *as soon* yield their power of seat-filling to all the men of twenty-one years of age as to all the householders ? It is so absurd, so shockingly absurd, to believe any such thing, that no man in his sober senses can believe it ; and for any man to affect to believe that the people have gone *too far* in praying for Universal Suffrage, while he himself professes a wish to go *as far as householders*, cannot possibly be ascribed to any thing but mere *whim*, or, to a desire to draw himself away from the cause altogether ; especially when he sees *not one single petitioner* of the same opinion with himself ! It would be a curious thing indeed for a man to ask for a Reform, because two millions of men have petitioned for it, and, in his plan of Reform to shut out the *main principle* of the Petitioners, and to exclude one-half of themselves from any benefit to be derived from their own prayer ! Solomon says that there is nothing new under the sun ; but, this would be something *new* at any rate ; and, it would come, too, directly in the teeth of the great principle of the law : "That *no man* shall be taxed without his own consent."

The line of conduct, therefore, which the Reformers pursued, was wise as well as just. They had law and reason on their side all the way through, and hence they were *unanswerable* ; and, besides, as far as I, or any other, who might be called a *leader* in the cause, had anything to do, the *people would have it so* ! They had taken the thing into their *own hands*. They no longer looked up to Palace-yard, nor to the Guildhall of London. They had met all over the kingdom ; and, they had shown that they wanted *no leaders*. In their Resolutions, their Petitions, their Speeches, they had shown that talent was no longer confined to those who are educated by Monks at the Universities. Some of the documents drawn up, and some of the speeches delivered in Scotland, in Lancashire, in Nottinghamshire, and many other places, would, if they dared accept of the challenge and lay their documents and speeches by the side of them, put the gentlemen of St. Stephen's to shame, if their fortitude were not too powerful to suffer them to experience any such feeling. At no former period could the *people* be said to ask for a Reform. How many times has Sir FRANCIS BURDETT, in his speeches, complained of the *silence* of the people of the country ! How many times has he said, that he saw no hope, till the *country* bestirred itself ? At last it did bestir itself in good earnest. But it was *Universal Suffrage* for which it stirred, as, indeed, it *must* be ; for, who could expect more than that half the tax-payers to bestir themselves in order *still to be excluded from the right of voting* ?

The people understood very clearly, long before the period to which I am alluding, what share of the taxes they paid ; every journeyman and labourer clearly understood, that out of 20s. for *salt*, he paid 16s. or 18s. in tax, including the additional charge arising out of the tax. He understood, that his *beer* was three-fourths tax. He understood, that his *candles* and *soap*, his *tobacco*, *shoes*, *suger*, *tea*, *spirits*, and almost everything else that he bought and used, paid enormous taxes. He understood, that out of every eighteen pounds of his earnings he paid ten pounds in taxes. And, what an excellent *Reform* must that appear to him, which was founded upon the principle, "that *no man* ought to be

taxed *without his own consent*," and which, at the same time, *excluded him from voting*, unless, in addition to his being taxed, he possessed the qualification given him by a wife and by renting a house ?

To make the right of voting depend on the possession of *property* of any sort, would not, in some cases, be so good as the present system, which in some cities and towns extends the right to *free men* of certain trades. But, to extend the right to mere *householders*, and to *stop there*, would in *principle* be even more capricious and partial than the present system, though, I am aware, that it would have answered the purpose, in practice, if it could have been obtained. But, while it was full as objectionable to the Boroughmongers as the Universal Suffrage, it did not please the petitioners, and CANNING very quickly availed himself of this circumstance, when Sir FRANCIS BURDETT talked of his Householder plan. He said, "this is full as bad as any other plan ; but, at any rate, it is a plan that nobody *petitions* for. The noble Lord's plan (Lord Cochrane's, who said he agreed with the petitioners,) is really *petitioned* for. It is ruin, it is confiscation, it is revolution, it is devastation and carnage: I am aware of all that ; but at any rate it does come supported by the prayers of numerous petitioners ; while all the other plans have *not one single petitioner* in support of either of them." This was very flippant and very impudent, but the *argument* against the divers plans, other than that of Universal Suffrage, was perfectly fair.

The question, when it came to this stage, was not what one man, or twenty or thirty men, might think best ; but what the *people thought best*, and what they were ready to support with all their might. It was for *no man* to be judge for a whole people. No man was *bound* to act contrary to his own opinion ; yet it may be wise, and just, and public-spirited sometimes to do so ; but, no man ought, by the opposing of his own opinion to that of a whole people, to endanger the success of their virtuous cause ; especially when it must be obvious to him, that the following of his own opinion, could, in no sense or degree whatsoever, lessen the opposition which would be made to what he would have to propose.

I was, as I said before, of opinion, that the Boroughmongers would *yield nothing* at this time ; but, because this was my opinion, I was not, for that reason, to desist. The thing was just and right. It was always justifiable to endeavour to obtain the Reform ; and, if I could have been quite *sure* that we should fail now, it was justifiable to pursue the path that I pursued ; because, after we were fairly on foot, to have retreated without coming to the onset would have done much more mischief to the cause, than a mere suspension of its complete triumph can possibly have done. With several gentlemen I reasoned upon the subject, thus : " We can do *no harm*, except to a dozen or two of persons, amongst whom I shall certainly be one. I am aware, that the Boroughmongers, though we shall drive them to the wall in argument, will *now* be too strong for us, if they resort to *force*. But then, what follows ? Why, their system will stand before the people in its *true and undisguised form and character* ; and that will be accomplishing more than one *half* our work. I know very well what *Gagging Bills* are ; and I know how they were *smoothed* over during the war, when so many means of false alarms existed. But I also know, that if *resorted to now*, the thing will admit of no smoothing over ; it will

“ admit of no disguise ; no palliation ; and the people will see clearly, that they can never be safe again as long as seats are bought and sold. We shall succeed now, or we shall not. If we succeed, the nation and all its ancient laws and establishments are safe. If we fail, there must be a system introduced equal to a great revolution ; and, then it is impossible that final success can be at any great distance. The length of time, however, that this new order of things may last is of little consequence, it being, in my opinion, far preferable, that the shadow of freedom should be removed, than that the shadow should remain after the reality is gone. It is,” I used to say, “ the *hypocrisy* of the thing that I most dislike, and the effects of which have been the most fatal to the country. The *talk* about *liberty*, about *personal safety*, about *free press*, about the *right of petition*, and the vague idea that the people have that all these exist : *these* are the things which have done the mischief. It was the fair face and smooth tongue of *Celia*, and not the seeing of her paints and ointments, that kept her swain in bondage. We shall at any rate, compel the Boroughmongers to throw off the mask ; and, when that is done let them live and carry on their system as comfortably as they can.”

This was the reasoning upon which I proceeded, and I could call twenty persons to bear testimony to my having used it. And, there the Boroughmongers are with all their Acts of Parliament about them ! They wallow in wealth ; they possess boundless power ; but, is there upon the whole earth, a man who *envies* them ? Dungeons and gibbets are their security. The dread of death, or of punishment equal to death, levelled against a whole people, they have thought necessary to their preservation. What a fact this is to proclaim to the world ! They have proclaimed that it is dangerous to them, *that the people should read* ! They have resorted to means to prevent the people from hearing what they are doing ; aye, to means such as the most guilty and timid of individuals would scorn to employ.

I should now proceed to refer to the circumstances which occurred at the opening of the Parliament, but, seeing some things in the London papers which require immediate notice, I shall here conclude this second letter to you, with expressing my most sincere regard, and with begging you to remember me and my sons most affectionately to all the persons of your families. Pray, Mr. HINXMAN, remember us to your neighbours about Chilling and at Posbrooke, and to our good and kind neighbours at Botley, when you see them. If you should happen to meet “ *the Botley Parson*,” emphatically so called, pray tell him, that I advise him not to emigrate hither by any means ; for that here the farmers do not pay *eight shillings sterling an acre for tithes* ; that a man may have a garden and orchard a thousand times as large as mine at Botley, and gather all the fruit himself, without sending to any parson to come and take his tenth apple, pear, &c. ; and that a man, when he has a hen’s nest, or a farrow of pigs, is not afraid of a parson coming to pry into his hen house or his pig-stye. Tell him from me, if you please, that the parsons here do not profess to be spies of the Government ; and, that a son never gets a good fat living in a church on the score of *the father’s having served a Lord at an election*. But, tell him, too, that the parsons here, never get horse-whipped with impunity to the whipper ; nor do they truck their pork in the sea-ports, for old clothes, to vend to their own domestics at a profit. He once

undertook to cure the paupers of the parish of the *itch* for *five pounds*, another source of profit that would fail him here, seeing that, as we have no tithes, so we have no paupers.

I am your faithful friend,
WM. COBBETT.

Postscript, June 14, 1817.—Mr. JAMES PERRY.—I have said enough of my calumniators, and the calumniators of my motives; but this mean and dastardly man must have one more blow, which I bestow on him because he is the well-known organ of the *Whigs*, that faction which is really *more* Boroughmongering than the *Pittites*, and who have been *more* active in procuring the abolition of liberty in England.

This man in a paper of late date, says, that I, at *some distance back*, was shaping my course for America, *because my Register had fallen so low in England*; that, upon the publication of the cheap Register, of which I sold *considerable numbers* (mind the curious phrase!), I changed my mind, and intended to remain at home; but that the *Gagging Bills having greatly reduced my sale*, I again resolved to set off to America.

Now, the object of all this is to inculcate the notion, that I have all along been actuated purely by motives of a *mercenary* nature. However, supposing for a moment this to be true, this man, in his eagerness to calumniate, forgets, that in saying (which is false) that the *Gagging Bills had reduced my sale*, he clearly acknowledges, that, if I did lose readers, it was only in consequence of those acts of force, which no man could resist, and which wholly put an end to public liberty. He forgets, too, that he himself had, on the 18th of April, distinctly said, that the circular of Lord Sidmouth was *directed against my cheap Register*. And he forgot, while he was giving such a detail of my reasons, and of those operations of my mind which had finally taken me to *North America*; he forgot, while he was at this work, that he himself had told his readers, about twelve days before, that I was gone to *South America*. This man, in speaking of the circular of Lord Sidmouth, and in ascribing it to a desire to suppress my cheap Register, adds: "In those publications **WE** were not always gently treated; but, **WE** should be *base* indeed, if we could see without emotion encroachments on the Constitution, by the suppression of writings, even if those writings should be directed against **OURSELVES**."

Yes, Mr. PERRY, you would be base indeed, if you could see this without emotion; but, let me tell you, Sir, that you would not in this case be guilty of baseness nearly so detestable as that of taking advantage of his compulsory flight from the *Gagging Bills*, to utter the foulest of *calumnies against the author of those writings*. Lord Sidmouth's circular is *force*; it is, as you call it, an arbitrary suppression of my writings; but it is as much less *foul* than your proceeding, as a highway robber's act is less foul than that of a wretch who endeavours to destroy by poison, the object of his hatred. The ground, too, of his Lordship's proceeding is less dishonourable to human nature. He manifestly proceeds upon the opinion, false or true, that the suppression of my writings is necessary to the permanency of the system, in the carrying on of which he is a great agent; while your motive is that of sheer *envy*, the *basest* of all the passions that ever cursed the human breast; a passion which sticks at nothing; which is ashamed of no means, however foul; and

which, alone, could have led you to commit so base an act, and that, too, under a conviction, that you could do it *with impunity*. Suppose I were to say of a man, that he was, at once, the most extravagant and most sordid wretch alive; that he cribbed from every one; took bribes for inserting or suppressing paragraphs, while he employed a half year's plunder at a time in order to *purchase* the company of some men of title to eat his turtle and drink his Burgundy; that he, while playing the patriot, had always his eye upon a place, which he seized hold of with eagerness equal to the malice engendered by its loss; that he was every morning preaching morality, and every evening trading in the lowest of debaucheries in the very streets; and that, to crown all, while he was smirking along the fashionable promenades with the airs and self-complacency of an ADONIS, his squinting eyes and distorted visage rendered him so dreadfully odious, that nothing short of a stock of vanity, such as human being never possessed before, could have emboldened him to go out of his house, even to take the air for the preservation of his life. If I were to say this of any man, would it not be called *base*, though warranted to the very letter by *truth*? What, then, shall we call your calumnies on me, which are all bottomed in what you know to be *false*, and which surpass in malignity anything here said of this imaginary despicable wretch? If you have not been "*gently treated*" in my publications, it is because I thought you, as I still think you, an enemy, and one of the worst enemies, of the liberties of the country. Even in the very paragraph which I have last quoted from your paper you serve the Boroughmongers as far as you are able. You call Lord SIDMOUTH'S CIRCULAR "*an encroachment upon the Constitution!*" What Constitution was there, pray, after the Secretaries had the absolute power of imprisonment in their hands; after it was made death to attempt to seduce a soldier from his duty; after the Magistrates could prevent, at their pleasure, meetings to petition; after they had the licensing of all reading places; and, after it was made treason, permanent treason, to *attempt to over-awe either House of Parliament*; which might mean the use of any strong argument tending to produce Reform? After all this had taken place, what *Constitution* was there remaining? To what, then, are we to impute this remark of yours? To *drivelling*, or to *hypocrisy*? Take your choice. To convict you of a positive, distinct, and wilful *falsehood* may be useless, as you stand convicted of so many before; but, it may not be amiss to show you, that you are not safe from detection, notwithstanding my distance from you. You say, that my Register was at one time so low in sale as 750, and that it was *precisely at this time* that I sent out my nephew to *try the American market*. Now, I appeal to Mr. CLEMENT, who lives within musket-shot of you, and whose word is, at least, worth your oath, for the fact, that at that very time, the sale was more than 1600 and yielded a profit of 1500*l.* a year or more. Thus I charge you in the face of our country with a wilful falsehood, invented by yourself, and published behind my back for the basest of purposes, namely, that of gratifying your personal malice, when you thought you were safe from detection. After this, must not the man who affects to believe you be a hypocrite, and he who really believes you be a fool? You acknowledge, that I sold "*considerable numbers* of the cheap Register;" I did, indeed, more in the *nine months*, ending with the month of March, 1817, than you have sold of the MORNING CHRONICLES during the *twenty-seven years* that you have

owned that paper. It was, upon my word, a very "*considerable number.*" And you, as well as Lord Sidmouth, may be pleased to bear in mind, that *what has been read cannot be unread.* Neither his mandate nor your malice can effect this purpose; and, unless you can effect this, you effect nothing in the end. You and his Lordship may bear in mind, too, that there can be *no relaxation of the present system*, as long as *I live*, without again *giving a free course to my publications*: to those very publications, which his Lordship so much dreads, and whence arises that envy which is ready to choke you in your own gall. But, the cheap Register "*fell off in sale* on the passing of the Gagging Bills." Well! and what then? Why, it was a proof, that the people were afraid if they continued to sell it, not that they should be *prosecuted according to law*; but that they should be taken, at once, and *crammed into a dungeon*, without the use of pen, ink, and paper, and without a right to see their wives and children. A very sufficient reason for "*the falling off*," as you call it, though you are the *first person* to inform me of it; and though I know, that of the number which was published after the issuing of *Lord Sidmouth's circular*, TWENTY THOUSAND copies were sold, in London only, in ONE DAY, a greater Number than ever was sold in any one day before; and *four times as many as were sold of Burke's pamphlet altogether*, except what was bought by the *Treasury* to be dispersed. So that, the "*falling off*," when it comes, will be proved, at any rate, to have formed no part of my reasons for quitting England. You and the hirelings of the Boroughmongers have laughed at the idea of *continuing my weekly publication in England*. I promised my readers that they should have a number from me in three months from the date of my *Leave-taking Address*. I have kept my word. I have sent them *three numbers*, and I shall send them one for *every week*. If the Boroughmongers suppress them, I cannot help that, but even this they cannot do completely without *great trouble*. They must have *more acts and more mandates*; and after all I will elude their grasp; and I fairly tell them now, as I told them before, that, as long as I have life, they shall feel the effects of my pen, unless they yield their power of disposing of the seats in Parliament. Of this they may be assured, and, who but such men as you will not applaud the steps I have taken, in order to set them at defiance.

MR. CURWEN'S POOR-LAW PROJECT.—This gentleman's project is, I see, in precisely that state that all his projects finally come to; to wit: in a state of *smoke!* He and his Committee may *sit* till doomsday, but they will never do anything that shall tend to diminish that load of taxes, called *Poor-rates*, unless they make the Boroughmongers take off the *other taxes* to an enormous amount, and this the latter cannot do without over-setting the main prop of their power, the *Funding System*. Mr. Curwen's plan is a *Saving-Bank plan*, than which there never was any thing more foolish in the world. The thing carries absurdity upon the very face of it, and upon every individual feature of that face. To make present abundance provide for future want is reasonable enough, but it is what men do of themselves if they are of a provident disposition, and upon the supposed existence of such a disposition, the plan proceeds and must proceed. But, to make *present want* provide against *future misery*, is a scheme that never before entered the minds of any men upon earth. Either the journeymen and labourers have quite enough to eat, drink, and wear *now*, or, they have not enough. If the former, why suppose that

they will not *always* have quite enough; and why pester yourself, Mr. CURWEN, to induce them to *lay up money*? If the latter, if the great mass of journeymen and labourers have not now half enough to eat, drink, and wear, as is notoriously the case, what an absurdity to suppose, that they will *save* out of their starvation the means of preventing their future demands upon the parish!

A Mr. OWEN, of LANARK, has, it seems, been before the Committee with his schemes, which are nothing short of a species of *Moukery*. This gentleman is for establishing innumerable "*communities*" of paupers! Each is to be resident in an *inclosure*, somewhat resembling a barrack establishment, only more extensive. I do not clearly understand, whether the sisterhoods and brotherhoods are to form distinct bodies, like the nuns and friars, or whether they are to mix together promiscuously; but, I perceive, that they are all to be under a very *regular discipline*; and that wonderful peace, happiness, and national benefit, are to be the result! How the little matters of black eyes, bloody noses, and pulling of caps, are to be *settled*, I do not exactly see; nor is it explicitly stated, whether the novices, when once they become confirmed, are to regard their character of pauper as indelible, though this is a point of great importance. Mr. OWEN's scheme has, at any rate, the recommendation of perfect novelty; for of such a thing as a *community of paupers*, I believe no human being ever before heard. Mr. OWEN has provided an hospital and a chapel for each of his communities; I wonder that he, who appears to have foreseen every other want, should have forgotten a *madhouse*. The formation of so many convents for paupers, with all their kitchens and "*dormitories*," and other innumerable buildings, and with all the seeds, cattle, implements, household goods, &c. would require a *sum of money*, the amount of which would have staggered a man whose mind had been fashioned in any common mould. But, this is nothing with Mr. OWEN, who says, it may be *borrowed* of individuals, or of the *Sinking Fund*!—Adieu, Mr. OWEN of LANARK.—Mr. CURWEN's ideas are of a more sublime cast. He hears the people cry for food, and, in turning about him for the means of satisfying their hunger, he fixes his eyes, at once, upon the SEA! "Thus," exclaims he, in an eloquent rapture, "*might eighteen millions of acres of sea, without any cultivation, be called upon to yield an abundance of the finest fish in Europe, for our general sustenance, our natural food as islanders!*" In the *Thanksgiving* which was instituted for the *escape* of the Prince Regent, last winter, there was a supplication to God to "*still the madness*" of the Parliamentary Reformers, the readers of my Two-penny Register. It had been more creditable to have relied upon this supplication, unaided by Gagging Bills. But, is there not more need of some such supplication to produce *stillness* in these *mad* projectors? "*Our natural food as islanders!*" What, then, the "*Roast Beef of Old England*" no longer appertains to us; and we are transformed into Seals! Fish is, at last, our *natural* food; and we have an immense domain, which yields it *without cultivation*. If it were not a shame to waste one's time in exposing the thoughtlessness, the childishness, of such notions as these, we might ask Mr. CURWEN, whether he thinks, that he is the first discoverer of this immense tract of sea; whether he thinks, that, if fish could be obtained *advantageously* as a general food, it would not have been so obtained long ago; whether he has forgotten the memorable

projects for feeding the nation upon Scotch herrings and Cornish pilchards, and whether the present Chancellor of the Exchequer (who commenced his career as a placeman, in the capacity of a *Commissioner of Scotch Herrings*), never told him, that the herrings were not eaten, and that the pilchards were used to manure the land, after the nation had been heavily taxed in order to pay a bounty for catching them; whether he does not know, that the fishing trade is now so poor a thing, as to be supported by a *bounty*, paid out of the taxes, amounting to more than a *hundred thousand pounds a year*. We might ask him all these things, and we might ask him besides, how it happens, that the cause of the national distress has been so very completely and so very suddenly changed? Last year, the misery was ascribed to the "*surplus produce*:" this year to a "*surplus population*." Last year food was *too plenty*: this year food is *too scarce*. Last year the *profound* as well as humane CASTLEREAGH congratulated that body of which he is a most worthy member, that wheat was *rising* in price, and he asked, in a triumphant tone, *where would be the distress* if wheat rose to eighty shillings a quarter? This year this profound Statesman assists in putting into the mouth of the Prince, the expression of a hope that the price of food will *soon fall*, and makes him ascribe the *distress* to the *high* price, and not to the low price, as in the case of the last year. Last year the distress and the sufferings of the poor, the desertion of their parishes by the farmers, the bands of poor prowling about the country, the want of employment for them, and the monstrous augmentation of the Poor-rates, were ascribed by the Honourable House, *without a dissenting voice*, to the *low price of farm produce*; and this year, when all these symptoms of wretchedness have increased in a three-fold degree, that same Honourable House, with a similar unanimity, and with equal profundity, ascribe the increase of these evils to the *high price of farm produce*. The year before last, in the face of the petitions of the people, and with troops actually drawn up round the House, a Bill was passed to *keep up the price of corn*. Last year the distresses of the country were ascribed to the not having passed that Bill *sooner*: this year those same distresses, together with their prodigious increase, are ascribed to the *high price of corn*. After this, would it be presumption in the most illiterate and most feeble-minded man alive to express his dissent from the opinions of any of those persons, or from the unanimous opinion of the whole put together? The truth of the matter is this: the whole nation *knows* now the *real* cause of the misery. The mass of the people cannot be any longer deceived. The most ignorant amongst the politicians are those who have wilfully and obstinately shut their eyes. There are many men, in both Houses of Parliament, who know that *mine* is the true doctrine, but who have not the *courage to be candid*. I have discussed all the points so often; I have so frequently varied the views of the several questions; I have so carefully collected in my progress every detached ramification of the several subjects; I have unravelled with such painful perseverance all the intricacies of these most intricate matters of inquiry; I have, at last, made the matter so clear to every unbiassed mind, that the whole nation, not only well understands what are the causes of its distress, but what are the remedies, and the only efficacious remedies to be applied. This fact is known to *those two Houses*; and, think now, my *Lords and Gentlemen*, would it have been *more humiliating to your pride*, if you had (years ago even) adopted my doctrines,

and prevented the existence of the grounds of that fear which has, at last, driven you to such acts of desperation? Would you have *more* reason to be ashamed of having adopted salutary measures, though all the world might have called them mine, than you have to be of those measures which have driven me from my country? Whatever way you may answer these questions, in this dilemma you must still remain: either you must keep my country in its present state, or I must be restored to that situation, from which to exclude me has been one of the great objects of your efforts, and of the efforts of your hireling press.

To return, now, for a little, to Mr. CURWEN's project; he does not see, or he affects not to see, anything at all of the *cause* of the evil, of which he complains, and to remove which he is, I dare say, very anxious, seeing that he pays, perhaps, a thousand pounds a-year in Poor-rates. The Poor-laws have existed three hundred years, or thereabouts. They were never regarded as an *evil*, till after the first American War, by which the nation was plunged deep into debts and taxes. In the reign of Charles the Second, they amounted to only 250,000*l.* a-year. Before the late wars against France, they amounted to 2,200,000*l.* a-year. At the end of the first war against France, they amounted to 5,300,000*l.* a-year. Last year, or, rather, the year before, they amounted to 8,000,000*l.* a year; and now they may probably amount to 12,000,000*l.* a-year. But, indeed, there is no rule to go by. Subscriptions, gifts, grants of money, applications of other funds: all these have been added, and still starvation raves throughout the land. And, how should it be otherwise, when those who labour, and who never can have any *saving* worth speaking of, are obliged to surrender in taxes *more than half what they earn*. I have often *proved* this fact. Indeed, if you look at the taxes on *beer, soap, candles, tobacco, tea, salt, leather, &c.*; if you look at the amount of these taxes, you will see how large a portion of the whole of the revenue comes out of the earnings of the *Labouring People*. There are men to say: "Oh, no! this is all a *mistake!*" A mistake is it? And how so? If JOHN JOLT pays four shillings for Barley, and four shillings for *Tax* on a bushel of malt; and twopence for *Beer*, and fourpence for malt-tax, beer-tax, and license-tax for a pot of beer; if he pays for these two articles 4*s.* 2*d.* and 4*s.* 4*d.* for tax, is he not just 4*s.* 4*d.* the *poorer* for the taxes on these articles? "Oh, no! It is his "master, Farmer BELCH, who pays John's taxes, because John gets his "money from Farmer BELCH." Indeed! why then, it is Farmer BELCH who pays 'SQUIRE LICKSPITTLE's taxes too; for the 'squire, who is Belch's *landlord*, gets his money from Belch as well as John does. "Aye, but then the 'squire gives Belch something for his money: he gives him the *use of his land*." And does not John give Belch something too for his money? Does not John give him the *use of his limbs and his head*? And, are not these something; and are not these John's *own private property*, as much, to all intents and purposes, as Lickspittle's land is his own private property? This is enough to show the fallacy of all such reasoning, and I defy Mr. MALTHUS, with all his scholars, to remove the conviction which at once flashes upon the mind out of this short exposition. Let us hear no more, then, of the insolent pretensions of what is called *property*. A man has a property in his *writings*; he has a property in his *inventions*; and what are these but his *labour*? for, he has not only a property in what he has published or made, but also in *what he is going to publish or to make*. And, TULL,

in his famous book on agriculture, very justly observes, if a man has not a property in his labour, he must be a real slave, and his body cannot be said to be his own. Whatever taxes, therefore, are paid upon the things, *consumed by the labouring classes*, is so much taken out of their earnings and carried away for the use of others; and, in proportion as these taxes are great or small in amount, must be the state of the labouring classes of the people. If the Government would but try the *experiment* in your two parishes, and send you ten or fifteen pounds a man to give back to your labourers at the end of each year, you would soon see HAMBLEDON and TITCHFIELD without a single pauper. A much better way would be *not to collect* the taxes in so great an amount by *seven-eighths*, or thereabouts; and then your men would not have to help to pay nearly *four millions sterling a-year* to the tax-gatherers, for their trouble in collecting taxes, and which sum exceeds the amount of the whole of the gross revenue of the country, only a hundred years ago! These are the causes of the increase of the paupers and the poor-rates; and, with these causes of the evil before his eyes, Mr. CURWEN's *remedy* is, making the poor, that is to say, all the labouring people, put into a *Saving Fund* a portion of what the tax-gatherer leaves them to exist upon. But; and here we come round to the old point of the circle; if he proposes to take off taxes, he must show how the *Fundholders* are to be paid and how *the army* is to be maintained; and, as he dares not face this grand question, he resorts to his projects, and finds out that we have a "*surplus population*," at the very moment that the Parliament is *taxing Bachelors* because they are *not married*, and while Mr. MALTHUS is roaring from his niche, that the salvation of the country depends upon *checking the disposition to early marriages*! "Well," says JONATHAN, "these are wonderful men in the Old Countries; what can be the matter of them?" I will tell you, JONATHAN, what is the matter of them. They are stuck fast in the mud. There is but one way to get out; and to take that course they are *afraid*. That is the matter of them, and there let them stick.

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE ON THE ABOLITION OF SINECURES.
 —This curious document I will notice in my next Postscript, and, if I do not strip it naked, there never was a Local Militia-man stripped naked in the Isle of Ely. Ah! they thought the Cat was gone for ever when they put out this Report! They were deceived. I stood at the hole looking for it, and it shall have that degree of attention, to which it is so well entitled. But in the meanwhile if anything *good* were to come out of this report, to *whom* will that good be ascribed? Not to the *Ministers*; for why did they delay it so long? Not to the *Whigs*; for they never once moved upon the subject. Not to the Parliament; for they have never done anything, when they *always* had it in their power. To the *People* themselves, then, the thing will be due; that is to say the *Petitioners for Reform*; for no other man, or body of men, ever urged this demand home before. I shall show what has been done, and *what is really intended at bottom*; but if any good could arise from this report (which I deny however) the people would have themselves to thank for it, and nobody else. Yet, there will be enough selfish men, who *skulked* from the Petitions, who will applaud *this* step. They are stupid enough to think, and base enough to hope, that we shall get the burdens removed from *them*, without obtaining our own just rights. Cunning as this class of men are, they are not cunning enough to see far into the chapter of events.

W. C.

A HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS OF ENGLISH FREEDOM, &c.

LETTER III.

Opening of the Session.—Speech.—Invitation to Strong Measures.—Attack on the Prince.—Who contrived it?—Thanksgiving for the Escape.—Language in Parliament.—Mr. Dawson and Mr. Lamb, Lord Milton and Mr. Elliot.—Affection of these men for the People.—The People discovered to be Ignorant.—“Lower Orders.”

(*Political Register, August, 1817*)

North Hampstead, Long Island, June 20th, 1817.

MY WORTHY AND BELOVED FRIENDS,

As the opening of the Session of Parliament, which took place on the 28th of January, approached, the hirelings of the press were more constantly employed in hinting, that some *vigorous measures* must be adopted to keep down what they had the impudence to call the *disaffected*. So early as the month of November, they evinced their alarm, and began, even then, to endeavour to communicate their own feelings to the timid part of the nation. There was, however, something so perverse in the proceedings of the Reformers, these latter were so provokingly peaceable and loyal, that Corruption dared not openly, all at once, talk of violent measures. She did, through her press, “*caution the well-affected against our peaceable language and conduct;*” but, she found nobody but the grossest of the feeders on the taxes to listen to her; and to her great mortification, my Register, which she held forth as a species of political torch, calculated to inflame not only the minds of the people, but to produce real flames in the stacks, and barns, and mills, and manufactories, and farm-houses, did, in the precise proportion in which it circulated, produce a directly contrary effect; and those excesses, which had finally loaded the gallows at Ely and in Nottinghamshire, were no more heard of.

No. 18 had principally this object in view, and besides the *Letter to the Luddites*, written in November, I missed scarcely a week to inculcate the doctrine of absolute necessity to avoid all acts of violence of every sort, and to observe a strict and real obedience to the laws; nay, I went so far as to reprobate, in the severest terms, all those who had been, or who were disposed to be, ready to commit acts of violence. It is no small compliment to the heads as well as the hearts of the people, that I could do this, not only without any loss of popularity, but with a vast daily increase of it. I was well aware of all the prejudices of the people against machinery, and of their notions about the extortions of bakers,

butchers, &c., which notions Corruption's press *was constantly fostering*. But, I knew my countrymen well. I knew that if, in kind language, they could be made to see their error, they would no longer persist in it; and I relied upon my own talents to produce that conviction in their minds.

I was not deceived in this reliance, and the nation will bear witness, that, from the time that I began to write upon this subject, a total change took place in this respect; and, that I did more in the space of a month, to prevent depredations of this sort, than all the new penal laws, all the magistrates, and all the troops had been able to do in seven years; and to prove this there were fifty magistrates ready and willing to come to the bar of the Parliament. Why, then, did WILLIAM GIFFORD and SOUTHBY; why did these two sinecure reviewers so bitterly lament, in their Quarterly Review, that the people "*swore by, lived by, and were ready to die by,*" my Register? Could they; could these sinecure-holders wish for the *peace* of the country? Yes, they really did wish for the peace of the country; but, they had a wish which stood higher than this: that of *keeping their sinecures*, which was wholly incompatible with the doctrines that I preached.

And as to the hirelings of the press in general, they, too, wished for the *peace* of the country, if it could be kept, and if their system could, at the same time, go on. But, in exhorting the people to keep their hands from committing violence on their innocent neighbours; in *proving* to them, that their sufferings did *not* arise from these imaginary petty causes, I was compelled, and was perfectly disposed to prove, that those sufferings *did* arise from the great load of taxes joined to the deadly effects of a paper-money, varied in its value by the will of the managers of that money; and, when I came to speak of the cause of the existence of these overwhelming evils, I was obliged to ascribe them to a want of a Reform in Parliament, and to exhort the people peaceably and legally to petition for such Reform.

This it was that stung Corruption to the quick. She did not wish for bakers' and butchers' mobs; for they might end in mischief to her upon some occasion or other. She wished still less for attacks upon machinery and upon corn-stacks; but, very far indeed did she prefer these to peaceable and legal and numerous composed meetings and petitions for Reform, for these were most formidable attacks upon herself. Many persons said to me, in the months of November, December, and January, "What impudence it is, Mr. Cobbett, in these men to say, that your publications are *inflammatory* and calculated to set the poor upon the rich, when they so obviously have a different tendency, that we, in our county, take great pains to put them into the hands of our working people." I remember particularly, that this was told me by gentlemen from Norfolk, from Cambridgeshire, and from Nottinghamshire; and at Leeds I received a vote of public *thanks* for this effect of my writings. But, as I used always to observe to those who made these observations to me, my writings really were "*inflammatory*;" for they inflamed the people against the corruption, bribery, fraud, and perjury, which had been the great cause of all their miseries; and I inspired them with an anxious desire to remove this cause for ever; and this it was that Corruption meant when she called my publications *inflammatory* and *seditions*, and called upon the rich to rally round the *throne* and *religion*, by which she meant the profits of those who lived upon the labour of the peo-

ple, and who were the greatest enemies of religion as well as of the throne.

"And how in God's name," honest people used to exclaim, "can they have the impudence to accuse you of teaching *blasphemy*, and of wishing to destroy the *Church*, when you, on the contrary, exhort the people not to make religion a subject of dispute or discussion, and when you are the only layman in the kingdom, who, having any degree of popularity, have even ventured to risk it by saying that the *tithes* do not make a part of the sufferings, of which the people complain?" The hirelings must, indeed, have been the most impudent of mankind to make this charge; but, any thing was resorted to. *Blasphemy* was a good word for their use. It served them, as a man once told me of the bank-notes. "Depreciated or not depreciated," said he, pulling a handful out of his pocket and thrusting them forward towards my face, "they serve us." And, true or false, the charge of *blasphemy* served Corruption. Besides, to wean the people from all religious *bickerings* was to hit her no common blow. She has long most essentially benefitted from these bickerings and divisions: *divide and subjugate* is one of her great maxims: nothing suits her turn better than to have contending sects continually appealing to her as the arbiter of their pretensions, and to keep all in awe by the fear each has of her giving privileges to any other which she denies to it.

My writings tended to sweep away for ever this source of influence; they tended to withdraw the attention of the people from these petty disputes; they tended to make them one firm and united body in the cause of Reform. From all quarters and corners I called them to listen to me. I raised the standard of plain common sense, of sound reasoning, intelligible language, and the whole people gathered around it.

This it was that alarmed Corruption, and she soon began to discover her uneasiness, and her press to throw out hints, that "*something must be done*" to counteract the *poison* that was *weekly* going forth to the people in "*Two-Penny Trash* publications." Day after day she grew more uneasy. She cut all sorts of capers. Like Nick Frog, in Swift's works, she canted, she cried, she swore, she seemed, at last, as if she was ready to cut her own throat. Her hirelings still kept bellowing for *something* to be done. Stewart of *The Courier*, Walter of *The Times*, William Gifford and Southey, of *The Quarterly Review*, and hundreds of others; but, these four men in particular, whose *names* and whose *conduct* we shall, I hope, never be so base as to forget; for that would be a crime such as ought not to be forgiven in us, and our country ought to perish, if these men were not called legally to answer for their deeds. These men in particular, Corruption's forlorn-hope, came, at last, about a month before the Parliament met, to call for *new laws* to protect the Constitution against the "*Two-penny Trash*." New laws to protect a Constitution against *trash*! When they were called upon to *answer* this *trash*, they declined, as BURKE declined to answer PAINÉ, whom he called on Mr. ATTORNEY-GENERAL SCOTT, to answer! The pensioned hack was stung to madness by PAINÉ, and, in the House of Commons, where PAINÉ was not to answer him, he actually called upon the Attorney-General to silence his opponent. Gifford and Walter and Southey and Stewart followed in the same path; but, in this case, the Attorney-General had *no power*. Hardened as the system had become; great as was the severity added to the libel-laws since the time of Paine and Burke:

great as the encroachments had been on the liberty of the press; still, as Lord Sidmouth afterwards confessed, the law-officers could find nothing in the Two-penny Trash to prosecute with a chance of success. The case being, therefore, more desperate than in the time of PAINÉ, more desperate was to be the remedy; and, accordingly, *my opponents* recommended, not prosecutions by the Attorney-General, but *new laws*, which they called for upon the ground, that we had laws to prevent the sale of *putrid meat*, and other *poisonous* things, and that we *ought* to have laws to prevent the reading of *poisonous* publications; and, of course, they themselves, or other sinecure placemen, or tax-eaters, were to be the *sole judges* of what was, and what was not *poisonous*! These prostituted, these shameless men, were the harbingers of the Acts, which were afterwards passed; and, as I said before, *they* must never be forgotten, while we, or our sons, are alive.

The subsequent measures were, therefore, resolved on, without doubt, weeks before the Parliament met; and, as we shall presently see, it was quite clear, that the attack upon the Prince's carriage in the Park, only added an incident to the grand drama, all the parts of which were before prepared and carefully distributed. Indeed, Lord Castlereagh said expressly, that the measures about to be proposed, would have been proposed, if that attack had *not* been made; and, it would have been in vain to hold out the contrary, seeing that those measures were but too plainly pointed out in the Regent's *speech*, which, be it remembered, had been delivered *before* the attack was made. Yet was this attack a *great incident*; and, though it was clear, that the Acts would have been passed without its assistance, it is nevertheless true, that it formed the grand feature in all the future harangues against the "*Demagogues*," as we were called, and the almost sole topic in the declarations of the tax-eaters, and in the diatribes against the Reformers from the pulpit. Nay, in the very *Thanksgiving* itself, which was put up in the Churches, this attack was deduced as the *natural consequence of our principles*, though those principles were of a nature to render them proof against the Attorney-General with all his sharp-sightedness and all his power.

So great having been the use made of this attack, it is necessary to inquire a little here into the circumstances of it, in order, if we can, to come at something like a *guess* at its real origin. There were in London, at that time, about *seventy persons* from different parts of the country with petitions for Reform. They had brought up, some of them only *one*, and others twenty or thirty petitions each. It was expected, that Sir FRANCIS BURDETT, *whose name had been affixed to a circular, inviting deputies to come to London from petitioning bodies in the country*, would attend and carry down these petitions to the House. In this the Deputies were disappointed. He was not in London; and, came to the House that day *in a post-chaise directly from the country*, without any Deputy or any Reformer having an opportunity to see him, before he entered the House, of which I shall have to say more by-and-by.

Here, then, were these Deputies, with positive orders to deliver their petitions to Sir Francis Burdett; here were these sincere and honest men, as anxious for the success of the cause as if their lives had depended on it, running about the town half mad, not knowing where to go, or what to do. Seeing that there was no sign, at eleven o'clock in the day, of the arrival of Sir FRANCIS, Mr. HUNT, about that time, set to work to collect together all the bearers of petitions from the country, which,

with some few exceptions, he succeeded in doing. The place of assembling was Charing-cross, and from this spot they moved in procession, the *Bristol petition*, signed by more, I believe, than twenty-seven thousand men, being opened and carried at their head, while a bundle of oak sticks, emblematical of *union* and *strength*, was borne on an oak staff before the bearers of the Bristol petition.

In this order the procession moved down Whitehall and Parliament-street, to the house of Lord Cochrane, which was in New Palace Yard, directly opposite the grand entrance of Westminster Hall. His Lordship here received all the petitions; and, the Deputies, together with, perhaps, 20,000 people, having waited till it was time for Lord Cochrane to go to the House, they forced him into a chair, and thus they carried him to the Hall-door, with the Bristol Petition in his arms, in a roll of parchment about the size of a tolerable *barrel*, and with the bundle of oak-twigs in its belly, all which his Lordship manfully presented to the House, who *received* the petition, and permitted it to *lie upon their table*, where it still lies, in the legal construction of the thing, ungranted its prayer, undiscussed its contents, and unanswered its allegations.

The circumstances are very important, because, as they are notoriously true, so they amount to a very strong presumptive proof, that the attack on the Prince did *not* originate with the *Reformers*, who were proceeding down Whitehall towards the house of Lord Cochrane at the very time that that attack was made. If *they* had meditated any such an attack; if they had wished it even; would they have been absent from the scene? And, besides, if this had been the case, would not the fact have come to light, with all the *rewards* that were offered, and with all the activity of the police magistrates and their innumerable host of spies?

With *whom*, then, did this attack *originate*? That is the grand question. Now observe, there were crowds, whole brigades, of magistrates, police-officers, spies, constables, in the Park, besides soldiers, horse and foot, the former surrounding the coach eight or ten deep, and no part of the coach, which was not bullet-proof, except the glasses of the two doors, and they half an inch thick. Under such circumstances, how was the glass to be hit by stones thrown at it, without some of these brigades of attendants *seeing* the person who flung the stones; and without their taking him instantly into custody? One man, of the name of Scott, was taken up, but it was not *alleged* even that he had flung any stone. As to the idea of the *bullets*, that was soon laughed off the stage, when it was found, that, if they did enter, they entered on one side, and *went out again through the passages by which they had entered*, for, that they were not to be found in the coach; and, what was very surprising, Lord WILLIAM MURRAY, who came to inform the Parliament of the attack by bullets, had not thought it worth while, before he came, to examine the coach to see whether any bullets were there! No report of fire-arms had been heard by any one; no one had seen any body, but the soldiers, with fire-arms in his hands; a stone indeed had been fairly found in the coach; and, still it was alleged, that the attack had been made by *bullets*; and, though this was almost instantly laughed at, still the idea of *bullets* was so precious, that, two days afterwards, it was attempted to be revived by a statement in the papers, that a Mr. Such-a-one had just *picked up a bullet in the Park*, and sent it to Lord SIDMOUTH'S Office! Drawings were given in the papers, said to be copied from an *original made by the Prince himself*, of the square of glass, of the perforations made by the

bullets, and, it was gravely shown, from Professor Somebody's experiments, that bullets might make holes through a thing *without going through it themselves*.

In short, there were no bullets, as all the world was soon satisfied; and, the *uncommon pains* taken to make out the fact, by no means tended to do away some suspicions, which, amongst well-informed men, arose in their minds, the moment they heard of the attack, but which suspicions did, I dare say, never enter the mind of the Prince himself. *Who*, then, could it be that *instigated* this attack? It was clearly not the Reformers, unless we could suppose, that they had the power to *depute* the assailants; and, what is more, unless we can suppose, that they secretly wished to defeat their own cause; for, what could have *happened* better for the Ministers, and the Borough-gentry? Indeed, it was so very *opportune*; so very *fortunate* for them, that I heard a fundholder say, that it had *saved the nation!* What an idea! An attack on the sovereign, alleged to have proceeded from a desire of part, at least, of his people, to *take away his life*, calculated to *save the nation!* Yet, such was the general sentiment, and such the general talk, amongst all this tribe, who, thereupon, set to work to draw up and to issue *declarations*, ascribing this "*treasonable and damnable*" act to the Reformers, and pledging their lives and fortunes to *stand by his Royal Highness and the Constitution*. Then followed the *Thanksgivings in the Church*, and the thundering; no, not the thundering, but the roaring from the pulpit, against *instigators, agitators, and evil-minded and designing men*.

Leaving you to *guess*, now, my honest friends, *who* it was that really instigated this attack, and to bear in mind, that, in spite of all the facilities for so doing, *not one flinger of a stone has ever been discovered*, though great rewards were tendered for such discovery, and a great parade made about these rewards; leaving you, as I safely may, to form your own opinions upon this subject, I shall now go back to the Parliament, and see what they were doing there.

From the Speech of the Prince it was easy to foresee, that the advice of Walter, Wm. Gifford, Southey and Stewart, was intended to be adopted to the very letter; and, that, as there were *laws* to prevent the selling of *putrid meat*, lest the bodies of his Majesty's loving subjects should suffer thereby, so we were to have *laws* to prevent Two-penny *Trash* publications from *poisoning* their minds. His Royal Highness, in the close of his Speech, had this *ominous* passage:

"In considering our internal situation you will, I doubt not, feel a just *indignation* at the *attempts* which have been made to *take advantage* of the distresses of the country, for the purpose of exciting a spirit of *sedition and violence*. I am too well convinced of the loyalty and good sense of the *great body* of his Majesty's subjects, to believe them *capable of being perverted by the arts* which are employed to *seduce* them; but I am *determined* to omit no precautions for *preserving the public peace*, and for counteracting the *designs* of the *disaffected*; and I rely with the utmost confidence on *your cordial support and co-operation*, in *upholding a system of law and government*, from which we have derived *inestimable advantages*, which has enabled us to conclude, with unexampled glory, a contest whereon depended the best interests of mankind, and which has been hitherto felt by ourselves, as *it is acknowledged by other nations*, to be the *most perfect* that has ever fallen to the lot of *any people*."

If we had time for sport, or, if these transactions were not of too serious and important a nature to permit us to indulge in any disposition to levity, we might here find abundant matter for amusement. But, leaving these "*inestimable* advantages" to be discovered in the present state of a country, which is so over-run with paupers as for the poor-rates to demand aid from Exchequer Bills; leaving the Ministers, who wrote this speech to discover *what* nations those "*other nations* are," who acknowledge the Borough system to be the "*most perfect* that ever has fallen to the *lot* of any people;" and leaving them also to say, what was the *wisdom* in pointing out the excellence of laws, the remaining good ones of which were all *about to be suspended*; let us come to the subject of the "*disaffected*," and of the "*designs*" and "*arts*" here alluded to.

It was well known, it has been a hundred times proved, that there were none of the *Reformers*, who had any *designs*, which were not openly avowed, and which were no other than the Duke of Richmond had had thirty years before; and, so far from the agitation of the question of Reform having produced a spirit of "*sedition and violence*;" it had notoriously produced the *contrary* effects. Nobody is bound to prove a *negative*; nobody is bound to prove his *innocence*; every man and every body of men are held to be innocent till they are *proved to be guilty*. But, we were in the singular situation to be able to prove a negative in our favour; for, while there had been riots, in parts of the kingdom where there had been no Public Meetings for Reform, there had not, throughout the whole kingdom been one single act of violence committed where there *had been*, or where there were about to be, Meetings for Reform.

The Speech, indeed, did not *speak* of the Reformers, but, it spoke of a reliance on "*the cordial support and co-operation of the Parliament*," and, it was not very easy to see what these were needed for, while the Attorney-General was in full power, and while the Ministers had at their command an army of 150,000 men. If, however, any one could have doubted of what was intended, the speeches of the Members, on *both sides* of the House, as it is called most whimsically, would have left no longer any room for the shadow of such doubt. The mover and seconder of the Address, the leading Members of the Opposition, all agreed in reprobating the Reformers, and that unfathomably profound gentleman, Mr. LAMB, who is called one of "*the gentlemen opposite*," most eagerly volunteered his support of the "*firm-handed*" measures which he anticipated, and which, he said he would be for, because they would be *for the good of the people themselves*! Thank you, sweet Mr. LAMB; and, if we do not demonstrate our gratitude in something more solid than thanks, towards you and towards the rest of "*the gentlemen opposite*," by no means forgetting Lord MILTON, Mr. WM. ELLIOT, Mr. WYNNE, and many others, we are well assured, that you will take the will for the deed, and that you will give us credit till the time shall come when we may be able to repay your kindness, principal and interest. Mr. LAMB, with his usual profundity, took occasion, by way of parenthesis, to say, that he would not touch the property of the fundholder. Stick to that, Mr. Lamb! He said, that the landholders had been *ruined*, and that having done the people no good, it followed, *of course*, that the touching of the funds would do no good, but would produce new ruin. This is *Oxford* learning. This is the hereditary wisdom of

Mr. Lamb, who, if he had been a "Weaver-Boy" of Lancashire, never could have had any such brilliant thoughts come into his head.

Now it was that the gathered storm poured down upon us, and more especially upon *me*. Every one had some stroke at the *Cheap Publications*; the *Poisonous*, the *Venomous*, the *Deadly*, Weekly Publications. There was too much *pride* remaining to name my *Register out-right*. But, there was not pride enough to prevent a resort to all those circumlocutory shifts, which amounted to exactly the same thing as a downright calling me by my name; and the whole nation saw, that the sole drift and object were to stifle, by some means or other, the influence of the Twopenny Trash Publications. Great pains were taken to disguise this; but all would not do. The people had foreseen, that this *must* be done, or that a *Reform must take place*; and, a resolution to refuse the latter amounted to a proof of an intention to make a desperate attempt to do the former.

Still, it was pretended, as in the Speech, that "the *good sense* of the "great body of his Majesty's subjects was such as not to leave room to "believe that they were *capable* of being *perverted* by the arts of the "disaffected." Not very good *English* this, 'tis true, but much worse *reasoning*, for, if the *great body* were sound and well affected, and not *capable* of having their minds perverted, what need was there of all this *fright*? Why was the "cordial *co-operation*" of the Parliament called for? And why did these gentlemen make such a lamentable outcry against the Twopenny Trash? But, then, as Mr. LAMB so sweetly said, it was necessary to adopt firm-handed measures for the *good of the people themselves*. Yes, sweet Mr. Lamb, but, while the *great body* were sound, was it necessary to enable the Secretaries of State to cram into dungeons any body whom they pleased, not excepting this "great body," whose *good sense* made them absolutely *incapable* of yielding to seduction? Some legislators might have thought it sufficient to enable the Ministers to cram into dungeons those who should be found to be amongst the "disaffected;" that is to say, legislators of a moderate degree of zeal and affection; but, so great was your zeal and affection for the people, that you volunteered your aid, though you were one of "the *Gentlemen opposite*," to assist the Ministers in this work of kindness towards the people; accordingly, you were *ballotted* upon the never-to-be-forgotten Committee!

This sentiment of wondrous *affection for the people*; of wondrous zeal for *their good*; this amiable sentiment seems to have been uppermost in the breasts of the whole of the actors in this memorable scene. Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning had *principally* in view their love of the Constitution and of the liberties of the people. That plain, frank, and sincere old Nobleman, the Lord Chancellor, almost shed tears, while he declared (and took God to witness to the truth of what he said) that it was his love for the Constitution and of the liberties of the people, that alone could induce him to give his consent to these measures. That pondrous statesman, the Marquis of Buckingham, and his no less pondrous uncle, said the same; while that future pillar of his country, as the sycophant BURKE, called him, Lord MILTON, though he voted for all the Bills but the *Power-of-Imprisonment Bill*, did not think that any *degree* of affection for the Constitution and for the liberties of the people called upon him to go quite so far; and, as his father (Burke's main national pillar) had gone the whole length, the newspapers told us, that

the tender-hearted Lord MILTON was "deeply affected" in expressing his dissent from the Dungeon-Bill. However, the Right Honourable Wm. ELLIOT, who is, in a *parliamentary* sense as closely connected with Lord FITZWILLIAM as Lord MILTON himself is; this Right Honourable Gentleman, whose very figure bespeaks benevolence and warmth of heart, and each of whose dimples brotherly love would seem to have chosen for its abode; this Right Honourable personage carried his love to the full length of Dungeon-Bill and all; and, if any thing further could have been proposed, I dare say, that his ardent love of the Constitution and of the liberties of the people, would have urged him to follow the propositions. In answer to all which expressions of tender regard, the people might have answered, that these worthies had "*an odd way of showing it.*" When they told us, so often, that they were really, at bottom, only anxious to prove their love to the Constitution and to our liberties, though they might seem to be passing Acts against both, we might have answered in the words of the old French Epigram, the former part of which I have forgotten, but in the latter part of which (being translated into English) a young girl, all in tears, says to her lover :—

I excuse you, my dear, for *dissembling your love* ;
But, why need you *kick me down stairs* ?

The *compassion*, too, that these kind gentlemen expressed for the *deluded few*, was very striking in its character and effects. There were only a few of the *deluded*; and yet these gentlemen would put the *whole nation* into the absolute power of the Ministers, for the purpose of preserving these few from the delusions practised upon them. They would, and they did pass a law enacting a *new treason*; a law making it *death* to attempt to seduce a soldier from his duty; a law to enable the magistrates to open, or shut up, at their sole pleasures, all *reading-rooms*, all *lecturing rooms*, all *circulating-libraries*, and to grant or refuse assent to the *petitioning* the Parliament itself at any public meeting, and finally, to drive the people of Westminster away from their old place of meeting to petition. All this these gentlemen did, besides enabling the Ministers to shut up in prison whomsoever they pleased, in any jail that they pleased, and for any length of time they pleased, without suffering the parties so shut up to see, or to correspond with, their wives, children or friends. All this these kind gentlemen did; and that, too, from their extreme *affection* and *compassion* for the "*deluded few*!" There were, indeed, *laws*, and those pretty severe ones, too, already in existence for punishing whoever might, by writing or speaking, inculcate what was called *sedition* and *blasphemy*; but while these laws remained *wholly unappealed* to; while none of the "*designing men*" were attempted to be made amenable to these laws, the compassion of these gentlemen for the "*deluded few*" induced them to hasten to propose new laws, which embraced every class of the community.

Infinite pains were taken, in these speeches at the opening of the Parliament, to send forth the idea, that the persons who had been seduced; that is to say, the persons who had met and petitioned for Reform, were nothing but an *ignorant rabble*. This was very inconsistent with the alarm that they had excited, and the serious measures which were clearly intended. It was completely answered by the wonderful stock of knowledge and of talent, which had appeared at those meetings. But, for reasons too obvious to mention, it was thought necessary to ascribe the

demands of the people to *ignorance*. To have called them all *perverse* or *disaffected* would have not suited the purpose. Therefore it was to *their ignorance* and to the *craftiness* of their *seducers* that the alarming evil was to be ascribed; though the arguments of the former had not, and were never intended to be, attempted to be refuted, and though the latter had never been called in question by the *law*. Yet did Mr. Dawson, who seconded the Address in the House of Commons, complain of the "delusive appeals of those, who, under the *pretence* of a redress "of grievances, were found haranguing large assemblies of the people, "on topics, which were quite above the comprehension of the vulgar."

I wonder what topics these could be? The usual topics were *Sinecures*, and unearned Pensions and Grants; the Civil List; the sums voted annually for the relief of the "Poor Clergy" of the richest Church in the world, while Mr. MALTHUS, one of that Church, was crying out against relieving *poor labourers*, because it was a *premium for population*. Other topics were, the injustice of making the nation pay interest in a high currency for debts contracted in a low currency, and for *salaries* at the old rate, when the price of labour had so greatly fallen. And, above all, the people discussed the topic of trafficking in seats.

Now, it may be a matter of doubt, perhaps, with some persons, though it is none with me, whether there were a score of labourers in England, who did not understand all these topics as well as Mr. Dawson did; but, if they did not; if they were ignorant, and, if the matters discussed really were *above their comprehension*, how came the discussions to have produced so strong an impression upon their minds, that it was necessary to endeavour to efface it by four most tremendous Acts of Parliament? We never find, that much impression is produced on the mind of a man by the hearing, or the reading, of what he does not understand; and hence, I suppose, the few converts that are made by the sublime speeches which the English people might, if they had nothing better to look at, read in the newspapers, during one-half of every year. Talk, or write, *nonsense* to a man, and you will make no impression upon him other than such as disposes him to laugh. Talk even sense to him, in a language that he does not understand, and he stares at you, but that is all. But, the people, in this case must have been addressed in a language that they understood, and they must have pretty clearly comprehended the matter too; otherwise, why these extraordinary, why these monstrous efforts, to reduce to silence those who were called their seducers?

It is curious to observe, too, how the estimate of the people's understanding varies, in the opinions of men like Mr. Dawson, as the tendency of the people's efforts vary. BURKE called them a "*Swinish Multitude*," while he held forth Lord Fitzwilliam and his son as the Nestor and the Telemachus of the day. This was at a time, when the people were, many of them, calling for an end to the trafficking in seats. But, when, in four years afterwards, they had been, in some places, especially at Manchester and Birmingham, induced by false alarms and by various other tricks, to form themselves, under the rich to pull down Jacobins' houses, and to burn Mr. PAINÉ *in effigy*; then they became all at once a very *rational* and sensible people; and, Sir ROBERT PEEL, the manufacturing Baronet, in answer to Mr. Fox, who had said, that the Government ought to be ashamed of having *instigated* these Church-and-King Mobs, said, that the "Right Honourable Gentleman was much deceived in his estimate "of the character of the *labouring classes*, as far, at least, as related

“ to the county with which *he* had the honour to be connected. They were not only a very *loyal* class of persons, but an *enlightened* class of persons, who were *not to be misled by any writings or any speeches, however artful*. The pamphlet of PAINÉ had produced no impression on them. They wanted, they said, no *French fraternity*. They preferred their *religion* and their legal *freedom* with the good solid *Roast Beef* of Old England, and to the *atheism, the liberty and equality*, and the *broken breeches, and soup-meagre* of France.”

Well, now, either this was the character of the people in 1794, or it was not. If it was not, Sir ROBERT PERL was what I need not name; if it was, why is not this their character now, after twenty-three years of Bible Societies, Lancaster Schools, Bell's Schools, and after all the boastings that we have heard about the wonderful progress that has been made in the work of *enlightening*? It was their general character in 1794; no doubt of it; and, it happens, too, that Sir Robert spoke particularly of that same county of *Lancaster*, the people of which have now shown so much public spirit, and so strong a desire to produce a Parliamentary Reform. And, if Sir Robert spoke truth, when he described the labouring classes in Lancashire twenty-three years ago, why should they be regarded as *mob and rabble* now? Why should Mr. DAWSON suppose, that the divers matters, discussed at their late numerous meetings, were *quite above their comprehension*? The truth is, that the general *capacity* of the people is the same as it was in 1794. They have, however, since that time, received a *great deal of information*; and, to this it is that we are to ascribe the change in their way of thinking, and in their conduct, as to political matters. And, what do they want more to enlighten them as to these matters, and to produce this change, than their *experience* of the last twenty-three years? And, at any rate, can they be called *inconsistent* in their change, when they see that the same “Roast Beef of Old England,” to which Sir Robert said they were so much attached, has been exchanged, not for “the *soup-meagre* of the French,” but for *butter-milk and brewer's grains*, which are actually now the food of a part of the people of that same county of Lancaster, the Soup-Subscription Kettle being a thing beyond the reach of many, many thousands?

Besides, who, amongst all the sons and daughters of Corruption, who have been writing pamphlets to the “*Lower Orders*,” as they call them; who have been so busily engaged in circulating *Tracts* amongst them of all sorts; who, amongst these persons, has ever affected to believe, that the “*Lower Orders*” did not *comprehend* what they had given to them to read? Will any man pretend to say, that the Books of Moses do not present to the mind greater difficulties to unravel than are contained in the question of Parliamentary Reform? Subjects, such as those of the Incarnation and the Trinity, about which thousands of Doctors of Divinity have quarrelled all their lives, were submitted to the “*Lower Orders*,” as to *judges* who were to decide between the disputants. But, the question, whether it was or was not just and reasonable, that the “*Lower Orders*” should pay ten pounds in taxes out of every eighteen pounds of their earnings, while Lord Such-a-one was receiving twenty or thirty thousand pounds a year out of those same taxes; this was a “topic quite above the comprehension of the vulgar,” was it? There are passages in the Bible of not more than two or three verses, to expound which, more volumes have been written than would fill Westminster Hall, to say

nothing of the burnings, the rackings, and the wars, which have arisen out of these disputes. Yet the Bible has been sent out amongst the people with so much zeal that servant men and maids have been, by circular letters, and by all kinds of means invited, under pain of almost perdition in case of refusal, to subscribe their penny per week towards the funds for circulating this Book. And yet, questions of plain matter-of-fact, all depending upon proofs close at hand, are above the people's comprehension! But, then, the Bible does not treat of *Sinecures*, of unearned Pensions and Grants; of a double interest for a Debt; of Standing Armies in time of peace; of trafficking in seats, and of a Parliamentary Reform.

For many years past there had been such a fuss made about *enlightening* the people, and about the wonderful success of the projectors, that it seemed, only about eight months ago, that there would not be a man left in the country who would not be a small-beer philosopher at least. To enlighten the people was Mr. WHITBREAD's grand scheme for *reducing the Poor-rates*. To enlighten the people was Sir SAMUEL ROMILLY's means of *preventing crimes*. The enlightening of the people was to produce every good, and check every evil. The work of enlightening went on: schools sprang up in every corner; the Church vied with the Dissenters; all were at work enlightening the people. Meetings and Dinners and Speeches without end: Reports, Subscriptions, Lists, proofs of the good effects. In vain did I say, that it would be better to give the poor *bread*, or, rather, to *let them eat it when they had earned it*, and leave them to enlighten themselves out of *their own means*. I was abused for this, and represented as a man who *wished to keep the "Lower Orders" in ignorance*. Nothing was thought of but enlightening the people; and, their improvement at home had, at last, brought them to so perfect a state of light, that the projectors began to cast their eyes *abroad*, and there was actually founded a "British and Foreign School-society," with one of the Royal Dukes at its head.

One would have expected, therefore, that *ignorance* in the people would have been amongst the last things to be alleged upon this occasion. But, when the people in Lancashire began to meet, and to discuss the great questions of *national interest*, it was discovered all at once, that they were a set of *ignorant Weaver-Boys*! And this was absolutely necessary, too, or else the charge of *seducers* must have died of itself. In short, it was necessary to say that the people were *ignorant*, or to acknowledge that their petitions ought to be attended to.

The truth is, that the great mass of the Labouring Classes had become *really* enlightened as to matters that were not only within their full comprehension, but in which every man of them was most deeply interested. This light they had derived chiefly from *experience*. And, indeed, if the picture that their country presented at the close of a war, which they had been told was for religion and liberty, and which had restored the Pope, the Inquisition, and the Jesuits; if that picture, which, instead of promised plenty and happiness, was a picture of such misery as was never before beheld in the world; if that picture had not enlightened them, their capacities must have been dull beyond that of any of the natives of Africa, not excepting the monkeys and baboons, or, our less-enlightened fellow subjects of the Cape of Good Hope. To the aid of this great teacher, experience, was, however, added that of the *press*, and especially

the "Twopenny *Trash*" publications, which, as I before observed, were the great object of the Boroughmongers' dread

To this it came at last; and, whatever shifts were resorted to in order to disguise the fact, this, and this only, was the cause of that celebrated GREEN BAG, of the contents of which, of the manner of examining those contents, and of the mode of acting upon that examination, I shall treat of in my next; and, in the meanwhile, in good health, and in the midst of an abundance of cherries, and with pine-apples to eat at 2s. English, each, I remain, my worthy and beloved friends,

Your faithful friend,

W. M. COBBETT.

A HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS OF ENGLISH FREEDOM, &c.

LETTER IV.

On the Extraordinary Conduct of Sir Francis Burdett, during the last Winter—on his Motion for a Committee, and on his Speech at the Westminster Dinner, on the 23rd of May last.

(*Political Register, September, 1817.*)

North Hampstead, Long Island, June 23, 1817.

MY WORTHY AND BELOVED FRIENDS,

In my last I treated of what passed in the Parliament at its *opening* in January last. It was my intention, in this Letter, to go into the history of the proceedings of the *Green-Bag Committee*; but, upon reflection, I choose rather, first to examine, a little, the mysterious part, which our great leader, Sir FRANCIS BURDETT acted upon that memorable occasion; and, in the pursuing of this course, I am, in a greater measure, determined by the account which has reached me of *his motion on the subject of Reform of the 20th May last*, and which motion was precisely the thing which the Reformers disliked, and against which they have uniformly protested for years past, and of which I shall speak more fully by-and-by.

And here let me observe, that the past conduct of no man, however meritorious, ought, for one moment, to be put in competition with the good of our country. It is our duty to examine freely the acts of Sir Francis Burdett, as well as the acts of Castlereagh himself. Indeed, the plain truth is this, that a clear statement, relative to the conduct of Sir Francis, during the last winter, is absolutely necessary to rescue the character of all the Reformers from the charge of folly approaching to madness. And,

it now plainly comes to this: either *he does not belong to us*, or *we are the most inconsistent of human beings*, and our prayers are worthy of not the smallest degree of attention.

I am well aware of the ten thousand calumnies, that the performance of this duty will give rise to. I am aware, that I shall be accused of dipping my pen in poison to inflict a deadly wound on the man, whose services to his country I have so often extolled. And, though it be my intention to inflict no wound; though I shall have the most respectful and most kind feelings towards the individual constantly in my heart; though I shall say not one word, which truth, which the good of my country, and which justice to my own character, do not all imperiously call for; though I shall deny myself every aid that I might derive from private communications; though nothing which has passed between Sir Francis and me, or others, *privately*, shall be brought in to enforce any thing that I may have to say; still I am aware that I shall be charged with every thing that the tongue of calumny can utter. But, even this shall never induce me to imitate the *example*, which, in the minds of a great majority of mankind, would fully justify me in making public *all* that has ever passed between us.

I will resort to the statement of *no facts*, which are not already well known to numerous persons, and which the public might not have known as well as I. I shall very clearly, or, at least, as clearly as I am able, give an account of this gentleman's conduct, during the time that I have mentioned; and I shall inquire very freely into the *motives* for that conduct.

That I have a *right* to do this is evident, and I think it will soon appear, that it is a *duty* as well as a right. It is a duty towards myself; but, what is that compared with the duty which I owe my country; and which I owe, in a more particular manner, to those millions of men, who have read my writings, and who have shown their attachment to me by every mark within their power! But, here again will come the old charge of my "*inconsistency*." My "*change of opinion*" will be again blazoned forth. What change? The change is not in *my opinion*, but, as I shall show, in the conduct of the person spoken of. OTHELLO, in one act of the play, praises IAGO for his honesty, fidelity, and knowledge; but at the close of the drama, he exclaims: "Perfidious, damned IAGO!" No critic has ever thought of accusing OTHELLO of either *inconsistency* or *injustice*. The merchant, who, to-day, confides the keeping of his strong box to his clerk, and who, to-morrow, accuses him of theft, and pursues him to the gallows, is never accused of *inconsistency*. It was IAGO who was inconsistent; it is the clerk who is inconsistent; and not Othello and the merchant.

Besides, it is not my intention to deal in *accusations* against Sir Francis Burdett. I impute to him no crimes; I charge him with no *perfidy*; I insinuate nothing foul against him. His conduct I impute to those weaknesses in man's nature, which the far greater part of mankind will be ready to excuse; but, those weaknesses must be stated, or the character of Reform and of Reformers must be blackened, which latter, nature as well as reason cry aloud in my heart and tell me, that, if I have the power to prevent it, I ought not to permit. Moreover, my object also is to induce Sir Francis to return to the old path. He has by no means forfeited any portion of my good opinion, as far as regards his honesty and his love of the liberties of his country. It is of his *inde-*

cision and his *inconsistency*, of his *jealousies* and of his *envies*, of which I complain; and of all these a man may, by an effort of which any man is capable, easily cure himself.

The "*good of the cause*," I shall, by some, be told, demands *silence* and *oblivion*; that the common enemy will be pleased to see this *disunion*. But the *disunion has taken place*, and, this was known to the *Boroughmongers*, and this it was that rendered them bold. So that the question is simply this: shall the cause of the people be sacrificed to the whims, or the indecision, or the *jealousies*, or the *envies*, or any other of the weaknesses of Sir Francis Burdett, or shall it not? I answer in the negative; and upon that ground I now proceed to inquire into his conduct, during the last winter.

It is very notorious, that the Reformers looked up to Sir Francis Burdett as the man who was to be the great advocate of their cause in *Parliament*. Indeed, the calls, which he had been making upon *the People*, for so many years, to *come forward in a body*, naturally led to the universal opinion, that he would be transported with joy, when he found, that they had actually come forward in far greater numbers and with demonstrations of greater knowledge, zeal and resolution than he ever could have anticipated. Strange to say, the reverse was the fact, and that in the precise degree, that he perceived the People to wax warm, he appeared to wax cold; and to see nothing but obstacles in the pursuit of that, to the full accomplishment of which he had always declared, that nothing but the hearty and unanimous good-will of the People was wanting. While all was life and hope amongst the Reformers, he remained as it were entombed at *Brighthelmston* and at *Hastings*, amidst a circle of that very *Standing Army*, the bare appearance of which one would have thought was enough to blast his sight.

There he remained until late in December, or, rather, early in January; while millions of men were anxiously looking, from every corner of the country, to know what he meant to do, and how he meant to proceed in bringing forward their cause to a decision. People were surprised, that *no Meeting took place in Westminster*. What! *Palace Yard*, which had been the very focus of Reform, and which had been sending forth its burning rays so long, NOW, when all the rest of the nation was in a blaze, to become dead and cold as a horse-pond! The holding up of his finger would have produced a Meeting at Westminster. And yet no Meeting took place, though it was very eagerly called for by many most respectable persons, and though an occasion loudly called for it, independent of the cause of Reform; namely, the imprisonment of my LORD COCHRANE. It was anxiously desired, that a *public Meeting*, and not one at a *Tavern*, should have taken place upon that occasion. Preparations were actually made for such a Meeting. Nay, the Requisition for it was sent to the High Bailiff. But, strange to tell, the Meeting dwindled into a *Tavern size* by the refusal of Sir Francis to attend it. This fact soon became public, and a most injurious effect it had. Lord Cochrane had acquired great and well-founded popularity for his most manly conduct at the *London Tavern*, when he blew the *sinecure-soup* project into air. The *real causes* of his sufferings were now become known to every man; and his gallant perseverance and disregard of suffering had gained him wonderful applause. The *Penny Subscription* set on foot to pay his fine had excited an enthusiasm that never was surpassed, and in which all ranks, except tax-eaters, participated. There was never such a Meeting

in Westminster as that would have been. And, was it patriotic in Sir Francis to prevent that Meeting? Would *his* popularity have suffered because another man received marks of popularity?

When Sir Francis came to London early in January, *then*, at any rate, we expected to learn what were his precise intentions. In this, however, we were disappointed; though it was impossible for us to believe, that he would not, *at the opening of the Session*, give notice of his intention to *bring in a Bill* for a Reform. The idea of a motion, for the *dozenth* time, for a *Committee* to inquire *about the necessity of a Reform*, was scouted by us all, not only as ridiculous in itself, but as manifestly *deceptious and mischievous* in its tendency. But, of this more by-and-by. We could have no doubt, that *a Bill was intended*; and though we had great reason to complain of the sluggishness of our Chief, none of us doubted, as yet, that he would, in the distinct terms of a Bill, move for what we wanted, and what we were praying for. It was not more long speeches that we wanted. It was something *to the point*; something that we might *rally round* till we obtained our object.

There was, at the period now alluded to, a degree of hope and of enthusiasm prevailing, such as had never before been witnessed. Like a salamander in the fire, Sir Francis appeared untouched by the blaze of public spirit that shone around him, and the ardour of which was all directed towards himself. He appeared like a lover, who had passed the honey-moon; or, rather like VAINLOVE, in one of CONGREVE'S Plays, who, as another character terms it, delighted in *springing the covey*, and then abandoning the sport; for, instead of being at his house in London to answer the numerous eager inquiries of zealots and honest men from all parts of the country, he was, we were told, hunting in Surrey with the hounds of Maberly, the ARMY TAILOR! This circumstance alone, which I found to have been *truly* stated, was enough to excite *suspicion*; and, it did excite, in my mind, very strong suspicions; or, rather, it confirmed those suspicions, which (for reasons by-and-by to be stated) I had conceived before he came to London.

As the day for opening the Parliament approached, his house was, of course, more and more resorted to by Reformers from all parts of the country; and, this was precisely the time, these momentous days were precisely those days, which he selected *for spending in Leicestershire a fox-hunting!* Why! I loved the country and hated London quite as cordially as he did. I could have written, too, at Botley, just as well as in London; but, I thought it my duty, or, rather, I *thought* nothing about the matter; I *felt*, that I could not, at such a time, be absent from the place of grand resort without committing something very little short of a crime. If, indeed, he had been fixed in his purpose to *bring in the Bill*, his absence might have been prudent to avoid solicitations on the other side. But, the real motive of so perfectly voluntary an absence became but too apparent in the sequel: that is to say, to avoid our opportunities to keep up to the mark of our wishes; a motive which became the more obvious, when it was considered, that he had left his SON, whose illness had, till then, been the ostensible cause of his absence, and had also left all his family, in Sussex, while he took his line of march to the North.

The day of the Meeting of Parliament was now at hand. The town was crowded with new faces and anxious hearts from all parts of the kingdom. He being absent, and no one being able to tell when he would return, the houses of Major Cartwright and myself became the scenes of

inquiry and information. In answer to the eager questions about Sir Francis, we held out a confident reliance upon his coming in time to carry down the petitions, and to give his notice to move for leave to bring in a Bill. The Major really expected this, and though I did not, I thought it my duty to hold out *hope* to the last possible moment. In the meanwhile the *deputies*, called together by a paper, signed by Sir Francis himself, met, came to certain resolutions as to what sort of a Bill it ought to be; but, at the same time, resolving, that *they had so entire a confidence* in the integrity and wisdom of Sir Francis, that they were willing to leave the *details* of the Bill to him.

Day after day passed, and no news from Leicestershire! The eve of the Parliament's Meeting brought no Sir Francis! Nay, the morning brought no comfort; nothing to cheer the half-distracted crowds of bearers of petitions, who had come up in full expectation of being received by him with open arms, and who longed even for a sight of him. In this state of things, and at about ten o'clock in the morning of the day of opening, I went to Major Cartwright's, who had about a dozen of the bearers of petitions in the room with him, and who had told them, that he had received a letter from Sir Francis saying, that he would be with him that morning, and that he, the Major, expected him to arrive every minute. "Sir," said I, "I will not disguise from these gentlemen my real opinion. I have, for some weeks suspected, and I have told you my suspicions, that Sir Francis Burdett will not give notice of a Bill, and that he will make no great and bold effort in our cause. And I do not now believe, that he will call upon you to-day; I do not believe, that he will carry down any petitions to-day; I do not believe, that he will make any stand for us in the House; and I advise these gentlemen to carry their petitions to LORD COCHRANE, who, I have authority to say, will give notice of a Bill, if Sir Francis does not."

The audience were astounded at my words. Many of them had received positive instructions to deliver their petitions *into the hands of Sir Francis Burdett alone*. They were at a loss what to do. But, at last, as many of them as could be found, assembled at Charing-cross, in the manner described in my last letter to you, and proceeded with their petitions to the house of LORD COCHRANE, who, as I have there described, was carried into Westminster Hall with the Bristol Petition in his arms, and with the resolution in his mind to give notice of a Bill, if Sir Francis Burdett did not.

Here I should observe, that his Lordship, who is *timid only when there is no real danger, and bold only when there is real danger*, for a long time resisted our importunities to give notice of a Bill, chiefly upon the ground that it would be done with so much more and so much better effect by his colleague. But, answered we, your Lordship is convinced that it *ought to be done*; that our only chance of success, at this time, depends upon this one act, done in a bold manner; and will you suffer the cause of the people to be deprived of this chance, rather than not do the thing yourself; that people, who have shown so much zeal in *your* cause; who have resented so boldly all your wrongs; who have been ever ready to stand by you to the last? Does your lordship think it *just*, that the cause should wait the good pleasure, the leisure hours, or the whim of any man living? Do you think, that the thousands of men, any one of whom would do the thing, were they in Parliament, as ably as Sir Francis Burdett, will be satisfied with your declining to do it, merely out

of deference to him? Do you think, that *the People* of Westminster, who have placed it in your power to do so much for the country, will be satisfied with your doing nothing, because your colleague will do nothing?

His lordship was convinced, that it was his duty to do it; and, how he came *not* to do it remains to be explained, and forms the most curious part of this most curious history. When my Lord Cochrane arrived in the House, *Sir Francis was there*, and had GIVEN A NOTICE, but, of what *sort* Lord Cochrane could not, probably, distinctly learn. Sir FRANCIS, who, as I had predicted, had *not called upon Major Cartwright*, had taken also such special care not to come in contact with any Reformer, that he actually came *in a straight line from Leicestershire to the door of the Honourable House in a post-chaise*, and passed by the end of New Palace Yard just at the time when the thousands of people were carrying Lord Cochrane to the other door of that House! He would naturally expect, from this indication, that his lordship had been chosen to occupy his place as to *the Bill*, about which we were so anxious; and, *before* his lordship, who, on account of the crowd, moved slowly, could arrive and take his place, he, Sir Francis, had given *his Notice for a Committee*; that is to say, for what the French call a *parler pour parler*, and what we call a *talk for talk sake*; or, in this case, for a giving the thing *the go-by*! When, therefore, Lord Cochrane, agreeably to his promise, asked Sir Francis whether he was *about to give his notice*, the latter answered, that he *had given it*. After this for Lord Cochrane to give *any* Notice upon the same subject, would have been at once to proclaim a division between them; and, therefore, he did not do it.

I am loth to call this acting the part of the *dog in the manger*; and I beg of you, my good friends, who have been as great admirers of Sir Francis Burdett as any in the kingdom, to give to this act the most mild association of epithets and terms that your justice will permit you to employ. But, willing as I should be to stop short of direct censure, it is impossible for me, without first divesting myself of all feeling for the suffering nation and its cause, to speak in any terms short of direct censure of the greater part of Sir Francis's conduct subsequent to this epoch.

We have seen, in former letters, that the Prince's Speech had, for its main object, to reprobate the Reformers and to produce *new laws to put them down*, or, at least to *reduce them to silence*. The following words, at the close of the speech, could leave no doubt of this in the mind of any man living. I have quoted these words before, but they must find a place here, in order to a clear understanding of what is to follow:—

“In considering our internal situation, you will, I doubt not, feel a *just indignation* at the *attempts* which have been made to *take advantage* of the distresses of the country, for the purpose of exciting a spirit of *sedition and violence*.—I am too well convinced of the loyalty and good sense of the *great body* of his Majesty's subjects, to believe them capable of being *perverted by the arts* which are employed to *seduce* them; but I am *determined* to omit no precautions for *preserving the public peace*, and for counteracting the *designs of the disaffected*; and I rely with the utmost confidence on *your cordial support and co-operation* in *upholding a system of law and government*, from which we have derived *inestimable advantages*, which has enabled us to conclude, with unexampled glory, a contest whereon depended the best interests of mankind, and which has been hitherto felt by ourselves, as it is *acknowledged by other nations*, to be the most perfect that has ever fallen to the lot of *any people*.”

Was it not of the very first importance, that these assertions and these

propositions, should be *instantly* met with *flat contradiction* and with *decided reprobation*? Did not all the world see, the moment they saw this speech, *what the Ministers were driving at*? Could Sir Francis Burdett, then, have any doubt upon this subject? Must he not have been *certain*, that Gagging Bills were intended in order to silence those, whom he had for many years been *reproaching* for their silence upon this very subject? And yet he suffered a *two-day's debate* upon this speech to pass over, *without ever saying one single word in disapprobation of any part of it!* Though, as every man must have seen, this was the time, and the *only* time to meet and rebut these unfounded charges against the Reformers, and to give the alarm as to the measures about to be hatched and brought forth. During this long debate there was no species of abuse that was not heaped upon the Reformers; their meetings, their petitions, their speeches, their *publications*. All these were called venomous, seditious, blasphemous, rebellious. And, all this he heard without uttering one single word in our defence! Nay, what is, if possible, worse, he declined, or rather, *refused*, to say one word in our defence, when a proposition to do so was offered to be brought forward, *and actually was brought forward by another!*

During the debate on the Speech, LORD COCHRANE, seeing no one willing to make a stand, or even to utter a word, in our defence, and knowing, as every man must have known, what the close of the Speech aimed at, moved the following amendment to the Address:—"That this House has taken a view of the public proceedings, throughout the country, by those persons, who have met to petition for a Reform of this House, and that, in justice to those persons as well as to the people at large, and for the purpose of convincing the people that this House wishes to entertain and encourage no misrepresentation of their honest intentions, this House with great humility, beg leave to assure his Royal Highness, that they have not been able to discover one single instance, in which meetings to petition for Parliamentary Reform have been accompanied with any attempt to disturb the public tranquillity; and this House further beg leave to assure his Royal Highness, that, in order to prevent the necessity of those rigorous measures, which are contemplated in the latter part of the Speech of his Royal Highness, this House will take into their early consideration the propriety of abolishing sinecures and unmerited pensions and grants, the reduction of the civil list, and of all salaries which are now disproportionate to the services, and especially, that they will take into their consideration the Reform of this House, agreeably to the laws and constitution of the land, this House being decidedly of opinion that justice and humanity, as well as policy, call, at this time of universal distress, for measures of conciliation, and not of rigour, towards a people who have made so many and such great sacrifices, and who are now suffering, in consequence of those sacrifices, all the calamities with which a nation can be afflicted."

Now, though it is very well known that this amendment would not have been *carried*, it is also well known, that a debate would have grown out of it, in which debate would have come naturally under review all the conduct of the Reformers, all their Petitions and Publications, and that *here* might have been fought a glorious battle against the intended measures. In short, if this battle had been fought by Sir Francis Burdett with resolution and boldness, the Ministers would have been checked at

the outset. The People would have been encouraged; they would have petitioned against the measures that followed upon the heels of the Speech; and, I verily believe, that the State Dungeons would now have been empty, and that I should not have been in exile. But, instead of *fighting a battle* upon these grounds so fair and so advantageous, Sir Francis Burdett *did not even second the motion*, so that it dropped dead without ever being put from the chair! And what was his excuse for not having seconded this motion, upon which, perhaps, the liberties of the country hung? Why, that he was out in the gallery when it was put, and was *going home*. This he told you, People of Westminster, in Palace-Yard; but, he did not tell you, that *he had seen the motion before*, and that he *knew it was going to be made!* True he was absent when the motion was made; but WHY was he absent?

This is not the way, in which Sir Francis Burdett has been *treated by the PEOPLE*. He has been put into Parliament by a subscription, not of the RUSSELLS and others, of whose acquaintance and support he now boasts, but of the Reformers *all over England!* Did the people treat him thus, when he stood for Middlesex? Did they treat him thus, when he was sent to the Tower; or when he came out of the Tower? Have they ever abandoned him for one single moment? Have they ever drawn off *from him*, when his enemies have called *him* violent and seditious? And, as to the *publications* of the Reformers which he tacitly suffered to be loaded with every species of abuse, has *he* ever been *abandoned by those publications?* Have those publications ever been *silent* when he was an object of calumny? Yet he could sit out two whole debates silent as a mouse in a cheese, while these publications were represented as "*venom*," and while their authors were marked out as fit objects for the dungeon! Let us hope, if we can, that his future conduct may be such as to cause this to be *forgiven*; but I frankly avow, that, by me, it can never be *forgotten*. I refrain from imputing this silence, upon such an occasion, to *ingratitude*, because that is the blackest of crimes; but to *what* am I to impute it? To talk of "*indolence*;" to talk of "*sluggishness*;" to talk of "*inadvertence*;" to talk of any of these, in such a case, is to insult common sense in the manner the most gross. The poor creatures in the Black Hole of Calcutta were obliged to submit to suffocation, because the Vizier was *asleep*, and no one dared to disturb his repose! But, was it thus, that the People of England were to suffer, because Sir Francis Burdett, who owed them so much, was not disposed to open his mouth? When charged with this neglect of duty, at a subsequent Meeting in Palace-Yard, he said, that he had often heard of Members being blamed for what they *had done*; but that he never before heard of any Member being censured *for what he had not done*. No: but, surely, he must often have heard of men being not only *blamed*, but *punished*, for *not having done* certain things; and he will find, I believe, that *not to denounce* a treason, of which we have knowledge, is a crime punishable with death by the law of the land. So that this was an attempt to parry the charge by a mere turn of expression. What! in the catalogue of offences against our country, does no such thing as a *neglect of duty* find a place? And, when Sir Francis Burdett was elected for Westminster, did not the patriotic people of that City expect him to *do something* for them? Yes, they expected him to be the great champion of the cause of liberty, and more especially of the cause of Reform. Was not this the case? Will any man deny, that this was the ground of all

our exertions, our votes and subscriptions? And, was he not bound, then, to act agreeably to this clearly understood compact; or, to resign his seat? He cannot give us a Reform of the Parliament. I know that very well. Our plan of Reform, though standing upon the very principles, which he has so long inculcated, he might not *now* approve of. But, could he not have opened his lips in defence of our conduct, when that conduct was so perfectly legal, that the Law-Officers of the Crown, with their two pair of sharp eyes, could find nothing in that conduct to prosecute? Well! but suppose us Reformers to have become *too violent* for his more sober years. Was the personal freedom of all the rest of the nation of consequence not sufficient to call forth a word from him? He did oppose the Bills *afterwards*; and so did *Lord Milton*, who was one of the Green-Bag Committee, and who voted for *new laws* in that Committee. Oh, no! It was not *subsequent harangues* that were wanted. It was a gallant fight at the outset; and, besides, never, from first to last, though such numerous opportunities were offered, did he utter *one single syllable in our defence*; but, on the contrary, by dealing in vague generalities, seemed to allow, *that our conduct was not to be defended*. Let us hope, my good friends in England, that we shall live to see the day, when we shall not stand in need of *him* for a defender! If he did not toss us down to be worried by the Ministers, he, at any rate, stood and looked on as an uninterested spectator.

Doubtless, there would have been Bills of *some sort* passed, in spite of all that he could have done. But, is it likely, that, if he had fought our battle, in the manner that it might have been fought, and that he was so well able to fight it; is it likely, that if this had been done, *the same measures* would have been proposed? At any rate, he was in a place where he *dared speak out*; where he ran *no risk* in describing those measures in their true colours; where he could have proposed *Resolutions*, which he was *sure* would be *seconded*; and where he could have placed upon indelible record the infamous conduct of our enemies. And, was it not a neglect of an imperious duty *not to do this*? There were hundreds of those men, whom he thus abandoned to the rage of the Borough-mongers, who would have done all this, and more than all this, and who would have done it *well too*. This he knows; and sorry I am to say, that I believe, that this knowledge led him to see without any great regret, if not with inward satisfaction, *any measures* adopted that were calculated to keep those men from being his competitors for popularity and for renown.

Other motives have been ascribed; but we shall find, I believe, upon a fair examination of his conduct, that all the indications of those other motives resolve themselves into so many concurrent presumptive proofs of this all-devouring and destructive motive. It was, indeed, subject of wonder and of astonishment, when his only son became an officer in that very standing army, against the practices in which, and against the very existence of which, the father had, all his life long, been so loudly inveighing. For my part, when I first heard of the fact, I treated it as one of the lies of the day, intended for twenty-four hours, to injure the character of Sir Francis. What, then, was my astonishment; what was my sorrow, when I not only found that his son was in the Standing Army, but, that he was in the *Prince's own Regiment*, and serving under one of those very *German Officers*, to employ whom in such a capacity is *notoriously a daring violation of the law*! Had the son, led away by the

military madness of the day, and, possibly, decoyed by some of his companions amongst the aristocracy, who would materially wish to give pain to, and excite suspicions respecting the father, dashed into the ranks *in time of war*, in search of "honourable scars."—Even in that case, the circumstance must have awakened some degree of suspicion. But, here is a joining of the *Standing Army in time of peace*, the very existence of which the father has reprobated in every term of reprobation. The commission might, *possibly*, be dated before the close of the war; but, Mr. Burdett did not join his regiment till peace; and, besides, there was no law to compel him to remain in it, and to be liable to be ordered out, at any moment, to draw his sword, and order his men to fire, upon the People. This very young man, when six years younger, saw his father dragged from his house, and escorted to the Tower, by a part of this very Standing Army. Nay, the youth himself accompanied the father in the same coach on that memorable occasion. We were, at that time told, in the public prints, that, "at the moment when the soldiers forced the "doors of the house, Sir Francis was standing *reading Magna Charta* to "his son *in Latin!*" One would have thought, that these circumstances would have been imprinted in the mind and on the heart of this young man to his latest breath. One would have thought, that he would have begged his bread from door to door, rather than have served in that same Standing Army, and that, too, under the sway of the very same set of Ministers.

But, you will say, "might not the son enter the army without the father's consent, and even in spite of his remonstrances?" Undoubtedly he might, and though I *know nothing of the matter*, I really believe, that the step never received the father's consent. The account, which some very zealous political friends of Sir Francis give of the matter is this:—They say, that the wife of Courtts, the Banker, who is Sir Francis's father-in-law, obtained the consent of the *Duke of York* to dine at her house, along with a parcel of his army-people, as a sort of giving the sanction to the *Great* to visit her, she having lately quitted the avocation of play-actress, and having, from ardour of affection, no doubt, married Courtts not many days (less than twenty, I believe) after the mother of Lady Burdett was cold. Whether this scheme of introducing her to the *Great* succeeded or not, I never inquired; though I should rather suppose, that it did not, seeing what numerous newspaper paragraphs we have read in praise of the *Lady's acts of charity*, which acts, of course, the sharp-sighted newspaper-people discovered of themselves, and blazoned forth to the world from a mere sense of morality and religion, and without the smallest desire of ever being *paid* for the insertion. Oh, Lord! no; not they! But, whether the scheme succeeded or not; or whether there really ever was such a scheme, I am not certain; but, of the *fact* of the *Duke of York's visits* the newspapers took care to inform us in as prominent a way as even Mrs. Courtts herself could have wished. These vehicles informed us, too, that Lady Burdett and Sir Francis did *not* visit the new mother-in-law; but, that Sir Francis's *son did visit her*, and, it is generally understood, that that son, who is the heir-at-law to Sir Francis's title, and to a great part of his immense estates, is also to be the possessor of the far greater part of Courtts's, perhaps a half million of money; but, this, of course, must depend wholly on the pleasure of Courtts, or, perhaps, partly on that of Mrs. Courtts.

Now, it is said by the friends of Sir Francis (for I never heard a word

from his lips on the subject), that at one of these visits of the Duke, the *Commission* was offered to Mr. Burdett, and that he accepted of it without his father's consent, and even without his knowledge. All which is so natural and so probable, that I never hesitated, for one moment, to give it my entire belief. It is so obvious, that the Duke of York and even the Prince, whose consent must have been obtained, because he is the Colonel of the Regiment, would wish to have this young man in *their hand*, that there needs not one word on the subject of the *reasons* for that wish. And, on the other hand, it is impossible not to see thousands of reasons for Sir Francis's shuddering at this destination of his only son.

As we are proceeding upon the supposition of a *non-consenting* father, we must carry along with us the idea of an *undutiful* son. Yet, let us not judge too hastily. The advice of a woman, who had been able so completely to subdue the heart, and, what is more, open the hand, of a thrifty banker in, I believe, the seventy-ninth year of his age, together with the affable kindness of Royalty, whose notice, even in the way of a bare look, so many covet, may well be thought too powerful for the head of almost any young man of fashion. Therefore, when Mr. Burdett was, in consequence of his fall from a gig, lying, as was supposed, at death's door at Brighton, it was natural for his father to fly to him, however much he might be displeased with his conduct; for, if we can, as I sincerely do, see fair ground of apology for this young man, how readily, and especially at such a moment, would apologies crowd into the mind of a tender father! And a father, too, who, in spite of his apparent coldness, yields, I am well persuaded, to very few men in the world in kindness of heart. Speaking of him as a man in private life, there never was a more sincerely compassionate man than Sir Francis Burdett. There is no suffering creature for whom he does not feel. To regard, therefore, his long continuance in the hated Barracks at Brighton, where he had a child to be saved from death; to regard this as an indication of his having consented to his son becoming part of the Standing Army in time of peace, is to be guilty of great injustice. Nor, while his son's life was in danger, do I think that any blame attached to him for his total neglect of all public affairs. If we readily excuse a labouring man for being absent from his work, when he has a child at the point of death, why should we not excuse Sir Francis Burdett, whose mind must have been wholly taken up with this one object? Therefore, every unfavourable conclusion, drawn from this absence at Brighton, I set down as unjust, except inasmuch as that absence was continued long after Mr. Burdett was recovered, and a part of the time of which continued absence, as the newspapers informed us, was occupied in the diversion of *hunting with the Prince's hounds*, while the Reformers, in all parts of the country were in motion, and were burning with impatience to know what measures Sir Francis had resolved on, in order, that all might pull together, as offering the only ground of hope of success.

This absence, and the total *silence* that accompanied it gave rise to many suspicions, and the circumstance of the son's being *in the army*, and in the Prince's own regiment, was now dwelt upon by every one as a symptom of a fatal change in the father's mind; for, in the distant parts of the country, the honest Reformers knew no more about Cousts and his wife than they did about the old man in the moon; nor, indeed, quite so much; for they did know, that they had heard their grand-

mothers say, that there was such a man as the man in the moon, and they had never heard that there was such a man as Coutts. They judged, as they naturally would, and as they had a right to do, from the *naked fact*. They had undoubted proof, that Sir Francis Burdett's son was gone into the Standing Army; they found Sir Francis absent, hunting with the Prince's hounds, and silent as to the subject of Reform. And how were they to draw any *other* conclusion, than that he had given his consent to the taking of a commission by his son?

Ready as I am to acquit Sir Francis of having given this consent; ready as I am to apologize for the conduct of his son, I must not, however, forget, that there is a duty here which was due from Sir Francis to his country, regarding, as he did, the cause of Reform the cause of his country. It was his duty, and his bounden duty, *to make known to the nation*, that he had *not given his consent*. Will he say, that the *public* had *no right* to demand an account of any of his *family affairs*? This would be going very far, even if the affair was a *family* one. For, it is possible to suppose a case, in which a mere family affair might be deeply interesting to a public cause. Suppose, for instance, Castlereagh were to become a widower, and that Sir Francis (God forgive me for the supposition!) were to bestow the hand of one of his daughters upon the noble Viscount! This would be purely a family affair. And yet I imagine, that no one will attempt to deny, that the people must be extremely doltish, if they thought it of no consequence to them. Suppose my two eldest sons were now to go to England, and that one of them were to become under-secretary to Sidmouth, and the other one of his Police Justices, and were, as of course they would, to set to work to carry the Gagging Bills into execution; and suppose I were to remain *silent* upon the subject. What would *you*, my good friends, think of *me*? I dare not attempt to describe your *thoughts*; but, I know, that the utmost stretch of your kindness would be required to induce you to content yourselves with *saying*, that I should do well to say not another word about my love of country, till this mysterious matter was cleared up. Well, then, if this is what the kindest of my kind friends would say *to me*; in virtue of what moral principle, of what rule of right, of what exemption or privilege known amongst men, is *the nation* not to say *the same* to Sir Francis Burdett? But, still the cases are by no means analogous. The nation's claim upon Sir Francis is far, very far, superior to any claim that even any portion of the nation has upon me. You, my good friends, and all my countrymen in a body, have a claim upon me for that attachment which is due to my country, and which unsophisticated nature bids every man bear towards his country; and this attachment you have a right to call upon me to show by the exertion of my talents, as far as is consistent with the safety of myself and my family. But, besides this claim, which the nation has upon all of us, the whole nation, and the Reformers in particular, have special and peculiar claims upon Sir Francis Burdett, who has entered into a *positive compact* with them; who has been supported in his public character by their votes and by their subscriptions, and who, in return, has a thousand times pledged himself to maintain their cause. I am bound by no such ties; and yet, in the case above supposed, you would, I am sure, regard an explanation from me as a bounden duty. All I ask, therefore, is that, in taking the most lenient course, you will decide on the conduct of Sir Francis Burdett in this respect, as you would decide on my conduct.

As to the story in January, about Sir Francis being about to be *called*

up to the House of Peers, or at least that, in case of his refusal, his Lady was to become a Countess in her own right, with remainder to her son, it was a story, which, though never publicly contradicted, I never for one moment believed; for as old WHITFIELD once told his congregation, "no man prays to be damned;" and, as for forcing the thing upon him, or upon Lady Burdett, as BOILEAU's bishop flung his blessing, out of pure spite, at a Jesuit who had crept under a bench in the church in order to avoid it, the thing was too ridiculous not to make the nation choke with laughter.

Nevertheless, I do believe that the courtly air of Brighton had some effect upon Sir Francis. The very purlieus of a Court-Barrack are pestilential as to political principle. Surrounded by crafty courtiers in the garb of frank and thoughtless military officers; listening to the praises bestowed on a beloved son, about whose health he was so anxious; and receiving, perhaps, personal condolence from the Prince himself. Under such circumstances, and in moments of incaution, men commit themselves before they reflect on what they are doing, and they are, by slow degrees, led to do things, which they would at first have shuddered but to think of. It was just at this moment that the blaze of Reform bursted forth, and that, in every part of the country, knowledge and talent seemed to be possessed by almost every man that opened his lips at a public meeting.

Sir Francis Burdett is a sensible man. No man's character was ever more misunderstood generally than his. He is a sober, reflecting, and even profound man; and his love to his country would be exceeding that of any man I ever knew, except the brave old Major Cartwright, were it not for his ill-judged ambition: This ambition will suffer no competitor, and especially in the capacity of orator, in which he falls beneath so many hundreds. I forget who it is that writes a fable about the thanksgivings of the animals to Jupiter. The peacock returned thanks for his sweet voice, the hog for his cleanliness, the viper for his harmless nature, and so on. And it does frequently happen, that nature, in her freaks, makes men so perverse as to think little of the talents which they really possess, and to think unconscionably highly of talents, in which every one but themselves can see that they are deficient.

It has always been the passion of Sir Francis Burdett to be *at the head*, and not only at the head, but to have *no degrees of approach towards him*, and especially in the capacity of speech-maker, a talent beneath notice, when compared with the great and solid powers of mind which he possesses. To hear him by the side of his breakfast-table; to hear the fine and consequent reasoning, the profound remarks, and the simple and strong language that comes from his lips; and, in a few hours afterwards to find all this as it were wholly forgotten, and to hear him labouring till he is out of breath in the utterance of sentences two minutes long, each containing in its belly two or three parentheses, and each of these two or three little ones one within another, as SWIFT calls it, "like a nest of pill-boxes," while the sentence closes, at last, without any memory being able to collect its ideas into any rational point or conclusion, and leaving no other impression upon the minds of his hearers, than that which is produced by declamatory rant; to hear him thus, in these two different situations, is enough to make any sensible man avoid the rock of misguided ambition. Sir Francis Burdett may be well assured, whatever some persons may say to this, that this is the opinion of every man, who is

sincerely enough his friend to lament his misconception of his talents. I could name a score off-hand who have expressed precisely the same opinion. But, why did I never say this *before*? If any one asks this silly question, my answer is, that these are things which brothers do not say to brothers; and, as to saying it *to the public*, one reason, amongst a thousand others, is, that it would have done harm to our cause. Nor should I have said it now, if I had not regarded the saying it as necessary to our own defence in explaining the real motives of him, by whom we have been abandoned.

This propensity to shine as the one great man and great speech-maker has led to all that I complain of. He saw, that a blaze of talent had burst forth. He saw that, if a Reform really took place, he would be *nothing* in that line of talent. He could not endure the idea of standing amidst a crowd of second or third rates: therefore he began to halt; to consider; to hesitate; to damp. We were going *too fast*; we exceeded *his bounds*, who, before, had *no bounds*. Till now he had been the undisputed chief; that pleased him well, and he zealously and sincerely strove for the victory. But, when he found the victory, if won, would leave him a disputed truncheon, he stooped short, and left us to the mercy of our foes, choosing rather to eke out his life as the *chief* of an unsuccessful, than to live an *associate* in a successful cause.

Let us hope, that he will be disappointed in the former, and that his conduct will be such as to give him a large share of his country's gratitude in the accomplishing of the latter. But, if I am to judge from his recent conduct; that is to say, his prominent acts since I left England, there is, I am sorry to say it, very little ground for such hope. These acts are his motion of the 20th of May, for a *Committee* of the whole House to *inquire* on the subject of Reform. I observed before, that this was a measure against which the Reformers all *protested* in the most decided manner. Indeed, we were of opinion, that such a step would amount to a tacit abandonment of our cause. For, what did such a motion argue? Why, that *we doubted*, or, that there was *room for doubt*, upon the subject. When we all declared, that the justice of our demand was "*as notorious as the sun at noon-day.*" And *he*? What had *he* said to justify his motion of *inquiry*? He had a thousand times publicly declared, in the House, as well as out of it, that it was *notoriously no representative of the people*. He had said, that he hated to go to the House for two reasons: first, because he disliked *bad company*, and next because he disliked *late hours*. He had told the people in Palace-Yard, that they ought never to call it by the *name* of the House of Commons; and in his speeches in that same Palace-Yard, he called it "*the Room over the way,*" loading the whole body indiscriminately with every epithet and term expressive of baseness in them and of abhorrence in him! Nay, he had even gone so far as distinctly to recommend to the people "*not to petition the Room*" any longer, seeing that the said Room consisted of "*a band of notorious oligarchs.*" Was it not, then, an insult to the people, after all this, to move this same "*Room*" to form itself into a *Committee* to *inquire* relative to the subject of Reform! It was about fourteen years that he had been, occasionally, making these talk-for-talk's-sake motions; and the Reformers thought it high time to see something clear and specific proposed, especially as they had always been told, that no one could tell *what it was they wanted*. His reason (the only one that I ever heard of) for

preferring the motion for a Committee was, that it would be *presumption* in him to attempt to dictate to the *House* what sort of a Reform should be adopted. What! "the *Room*" become "the *House*" all at once, and a body, too, so respectable and so wise (as evinced by the happy result of its twenty-five years' measures, I suppose) as to make it presumption in him to appear to dictate to them, though it is done two or three hundred times in every session; that is to say, every time *any* Member moves for leave to bring in *any Bill*. But, what was well worthy of remark, while his modesty prevented him from risking the imputation of dictating to "the *Room*," it was not sufficient to prevent him from dictating to *the people*, whom he had formerly taught to despise "the *Room*." A million and a half of men asked for a *Bill* and for *Universal Suffrage*; and he made a motion for a *Committee*, and would stop at the *Suffrage of Householders*; so there was he, who had hundreds and hundreds of times declared, that the people ought to *instruct* their representatives, presenting petitions and acting in *open defiance* of the prayers of those petitions!

It is said (for the paper containing the report of the debate has not yet reached me, though papers to the 24th of May have), that he had *one-third of the Members present* to vote with him for a *Committee*. To be sure he had! This just suited his views and also the views of the Ministers. He wanted support at the end of a long speech, and they wanted the appearance of a fair discussion of the question, and a delusive procrastination put into practice. "Oh, well! Come! *one-third* vote with Sir Francis. *More* will vote with him, perhaps, another time. If fourteen years of motions give *one-third*, another eight years (only eight years!) will produce a *majority*!" When old canting John talked of his "crumbs of comforts for the chickens of the Covenant," he was answered by a fellow in the aisle of the chapel, by an observation, that it would be much better to give them the whole loaf at once. "No," said John, "for chickens are very silly things, and would not know what to do with it." So appears Sir Francis to think of the Reformers. But, I can assure him and the Boroughmongers too, that the people are not *now* to be deluded and noodled along by any such means. The people know as well as he does, that the voting for a *Committee* is not voting for a *Reform*; but that, in fact, it is voting *against a Reform*; and, when we come to look at the list of this famous *one-third*, we shall find it chiefly composed of Boroughmongers, or the heirs or representatives of Boroughmongers; and, that there were but *two* or *three* men, who would really vote for a *Reform*. Nay, I am sure I shall find men voting for *the Committee*, who, in their speeches, reprobated the Reformers, and declared their abhorrence of what alone we call *Reform*. What a despicable farce, then, was the exhibition upon this occasion! And how heartily must the people despise it!

The other prominent act, to which I have alluded above, is Sir Francis's speech, at the Westminster dinner, on the 23d of May, being the anniversary of his first election for Westminster. This dinner, of the *original occasion* of which I shall another time, perhaps, find it necessary to give the real history, and as to which I shall only say, at present, that a full proof was then given, that Sir Francis would possess no eminence as the *associate of another*; this dinner is ordered and arranged by a Committee of persons, who are in the constant practice of consulting Sir Francis as to all their acts in that capacity. Therefore,

last year, when I made at this dinner a sort of proposition to defeat the intrigue going on between the Committee and Mr. Brougham, and which did defeat it too, I thought it necessary to say to Sir Francis before we went into the dining-room: "I am going to do something, and if I do not tell you what it is, it is because I wish to keep you clear of being a party to it, and to beg that you will do in it just what you please, without any considerations with regard to myself."

Upon looking over these dinner proceedings again, I perceive that I cannot do justice to them in the remnant of a letter. I will, therefore, reserve them for another number, in my next letter to you; and shall only add here, that nothing in the world would give me so much satisfaction as to find, that Sir Francis Burdett's *protection of the imprisoned men*, or their families, has compensated, in some degree, for his abandonment of us all. But, that protection, to satisfy me, must be *real and efficient*. Vague declamatory speeches, however long, and however loud, are not the things that are wanted. What *ought* to be done, I have pointed out in my last number: what is there proposed is barely what justice demands: it is in the power of *any* Member of Parliament, who has two thousand pounds and who has very moderate talents; and, if it be not done by this gentleman, I shall entertain not the smallest hope of any thing good from him.

I am always your faithful friend,

WM. COBBETT.

P.S. I have *now* just received English papers to the 29th of May. But, I am told, that papers of the 9th or 10th of June have been received at Philadelphia, and that they give an account of the acquittal of Mr. WOOLER, the author of "the *Black Dwarf*." If the circumstances are correctly stated to me, this is a most glorious triumph indeed, in more respects than one. It shows, that, where a *jury* is ventured upon, all is not yet lost. It shows, that the *public feeling* is not yet wholly benumbed. Those *jurymen*, whose honoured names I am anxious to see, deserve more at our hands than ten thousand makers of flaming and vague and pointless and fruitless harangues. The event is, too, of vast importance, as Mr. WOOLER is, it appears, another of the "*lower orders*." I am told that he is a printer, and has been a common sailor, as I was a common soldier. His defence, I am told, was a most noble one and also a most able one. His being angry with *me* for what his anxiety led him to view as a "*desertion*" I excuse; and, I hope, that he is before now convinced, that I took the patriotic as well as the prudent course. Be this as it may, I hold his exertions and his talents in honour; and, I trust, that he is destined to see insolent pride and powerful cruelty crouching at his feet. He has youth, and, if he take care of his health, this he will certainly live to see.

A HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS OF ENGLISH FREEDOM, &c.

LETTER VI.

On the Green-Bag Plots and Report.—On the Conduct of certain Individuals relative to these.—On the renewal of the Absolute-Power-of-Imprisonment Act.—On the Question, whether this Act will ever cease.

(Political Register, October, 1817.)

North Hampstead, Long Island, August 7th, 1817.

MY WORTHY AND BELOVED FRIENDS,

I now approach towards the conclusion of the history of those measures, which I trust, will, hereafter, become a subject of solemn investigation at a time when men shall dare to speak and to write the truth.

We have before seen what extraordinary pains were taken to prepare the way for those measures. First, there were the everlasting paragraphs in the *COURIER* and such-like newspapers, including the writings in that sanguinary publication, the *Quarterly Review*, conducted by the renegado, *SOUTHEY*, and the hireling, *WILLIAM GIFFORD*. These paragraphs and articles, written by, or dictated by those who wished to adopt the measures, called upon the Government for the adoption of them; and chided the Ministers for their tardiness in not having adopted vigorous measures sooner; just in the same way that the creatures of the bloody tyrant *RICHARD THE THIRD* chided him for his tardiness in usurping the Crown. These vile writers; these execrable tools of the Boroughmongers; these murderers of their country's freedom; these bravos in the cause of Despotism, who must answer for their deeds whenever the day of justice shall arrive, stuck at no falsehood in point of fact, at no sophistry in point of argument, at no consideration whatever with regard to the means which they recommended to be employed. They recommended the going much farther than was necessary even for their own purposes. The audacious wretches were for direct slaughter, knowing very well that in order to prepare the way for a mile, the guide must push on a mile and a half. We have got nothing but *perpetual imprisonment at pleasure*, and these sanguinary monsters recommended *death at pleasure*.

Next came the *SPEECH* of the Ministers, put into the mouth of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, close upon the heels of which came the speeches, not of the Ministers and of their political adherents, but of those, or at least, many of those who are called the *OPPOSITION*, and who did every thing that lay in their power to give the colour of justice and of reasonableness to those measures which they well knew were about to be proposed. Last of all came those memorable *COM-*

MITTEES of the two Houses, rather than forget one man of whom we ought to wish to forget our own names, and to be deprived of the faculty of distinguishing which is our right hand and which is our left. Of the *manner of choosing* these Committees, I gave, at the time, a very distinct account; and, indeed, I clearly showed to the whole nation; that the Committees were chosen entirely by the Ministers themselves. And yet; the hirelings of the Press have had the barefaced impudence to pretend, that there was great *impartiality* observed in the forming of those Committees; because, forsooth, some of the "*gentlemen opposite*" were put upon those Committees. *Opposite*, indeed! Aye, opposed to the Ministers and their supporters as far as regards a contest for power and profit; but, going cordially with them, and even surpassing them, if possible, in hostility to the just claim of the people to be represented truly and fairly in the Parliament. Amongst these "*gentlemen opposite*" were Lords GRENVILLE, BUCKINGHAM and FITZWILLIAM, in the one House; and in the other, Lord MILTOWN, Mr. PONSONBY, Sir ARTHUR FIGOT, and some others. Look at these Lords and gentlemen. Look at their sinecures and those of their relations and dependents. Look at the seats which those in the lower House fill. Look at the means by which they are returned to that House. Look at all these, and then, if you can, express a suitable degree of indignation against the literary ruffians who have pretended that the Ministers chose, upon this Committee, persons opposite to their own way of thinking.

However, I wish clearly to be understood, that I do not believe that the result would have been very different if the Committees had been chosen by *real* ballot, as common jurymen are chosen; for, if there were such an immense majority to vote for the measures without seeing any evidence at all; why should not there have been a similar majority in a Committee to recommend those measures? Nay, notwithstanding there were many men to vote and speak against the measures when proposed in the Houses, I am sincerely of opinion, that there were not, in the two Houses, more than six or seven men, who, at the bottom of their hearts, did not rejoice at the adoption of those measures. But, if only one of these six or seven had, by any accident, found his way into one of the Committees, the Reports would not have been *unanimous*; the surprising and happy *harmony* of the thing would have been disturbed a little. Thus, then, were the people of England and Scotland and Wales wholly deprived of every thing bearing the semblance of liberty. The whole of their persons were placed at the absolute disposal of the Ministers, to all intents and purposes short of instant death; thus did the noble Lords and honourable Gentlemen place us all as much at the mercy of the Ministers, as the sheep and the dogs of those noble Lords and honourable Gentlemen are at their own disposal, short of the infliction of instant death; and this they did, too, without one particle of evidence laid before them to establish any proof against the people, or to afford any presumption of even a probable necessity for measures of force of any degree. Let these facts, oh, Englishmen! be inscribed so deeply upon your hearts, that nothing but the hand of death can efface them; and let it be the first of your duties to inscribe them upon the hearts of your children.

Wonderful was the dispatch to act upon these precious Reports before the boiling indignation of the people would give them time to reflect, for a moment, on the mode of opposing them and of showing their in-

justice. Swift, however, as was the hand that was smiting the liberties of the country, it was not swift enough completely to prevent an exposure of the Reports. Amongst other things that the Parliament was destined to do was that of passing these laws upon Reports, of the absolute falsehood of parts of which, and of the *most material parts of which*, ample proof was tendered in both Houses, quite early enough to produce a revision of the Reports before any of the Bills were passed.

It would be useless to enter into a minute examination of the whole of these Reports; suffice it to say, that they turned upon two principal points, namely, that the Reformers in a body, and particularly that their Clubs and Societies were *closely connected*, not only in their operations, but in their views, with the Societies of *Spenceans*; and, secondly, that the insurrection, as it was called, of the 2nd of December, was an insurrection *begun and carried on by the Reformers as well as by the Spenceans*. These were the two points upon which the Reports principally turned, because, against the Reformers, taken separately, it would have been impossible, one would have thought, for the tormentor of Jos or for even a Crown-Lawyer to call for coercive laws. It was, therefore, necessary, so to connect the Reformers with the Spenceans as to give a colour to the conclusion, that they both had, at bottom, *the same objects in view*; that is to say, an universal confiscation of real property, and a subsequent distribution of it amongst the people at large. Now, it was offered to be proved, at the bar of both Houses by Mr. CLEARY, and at the bar of both Houses by Mr. HUNT, that, as far as they went to give colour to the above conclusion, the Reports in both Houses were wholly destitute of truth. The petitions of these gentlemen, which were published in my Register of the first of March last, will remain as everlasting proofs against those Reports, as far as related to these two principal points; and, I anxiously hope that those two gentlemen will yet be called upon to give proof of their having delivered in those petitions. Since my departure from England, the Grand Jury of the city of Norwich, together with the Mayor of that Corporation, have given on their oaths, and under their hands, a DIRECT CONTRADICTION to a particular, a distinct, and an important fact stated in those Reports; and, yet, hear it, and remember it, Englishmen, to your last breath, it was upon these two Reports, contradicted as they were, by petitions upon their tables, and invalidated as they were by the tender of evidence to prove their falsehood, that the two Houses proceeded to place the very persons of us all at the absolute will of the Ministers of the day. The other measures which they adopted upon these Reports were of themselves sufficiently terrible; but this is the great deed which you ought to keep in mind, and to remember that this deed was committed in consequence of Reports such as I have above described.

Now, my friends, put it to your own hearts: could either of you have sat silent while the petitions of Mr. CLEARY and Mr. HUNT were before the House of Commons? Sir FRANCIS BURDETT may say, that *he did not want* the people of Westminster to elect him. He may say that he was *forced to go* to the House of Commons; but if it had happened that either of you had been forced to go there in his place, the question I put to you is this: could you have sat there *silent*, unless you had been struck dumb all at once, while Mr. HUNT's petition was lying upon the table, and while no effort was made to charge it home against the Report, upon which the liberties of the people were in a few hours to

be taken away? I think neither of you could: I think that if every word had brought a new blister upon your tongue, you would have cried out against the outrageous injustice of depriving the people of their liberties, until, at any rate, the evidence tendered by the petitioner had been heard at the Bar. What! shall we be told of any personal dislikes that Sir FRANCIS BURDETT had to Mr. HUNT? If he had any such and had good reasons for them, it is rational to expect that they would have been stated. But, at any rate, there was Mr. HUNT a petitioner; he was the person who had taken the active part at the Spa-fields Meetings; he came forward with an explicit declaration, that, if permitted to do it, he would bring evidence to the Bar to prove many most interesting and most important facts, and to negative, completely, one of the great assertions of the Committee. Was it the duty of the House to hear him, or was it not? If it was; if that be your opinion, my friends, can you find out a justification for Sir FRANCIS BURDETT in sitting still as a mouse, in not making one single effort to cause this evidence to be called to the Bar, and not one single effort to expose the conduct of those who refused to hear this evidence? It is no apology to say, that Sir FRANCIS BURDETT disliked the petitioner, especially if that dislike was of very recent origin, and could not be very easily accounted for, and that, too, upon grounds fair and just. But in no case could that dislike be an apology for such conduct. There lay the petition, its allegations were most important to the cause of the people; and, not to use his utmost efforts to give effect to that petition, was to act the part of a lawyer who should suffer his client's cause to go to ruin merely for fear of its success doing credit to a person whom he himself disliked.

But, this was not the first instance in which Sir FRANCIS BURDETT had thrown a damp upon the right of petition. I do not mean upon the *theory* of that right; upon the general doctrine of that right; but upon the real, practical utility of it. All the nation remembers the petition of the boy DUGOOD, which was presented to the House of Commons by my Lord FOLKESTONE, and to the House of Lords by my Lord THANET, which latter presented a petition upon the same subject to the House of Lords from Mr. HUNT. Both these petitions Sir FRANCIS BURDETT declared to be such as the Houses could not receive; though my Lord FOLKESTONE hesitated not one single moment, nor did my Lord THANET; and though both Houses received the petitions without one single word of objection from any quarter. Nay, the petition of Mr. CLEARY was, I heard it publicly declared, presented against the judgment of Sir FRANCIS BURDETT; though, to this hour, that petition remains to be cited by every body as a most triumphant answer to the Report of the House of Lords. What sort of conduct was this, then? Let us not flinch from stating these truths due to the injured nation. We had, as we thought, and as we boasted, *one* man, at least, in Parliament, who would dare to defend our cause. He having abandoned that cause, it is absolutely necessary for us, in justification of ourselves, to accuse him of that abandonment. If we neglect to do this, we tacitly acknowledge that we were unworthy of being defended, which would be most basely as well as most senselessly to offer ourselves up as a sacrifice to him who has abandoned us.

You will please to bear in mind, that it was not a *favour* that we were here asking of Sir FRANCIS BURDETT. It was a *duty* that we expected him to perform. Not a duty towards any particular individuals;

but a duty towards the whole of the Reformers ; for, if he will have it that he has been *forced* to be a Member of Parliament, as some gentlemen are *forced* to be Bishops ; still, it was clearly understood on both sides, that he was to be the unshaken supporter of Parliamentary Reform. This was the very ground upon which he was so forced, if force it must be called ; and, therefore, not to give us his support was to betray his trust, especially after he had signed a paper inviting Parliamentary Deputies to assemble in London, and after he had signed another paper commissioning that same Mr. CLEARY that I have above-mentioned, to distribute papers, and, generally, to do every thing that he could do, calculated to rouse the people to active exertions in the cause of Parliamentary Reform.

But, I am aware that it will be said that with Sir FRANCIS BURDETT, as well as with LORD GREY and LORD ERSKINE, a more mature age might have produced a change of opinion. It is very true that Sir FRANCIS BURDETT has made very great sacrifices to his principles, which age may have changed without any fault in him. But, then, it was his duty to tell us so, and not to lead hundreds of thousands of people on to the very eve of the Meeting of Parliament ; nay, until the very hour of the Parliament's opening, and then to abandon them all to the mercy of their inveterate foes ; and still to retain possession of that battery, whence another man with half his abilities might have blown all those foes to atoms.

If I return thus frequently to the abandonment of the cause by Sir Francis Burdett, it is only on account of its necessity to our own justification. I am quite convinced, indeed, that, if he had done his duty ; if he had met the Ministers boldly upon the concluding part of the Prince Regent's Speech ; if he had brought forward an amendment such as that which was proposed by my Lord COCHRANE, and which, when moved, he was not present to *second* ; if he had moved an *adjournment* of the debate, which he had it in his *absolute power to carry* ; if he had amply discussed here, at the threshold, the question of the conduct of the Reformers, which he knew to be perfectly good ; if he had here dared the Ministers to the proof of their allegations ; if he had here repelled all the falsehoods of the assertions and insinuations of our enemies ; if he had exposed, in their true form and colour, the conduct of such men as Lord Milton, Mr. Wm. Elliott, and some others ; if he had, at subsequent periods of the proceedings, opposed the measures with zeal and resolution, and not by now and then a speech in general terms, but by *Resolutions*, drawn up with clearness and strength, amplified by interesting facts, and leading the mind on to practical conclusions ; if he had done these things, which form only a small part of what an able, industrious and zealous man would have done, in such a crisis ; I do not say, that he would have prevented any of the measures from being adopted, though I do not know that he might not have succeeded even so far ; but, I am quite sure, that, if he had acted thus, he would have stricken so much terror into the hearts of our enemies, and would have excited so much spirit in the people, that any measures that had been adopted would have fallen far short of those that were finally put in force.

If Sir Francis Burdett or any of his friends, adopting the old *desponding* strain, which is always the sure symptom of disinclination for exertion ; if he or they should treat this idea of mine as chimerical, and should say that it was perfectly useless to contend against the *Boroughmongers*

in this case ; the first answer to this would be, Why do you not, then. *give the thing up at once ?* Why do you keep *talking* about this question of Reform ? If it be useless for you to carry on the contest in Parliament, it certainly must be useless for us to be carrying on the contest out of doors, where we neither dare write nor speak. Another answer is the good old maxim of men of pluck, namely ; that men do not know what they can do till they *try*. Lord HOLLAND reminded the Ministers of this maxim, when they said that the libel-laws were not sufficient to keep us in check ; “ you have not *tried* those laws,” said Lord Holland ; but the Ministers had, it seems, been men of more hope than Sir Francis Burdett, for they said, “ We *have* tried. The Law-Officers have tried, and they “ find that the authors of these cheap publications are too many for them ; “ for which reason we demand new laws to assist us.” So that it appears that they had not given the thing up as hopeless, till they had actually found themselves beaten. But, a third answer is, that I think I can show reasonable grounds for believing, that if our cause had been fought with all the arms that it naturally furnished to Sir Francis, and with all the talent which he has at command, the dreadful measures against the people *never would have been adopted*.

You, my friends, know very well, that at the opening of every Session of Parliament, the mover and seconder to the Address in answer to the Speech are fixed upon before-hand ; that they hold consultations with the Ministers ; that they are fully apprized for many days before the Session opens of all that the Speech is to contain ; and that they have their lessons as completely as any servant has the terms of an errand on which he is sent. Their speeches are as much the speeches of the Minister as the King's Speech is the speech of the Minister. These facts are notorious to the whole nation. Now, then, observe, that the mover of the Address at the opening of the last Session, Lord VALLETORT (whom I never heard of before) abused the Reformers in good set terms ; but, he spoke very doubtingly as to its becoming necessary to adopt any measures at all pointed against us. The *Secunder*, Mr. DAWSON, made use of words peculiarly worthy of attention in this case. “ These Demagogues,” he said, “ were like the fanatics of old, who went about with “ the Bible in one hand and the sword in the other, preaching peace and “ benevolence, while they meditated war and bloodshed.” In which sentence, if the honourable gentleman did not justly describe us, he most aptly described our enemies ; for all the Bible-Society-people were flying upon us like so many vultures ; and they, it was, and not we, who had been seeking war and bloodshed abroad for so many years, and who now sought to employ the *scourge of despotism at home*. But ; “ he hoped, “ however, that the good sense and loyalty of the country would defeat “ the projects of the demagogues, and THAT NO STRONG MEASURES “ WOULD BE REQUISITE TO PUT THEM DOWN.” Now, my friends, when you consider the capacity in which Mr. Dawson was when he uttered these words, I think it is impossible for you not to see that, up to this time, the Ministers had by no means made up their minds to propose any strong measures at all, much less such measures as they did at last propose. Indeed, if you look at their own speeches during the debate upon the Prince's Speech, you will find nothing that does not tend to confirm this opinion. There is no question but all their Green-Bag-story was ready, and that they most anxiously wished to shut up the people's mouths, stop their pens, and to have every man's person placed at

their mercy ; there is no doubt that this was their *wish*, and I think there is as little doubt of their not daring to propose it till they had felt the pulse of those who had the power to give a check to the accomplishment of that wish. But, when they heard not one single voice in defence of *the people* ; when they learnt, as they very speedily would, the curious history of the fox-hunting trip to Leicestershire, of the coming down to the Parliament-house door in a post-chaise from that county, while there was nobody to receive hundreds of petitions in St. James's Place, except Sir Francis's porter ; when they learnt all this curious history ; when they heard speaker after speaker amongst the "gentlemen opposite" falling on upon the Reformers with every species of calumny ; when they saw Lawyer Brougham amongst this group of dignified revilers ; when they heard not one man to open his lips in defence of the *Reformers* except my Lord Cochrane ; and when they saw Sir Francis not present to second an amendment which contained the only thing that was said in our defence ; when they learnt and when they saw all this, then they drew their lance and came on us full speed. There were no longer doubts and hesitations. They knew before of the son's being in the standing army in time of peace ; they knew of all that had passed at Brighton ; they saw, in short, that they had got the muzzle upon the guardian of the flock, and that they might fall on and devour it at pleasure.

My worthy friends, let us no longer be the dupes of men of ungovernable ambition, at the same time that their envies and their jealousies totally disable them from rendering any service to the country. In the history of the momentous events, concerning which I am addressing you, there is no circumstance of a tenth part of the importance as this abandonment of the people by Sir Francis Burdett. No army ever owed its ruin to the defection of a General more decidedly than we owe our temporary defeat to this abandonment. *Now*, indeed, at the Westminster Dinner, Sir Francis talks the matter well enough in some respects ; but, when he talks of the *people's* resisting, he seems to have forgotten how little disposition he showed to resist, when he might, as I have shown above, have done it with so much effect and with perfect safety. He sat silent while he saw the chains *forging* for us ; he said very little while they were putting round our hands and our feet ; but now when he sees us safely manacled, now he hears our fetters rattle, and feels *himself in a state of safety* (mark that!) he most courageously calls upon us to *imitate our forefathers*, and use the right of *resistance* ! Sir Francis, my worthy friends, was the perpetual Chairman of the famous *Hampden Club*, consisting, it was said, of a hundred gentlemen, who have amongst them, landed estates amounting to three hundred thousand pounds a-year of rent. Before Sir Francis calls upon the people again to imitate their forefathers in exercising the right of resistance, let us hope that he will show us the way by *imitating the conduct of Hampden* ; and, when he again talks of *resistance* before he has put in this claim to our confidence, let us ask him seriously, whether he would advise the people to oppose their naked breasts to those bayonets, which it may become the military duty of *his son* to order to be plunged into those breasts ?

Oh, no, my friends ! This big and unmeaning talk comes too late. When Sir Francis, at the last Westminster Dinner, boasted of being surrounded "by so many respectable gentlemen," as he was pleased to call them, and grounded his confidence of final success upon *their* support,

he did not recollect, perhaps, that there was not one single family, to which those respectable gentlemen belonged, who had not used their utmost exertions, including all manner of acts of foulness and of baseness, to prevent the Electors of Westminster from having any more real voice in choosing their Representatives than the people of Salisbury or of Winchester have. It is very well known to Sir Francis Burdett, that, until the *grand stir* which was made in Westminster by the gallant, though unfortunate Mr. PAUL, and myself, aided by some excellent men in the middle and lower walks of life, the people of Westminster were no more represented in Parliament than the people of Manchester now are. The great families of the two factions had come to a compromise many years before. One party put in one of the Members, and the other party put in the other. At the death of Mr. Fox the Whigs put in Lord PERCY. SHERIDAN wished to be put in, but the DUKE OF NORTHUMBERLAND carried too heavy mettle. He spoke in Parliament with seven mouths, and poor SHERIDAN had no mouth at all, unless some one was pleased to give him one. The Duke's triumph, however, was but short. The Parliament was dissolved, and, at the general election, the Whigs intended to put in SHERIDAN for their man, and the Pittites Sir SAMUEL HOOD. Mr. PAUL became a candidate on the popular ground; and though he was not returned Member for Westminster; though Sheridan and Sir Samuel Hood were returned, they went into Parliament so battered, so bruised, that, when the next general election took place, at the end of a very few months, their old sores still smarted too acutely to suffer them to venture before the people again; and the great families on both sides, dreading a repetition of the strokes which they had received across the backs of their tools, thought it prudent to keep quiet, and to leave the people to themselves. It was at this time that the fatal dispute arose between Mr. Paul and Sir Francis; and though the former was guilty of very hasty conduct, and was by no means justified in putting Sir Francis's life in peril, I have always been one of those who thought him not fairly treated. The truth is, that it was not true that Sir Francis disliked to make common cause with Mr. Paul *on account of the expense*. How could it be so, when he had been so unsparing of money in his Middlesex elections! Nor, could he dislike the public conduct or the principles of Mr. Paul; for not only had he always expressed his approbation of both, but, at Mr. Paul's former contest against Sheridan, Sir Francis had most generously subscribed and punctually paid, *a thousand pounds towards Mr. Paul's expenses*. No, but Mr. Paul was become exceedingly popular, and Sir Francis did not wish success to a rival in popularity. No matter for Mr. Paul's inferior talents; and, surely, they were as much inferior to those of Sir Francis, as those of SOUTHEY or GIFFORD are inferior to those of POPE, of whom Gifford, particularly, is the imitator, even to plundering. Mr. PAUL was nothing in point of talent, nor in point of weight of character, compared with Sir Francis Burdett; but, still, he had the outward appearance of great popularity, and it was easy to perceive, that his zeal, personal courage (of which no man that I ever saw possessed more), his industry, and his perseverance would not have suffered that popularity to diminish. This was the cause, and the only cause, in my opinion, of the breach between them. Similar, too, I am fully convinced, was the cause of the recent extraordinary conduct of Sir Francis, with regard to the Spa-fields Meetings; with regard to the amendment proposed by my Lord Cochrane; with regard to the petition of the Boy DUGOOD; and finally,

with regard to the whole subject of Parliamentary Reform, of which he perceived that he had lived to see himself not the *only* great champion. To suppose that he could suffer his son to go into the army for *interest's sake*; to suppose that he had suffered himself to be quieted by offers of titles; to suppose that he has been influenced by Courtr's million of money; to suppose that he has changed his opinion as to the question of Reform; to suppose any of these, is to do injustice to his mind even more than to his heart. As far as he may have yielded to any of them, they have been *effect*, and not cause. The great cause has been, the proofs which he daily witnessed, that, if the question of Reform was carried, he himself would soon be surpassed on that line where it was his ambition always to be at the head, and not only at the head, but so far a-head as to have no other near him; like those hounds, with the disposition of which he is well acquainted, and which, though the finest of the whole pack, will never hunt with the pack; and if they cannot keep a-head, will rather hang behind upon a stale scent than join in the general cry. This is just what he is doing at present; but, again I tell him that he may be assured, that none of these Tavern-speeches; not all the big words which he can now muster up, will weigh as one feather against his failure of duty at the opening of the last session of Parliament.

It is not till since Sir Francis Burdett saw so many able men rising up in the cause of Reform, that he has taken to that everlasting harping about the *importance of property*. It used to be the importance of the *people*; the importance of the people's rights; the importance of men's rights, as *men*. This was the language of no very great many months ago. But, now, it is all *property*. It is the *country gentlemen*; it is the gentlemen of property. These are the persons that are now to be looked to, it seems, as the sole, or, at least, as the great prop of the cause of Reform. These notions appear, upon looking back into the Speeches of Sir Francis Burdett, to be wholly new in his mind, and I am very sure that, both in theory and in expected effect, they are altogether erroneous. Property does not consist solely in house and land, nor in goods and chattels; nor in certificates of Stock, like that of Courtr's; nor in specie and bank-notes. Every man has property in the works of his hands, or in those of his mind. Would you call a fellow a man of property because he has a hut and a bit of ground worth forty shillings a year, and set down as a man of no property a physician or a lawyer, who, though in constant practice, had neither house nor land and not a second shilling in his pocket? No; language is not to be thus abused for the sake of putting the ignorant possessors of his landed estates above men of sense and talent, and making the former, in spite of nature as well as of justice, the lords and masters of mankind. Civil society is built upon this basis, that the whole mass is to derive benefit from the *wisdom* which it contains; and for it to derive benefit from the wisdom, men must be left freely to choose the most wise of the society to manage its affairs. But, according to Sir Francis's present notions, the wisdom must be in the *acres of land*, and then comes the monstrous absurdity of acting upon the principle that forty shillings' worth of land ought to have as much voice as forty thousand shillings' worth of land.

But, these absurdities are not the natural production of Sir Francis Burdett's enlightened mind. They are the production of that unaccountable and that fatal jealousy, which induces him to do any thing rather than labour amidst equals in point of popularity. Gentle, kind and

benevolent to all his inferiors, in point of fortune. No base aristocratical pride, that indulges itself in looking down with disdain upon the poor or the lowly born; no envious feelings with regard to those who surpass him in extent or in value of estates. No; this, all this is *too low* for Sir Francis Burdett; but, in the race for popularity, he will admit of no equal; and, as it is impossible that he alone can accomplish the great work of the nation's deliverance, the consequence of this fatal propensity of his mind is, that he has, at last, been a quicksand to that cause, of which he seemed destined by nature as well as by the habits of his life to be at once, the corner-stone and the ornament.

When Sir Francis Burdett talks again about the *property* of the country doing such famous things, I beg him to look over the list of those persons who subscribed the money to defray the expenses of his *Westminster elections*. Will he find there a parcel of proprietors of estates? Will he find there a set of seedling Boroughmongers, such as those of whose company he boasted at the last Westminster Dinner? Will he find there what he calls the "*property* of the country?" No; he will find there none of the Bond-street Bucks; he will find there no fox-hunters who have sons in the standing army in time of peace; he will find there no fundholders and no army-tailors, who keep packs of fox-hounds to treat the poor and proud ancient gentry to a chase now and then. He will find there for the far greater part, tradesmen, who work for their bread; honest, industrious and public-spirited tradesmen, whose property consists in their capacity to labour, and who are men, not only of more high and honourable minds, but of minds, too, far more enlightened than the insolent Boroughmonger broods, of whom he appears lately to have become so enamoured. This was the description of men all over England and Scotland and Wales that raised and supported him. There were found upon the subscription-list the names of some few gentlemen of landed estates. Very few, indeed, and those marked out by the Boroughmonger tribe as Jacobins and Levellers. Let Sir Francis Burdett, therefore, look over this list once more, and, I think, or, at least, I hope, that he will not, in future, insult us by appearing to confine the quality of respectability to those who denominate themselves the "gentlemen of the country."

Besides, if *property* is to be made to consist in landed or in pecuniary possessions, let me ask Sir Francis Burdett, upon what ground it is, that journeymen and labourers are not only invited, but *compelled* to take up arms and venture their lives *in defence of the country*? If they are to be regarded as having *no property*, with what justice are they thus forced to leave their homes, their wives, children and aged parents, and to waste the prime of their lives, while they are submitting to all the hardships, all the restraints and all the severities of a military life and of military discipline? I should be glad if he would distinctly answer these questions; and tell us plainly at once, that the tradesmen, the farmers, the journeymen and the labourers are destined, in consequence of his Divine right, to spill their blood in defence of his estates.

Oh, no! He will not declare the affirmative of this proposition; and, yet, it is a necessary deduction from all the doctrines which he has lately broached with regard to the pre-eminence of *property*, meaning, as he has clearly defined it, the proprietorship of landed estates. What! is not that man a slave to all intents and purposes, who, deprived of all political rights, deprived especially of the right of voting at elections,

is still liable at any moment to be called forth to fight in defence of the possessions of others? To call such a man a free man is mockery. What was it, I would ask Sir Francis Burdett, which constituted the mark of *vassalage*? Why, it was that the vassal was considered as having no property in his labour or in his capacity to labour, and, that his Lord could command him to come forth at any moment he chose, to fight in defence of that Lord's possessions. If the people of England, who have no real property, that is to say, no property in house or land; if they are to be considered as having no property in their labour and in their capacity to labour; and if, notwithstanding this, they are to be liable to be called forth to fight in defence of the country, they are not only in a state of vassalage to the proprietors of the houses and the land, but they are infinitely worse off than vassals, seeing that they have enormous taxes to pay, and that the vassals had no taxes at all to pay. What! will you tell a man that he has no property, at the very moment that you are calling upon him and compelling him to pay many pounds a year in taxes towards the support of peace and war establishments, and towards paying the interest of what is called the National Debt? "You have no property, you vagabond; but part of the National Debt is due from you, and you shall pay one-half of your earnings in taxes, or else you shall go to jail." Will Sir Francis Burdett address this naked language to the people? As he certainly will not, let us hope that he will cease to put forth these new notions about the pre-eminence of landed property, and that he will return, and right speedily too, to those notions, which brought from him the public declaration that, to induce the people to fight cordially for their country, *it was necessary to give them something to fight for!* As things then stood, he said they had nothing worth fighting for, and yet he now talks about the rights of nothing but property in house and land; and distinctly proposes *his* Reform of Parliament, contrary to the prayers of the people, and by which Reform he would exclude from all right of voting more than one-half of the men who pay taxes, and nine-tenths of those who are liable to be called upon to defend the country.

But, I must break off here, and leave for another letter all the tricks resorted to by the Ministers and their hirelings to impose upon the country, and to make timid men believe, that there was a plan on foot by the Reformers and others to subvert the kingly government, and to produce the destruction or confiscation of all property. The heart-cheering news of the acquittal of Doctor WATSON and of Messrs. THISTLEWOOD, PRESTON and HOOPER, has just been received by me. Nothing that I ever heard in my life gave me half so much pleasure. My next Register will be upon this subject; but I cannot help observing here, that I have read the evidence of Mr. HUNT and Mr. BRYANT, and that I, as well as my son William, have more than twice heard Mr. Hunt state, very nearly word for word, all that is stated in the evidence relative to the conduct of CASTLES and the other parties at Bouverie-street, and also relative to the very important circumstance of Mr. Hunt's being met by the mob in Cheapside, and being called upon by CASTLES, by this same CASTLES, *to go and join the mob in taking the Tower!* Now, then, *who were the plotters?* Who are the men, who ought to suffer that death, which WALTER and STEWART doomed Mr. HUNT to suffer? The conduct of these two men on that occasion ought never to be forgotten for one moment. These were the men who hallooed the Ministers on to deeds

of death. My Letter to Mr. Hunt, published in the month of December, and in which I cautioned him against false witnesses, and particularly against the machinations originating with these two men, is now verified in all its parts. These two men were the prime agents of the whole of the * * * * *; but of this I shall say more hereafter. In the meanwhile, that you, my good and faithful friends, may see that I have not been unmindful of my duty towards these, my falsely-accused fellow-countrymen, I subjoin here as the close of this letter, a notice which I published in the American papers on the 24th of July.

“I see, that it is stated in the London papers, that *Young Watson* is in the United States of America. A little while back, I heard that he was in this country, but that he went under a *borrowed name*. Upon asking the reason why he did not go by his own name, the answer was, that he was afraid of being claimed by the *English government*, in virtue of a treaty between the two countries. This is a mistake. There was a treaty, made in 1794, which enabled the two Governments reciprocally to claim the surrender of *murderers and forgers*. This treaty is no longer in existence; and, if it were, it could, in no sense, apply to Mr. WATSON. This stipulation, though, upon the face of it, very fair and just, was one of a very dangerous tendency; for though the article took care that no man should be surrendered, except upon *proof*, produced in a court of justice, in the country where he was found, that he had been guilty of the crime alleged, and that too in the construction of the laws of *that country*; yet, there was the want of fair trial of this proof, because, while a vindictive Government might easily find evidence to send over in support of the charge, the accused party would have no means of bringing evidence in his defence, being at such a distance from all his friends, and all who might be able to prove his innocence. He would, indeed, have a *trial for murder or forgery* after he got home; and, if innocent, would, we will say, be acquitted of that crime; but, he might immediately be *detained* and tried for *sedition or treason*. A surrender of fugitives never, *until now*, made part of the compacts even between the sovereigns of Europe; and, I am quite sure, that no particle of such a horrid system will ever again be given into by America. However, this treaty has long since been at an end; and, as far as related to *forgers*, it was, I believe, never acted upon. It would have been shocking indeed if it had; for, it would have been, on the part of this country, surrendering up a man to suffer death for a crime, which, in no case, is punished with death in this country. But, even if the treaty were still in being, Mr. WATSON's case, supposing him to have seriously wounded PLATT (which I never believed), never could have come within the meaning of that treaty, which speaks of persons, charged with *murder or forgery*. Now, it is very well known that PLATT is *alive*; and, it is also well known, that to make out a charge of murder there must be a *death* upon the spot, or *ensuing* directly from the act. I never believed, nor do I believe it now, that PLATT was ever seriously hurt. I said this in print in England. I challenged the *COURIER* to bring forth the *surgeon's certificate*. There was an account of a ball *not extracted*. Timid people were kept in alarm for a long time with the most shocking description of the sufferings of poor PLATT; but, after we had been told of the *discharges* of the wound for six or seven weeks, and after *the Acts were passed*, the thing *died wholly away*. Mr. PLATT became well, nobody knew very well how; and, in all the trials of the rioters, not one word of evidence came out as to this most mortal wound, the existence of which was never certified by any surgeon from the beginning to the end, an omission that was never known to take place before on any similar occasion. The public were favoured with not one word upon the subject, first or last, under the hand of *Mr. Platt* himself, or of any of his numerous relations, though his father-in-law was living within a few yards of the spot where the act was said to have been committed, and though he is a man, I was informed, upon whose word the public would have placed a firm reliance.

“*Mr. Platt*, they told us, escaped over a *high wall* after he had received the ‘mortal wound.’ We were told by the hirelings themselves, that *Mr. Watson*, as soon as he had shot off the pistol, and upon hearing *Platt* say that he was shot, exclaimed, ‘I am an *unfortunate young man*!’ let me *dress your wound* :’ and yet, this young man was called a *murderer, an assassin, a bloody monster,*

another *Rohespierre*; and thus were the people of the whole country endeavoured to be thrown into a state of alarm. The hirelings stated, too, that the business of *Mr. Watson* and his associates was to obtain arms to go and attack the *Tower*, and that *Platt* first seized hold of *Watson* to take him into custody; yet, this latter, when he had shot off his pistol, or when the pistol had gone off, exclaimed: 'I am an unfortunate young man! I am a surgeon; let me examine your wound,' and in the face of this, their own account, they call this young man a murderer, and an assassin, though the man he is said to have shot is still alive, and though the act was committed (if committed at all) not only in open day, and before hundreds of witnesses, but in order to resist an attempt to take him prisoner. But these words were merely made use of as the words *Jacobin* and *disaffected* and *blasphemous* and *seditions* are: they are words intended to deceive the ignorant and alarm the timid.

"I think it likely that *Mr. Platt* received something of a hurt: and, perhaps, his fears augmented his danger; but, I do not believe, that he received any serious wound; and, as to a bullet, the surgeon, I believe, might have looked for a bullet in his body with as little chance of success as the noble Duke of Montrose and his coadjutor, *Lord James Murray*, looked for a bullet in the Prince's bullet-proof coach.

"However, *Mr. Watson* is able to clear this matter up, and I hope he will come forward in his own proper name and do it. His father is, I see, by this time, tried for *high treason*! the son has now a duty to perform, the most imperative that can exist: that of rescuing from dishonour the name of his father; and of a father, too, who, from every account from every quarter, has borne, throughout life, the character of a most virtuous, kind, and humane man. Indeed, it was his humanity, which in all likelihood, has produced his late misfortunes: for, his time was, in great part, devoted to the assistance, which, as a surgeon, he gave to the poor and friendless. Perhaps, before this time, he may have added one to the long list of those who, during the present reign, have been sentenced to be hanged, but not till dead, and to have their live bowels ripped out, to have their four quarters separated, and to have them placed at his Majesty's disposal. But, such was the sentence on *Russell* and on *Sydney*, except that they had the favour to have their heads chopped off; and yet, their descendants are Dukes and Lords. We are not, therefore, upon the bare ground of this sentence, if it should take place, to conclude, that it is improper for any one to explain satisfactorily, if he be able, the conduct of *Dr. Watson*; and, it is so far from being improper in his son, that it is his bounden duty to the memory of his father. Besides, the son himself, perhaps, is tried by this time, for the same offence; and, if found guilty, he will be condemned, and will be outlawed. It behoves him, therefore, on his own account, to come forward, and to make his defence before the world, and particularly in the face of that nation, amongst whom he has sought refuge.

"For my own part, being satisfied that *Mr. Watson*, if he really did wound *Platt* at all, never premeditated any such act; having seen, in the confessions of the very hirelings themselves, that he could not have thought of committing a murder, or of doing harm to any individual; having seen, that every one who knew him spoke of him as being a very humane though enthusiastic young man; being thoroughly convinced that he had no treasonable designs in view; and knowing that he has been, by the execrable London press, most foully calumniated, I shall be perfectly ready, if he be in this country, to afford him any assistance in my power, in the circulation of any statement that he may think proper to make upon this subject, so interesting to the nation to which he belongs, and to that which has given him protection; so deeply affecting the character of his father and himself, and so important in every point of view.

"To this end, I shall be glad to see him at my house as soon as he can make it convenient. Faithful to the settled laws of my country, I will never abet or countenance any conspiracy, direct or indirect, against the king and his family, or their well-known and lawful authority; but a man may 'faithful and true allegiance bear to our Sovereign Lord the King,' and yet may be very impatient under certain acts of his ministers; and may entertain a mortal hatred of trafficking in seats of Parliament. In other words, a man may be indiscreetly eager to obtain a Reform of the Parliament, without being a traitor. And as to *calumniam*, so far from its being a disrecommendation with me, it is on the contrary, the very quality which, of all others, is now most wanted in our country.

If Mr. WATSON is here, he is safe; and if he should see himself held forth as a traitor in the London news-papers, he may easily console himself with the reflection, that, in this respect, he only shares with General Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Dr. Franklin, and hundreds of others, now living, or lately living, in these States."

I remain your sincere friend
And obedient servant,
WM. COBBETT.

A HISTORY OF THE LAST HUNDRED DAYS OF ENGLISH FREEDOM, &c.

LETTER VI.

Doctor Watson's Trial and Acquittal.—Acquittal of the other State Prisoners.—The Unravelling of the Plots.—The whole Scheme blown into the air.—The Mask pulled off.—The Boroughmongers left without the smallest Disguise.—The real Men of Blood discovered.—Conclusion of the History of the Last Hundred Days of English Freedom.

(Political Register, October, 1817.)

North Hampstead, Long Island, August 15, 1817.

MY WORTHY AND BELOVED FRIENDS,

Often I have said that the Boroughmongers would find, if once they attempted to dip their hands in the people's blood, that "blood for blood" would become the motto of the people. Let the former remember this. Let them stop while yet there is time; or, let them not expect a tear of pity for them or for their children, in that day when even-handed justice shall give them back measure for measure, lacking not one single drop of what shall be their due. Our unhappy country is, it seems, according to the accounts of the bloody Boroughmonger newspapers, *all in a state of commotion*. What, then! the people do not remain quiet (for quiet they were *before*), after receiving loads of unmerited stripes! They most humbly pray to be restored the enjoyment of their rights. The answers they received were the *gag*, and the threatened dungeon and halter! They met, particularly in the brave county of Lancaster, to remonstrate against these intended acts of injustice and cruelty. While they were met, and peaceably met, for the legal purpose of petitioning, they were surrounded with soldiers, and, with the bayonet at their breast, like malefactors were dragged to a prison! And they do not like *this*; strange, perverse, stiff-necked race! They do not like treatment like this, while they pay one-half of their earnings in taxes, and while they are liable to be called out to shed their blood in defence of those who thus treat them! Wicked people! To imagine that the treatment of ordinary dogs is not far too good for them! Perverse people! To growl and snap when they are beaten

without cause and without mercy; and beaten, too, by those who have got a tenth part of their own understanding!

Upon the subject of these commotions, however, I shall hereafter have occasion to remark. At present, the PLOTS; the famous Plots are the subject of my attention. In this very letter, it was my intention to have shown how false all the pretences were with regard to the plots and conspiracies mentioned in the reports of the two Houses of Parliament. The trial of Doctor WATSON, and the bringing forward of that precious gentleman Mr. CASTLES, have prevented me from going here into any reasonings or speculations upon the subject. Mr. Castles, under the guidance of his judicious friend, the Attorney-General, SHEPHERD, has saved me a wonderful deal of trouble. He has proved; he has made matter of record; he has made materials for history, those facts, which, without his assistance and that of his worthy friend the Attorney-General, SHEPHERD, I should have been obliged to leave to the discretion and decision of my readers.

Mr. WETHERELL's defence of Dr. WATSON was very able, and, perhaps, it was better calculated to produce an acquittal than a speech of better politics would have been; I, however can never give my unqualified approbation of any speech which contains unqualified approbation of the present Government and present Ministry in England, as Mr. Wetherell's speech did; and, there is want of taste as well as of judgment and sincerity in praising the Ministry to the skies, as the most pure and excellent of men, while, in the next breath, the speech tells the Jury, that Castles stands before them, a most naked villain, a bare-faced perjured wretch, and that he is fed, clad, and paid by that same Government and Ministry; and that the very clothing upon his back is a mere foretaste of the blood-money which he is to receive for bringing the devoted victims at the bar to the gallows. I disagree with Mr. WETHERELL, too, in the abusive epithets and terms which he applies to Mr. Castles; and I rather agree with the Attorney and Solicitor General, that we ought to look upon him not with an eye of so much severity. He is, after all, a far less villain than a man who sells a seat in Parliament; a far less villain than a man who bribes a Parliament to sell its country and itself too; and a far less villain than any of those who commit numerous murders under the guise of law and justice, and who pretend to be actuated by motives of loyalty and love of the country and constitution. There have been villains of this sort in former times. There were the JEFFRIESES and the LAWS in the time of the STUARTS. These bloody monsters cut off men's ears, burnt their cheeks, split their noses, shut them up in dungeons for years, under pretence of their having been guilty of seditious libels. And they did it too like other villains of the same stamp, under the pretence that what they did was necessary to the tranquillity of the country and the safety of the throne! * Those cruel villains, after having produced civil wars, and the destruction of both the Kings who listened to them, had ample justice visited upon their own guilty heads, and which justice was inflicted, too, by the hands of those brave and resolute Englishmen, whose descendants we are. The base and cruel villains used a great deal of *cant*; pretended to a great deal of impartiality; when wrapped up in their ermine, and all the while they were trying to get the victim safe into their claws, they *purred* like pussy! But, the moment the victim came safely within the reach of their *discretion*, his bones began to crack

under their teeth, his blood to issue from the corners of their mouths; like pussy, they growled and swore and revelled in the enjoyment of their savage fury! In their approaches, soft goes their pat upon the floor, meekly, and, as it were, half-asleep, they peep through their fur at their prey; like pussy, sitting before the hole, they sometimes purr and sometimes seem to sleep. But the moment the Jury has let the poor mouse go into their claws, they are all activity, all boldness; up goes the corner of the robe, like the cat's tail, and the wretched victim has no more chance of mercy than if he were in the hands of the persecutor of Job.

Such were the villains of Judges, who lived in the time of the STRAITS, when that famous Judge HOLT, of whom they talk so much now, was a barrister, and who had the baseness, after he had received his fee, to desert his client Mr. PRYNNE. These men were infinitely worse than Mr. CASTLES; for they pretended to be guided in their conduct by a desire to promote the interests of loyalty, morality and religion, whereas, honest Mr. Castles has no pretence of this sort. He is a villain; but he is a villain without a mask. Like a Boroughmonger, he cares nothing about shedding blood; but then he does not, like a Boroughmonger, pretend to want to prevent blood from being shed. His trade is blood, human blood, and that was known by the Boroughmongers long and long ago, to be sure. But, then, he is not base enough to deny his trade. He comes manfully forward and says that he wants blood, in order that he may have money; because without blood, he cannot have money. There is, therefore, something in Mr. Castles's mode of proceeding that makes him less detestable in my eyes, and far less detestable than many others, whom, though we know them to be villains, we *dare not call them so*. If a housebreaker be taken up and examined at Bow-street, he is, upon that bare examination, the next day, called a *villain* in all the newspapers. But these newspaper-gentlemen are very cautious how they give this appellation to any one who has power at his command or pounds in his pocket. This conduct has always been regarded by me as being extremely base; and so far from imitating the conduct of Mr. Wetherell in this particular, I shall treat Mr. Castles with the greatest degree of politeness, and shall call him the *Honourable* Mr. Castles, or the "honourable gentleman," which appears to me to be really his due. Occasionally he may be called the *loyal* Mr. Castles; for, when the devil comes to cast up his account, neither the DUKE OF MONTROSE nor LORD Somebody MURRAY, who told the story about the bullets, will have a greater stock of *loyalty* to plead. These men differ in some respects from the Honourable Mr. Castles, but nobody will pretend that they ever went farther than he in the unravelling of plots. They, indeed, have not, as far as the world knows, at any rate, the fiftieth part of the merit of this "honourable gentleman," for he not only discovered plots, but assisted in hatching of them; which nobody has pretended to *prove* with regard to any persons connected with the Ministry or the Boroughmongers; that is to say, persons other than Mr. Castles himself, who, it must now be manifest to the whole world, was the agent in the hands of the agents of the Boroughmongers, to produce a pretended insurrection.

For the reasons just stated, we will treat Mr. Castles with the same politeness in point of appellation, as we do others whom we detest, but of whom we dare not speak in the manner that justice would authorize.

There are many appellations, either of which he would very well merit; but, as being the most in vogue, we will give him the appellation of "honourable gentleman." Whether we shall ever see him upon that list of sinecures, pensions, and grants, where we already find the names of DUNDAS, BURKE, STEELE, JOSEPH HUNT, CANNING, WM. GIFFORD, SOUTHEY, all the ROSES, and many others which I need not now name; whether we shall ever find Mr. Castles's name upon this list, will depend, probably, more upon *events* than upon the wishes or intentions of Mr. Castles's friends. It is not quite impossible that Mr. Castles may, for a short time, at any rate, have a seat in an assembly much more respectable, in all outward appearances, at least, than the assemblies at MOTHER TONGUE'S, or those of thieves and housebreakers in Smock-alley and Petticoat-lane. I do not say, that at bottom, Mr. Castles will have changed his society for the better; but, at any rate, if one must keep late hours and bad company, one would rather be with robbers that are not lousy than with robbers that are lousy, though one may be very well convinced at the same time, that the former deserve hanging much more than the latter.

Having thus premised, let us now, my friends, proceed to take a view of the London Plots as they now stand unravelled. And, if such a scene of infamy; if a scene of so much baseness, ever was witnessed before, I beg to know from Beckett or Gifford or Southey, when and where it was that the world witnessed such a scene.

In order that we may see the whole thing in its true light; in order that we may be sure that the insurrection in London was hatched by the Boroughmongers and their tools; in order that we may be sure of this, we must not suffer Mr. Castles's evidence to stand alone. That "honourable gentleman," indeed, almost positively swears to the fact. DOWLING positively swears, that he was employed before the Meeting took place, to go and take down the words. But, we must go back now, and trace the minds of the Boroughmongers through their press, and through some other symptoms, until we come to the interesting sequel; the interesting unravelling of the Plot, which has been so kindly given to the world by the "Honourable" Mr. Castles and Mr. Dowling, and through the assistance and instrumentality of that judicious gentleman, Mr. SHEPHERD, the Attorney-General, who found out that my son owed eighty thousand pounds to the Stamp-Office. Mr. WETHERELL'S object was to triumph over the Attorney-General *as a lawyer*, which he fairly did; but Mr. WETHERELL took especial care to keep his peace with the Ministry; and, indeed, he seems upon this occasion, to have availed himself of the opportunity of convincing the Ministry and the Boroughmongers, that he was a man that was *worth something*, which, I dare say, they will perceive, and will, I have no doubt, very soon discover the sure way of having the full benefit of his talents. He is a member of Parliament already, in right of his own purse; he has *voted for* the renewal of the Absolute-power-of-imprisonment Bill; and if things go on in the present way, he may, very probably, be Attorney-General himself, if not something higher.

From such a person we could not expect such an exposure of the plotters as truth and public good demanded. It was his affair to trace back the thing no farther than was required in order to fight his rival the Attorney-General. He, therefore, told the jury, that the change of the charge from *misdeemeanor* to *high treason*, took place in consequence of Mr. Castles's coming forward. But, as we shall presently see, it

took place in consequence of the recently-formed resolution to pass the Gagging Bills; and which resolution was not formed at the time when the charge of misdemeanor was brought forward.

We must go into the matter from the beginning, and trace the plot regularly all through from the apprehensions of the Boroughmongers; from their alarm at the progress of the principles of Reform; and we shall find the whole hang together as completely as the links of any chain that ever was forged. In the former part of this history, we have seen, that, so early as the month of October, the Boroughmongers had taken the alarm, and had begun to sound that alarm by the means of their corrupt and hired press. When the Twopenny Register made its appearance, they clearly perceived, that the days of deception were passed, or, at least, that they speedily would be passed for ever, unless a belief could be created amongst the foolish, the timid, and the selfish, that the Reformers aimed at a *French Revolution*, the horrors of which, a million-fold magnified, were still lurking in the minds of the nation. But, to create such a belief as this was no easy matter, seeing that the very publication, of which the Boroughmongers most complained, inculcated a peaceable and orderly conduct; and, what is more, really produced such conduct on the part of the people all over the kingdom. Moreover, and which was a thing truly wonderful, this publication, at the same time that it urged the people on to demand Reform, actually put an end to a course of unlawful violences, which were before taking place in numerous parts of the country.

These facts, so striking in themselves, and so honourable to the minds of the people, and to the cause of Reform, reduced the Boroughmongers almost to despair. They saw no hope of riots. The bakers, butchers, and other dealers in the necessaries of life, were no longer annoyed by senseless attacks. The Boroughmongers could complain of no violences. They, therefore, *from that very moment*, began to think of hatching plots, in order to serve as a pretence for resisting the petitions for Reform, not by argument, but by force of arms. It was in the month of October, that the COURIER and the TIMES, both in the pay of the Boroughmongers, began to pave the way for these plots. The former of these papers had these words: "There is ONE POINT, to which we wish particularly to call the public attention. Much praise is given to the Meetings for their peaceable conduct. Why peaceable? Because they know that tumult would defeat their real as well as their pretended object. Peace! They would keep peace for a time, till the crisis is ripe for explosion. Like the sportsman, they would advance with silent step, and crouching, fawning curs, till they are secure of killing their game."

The impudence and baseness of this must be manifest to every man. I quoted the paragraph and noticed it in my Register of the 9th of last November. From this moment forward attempts were constantly making by the Boroughmongers to excite false alarms; but the people had by this time discovered, that they had been ruined by the false alarms of Pitt and Dundas and of the Fitzwilliams and the Bentincks and the Spencers. This new attempt to excite false alarms was like an attempt to pluck a pigeon a second time, before his feathers were come again. The undertaking appeared to be wholly hopeless. At last a most desperate expedient was resorted to. Written handbills were said to have been put under the doors of public-houses, calling upon the people to take up arms

against the tyranny, and calling upon them also to chop off the head of Castlereagh, and to destroy the kingly government. These handbills were so perfectly ridiculous, considered with regard to any real design of a revolutionary sort, that it was impossible to believe them to have proceeded from real conspirators against the State; but, when we saw them blazoned forth in the *Courier* and the *Times*, it was very evident to me, that they had originated with the Boroughmongers and with their immediate agents. The desperateness of the Boroughmongering crew may be easily gathered from their resorting to this expedient; but, soon after this, the first Meeting in *Spa-fields* came fortunately to their assistance. This was a Meeting, called by Dr. Watson, Mr. Preston and others, of the distressed persons in and about London, and the professed object of the Meeting, to petition the Prince Regent for a redress of grievances, and for relief. The advertisement, calling this Meeting, was signed by DYALL, as Chairman of a Committee. It was now that Mr. HUNT came upon the stage; and of the causes of his so coming I will here state the particulars. Mr. PRESTON, who was the Secretary to the Committee, wrote a letter to Mr. HUNT, calling upon him to come to the assistance of his distressed countrymen, and to be present at the intended Meeting in *Spa-fields*. Upon receiving this letter, Mr. HUNT went over to Botley to me, to ask me what I thought he had better do. My answer was, that, seeing that it was a body of his countrymen in distress that called upon him, it was useless for me to say, that he *ought* to go, for that I knew he would go. But, I observed to him, that it was necessary for him to bear in mind, how desperate the Boroughmongers were becoming, and that it behoved him, for the sake of the cause of Reform as well as for the sake of his own life, to be constantly on his guard against spies and informers; for that I was certain, that a trap would be laid to destroy him. He was of my opinion, and, as the invitation came from those persons who were called "*Spenceans*," I observed, that it would be his duty to take great care, not to suffer, in his person, or by the means of his concurrence, the cause of Reform to be *mixed up* with what was called the *Spencean project*, and which project, by a little twisting and misrepresentation, might be made to mean a *general confiscation of real property*, though it really meant no such thing, as was evident from Mr. EVANS's pamphlet, which I then had lying upon the table. Mr. HUNT saw the danger of his appearing and giving his countenance to any petition proceeding upon the *Spencean principles*; and he, therefore, resolved not to join, directly or indirectly, in any such petition. The Meeting took place. A *Memorial*, as it was called, had been prepared by the Watsons and others to be moved at the Meeting. But, it is one thing to draw up a paper in a room, and another to have the ability to cause it to be received and passed by a Meeting of numerous persons promiscuously met. When, therefore, they came to the field, Mr. HUNT found little difficulty in setting aside the *Memorial*, and in proposing and causing to be passed a Petition to the Prince, respectfully worded, on the subject of Reform and of the sufferings of the people.

While this was going on in *Spa-fields* the Boroughmonger press was actually at work, preparing the way to take the life of Mr. HUNT. The *Courier*, which is published about noon, stated that its reporter had just left the Meeting, and had just heard HUNT move a *Memorial* of a very *reasonable nature*, of which it then *actually inserted a passage!* This fact is proof positive of a dark and infamous plot against Mr. HUNT's

life. But, how came the *Courier* to say this, when the wretched proprietor, when the corrupt, sanguinary proprietor of that paper, must have known that he would have been contradicted in a few hours? No; he *did not know it!* And how this agent of the plotting came to be deceived, you shall now hear the interesting account.

DYALL, the man who had signed the advertisement for the Meeting, had, long before the Meeting took place, been sent for by JOHN GIFFORD, the Police Magistrate, and had shown the *Memorial* to Gifford, who had immediately transmitted a copy of it to Lord Sidmouth. Who furnished the infamous slanderer, the *Courier*, with a copy of it, I leave you to guess. But, a copy of it he had; and, therefore, he stated in his paper, which was printed about the middle of the day, that Mr. HUNT had *just moved* the Memorial, and that it contained the treasonable passage which he inserted!

Look, now, at the series of facts. First the advertisement appears; next it is stated in the newspapers that Mr. HUNT is coming to the Meeting; next DYALL is sent for, and "the *treasonable Memorial*" is copied and the copy lodged with the Secretary of State; next the Secretary of State keeps the copy quietly in his possession, and never apprizes Mr. HUNT that he is going to be led to commit treason; next, the COURIER stands ready with a copy in his possession; next, about the hour that he supposes that Mr. HUNT has fallen completely into the trap, the COURIER, the agent of the corrupt and bloody-minded Borough-mongers, puts into print and sends off all over the country, what he calls a *treasonable* passage, of the Memorial; states that this has *just been moved* by Mr. HUNT, and thus paves the way for the *arrest* and the probable *death* of that gentleman. How the blood-hounds must have lunged their tails, when they found that they were disappointed! Can you conceive any thing more base than the whole of this transaction? If one could believe it possible, that the agents in this dark piece of villany are to escape unpunished; if one could believe this possible, the light of day would become hateful to one's sight.

I beg you to remark, that it is treason in any one not to *prevent* the commission of a treason, if he has the power of doing it; and yet no effort was made to prevent Mr. HUNT from committing what was called treason, and what would have been endeavoured to be made treason, too, if he had not been too discreet to commit it. Remark, also, that what was *treason*, when it was thought to have come from *his* lips, was *no treason* in Dyall, who had it in his possession in a written document. No; it was not *Dyall*, whose blood was wanted by the COURIER and the Borough-mongers: it was Mr. HUNT whom they wanted to sacrifice. They knew very well all about the *Spenceans* long before. They had read their project in *Mr. Evans's pamphlet*, which had been sent to every Minister, and to every well-known public character years before; and this project of "*a common partnership in the land*" was now conjured up to be hitched on upon the cause of Reform, in order that both might be destroyed together. It was false to accuse the Spenceans, even the Spenceans, with a project of *confiscation*. They entitled their scheme "*Christian Policy*;" and they proceeded upon the principle, which the Apostle laid down for the guidance of the primitive Christians in their temporal affairs. They told their disciples, as the Apostle told his disciples, that they ought to enjoy "all things in common." But, look at the pamphlet of Mr. Evans, who was the great apostle of the

sect; and, if you find one single word in that pamphlet, which would lead you to believe that Mr. Evans wished for confiscation of any sort; or that he wished to destroy any of the establishments of the country, then I give you leave to regard me as being upon a level with such a man as Shepherd, the Attorney-General. Therefore, even the Spenceans have been grossly and basely calumniated. But, when we know that their project has been on foot for so many years; when we know that the publication of their project has been struggling for public attention in all sorts of ways; when we know that the well-meaning, though wild-thinking leaders of the sect have actually been urging every Minister for years past to adopt their plan; when we know that it was formally proposed, too, and treated only with ridicule by that vixen, PEACEVAL, who was ready to bite at every thing that came within the reach of his power; when we know that the plan has been advertised by writings upon the walls of London and ten miles round London, for, at least, seven or eight years past; when we know all this, who can be fool enough not to perceive, that the only reason for conjuring the thing up at this time, was, to couple it with the cause of Reform, and, by that means, to impute to the latter views of confiscation and revolution? The Spenceans had not changed their plan. Their plan continued to be what it was ten years before; and, therefore, it is clear that it was now conjured up by the Boroughmongers, in order to vilify that cause of the country, which had been maintained by arguments, which neither those Boroughmongers nor their tools had been able to answer.

The sequel of the first Spa fields Meeting was conducted by Mr. HUNT with the utmost prudence and propriety. Sir Francis Burdett declined to comply with the request of the Meeting, which was, *that he should present their Petition to the Regent*; but, there was this added to it, that he should be accompanied by Mr. HUNT. He refused to present the Petition, though I will venture to assert that he has engaged to present many Petitions much more strong in point of language, and far more offensive in point of sentiment, than this Petition; and I will further venture to assert, that he never in his whole life-time presented a Petition, either to the Parliament or to the Throne couched in more correct, more dignified and more respectful language than this Petition. Nay, I will venture to assert, that this Petition was a better-drawn Petition; more correct in its statements; more consequent in its reasonings; more judicious in its topics; and more logical and more forcible in its conclusions, than any Petition he ever presented in his life. Where, then, are we to look for the real cause of his refusal to present this Petition? Why, where we are to seek for the cause of his never having, even to this day, presented the Petition to the Prince from his own Constituents, which he was to have presented according to their resolution, "*accompanied by Lord Cochrane.*" This Petition had been agreed to at a very numerous Meeting in Palace-Yard; its main subject was the corruption of the House of Commons; it had been agreed to many months before I left England; and though many, many *Levees* had been held before that time, he had never been there to present that Petition, though he had been there for other purposes or for no purposes at all. Mr. Hunt may probably think it his duty to make public the grounds of Sir Francis's refusal upon the occasion above spoken of. For my part, I must content myself with the facts and with the conclusions to which those facts naturally lead. At the Meeting in Spa-fields, Mr.

Waddington observed, in speaking of the absence of Sir Francis Burdett, that "this was not a time for a man like Sir Francis to be nursing a boy that had tumbled out of a gig." But, no countenance was given to this by Mr. Hunt; and there appeared to the public, at any rate, no good reason whatever for declining to present this Petition.

This refusal, however, had very considerable weight in producing the subsequent events. The Boroughmonger newspapers, who knew very well what interpretation to give to this refusal, took special care to avail themselves of the occurrence. They took care to inform the public, that his son was so far recovered as to be able to ride out; that Sir Francis had gone to Hastings, where he was living in a house of GENERAL HULSE (a known creature of the Court); and that Sir Francis himself, though he could not leave his son to come to the Meeting at Spa fields, could leave him to go out a fox-hunting. In short, this refusal greatly encouraged the Boroughmongers; because they regarded it, and very justly, as a symptom that the Reformers would, when the pinch came, be abandoned by the man whom they regarded as their chief, if not their only supporter in Parliament.

Nevertheless, undaunted by this refusal, Mr. Hunt proceeded to present the Petition himself. And proceeded, according to the very letter of his promise, to Carlton-house. He was there received with the greatest attention and respect, but was referred to the Secretary of State, as being the proper channel. By Lord Sidmouth he was received in a similar manner, who told him, that he would present the Petition to the Prince, and he further told him, that he disbelieved the calumnies published against him in the newspapers, and that he was convinced that Mr. Hunt's presence at the Meeting had prevented a great deal of mischief. His Lordship kept his promise in presenting the Petition without loss of time, and the moment he had so done, he informed Mr. Hunt of it by letter, *in order, that Mr. Hunt might make his report accordingly to the next Meeting.*

It was impossible for any gentleman in England to have conducted this matter with greater decorum than it was conducted by Mr. Hunt. But, now, observe, that it was clear from all these circumstances, that the Ministers must have had it completely in their power to prevent any thing resembling a commotion on the 2nd of December, when the next Meeting was held. They were perfectly well informed, even by Mr. Hunt himself, of the silly, inflammatory stuff, that was working in the minds of the Spencean enthusiasts. They had, besides, the proof of all this in DYAL's memorial. Was it, then, an act becoming a gentleman; was it an act becoming a friend of peace; was it an act becoming a Minister of the Crown, to keep silence as Lord Sidmouth did upon this occasion, and not to utter one word to Mr. Hunt in order to put him upon his guard; but, rather, to encourage him to hold the second Meeting, without putting him upon his guard at all?

All these facts were explicitly alleged in the Petition of Mr. Hunt to both Houses of Parliament, and, how completely did that petition upset the main conclusion of the Reports from the Secret Committees! Though Sir Francis Burdett thought proper to sit in silence, while this petition lay on the table of the House of Commons, my Lord Holland, who presented it to the House of Lords, made that use of it, which became a sincere and honourable man. "Here," said his Lordship, "is a petitioner, who offers to prove at your Lordships' bar that the Secretary

“ of State was duly apprized of all the circumstances which led to the “ insurrection of the second of December, and that he used no endeavours whatever to prevent that Meeting, but rather encouraged it.” And, then he challenged Lord Sidmouth to *contradict the statements of the petition if he could*, and not a word did Lord Sidmouth say in answer to this charge. What could be more cogent than this? Ought not the House to have hesitated? Not one moment did they hesitate; but, on the contrary, they hurried on the more to pass the Bills, and to put every man’s person within the reach of their fangs.

If the Ministers had been desirous to prevent a commotion being produced by the wild and enthusiastic men, whom they acknowledged Mr. Hunt to have prevented from working up a thoughtless multitude to desperate deeds; if they had been really desirous of preventing such a result of the Meeting of the second of December, would it have been too great a condescension in my Lord Sidmouth to have advised Mr. Hunt to be cautious, and to have warned him of the danger? His Lordship can, it seems, condescend to hold conferences with *infamous spies*; this is not beneath his Lordship. Therefore, it was not any sense of dignity (it would have been false dignity, I allow), that prevented him from free communication with Mr. Hunt, who, he must have been very sure, could wish for nothing so earnestly as to cause peace and tranquillity to prevail, while he was engaged in the prosecution of his object of Reform, and while he was also engaged, as without any crime he might, in advancing his own popularity. But, instead of this line of conduct; instead of putting Mr. Hunt upon his guard against those schemes of a set of wild men, which were well known to the Home-Office, the Home-Office set itself to work to get in readiness Magistrates and Police-officers to surround Mr. Hunt at the Meeting, and a short-hand writer to take down his words. This last is a very material circumstance indeed. VINCENT GEORGE DOWLING, who was brought forward upon the trial with his notes, confessed that he was engaged by *Mr. Gurney’s clerk*, who was there as a short-hand writer, also, to *assist him* in taking a note of the speeches in the field; and he further confessed that when he had transcribed his note of what passed, he gave it to Mr. Beckett, one of the Under-Secretaries of State. The cross-examination of this man was stopped by the Judges, so as to *prevent him from disclosing what passed between this witness and the officers of the Government*. However, he disclosed enough, for he confessed that he had said that he expected to be *paid by the Government*, not only for his notes as a short-hand writer, but for other trouble he had had in the business. And SAMUEL STEER swore upon the trial, that DOWLING had told him that this introduction to the Home-Office “ *was likely to lead to employment for himself and his brothers, which might amount to three hundred pounds a-year.*” This was a disclosure that answered all purposes; for, it completely proved that the anxiety of the Ministers was not to prevent seditious words and actions, and riotous proceedings, but that their object was to obtain colourable grounds for bringing accusations against the Reformers in general; and against Mr. Hunt in particular. So that, if the Committee of the House of Lords had said in their Report, not that the conspirators in Spa-fields had been defeated in their object in November, but were prepared for success on the second of December; if they had not said this, and *had said* that the Boroughmongers, having missed their mark in November, had made preparations for hitting it on the

second of December, that Report would so far have been perfectly correct.

But here again their scheme was marred, and the blows, which they intended principally for Mr. Hunt, have finally fallen upon their own heads. The Honourable Mr. Castles and Mr. Dowling have done the Boroughmongers, the Spenceans, and Mr. Hunt, and even young Watson, ample justice. We see Dowling prepared with his book of notes, dogging the rioters from place to place, and we hear him confess, and we see it proved by another witness, that he expected ample remuneration for his trouble, not only for himself, but for his brothers; a remuneration to come out of the sweat of the people. We see the "Honourable" Mr. CASTLES exciting a senseless and thoughtless rabble to acts of fury. It was he, the "honourable gentleman," who met Mr. Hunt in Cheapside, and told him to turn about and go with them, for that the Tower was in their hands. This fact Mr. Hunt declared upon his oath at the trial; and I am ready to declare upon my oath, that Mr. Hunt told me the same thing on the third of December. He did not then know the name of Castles; but his words were, "that it was a damn'd scoundrel who had been guilty of conveying French prisoners out of the country." After this, Mr. Hunt repeated the same story in the presence of my son William; and we all agreed that there could be no doubt, that the chief instigators of this riot had been employed for the express purpose of obtaining the grounds for taking away his life; and, with the facts which have now come to light, I believe, that there is not an unprejudiced man in England or in America, who will not come to the same conclusion. *To strike him down* was a great object with the Boroughmongers. His talents are not of that sort which are calculated for sowing the seeds of conviction in the mind. But admirably calculated for the time of the harvest. He has no pretensions to anything further than great presence of mind in difficult and perilous circumstances; undaunted personal courage; and a perseverance that no discouragement can check. He commits errors enough, he is frequently carried away by his ardour, and is by no means deficient in point of ambition and self-sufficiency. But, who is the man to say that he is without spot or blemish; and that there is nothing in him that might not be mended? There is no such man who has any virtue or any energy in him; and if he has neither, he is of no more importance than a log. I have never been able to discover any base selfish motive in Mr. Hunt. I know that as to overt acts, he has shown more zeal in the cause of the country than any man I ever met with, Major Cartwright excepted. Nor, should the public listen at all, to those base tools of the Boroughmongers who have so large a portion of the press at their command, with regard to the talents of Mr. HUNT. I believe that, upon five or six different occasions, he has pleaded his own cause, in civil matters, or matters of trespass, and that in all these he has been triumphant. Twice before Mr. Baron Graham, he not only triumphed, but the lawyers were reprov'd by the Judge for attempting to act foully against him. In one case, though the evidence produced in an action of trespass against him, under the Game-laws, led to a verdict against him, the Judge refused to certify upon the back of the record; so fully convinced was he by the speech and by the evidence produced by the defendant, that the *action*, and not the *trespass*, was *malicious*. These are facts, which are more than sufficient to answer all that the hirelings of the Boroughmongers have written

about Mr. Hunt's want of talents. Still, however, his main talent is wonderful quickness and presence of mind in difficult and dangerous circumstances. After the last election at Bristol, where Sir Samuel Romilly was a candidate against him, the latter gentleman, in a speech publicly made, sought an occasion for declaring, that, through the whole of that boisterous contest, Mr. Hunt had conducted himself in every respect as became a gentleman and a man of honour. At that contest Mr. Hunt had no lawyer; and those who witnessed the quickness and ability with which he managed the law part of the election, were utterly astonished.

I mention these particulars in order to show that Mr. Hunt was a man worth the powder and shot of the Boroughmongers. They knew all about him; for they know all about everybody, either through their tax-gatherers, their post-office or their spies; and the second of December was, I really believe, destined to be the last day of his liberty. Mr. Wetherell said, during his speech, that he made no doubt that Castles meant to have taken the life of Mr. Hunt, who, he said, had providentially escaped the trap; and, so fully was I convinced of this before I left England, that I told Mr. BRYANT, "Hunt owes his life to your happening to dine with him at the Bouverie-street Hotel, and to his own prudence in going to WANSTED on the first of December, instead of remaining in town."

I might here close my observations upon the origin and progress of this conspiracy against the liberties of the country. But, the infamous *Boroughmonger Press*, particularly the atrocious and sanguinary wretches, who own the *Times*, the *Courier* and the *Sun*, must never be forgotten. While "the Honourable" Mr. Castles was at work organizing the riot; while GREEN, Mr. GURNEY's clerk, and his associate, Mr. DOWLING, were stitching their note-books together and sharpening their pencils, as the butchers sharpen their knives, the conspirators of the press were not idle. They were preparing their paragraphs, which were to confirm, or, at least, corroborate the testimony of the former. The *Courier*, who had acted so infamous a part, with regard to the first Meeting, had now his paragraphs ready to send all over the country, charging Mr. Hunt with being the cause of the riot. The *Times* stated distinctly, that, on the Sunday previous to the riot, Mr. Hunt and myself were *in consultation at the King's Bench with my Lord Cochrane*; though I never saw Mr. Hunt during the whole of that day, and though he spent the whole of that day in Essex, and I spent the whole of that day at Peckham in Surrey. The *Sun* newspaper asserted, that I had come up from Botley expressly to assist in organizing the insurrection, and that the moment it was over, I drove off home again. Though I had been in London from an early part of the month of November, and though I never left it, except to go to Peckham and back again, until the middle of the month of February after. But, these atrocious miscreants, knew well that we should stand no chance against them in any appeal to the law; and, besides, they made so sure of their prey, that they had not the least idea of any danger to themselves from anything that they might do against us.

I beg you to turn back to my Register of the 14th of December last, which consists of a Letter addressed to Mr. Hunt upon the subject of the Plots. You will there see what I then said of the danger he was in from false-swearing; and how anxious I was to impress upon his mind, that these *newspaper-people* were the most base and bloody of the tools of the

Boroughmongers. One paragraph of that Letter I cannot help inserting here. After stating what I have above stated as to the conduct of the COURIER, the TIMES and the SUN, I thus warn him of his danger:

“ You, conscious of your honourable motives, and listening only to your courage, have always been deaf to the entreaties of those who cautioned you against the danger of spies and false-witnesses. But, do you think, that the wretches who could be base enough to publish falsehoods such as I have enumerated above: who could coolly represent you as having been sent first to jail and then to Bedlam; and who, in order to deter me from my duty, could exhibit my son as being in danger of his life, and thereby cause alarm in his mother and sisters: do you think that men so lost to all sense of shame, and so devoted to everything that is corrupt; do you think they would hesitate one moment to bribe villains to swear falsely against you or against me or against any man, whom they thought it their interest to destroy? Nay, do you think, that they would hesitate one single half-moment to be guilty, for such a purpose, of the blackest perjury themselves? Be you assured, that there is nothing of which such men are not capable; intimidation, promises, bribes, perjury, anything such men are capable of recommending to others, or of doing themselves. Your country life, your sober habits, your dislike of feastings and carousings; these are great securities; but, while you follow the impulses of your public spirit and your valour, I hope you will always bear in mind, that there are such things as *false-swearing* in the world, and that a defeated coward has never been known to be otherwise than inexorably cruel. The proprietor of the MORNING POST, in his Paper of last Monday, says, that COBBETT and HUNT ought at least to *lose their lives*; and the author of the ANTIGALLICAN has, I am told, put the drawing of a gallows in his Paper, with a *rope* ready for use, having *my name* on it, or very near it.—And, you may be well assured, that, if the *false oaths* of these men could do the job, those oaths would be very much at our service. Therefore, though I am quite sure, that these menaces will not deter you from doing anything, which you would have done if the menaces had never been made; yet, as being proofs of the shameless, the remorseless, the desperate villany of these tools, their present conduct ought to impress on your mind the necessity of being on your guard, so far, at least, as not *unnecessarily* to expose yourself to the consequences of *false-swearing*. These men and their associates call the younger Mr. WATSON (whom they, without proof, charge with shooting Mr. PLATT) an *assassin*, though they themselves state, that the shot arose from the seizure of Watson by Platt, and that the former, like a wild enthusiast as he appears to have been, expressed his sorrow on the instant, and actually went to work to save the life of the wounded man. Nobody justifies, or attempts to justify, the shooter; but, if he were an *assassin*, what are these men who, while they kept their *names hidden*, are endeavouring to produce persecution and ruin and death in every direction? The man who shot Mr. PLATT, though highly criminal, is not a thousandth part so criminal as these men, who to premeditated bloody-mindedness add a degree of cowardice such as was never before heard of.”

I was very certain that the riot had been caused by the Boroughmongers, and that Mr. Hunt's prudence, joined to my advice, had defeated their

grand object. I remember well, and he will remember too, that when he came up from the country to go to the second Spa-fields Meeting, I took infinite pains to convince him of the existence of a conspiracy against his life; and he will remember my concluding words: "Hunt, your life is not safe for a month, unless you are in a situation to *prove* an *alibi*, "for every moment of that life." He clenched his fist and swore, that a man had better be hanged at once than to live such a life. However, I luckily prevailed upon him to go into the country, and to drive directly from the country to the Meeting in Spa-fields; and now, I believe, the whole nation will be convinced, as he long ago has been, that this advice and this alone has saved him and all the unfortunate men, who have lately been put upon their trial, from the fangs of the blood-hounds of the Boroughmongers.

No more need be said upon the subject of this conspiracy of the Boroughmongers against the liberties of the nation. They have at least resorted to open undisguised force; they have thrown off the mask, or rather, we have pulled it off from them; they have now found, that *Juries* will not lend them their assistance; and they must set *Juries* wholly aside, and trust simply to the sword, or they must give us our rights, and particularly our right of choosing our Representatives in Parliament. Even their spies are detected and exposed. Hundreds of thousands of those in the middle and higher ranks of life, who approved of the first adoption of the present terrible measures, now begin to look at them with dread. "*Where is this to end?*" every one now asks. And well may every one ask that question; for, if the people cannot be suffered to enjoy liberty now, when are they to be suffered to enjoy it? Cast your eyes which way you will, you see, that the only real reliance is upon the bayonet. The State Prisoners could not be tried at the Old Bailey as usual, because it was well known that the Lord Mayor, would not, without down-right force, have consented to the use of *troops* in the escorting of prisoners to and from a court of justice. Troops, we are told in these newspapers, were ready in great bodies, to come to Westminster Hall, in case of necessity. What a disgraceful fact! Many thousands of troops, these papers tell me, were present at the opening of the Waterloo Bridge! To see the toll paid, I suppose! But, troops to assist the *Judges* in the execution of their duty! Troops, too, in all the Assize Towns, during the circuit. What is now become of that famous principle of our laws which would suffer no troops to remain even near to an Assize Town, during the sitting of the Judges? What is now become of that justly-boasted omnipotence of the laws, which was once the chief glory of England, as it now is the glory of America, where the Sheriff's wand is more than sufficient to protect the Judges, and to insure the due execution of the law upon every offender? But, in America, there are no Boroughmongers; every man has a voice in choosing those who make the laws by which he is governed; and, therefore, every one but criminals entertains a reverence for the laws, and feels that he has an interest in upholding those by whom those laws are administered.

And, my friends, shall our beloved and renowned country never see such days again. If I thought so, I should little care how soon there was an end to my existence. Injustice such as now prevails in England, cannot be of *long duration*. It is a great struggle that is now going on, and when I look back into the history of my country, I can find the account of no great struggle, in which justice and liberty were not finally victo-

rious. The Boroughmongers are beset with difficulties. The poor flimsy thing that prates about their finances, knows little more about the matter than a jackdaw. The whole fabric of their affairs is rotten. They have armed against them all the best feelings of mankind; and, for my part, I look for their overthrow with as much confidence as I look for to-morrow.

Let the people be *patient*. They cannot be killed in any great numbers, unless they proceed to open warfare, which I by all means deprecate. Let all those who wish to see the liberties of the country restored, aim at the destruction of no ancient establishment. It is the usurpation of the Boroughmongers, and that usurpation alone, with which we are at war. It is that which has reduced our country to such unexampled misery; it is that which has been the cause of the miseries of Europe as well as of England; it is that which has hatched all the plots, all the conspiracies, and that has aimed its fangs at the lives of so many innocent men. It was the Boroughmongers who produced the long and bloody war in this country, where I now am. The ground of their present contest against us is precisely the same ground, and I trust that the result of the contest, now as well as then, will prove that freedom is immortal.

Before I conclude, I cannot help expressing my hope, that some step will now be taken to put safely upon record, the *name and conduct* of every man, high and low, who may have taken a part, or, who may yet take a part, or, at least, a conspicuous part, in any of these transactions, whether the part he has acted be good or bad. A book might be made, and the names arranged alphabetically, and it might be called, *The People's Memorandum-Book*. *Shepherd, Sidmouth, Castles, Dowling, Stewart, Walter, Street, Stoddart, Wm. Gifford, Southey, Garrow, Powis, Parson Baines, Lockhart the Brave, Wilberforce, Milton Lord, Elliot Wm., Castlereagh, Lambe, Ponsonby, Reynolds, Oliver, Cartwright Major, Hunt, Walker, Cobbett, Cochrane Lord*; and so on. I would have all the names arranged, as I said before, alphabetically. And against each name I would have the prominent acts of the party mentioned. Every one who has made a speech for or against any of the Bills, should have his name introduced, the gist of his speech should be mentioned, very shortly, and the speech itself referred to. The names of all the persons in the lists of minorities and majorities upon any of the Bills should be introduced, and the circumstance mentioned. The names of those who were upon the Secret Committees in both Houses; the names of all persons all over the country, who have taken any active part, good or bad. The names of all magistrates and clergymen who have taken a part, whether good or bad. The names of all the judges that have been upon the bench when trials under any of these Acts have been going on. The names of all jurors who may have been upon juries where men have been tried at the prosecution of *Shepherd*, or any other subsequent Attorney-General, after the passing of these Bills. I would recommend the stating, very briefly, the simple facts, against each name, without any observation at all, and, consequently, without either praise or censure. All that we want is, something to refresh our memory. We are a people *too apt to forget*. All the lawyers should be mentioned, who have aided and abetted the parties on either side. I have just given such heads as have occurred to me off-hand. Many others will suggest themselves to any gentleman of talent and industry who will undertake such a work. I would introduce the names of all the Boroughmongers, from *Oldfield's* book, and mention the

number of seats which he gives to each. Their names would naturally come in for other purposes, but the circumstance of *Boroughmonger* should be stated. When a name is mentioned, the Red Book, the Sinecure and Pension and Army List, should be looked into, to see how the party stands there, and to see how the relations of the party stand there. It should also be seen how the party is connected with the Bank of England or East India Company, or whether he has been a contractor, or the like.

If any gentleman will undertake a work of this sort, and will execute it in a manner suitable to the intention, and put it at a moderate price, I will engage to subscribe for five hundred copies. It might be in a duodecimo form, of about three or four hundred pages. It might be bound in sheepskin at a very trifling expense, and, as the edition would be numerous, it might be sold by retail at about three shillings or three shillings and three-pence. Very few words would be necessary against each name: for instance,

FOLKSTONE, LORD, moved for List of State Pensioners, such a day.

WILBERFORCE, WM., spoke and voted for renewal of Power-of-Imprisonment Bill, such a day.

SIDMOUTH, LD., moved the Power-of-Imprisonment Bill, such a day. Issued Circular such a day, &c.

SHEPHERD, SIR SAMUEL, Attorney-General, advised Sidmouth's Circular; prosecuted Watson, &c.

In this sort of way, with as many particulars as room will allow of: but, any gentleman who will undertake the work, and is qualified for it, will be able to judge for himself what are the facts to be stated. There is no need of being very particular in collecting every fact against every name. Two or three striking facts against each name, with a reference to the speech or to the account of the transaction, will be quite enough. But the price of the book is a main consideration, and it must not exceed the fourth part of a week's wages for a labouring man.

If I do not receive, in a few months, an intimation from some one that such a work is undertaken, I shall make one of my sons undertake it; for, forget these things we will not.

In health, with both my sons in good health, and made very happy by just having heard of the health of my family in England, and of the great kindness of numerous friends towards that family, I remain, my worthy friends, yours most sincerely,

WM. COBBETT.

TO MAJOR CARTWRIGHT,

THE VENERABLE LEADER OF REFORM,

On Mr. Wooler's Attack on me.—On that Gentleman's Trials for Libel.—On the Proposition to Elect the Lord Mayor as one of the Members for the City of London.

(*Political Register*, October, 1817.)

North Hampstead, Long Island, August 1, 1817.

MY DEAR SIR,

Amongst the consolations that I daily experience, I know of very few, which can be put in competition with that which I have received in a let-

ter from you, brought out to me by one of our most worthy and excellent friends of Westminster, whom I saw last Sunday in perfect good health. The bare sight of the writing of that hand which has been for so many years employed in the service of your country, in circulating the sentiments of that mind, which has been one of the great causes of all the prodigious efforts made in the cause of Reform; the bare sight of your handwriting would have given me very great pleasure: but this pleasure was very much heightened when I saw this venerable hand employed, in this case, to express your decided approbation of the step to which I had resorted; and, I beg you to be assured, that, if any thing were wanting to strengthen my determination still to devote my time to the great cause of freedom in England, the contents of your Letter would amply supply that deficiency.

I perceive, however, and I really do perceive it with some regret, that Mr. WOOLER,* who has recently become distinguished by his bold, manly, and just attacks upon our enemies, and who has been rendered justly conspicuous by the means taken to crush him, and of which means I shall speak by and by, has not only expressed an opinion concerning my conduct, exactly the opposite of that which you have been pleased to express; but who, for reasons which it is not worth while, perhaps, under the present circumstances, to dwell upon or at all to develop, though they are quite obvious to me; for these reasons he has thought proper, not only to express his disapprobation of my withdrawing from the country, but so to charge and overcharge his attack with personal and base abuse, as to make it effectually defeat its own object, and to put forward its claims, its irresistible claims, to every particle of that contempt, which he would fain, for the reasons before-mentioned, have fixed upon my conduct and character.

The reasons stated by me for my voluntary exile, appeared to my own mind so satisfactory, that I never for one single instant doubted of their meeting with the approbation of every real friend to the cause of Reform. These reasons have not been combated by Mr. WOOLER by other reasons, but by downright personal, and even vulgar, abuse and calumny; by imputations which he knew to be false, and by assertions, in numerous instances, which he knew to be as utterly destitute of truth as any of those pretended plots and conspiracies which the baseness of the nation's enemies has led them to resort to; and the few instances, in which he has resorted to something in the shape of argument, have only discovered to the enlightened reader, that, in this case, as in many others, the powers of describing men and things, are very different indeed from those powers, by which statements of facts and conclusions drawn from those statements are made to produce conviction and to lead to important consequences.

My reasons for my conduct having remained wholly unanswered, I shall, in this place, merely subjoin some few *authorities* for the step which I thought proper to take. You remember, Sir, that BASTWICK, BURTON,

* Mr. WOOLER had been a printer, but he stepped forth as a writer about this time, and acquired some celebrity as a weekly writer of a paper called "*The Black Dwarf*." On Mr. COBBETT's leaving England, his comment on the circumstance was entitled, "Trial and Desertion of Corporal Cobbett." He wrote on till Mr. COBBETT's return from America, but soon afterwards gave up his paper.—Ed.

and PRYNN went to *Holland*, in the times of the Bloody Stuarts, and there caused their writings to be printed and sent into England. You remember that General LUDLOW fled to the Continent; and that it was from *Switzerland* he wrote those famous letters in defence of his countrymen, who, amongst other things, had fought and bled for Annual Parliaments. Mr. WOOLER will hardly pretend, that these famous Patriots were "*cowards*," though he fixes that term upon me with as little ceremony as if he were talking of a man who had skulked behind a wall in the midst of a battle, and had sent on his soldiers to meet the bayonets of the enemy. This gentleman talks about the precious blood of SIDNEY. He forgets, while he is thus talking, that that gallant and truly learned man fled to the Continent to avoid the fangs of the despots at home, and what is more, that it was in *voluntary exile* that he wrote those celebrated papers, which brought him to the block, and which have, more than any other circumstance, endeared his name to posterity. Why, then, let this gentleman boldly call the gallant SIDNEY a "*coward*," or let him retract his charge of cowardice against me, or let him pass for an envious or a silly calumniator. Perhaps, however, the gentleman's wonderfully furious patriotism, will not suffer him to receive as a justification the example of these men of *former times*. To accommodate him, then, let us come down to a very late period. Mr. PAINÉ has never been called a coward that I know of, nor have I ever heard the *old Congress of America* charged with cowardice. Yet, he as well as they fled from town to town at even the distant approach of their enemy. This was, indeed, an enemy with bayonets in his hand, of which circumstance I leave Mr. WOOLER to profit; but then comes the staggering fact of Mr. PAINÉ, who was an Englishman you will observe, having fled from England to France, not from the warrants of a Secretary of State; not from the natural effects of an absolute Power-of-Imprisonment-Law; not from the newly-conjured up code of Lord Sidmouth; but upon the bare intimation of an information *ex-officio* being filed against him by the Attorney-General!

Thus, then, it follows of course, that all these persons were cowards; that even SIDNEY was a "*coward*;" that VOLTAIRE was a coward, when he chose a residence in the mountains of Switzerland rather than a residence in the Bastille. It follows also that the brave LALEMANS and the brave General VANDAMME, who are now in this country, are cowards, and that every man is a coward who has fled hither from England, Scotland, or Ireland. Nay, Sir, even Mr. HUNT is a coward (though I would advise Mr. WOOLER not to tell him so), because Mr. HUNT did not go to the intended *fourth* Spa-fields Meeting, agreeably to the resolutions of the third Meeting. And, think yourself very happy, Sir, if you escape the charge of cowardice; for, besides your being an "*old man*," old enough to be my father, I am very sure, that you will not attempt to call Meetings, and to act at those Meetings as you hitherto have done.

If it be cowardice to do what I have done, and what so many eminent and immortal patriots have done before me, every thing must be cowardice, which embraces the most distant consideration of personal safety, though connected with the most reasonable expectations of future utility to the cause of our country. In the estimation of Mr. WOOLER it must be cowardice to take shelter from a thunder-storm; 'tis cowardice to avoid being buried by a falling house; it must be cowardice to lower sail in a hurricane; it must be cowardice to resort to a surgeon in the

case of a broken leg ; in short, this is such superlative nonsense in Mr. WOOLER, that it takes away and fixes in his own bosom, whatever there could be intended as a sting in his calling me a " *silly old man.*"

But, in all the examples that we have mentioned, there is wanting this material circumstance which presents itself in my case, that while, by remaining, I could render my country *no service at all*, by my flight I retained whatever power I had of rendering her service ; and, that I did not want the *disposition* to render that service, my countrymen will, before this time, have been fully convinced ; seeing that I have written *more* ; not as much, but *more*, since my arrival in this country, than I ever wrote before in my life, during a period of the same length. This intention, too, in the very publication* upon which Mr. WOOLER has bestowed his reprobation, was distinctly stated. He, indeed, ridicules the idea of my seriously entertaining such intention ; and the public will have seen by this time, that his predictions were upon a perfect level with the rest of his attack ; the public have now the proof before them, the practical *proof*, of the falsehood of this prediction ; and I am not at all afraid, that the Reformers in England will not now be able to form a very correct judgment, not of the *motives* of this gentleman, for those I shall not meddle with at present, but of his conduct towards me upon this occasion.

There was something very ungenerous, not to call it malignant and base, in a pretended friend of that cause, of which he acknowledged me to have been a great supporter, to *fall foul* thus, before he could possibly *know*, at any rate, that it was not my intention to write from America ; and, the great haste to rush on to this conclusion, which was false, as the event has proved, clearly shows a spirit of injustice and malignity ; of deliberate malice, and of malice, too, wholly unprovoked by any act of mine or of any body belonging to me, either towards himself or towards the public. If he had really thought that I should not write from America, was it a public-spirited act in him to anticipate such a result ? If he was sincere in what he said concerning the great and beneficial influence of my writings, was it a patriot-like act to endeavour to lessen that influence as much as possible by this uncalled-for prediction, which has, at last, been proved to be as false as it was ungenerous ?

However, all the other parts of this virulent, malignant, base and foolish attack, sink wholly out of sight, when compared to the paragraph at the conclusion of it, in which he *reminds the Americans* of my former writings against their Government, and against what he calls their " *infant Liberty,*" and bids them to be " *jealous*" of me. Consider, Sir, *all the circumstances, under which this was penned* ; and then say, whether, even in the conduct of the tools of the Boroughmongers, you ever heard of any thing quite so base as this.

Little did this man imagine, that I had published a Register in America beginning with the month of January 1816, and that, in the very first number of which, instead of *crawling* to the Americans, and *recanting* any thing that I had said before, I plainly told them, that I did *not* ask them to " *forget and forgive,*" but, that I wished them to *remember*, that, if my writings had done them any harm in Europe (and that I did not know *that they had not* done them harm) it was fairly to be ascribed to the

* Mr. Cobbett's Leave-Taking Address.

unjust and tyrannical treatment which I had experienced in America. This was published at New York last year, long before I had any thought of coming to America. But here I am now. This Register that I am now writing will be published at New York before it will reach England, and here I repeat my former words, with this addition, that, being now accidentally here upon the spot, *I will, yet, have justice done me* for that tyrannical treatment; or, in case of refusal of justice, I will make known to every corner of the world what that treatment was. I am no flatterer of any body. My opinions, as to the conduct of the English Government and as to the mode of electing Members of Parliament, have undergone a great change since I was in America before; a change arising from *experience*; a change perfectly natural in itself, and perfectly consistent with honourable intentions and views, and with such intentions and views having *always* been uppermost in my mind. But, so far from acknowledging, that I was *an enemy to real freedom*, when I was in America before, I maintain that I was *always its friend*; and, I maintain further, that, *in my person that freedom was most grossly violated in America.* However, better times are now come. No such despotic acts can be committed now. Here is a just and mild and cheap Government, and a free and happy people. A very glorious sight it is to behold. I feel gratitude towards the Government and the people for having preserved their country free, and for affording me a place of refuge. But if Mr. WOOLER imagines that I am come here to be a slave of the Americans, or to care any thing about their jealousies or prejudices, he is the most mistaken man alive. I know that I have the esteem of all reflecting and honourable men; but never will I do any act; never will I utter one word to make my *court* even to them. I have a real and sincere regard for the people. Their kindness towards me, upon all occasions, shown in every village and every house that I go to, is alone well calculated to inspire me with sentiments of regard and affection; and I show these best by endeavouring, as far as in my power lies, to do justice to their excellent institutions by describing to the world their happy effects. But, if there be any persons who require me to go further; if there be any body who will not be content, unless I turn my back upon my own country, either by *abjuring* the King (as the *loyal* English merchants do), or by any other act, no matter what, to such persons I answer, I still love England best: and I will never do or say anything that can be by any means construed to imply that this preference is ever to be rooted from my heart. I say now, as I said in my Leave-taking Address, a *palace* here, with the whole of this beautiful and happy Island for my domain, would be less dear to me than a thatched cottage on the borders of Waltham Chase or of Botley Common.

Mr. WOOLER will do me the justice to suppose, I hope, that I shall take *the will for the deed*, though, perhaps, he may be somewhat disappointed at perceiving that any attempt of his to excite jealousy of me, and ill-will against me, in America, is likely to be full as fruitless, and is certainly a great deal more ridiculous, than his expectation of producing a similar effect in England, though I am very sure, that he will there meet with disappointment in his expressions in this regard, and that, even before now, his malignant attempt has received the scorn that it merits; and, more than it merits it cannot, I think, possibly receive.

Nevertheless, Sir, as you have often said, and as you once told the Attorney-General, who is now the Lord Chancellor, we must, in fighting the enemy, not reject the use of the arms of even despicable and detestable

men. He asked you, whether you would have no regard to the characters of men in this case. You said, that you would *rather* have to do with all men of good character; but that, as thieves and robbers and swindlers were sent on board of ship to fight the foreign enemy of the country, so you saw no reason why you should be so very scrupulous in the materials of which the ranks were composed, which were to fight against its enemies at home. Though I have a right, a perfect right, to presume every thing that is base in the character of this Mr. WOOLER, I do not so presume. His conduct has been base *towards me*; but, I am even willing to hope, that want of experience, want of time for reflection, extreme anxiety for the success of the cause, some misrepresentation, perhaps, and (a weakness too common amongst literary men) an eagerness to obtain fame, which rendered him too impatient to confine himself to *efforts to rise*, without endeavouring, at the same time, to pull others down; I am willing to hope that his malignity has been thus engendered, as it were, without his own wish; and that a little more time would have made him act towards me with more generosity and less injustice. At any rate, upon your old principle, I take the assistance of his pen as far as it is calculated to aid the cause of our country; and I do most sincerely rejoice at his acquittal on his trials for libel, the statements in both of which were as *true* as his statements with regard to me were *false*. His defence, which I have read in the English papers, was not only bold and manly, but it was full of talent; and though the Attorney-General made a great mistake, when he said, that it was a proof of *facility* of composition, that a man was able to put his thoughts together by the means of *types*, without manuscript, the fact being that many men can write as much in a day as six or seven compositors can print; still, it was a most interesting fact that this was done by Mr. WOOLER, and it was a proof, amongst thousands of others that might be produced, of the great stock of talent now possessed by the people of England.

To go into all the particulars of the trials would be useless; but, I cannot help observing, that, in one part of Mr. WOOLER's defence he complains what a *hardship* it was to have been *dragged all of a sudden from his affairs*; and he adds, that, if he had had a *wife and family*, the consequences must have been *dreadful*. Mr. WOOLER is too sincere a man, I dare say, to have *feigned* this, in order to move *compassion*; therefore one may perhaps be permitted to ask Mr. WOOLER, whether he did not happen to know that I had a wife and family; and whether, when he was calling me a *coward*, he did not happen to know that that wife and all the *feeble* part, and *only the feeble part*, of that family were in London, at the very time that he was aiming his malignant shafts against the head of that family? I observe, too, that Mr. WOOLER expresses a wish not to be found guilty; that is to say, not to be *imprisoned* and *fined*! Bless me! Wish not to be imprisoned! Beg not to be imprisoned and fined! Why, one would have supposed, that this gentleman, who, by implication, accuses LUDLOW, SIDNEY, and PAINÉ, of cowardice, would have *courted* imprisonment as the greatest of favours, like the methodist parson, or like JACK in the Tale of a Tub, who cried out, "Another box in the ear, good folks, for the Lord's sake!" I, indeed, as you remember very well, suffered two years' imprisonment and paid a thousand pounds fine, without liking it at all. But this gentleman's taste appeared to be so very different, that one might naturally have been surprised not to hear him beg to be sent to prison; instead of which he

makes most strenuous efforts to save himself from it; and, from present appearances, I have very great pleasure in believing that those efforts are likely, in the present case at any rate, to be successful. If they should not, and if he should have two years' imprisonment to suffer, a fine of a thousand pounds to pay, and be compelled to give bail in a *five thousand pound bond*, to be of good behaviour for *seven years afterwards*; when he comes out of prison and has paid his fine and given his bail, he will be better able to judge than he is at present, of the manner in which he ought to talk of the step which I have taken. But as Mr. WOOLER has ventured upon *predictions* with respect to what I should do, he will excuse me if I hazard a prediction with respect to him, especially as it shall be wholly divested of malignity. I predict, then, that he, Thomas Jonathan Wooler, will be *silenced* by some means or other, before next Christmas-day; or, that he will write in a very *measured style*, and be very *mannerly* towards the Ministers; or, that he will *come to America himself*, and that, if he does come to America, he will be a *printer* and not a *writer*. I most sincerely desire, that a state of things will arise such as will enable him to continue to write boldly in England; but, if he must follow the example of Mr. PAINÉ, I must confess, that I am ill-natured enough to wish to have an opportunity of *calling upon him* in New York or Philadelphia, between one of which and an English jail, his choice, if he has a choice left, appears to me to lie.

But, be Mr. WOOLER's destiny what it may, the result of the trials, as far as they went up to the 9th of June, is not only pleasing in itself, and honourable to the jurors, who made such a glorious stand for the Liberty of the Press, but it is of the greatest importance, considered as a symptom of the public feeling and of the spirit of the people. There were no such juries *when I was sent to prison*; if there had, I never should have gone there. But, this is the natural effect of the terrible laws which have recently been passed. The people now see no hope but in themselves. They see everything in authority so decidedly hostile to liberty, that, when any portion of power happens to *fall into their own hands*, as in the case of a jury, they feel that they ought to exercise this power so as to favour liberty as much as they possibly can. They, therefore, while they are listening to the case before them, bear in their minds all the parts of the present system of restraint and of force, and they lean, as much as their oaths will permit them, towards the side of the accused. If they could be told with truth, that the press was free, and that men were only rendered answerable for the real abuses of that freedom, then they would naturally be less inclined to view the matter charged with a lenient eye; but, when they take into view the efforts which are now made to stifle publications, which even the Libel-law does not deem libellous; when they see the magistrates authorized to shut up reading-rooms, circulating libraries, debating societies, and in effect to select the newspapers for public-houses; when they see a new and unwarrantable construction given to the Hawkers' and Pedlars' Act; when they see, in short, everything, except a direct *ensorship*, put in motion to prevent the publication of that which displeases the Boroughmongers; when they hear the Secretary of State declare in his place in the House of Lords, that he wants Gagging Bills, not because the cheap publications are contrary to law, but precisely because the law-officers can find nothing in those publications to prosecute; and when they see the most popular of all the writers, against whom the laws were particularly aimed, crossing

the sea for the purpose of being in safety and to continue his writings ; when they see and hear all this, and see themselves impannelled to sit in judgment upon one of these writers, they feel, they must feel, they must have hearts of iron not to feel, leniently towards the accused ; and, I am persuaded, that, if the present system go on for any length of time, this feeling will become more and more prevalent, and more and more powerful.

It appears to me, therefore, that, if the present system go on, juries must be *wholly left aside* in all cases where the *Government is the prosecutor* ; and that it must rely upon the powers with which the Ministers are now vested. They can now imprison for any length of time that they choose ; in any jail that they choose ; in any dungeon that they choose ; and they can deprive the prisoner of all communication with friends or relations ; of all knowledge of what is going on in the country ; and all this they can do without alleging any crime, and without giving the prisoner any hearing even from themselves. But, they want still to have the *appearance of law* for punishment in cases of libel. They take a man up at once upon a charge of libel before any guilt be proved. They put him in prison or hold him to bail. All this is new to the country. But still, long imprisonment, heavy punishment, upon a charge of libel, requires the consent of a jury ; and though they can imprison and punish without it, they would *rather not*. They would rather have a "*jury of his country*" to fling in the face of the victim. But, if juries of the country are not to be found to convict men of crimes for publishing *truth* ; if juries take it into their heads, that to publish truth is not a crime ; if out of all this discussion, and all these terrible measures, there should arise a general persuasion, that it is a *fear of the truth being known* which has given rise to all these measures ; if this persuasion should become general, juries will not convict ; and then one of two things must take place : either the present imprisoning system must be put an end to, and a reform must be adopted at once ; or, juries must be dispensed with and wholly set aside, in all cases of prosecution by the Government. This can take place without the passing of any additional Act of Parliament ; because, in place of trying a man for a libel, and imprisoning him in virtue of a sentence of the Court of King's Bench, the Ministers can, whenever they please, send a King's Messenger, take the offensive writer and put him in a dungeon ; and there's an end, at once, of him and of his writings. But, as I said before, this is what they would *rather not do*. They would rather have the *countenance* and the *active concurrence of a jury*. But, be you assured, Sir, that they will not have this long ; for if they wait for this concurrence, they will find themselves hampered at every turn. One acquittal will produce ten thousand of those things which they call libels ; that is to say, a mass of truth and argument levelled against their acts. They want to carry on their system of dungeons and gags hand in hand with the juries and the law. But, I imagine, that this they will find too difficult. Indeed, what can be more difficult than to mix up arbitrary power with legal proceedings ? It cannot be done. The juries must go next ; and then the thing will stand upon its fair foundation. There will be no masked battery left at any rate. Every one will see what the thing really is, and every one will call it by its right name.

Nor, is this to be *dreaded* at all. The strength of the Borough-mongering system has consisted principally in its powers of *deceiving*.

To be seen in its true colours is all that is necessary. It would have been annihilated long and long enough ago, and the people and the king would have had their rights, if both could have seen the system in its true colours. Therefore, everything that tends to exhibit it fairly and truly, tends to its overthrow, to the restoration of the people's rights and happiness, and to the dignity and stability of the throne.

Such is my reasoning upon the result of the trials of Mr. WOOLER, whose conduct as to these trials, I highly applaud, and to whom I wish all the success that he himself can desire in every undertaking where the good of his country is not made to yield to the gratification of selfish and base desires and propensities.

It is with no small pleasure, that I see from the London papers, that the worthy and most excellent LORD MAYOR has been proposed as Member for the City in the place of Mr. ALDERMAN COMBE. What has been the termination of the contest, or, whether there has been any contest at all, I cannot, of course, know as yet, seeing that my latest papers are to the ninth of June. But, there were some circumstances attending the cause of the vacancy, which I cannot overlook here, being extremely material in an estimate, which it is *very necessary now to form* of the conduct of a man, who has acted a great part in the City; namely, Mr. WAITHMAN. It appears, that, on the 30th of May, the Common Hall being met to petition Parliament against the renewal of the Absolute-Power-of-Imprisonment Act, Mr. ALDERMAN COMBE, who has been a long time ill, sent a letter to the Lord Mayor, which his Lordship read, stating Mr. Combe's inability to attend the House from ill health, hoping that his absence from the Parliament would be excused, and declaring his opinions on the question of Parliamentary Reform and his ardour in the cause of Liberty, remained what they always had been. Upon the reading of this letter, the most curious occurrence arose. Mr. HUNT, who is a Liveryman of the City of London, and who, in presence of mind, in a Public Meeting, yields to very few persons that I have ever seen, caught hold of this opportunity to do that which has given me, as I am sure it has given you, the greatest satisfaction; and a better blow to the Ministers and to the system could not, perhaps, have been given.

"Mr. HUNT thought it of great importance that the City should have some person in Parliament in the place of the worthy Alderman whose letter had just been read, at a crisis like the present. He moved, that the thanks of the Hall should be given to Mr. ALDERMAN COMBE for his long and faithful services, and that while they lamented his inability to attend to his Parliamentary duties, he should be requested to resign his seat, that some other person might be elected to watch over the interests of the City of London in the House of Commons at the present momentous crisis."

Nothing could be better timed, nothing more reasonable, nothing more just than this proposition. Yet, Mr. Waithman *resisted* the motion, "as he considered it to be *disrespectful* to Mr. ALDERMAN COMBE, who had for twenty years been virtually the only representative of the City in Parliament."

This was a strange objection to make! How could it be disrespectful to Mr. COMBE, when it had embodied in it a vote of thanks for his long and faithful services, and an expression of lamentation at his inability to attend to his Parliamentary duties? Mr. HUNT answered Mr. WAITHMAN by saying "that no man had a higher respect for the character of

"Mr. COMBS than himself; but expressed a determination to press his motion." Mr. WAITHMAN, being now hard pushed, cried aloud for help. "He thought it highly *improper* to introduce matter so *irrelevant* to the requisition without notice, and in so thin a Hall. He called upon the Lord Mayor to *interpose his authority* upon the occasion." This was being hard pressed indeed! The Lord Mayor, who was not hypocrite enough, who did not give enough into *shuffles* and *shams* to cry *Nolo Episcopari*, as some other longing politicians have done; the Lord Mayor, who did not wish to act the part of a maiden so tender and coy, "was of opinion, that the motion had arisen out of the letter that had been read; that the question ought to be put; and that he was surprised that it should be objected to as *irrelevant* by a gentleman from whom so much *irrelevant matter* had so frequently proceeded." Mr. WAITHMAN denied that he had been in the habit of introducing irrelevant matter. He moved, as an *amendment*, a vote of censure on Sir WILLIAM CURTIS and Alderman ATKINS!"

Now, my dear Sir, you, I dare say, in spite of all the dreadful scenes before your eyes, and in spite of all your feeling for the numerous sufferers, have been utterly unable to prevent repeated fits of laughter at this *tour de main* of our friend the SIGNOR! This beats the "black cat of Katerfelto," and even the "black fox of the SIGNOR." Suppose, now, being in the company of a set of men coming in piping hot from work in the fields, I was to make a motion for a gallon of strong beer, and another was to get up and move, as an *amendment*, a deliberate and very bitter curse upon your cider. What would you think of this fellow? I know what my companions would say. They would say, "Curse the sour cider as long as you please; but, for God's sake, let us have the strong beer." So said the Common Hall; for Mr. HUNT's motion was put and carried, to the great, and I am very sure, lasting mortification of Mr. WAITHMAN, who hates the Lord Mayor more than he ever hated the Boroughmongers, if, indeed, he ever sincerely hated them at all.

Such was his eagerness to get rid of this dreadful proposition, that he forgot that the motion contained a *vote of thanks* and a very high compliment to Mr. Alderman COMBS; or, if he did not forget it, he was willing to sweep every thing away rather than that proposition should be adopted, which was likely to open the way for the Lord Mayor's Election at this time.

In the Morning Chronicle of the 31st of May, there is subjoined to a report of this transaction, an assertion, "that before the *violent commotion* produced by Mr. HUNT, about one-half of the Meeting had dispersed; and, we believe, that there were not a hundred Livery present at the time of the *commotion*, the rest being composed of a promising crowd of the *lowest class*. The resolution, therefore, of this gentleman, is certainly *not the sentiment of the Livery*."

How do you make that out, SIGNOR? The Livery who were present had not been culled out for the occasion. It was not a *packed* Hall, such as you know are sometimes contrived. The doors had not been shut to keep out the Livery, as you remember was the case, when you produced, out of pure opposition to Mr. HUNT, a vote in that Hall, calculated to damp and destroy the cause of Reform; and when you, with the word *Union* upon your lips, endeavoured to produce a total disunion, and to separate London from all the rest of the kingdom. No, there could be no packing. Mr. HUNT has no runners to work for him in the City.

I'll engage that he came up from the country that very morning ; and that he had not the smallest intimation beforehand, that any letter from Mr. Alderman COMBE was about to be read. The motion could have proceeded from nothing but a sense of duty ; and, if my Lord Mayor be elected, as I trust he will be, it will be a most seasonable as well as a most powerful blow, given to the dreadful system that is now going on, it being well known, that the Lord Mayor is an honest and bold enemy of that system.

There is, too, the more merit in this proposition of Mr. HUNT, as it cannot possibly be ascribed to any thing other than a sense of duty. The public will recollect, that Mr. HUNT received last winter a letter from the Lord Mayor in his official capacity, which was not well calculated to gain the personal friendship of the former. I do not say that the Lord Mayor's letter, which was probably written without much time for reflection, and was indeed in all probability, written by a clerk or secretary, it being impossible for the Lord Mayor to have written, at that time, a hundredth part of his letters : I do not say that this letter was either *rude* or *unfriendly* ; but there was a sort of *sarcastic* tone in it, which men in general are very apt to receive not very graciously. I have never understood, that my Lord Mayor has ever shown any particular marks of partiality to Mr. HUNT during any of the discussions in Guildhall. But, then, I know well, that Mr. HUNT has always entertained the highest possible opinion of the Lord Mayor's integrity, humanity, industry, and all those qualifications which are so necessary at the present time ; and I have always observed in Mr. HUNT a most anxious desire to see the Lord Mayor in Parliament. Indeed the Lord Mayor is such a man as there are very few like him. He is sincerity itself. He has no *envy* in his composition. He has no disguise of any sort. He abhors every thing like tyranny. He is as bold as he is honest ; and if ever he commits an error, it is soon repaired by his frankness in avowing it.

Mr. WAITHMAN's conduct upon this occasion, is but too much of a piece with all the rest of his conduct for some time past. His grand object appears to have been to obtain a seat in Parliament for himself ; an object not only justifiable, but laudable, because a seat in Parliament would have given him a greater degree of power of doing good. Mr. Waithman is not only a bold and resolute man, but a man who is possessed of far greater talents than nineteen-twentieths of the Members of the two Houses. Therefore, few things would give me greater pleasure than to see Mr. Waithman in Parliament, particularly at this time. But, the misfortune is, that Mr. Waithman has sought to accomplish this object by means injurious to the cause of Reform. What could be more injurious to that cause, as far as he was able to do injury to it, than to cause to be negatived in the Common Hall of London, a proposition for Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage, at a time when the whole of the Reformers were petitioning for a Reform upon those very principles ? And what rendered this proceeding the more flagrantly odious, was, that he affected to believe, that this was the way to produce *Union* against the Boroughmongers ; when it was manifest to every man in the kingdom, that this was throwing the apple of discord amongst them. Nay, this gentleman, not content with using his influence, and exerting his talents for this baleful purpose, did not restrain himself from going into that species of criticism upon our plans and our conduct, which had been first introduced by Mr. BROUGHAM, and which criticism met with a

chastisement from *your pen*, which, one would have thought, would have been a sufficient warning for Mr. Waithman, who was less excusable than Mr. Brougham, because the former had, only a few days before, in a speech made to the Common Council, most amply and most ably proved both the justice and the reasonableness of *all our claims*.

This defection, or, rather, this perverseness, of Mr. Waithman, was very injurious to our cause. It put an argument into the mouths of our enemies. Even Mr. Waithman called us "wild," "visionary," and "violent" men! This was doing as much as he was able to do; and he owes it to your forbearance, Sir, that his conduct was not long ago held up to universal detestation. He wrote a letter to you and Sir Francis Burdett, jointly. You answered that letter in your own name; and you gave me authority publicly to say, that he had your permission to publish the correspondence. This I did say in print many months ago. Yet, he has never availed himself of this permission. *Why* he has not, the reason is but too manifest.

I do not forget the great and powerful efforts of Mr. Waithman, when he stood almost alone in the City for twenty long years. I am willing to see him rewarded by any honour that his countrymen can bestow upon him, and which is consistent with the good of the commonwealth; but, if he cannot have his reward, that sort of reward which will satisfy him, without sacrificing the interests of the country to the gratification of his ambition, I most sincerely hope that he will go unrewarded to the end of his life. *You*, Sir, have rendered some services to your country! The heart of every one of us tells us that there is no honour that we could bestow on you adequate to those services. But, if you were to become the instrument of a Whig faction; if you were, at a moment the most critical, and when so much depended upon *Union*, to call for a Triennial Parliament, when all the rest of the Reformers were calling for Annual Parliaments, would you expect at our hands any thing short of reproach? And if this would justly be the case, with respect to *you*, in the name of justice and reason I ask, what is to restrain us from complaining of the conduct of Mr. Waithman?

Let Mr. Waithman be a Member of Parliament; but let him become such upon the principles of real, and not of sham Parliamentary Reform; let him become such, as the instrument in the hands of the people, and not as the instrument of the Boroughmongering faction.

Mr. Waithman is one of those men, whose greedy ambition leads him to do that which his honesty and his real love of liberty would naturally make him flee from, "as from the pestilence that walketh by night." He is so extremely desirous of standing upon the same floor with "Noble Lords" and "Honourable Gentlemen," that he really foregoes the means of accomplishing his object. He wishes, I verily believe, to do that which is right, when he has obtained his object; but, he unfortunately has taken it into his head that he is able to conciliate both parties; and, he is verifying, in a most conspicuous manner, the old adage of the *two stools*. As to the Whigs, those famous champions, those disinterested and sincere heroes of Triennial Parliaments, and of the principle of *Property* and not *Taxation* giving a right to vote; as to these noble combatants for a sham Reform, nothing is farther from their hearts than the wish to support Mr. Waithman upon any other ground than that of his being a marplot; than that of his being an instrument in the work of producing disunion amongst us. And, as to the real Reformers, angels of

light can no more unite with the inhabitants of the infernal regions, than they can unite with the greedy and perfidious Whigs, who have their full share of all the sinecures, all the Pensions, all the Grants, and of all the Boroughs; and, what never ought to be forgotten, who had their full share in the adoption, as well as in the recommending, of all those dreadful measures which characterize the present times. What! will Mr. Waithman pretend, that those men, who voted for Mr. WYNNE being Speaker, are the friends of Parliamentary Reform? Mr. Wynne, along with the whole family of GRENVILLE, had not only voted for, and defended every one of the measures, to their utmost extent; but, like LORD GRENVILLE, and the MARQUIS OF BUCKINGHAM, and like LORD MILTON, Mr. LAMB and Mr. WILLIAM ELLIOTT, he had volunteered his recommendation of such measures; and, yet, the MORNING CHRONICLE congratulates his readers upon the proof of the *steadiness* of the whole party, which proof, he says was furnished in the contest for Mr. WYNNE! And this is that "*Opposition*," to which Mr. Waithman bids us look for success in the cause of Parliamentary Reform! Long, indeed, will it be before Reform comes from such a source. Indeed, how contemptible is such an expectation! Look into the Sinecure List; the Pension List; the Grant List; the Staff List; the List of Governors of Castles and Provinces; look at the immense sums which the Whig families now receive, and look at the greater sums which all their broods are gaping for, when the heads of them shall get into power; look at all this, Sir, or, rather, let Mr. Waithman look at it, and then tell us, if he can, that he believes, that the Whig families will ever join in any attempt to procure a real reform of the Parliament, which, as those families well know, would instantly strip them of all these emoluments, and leave them nothing but their just privileges and rights. No, Sir; it is impossible that any sensible man can believe, that the people will ever meet with any portion of support from this faction, while it is thus gorged with the public money. We want no speeches and declarations from them. We want a surrender of their Boroughs. We want a House of Commons elected by the people, and not by them. Some of them told the people at the late Westminster Dinner, that they were *really in love with Liberty*; but, not a word did they say about those same Boroughs, which are the sole object of contention. If a man has got my horse and I ask him to give it to me; "Softly, Cobbett," says he; "don't be in such a rage, my friend. You must know, that I and all my family, for ages back, have been distinguished for our extraordinary respect for the maxims of *mine and thine*. You must know, my good fellow, that I have an hereditary abhorrence of oppression of every sort; and, I protest and declare, I vow and I swear, that there is not a man upon the face of God's earth that is more sincerely your well-wisher than I am."—"Thank you," says I, "but, still, you say nothing about *my horse!*"—"O! your horse, did you say? As to the horse, Cobbett; the horse, you know, Cobbett; as to the horse, I have had the horse, you know, for a long time; and, you know, Cobbett, that the horse might really be of no service to you; you have been doing very well without him; besides, being rather high-mettled, and you not being a very skilful rider, he might break your neck; and then, Cobbett, only think of the confusion, the desolation and misery that would be produced in your affairs and your family!"—You will anticipate, Sir, that, during this speech, I should be clenching my fist, and you, will not find it difficult to guess what I should do at the close of it. Yet, the seedling

Boroughmongers at the Westminster Dinner, said not one single word about surrendering the Boroughs, though they avowed and declared, that every drop of blood in their veins was ready to start forth in the cause of the people, and, though (which surprised me a great deal more than their declarations), Sir Francis Burdett, in the report that I have read, is made to *congratulate* himself upon being surrounded by such company, who, he is made to say, had *always* been the friends of the people!

Far be it from me to say, that if any of these persons would actually surrender their Boroughs, they ought not to be pardoned for what they have done. I am for conciliation to the very last; that is to say, to the very last moment when conciliation can take place without baseness on the part of the people. All might have been amicably arranged at the opening of the last Parliament. All might have been settled so as to restore the nation to happiness, without the destruction of anything which is warranted by the Constitution of our country. But our enemies chose to throw away the scabbard, and to hang the naked sword suspended over our heads. Whether reconciliation can now take place is more than I am able to say; but, still, my anxious wish is, that our country may be restored to freedom without retaliation and vengeance. But, at any rate, let come what will come, my wish is that our country may be restored to freedom, and in pursuing my incessant endeavours to see that wish accomplished, one of the motives certainly will be that, of having the honour to follow, as far as I am able, your great and immortal example.

I desire to be remembered, in the kindest terms, to our old and honest friends of Westminster, whose exertions in the cause of Reform I always remember with great satisfaction, and whose happiness will always be an object of deep solicitude with their and your faithful friend,

And most obedient servant,

WM. COBBETT.

TO EARL FITZWILLIAM,

ON WHAT THE "MORNING CHRONICLE" CALLS YOUR "MUNIFICENT DONATION" TO SOME OF THE DISTRESSED PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

(*Political Register, November, 1817.*)

North Hampstead, Long Island, September 13th, 1817.

MY LORD,

I have now lying before me the Morning Chronicle of the 19th of July, in which Mr. PERRY, the basest of all the base tools of corruption, because to the enmity which all the rest of these tools bear to the cause of freedom, he adds greater hypocrisy than any of the rest; in this paper I find an account of what he calls the *munificent donation* of your Lordship to a portion of the people of Ireland; and upon this subject, after inserting the paragraph to which I allude, it is my intention to address your Lordship.

" **MUNIFICENT DONATION.**—We are glad to have an opportunity of recording the almost singular liberality of one of the great landed proprietors of this country; and we therefore state the facts connected with it, as promptly as so very laudable a circumstance merits.—Earl Fitzwilliam, after having had considerable sums distributed amongst his tenants, wrote very lately to his agent, Mr. Haigh, to say, that from the general impression he had of the state of the country, he was apprehensive that the distress on his estates and in their vicinage must be very great, and that he had therefore ordered a vessel, with 50 tons of American flour, from Liverpool to Wicklow, to be distributed among the poor at any such reduced prices as the agent might conceive to be necessary, according to the poverty of the people. Mr. Haigh, however (although the shipment was actually made, and the vessel on its way, at an expense to his Lordship of more than three thousand pounds), wrote, to represent to his Lordship that a different description of provisions would better suit the situation and circumstances of the objects of his bounty, than flour of the quality shipped; and that he would take upon himself to send the cargo, when it arrived, round to Dublin, make sale of it there, and, with the produce, purchase rice, oatmeal, &c. to be distributed in its stead, according to his Lordship's benevolent intentions. Earl Fitzwilliam immediately sanctioned this judicious arrangement of Mr. Haigh. The fifty tons of flour shortly after arrived in Wicklow, and were immediately sent round to this port, where they were disposed of, and a considerable quantity of rice purchased, which is now shipping for Wicklow, where large purchases are making of oatmeal, &c. &c. (of which there is a vast quantity in the country, but held back partly for want of means in the people to buy at the high price demanded)—and thus that district of the country will instantly receive the great relief which must arise from such an act of munificence and benevolence as that of Lord Fitzwilliam. The distribution of the produce of so large a sum as 3000*l.* must be of the greatest importance to the many suffering objects for whom it is destined, and the act will place the noble Earl conspicuously among those who have embarked in the cause of humanity in this period of general distress and embarrassment."

Pope says, that he who erects an altar to God and not to fame, will take care not to commemorate his own name along with the deed. In other words, he would say, that the merit of the act is wholly lost by blazoning it forth to the world. And Jesus Christ had said, long before him, that in matters of charity the left hand ought not to know what the right hand did, which is one of the most simple, and at the same time, most beautiful and most forcible expressions that ever was made use of to describe the caution which men ought to use in keeping their acts of charity a secret from the world. I broadly assert that it is impossible that this account of your Lordship's donation should have found its way into print without your approbation. The circumstances stated in the publication could have been known to nobody but yourself and Mr. HAIGH. From one of you, therefore, it must have proceeded to the press; and, it appears to me that no reasonable man will believe, that Mr. Haigh would have caused the publication to be made, unless with the approbation of your Lordship. What sums may have been distributed to those men who sell the columns of their papers for such purposes, and who measure out praise and slander by the inch or by the foot, I know not; but, I am fully of opinion, that if the sums expended to blazon forth this donation, had been added to the donation itself, it would have made thereunto a considerable addition, and would have been much better bestowed on the miserable families of the men whom your Lordship has assisted to cram into dungeons, than on the pampered and debauched minions of a press devoted to the Borough-mongers.

It is not, however, as an act of a private nature that I am to consider this donation. I am to consider it in connection with your Lordship's

public conduct, and in connection with those dreadful measures, of which, for twenty-five years, your Lordship has been an uniform supporter. "*Be just before you are generous*" is a maxim full of wisdom, and never could it be addressed more pertinently than to your Lordship upon this occasion.

When I read of three thousand pounds having been given, by any body, to the suffering people of any part of the kingdom, and when I hear that the *fine flour* intended for them was thought to be wasteful, and that the meal of *oats*, that *rice*, and other articles of I know not what quality, had been substituted, I am not to stand gaping in admiration of the act itself; but, if I have any regard for my countrymen, either in their happiness or their honour, I am to inquire what has been the cause of this state of distress and degradation; and this is particularly incumbent upon me, if the blazoned forth act belongs to a person who has had, for more than twenty-five years, a great portion of power in the managing of the affairs of the nation.

It is a curious thing to behold you held up as the warm and kind friend of any portion of the Irish people, when it is perfectly notorious that you formed part of that very Ministry who framed that memorable Act of Parliament, in virtue of which Irishmen are shut up in their houses from sun-set to sun-rise on pain of dreadful punishment, and in virtue of which Irishmen may be transported beyond the seas without trial by jury, and without the sentence of any of the regular Judges; and which tremendous Act of Parliament was drawn up by the hand of Mr. GRATTAN, who was well known to have been put into the Parliament, by what is called in the slang of the day, the *interest* of your Lordship, he being a Member for one of those very Boroughs, of which the petition of 1793 complained as of the most intolerable grievances. But, it is not of the measures relative to Ireland exclusively, that it becomes me to speak to you upon this occasion. It is of the measures applicable to the whole kingdom; those measures, which have caused all those miseries, a trifling portion of which your agent has been ordered to relieve. It is of those measures that I am to speak to you, and again and again I repeat, that your Lordship has been a prominent and a powerful actor in them all.

It is impossible for any man to cast his eye over the kingdom; to take even a glance of its happy climate, the industry of its inhabitants, their punctuality and their perseverance, the good faith that prevails between man and man, the quickness and cleverness with which every thing is executed, the improvement which is made by every hand that has but the most trifling encouragement to improve; the farms which are so many gardens on the top of the land, and the inexhaustible mines which are beneath; and, to crown all, the example of many centuries of ancestors, with whom independence in circumstances was one of the great objects of life, and who regarded debts and a dependence upon others as the greatest of all possible evils. Taking the kingdom as a whole, and thus casting one's eye over it, it is impossible for any impartial man not to conclude, that the present ruin in the middle ranks of life, and the indescribable misery amongst the labouring classes, have proceeded from some gross, if not wicked, mismanagement of the nation's affairs. When we see a family, descended from wealthy and virtuous ancestors, fallen into decay; its property dissipated, bit by bit; its members scattered here and there, becoming street-sweepers, beggars, or play-actors and actresses, living their whole lives marked out by the law as

vagrants by profession ; when we behold a sorrowful spectacle like this, we conclude, without hesitation, that the affairs of such family have been mismanaged, and that the head of it has been a drunkard, a slothful man, a squanderer, or a knave. We do not, in such a case, think inquiry necessary. We conclude at once ; and, if we accidentally discover that any unavoidable misfortune, that any act of despotism, has produced the melancholy effect, we find it very hard indeed to believe that the compassion of mankind would not have stepped in and mitigated, at least, the ultimate consequences.

And, my Lord, was there ever in this whole world, a family over whose affairs the father possessed a power more absolute than the fillers of the seats in Parliament have possessed over the affairs of our country ? It was said of some Roman, that he found the city *stone*, and that he left it *marble*. It was said of PIRR, that he found England *gold*, and that he left it *paper*. It may be said of your Lordship and the rest of the seat-fillers, that you found the people flesh and blood, and that you have brought them to skin and bone ; that you found them happy and free, and that you have brought them to be miserable slaves. That you found them with poor-rates amounting to two millions a year, and that you have brought them to poor-rates of twelve millions a year. That you found them shunning the workhouse, and shunning parish-relief as they would shun pestilence or infamy, and that you have brought them to crowd pell-mell, to obtain from parish-officers the bare means of sustaining life. You found them safe under the protection of those sacred laws gained by the valour and cemented by the blood of their forefathers, and you have brought them to be placed at the absolute mercy of such men as SUDMOUTH, CASTLEREAGH and CANNING, as far as regards their personal liberty, while you have made their very lives hang upon the tongues of such men as REYNOLDS, OLIVER and CASTLES.

Such is the change which the affairs of the kingdom have undergone under the management of your Lordship and your associates. It would be quite enough to state this, all the facts being so notorious as they are ; but it is for me upon this occasion to show, that your Lordship has been a *great actor* in the producing of this change. It is very notorious that all the present evils of the country have their foundation in an enormous expenditure of the resources of the people. They have been ascribed by one set of men to a sudden transition from war to peace ; and, if we could allow this to be true, and that there were no other cause, we should have a right to go back and inquire, whence came the war ; who fomented it ; who persevered in it ; and what were the grounds of it, pretended and real. We should still find the same original cause, only the development would be more complicated than truth and justice demand.

As I have proved more than a hundred times over, that the poor-rates and all the miseries of the labouring classes arise from taxation, heavy taxation, I will say less upon that subject now ; and, indeed, less will be necessary, because the whole of that faction to which your Lordship is supposed to belong, are now forward not only to confess, but to proclaim, that the taxes are the cause of the people's suffering, and that there is no remedy but a diminution of taxation. Indeed, the grand subject of what is called Opposition now, is, economy. It is for economy that your Lordship's son, and all those who want the places of the Ministers, are continually crying : economy, economy, even Lord MILTON and your protégé, Mr. WM. ELLIOTT, do continually cry ! Mr. CROKER's two hun-

dred and fifty pounds was thought by the former gentleman, worthy of a general muster and a long debate. But, my Lord, what economy can make the annual charge of the Debt less than forty-four millions a year? What economy can make the army cost less than sixteen or seventeen millions a year, unless you are willing to trust to the laws for the peace of the country, in Great Britain, and unless you could collect the Revenue in Ireland without the aid of the military? What is meant by economy, if the late Speaker is still to retain his sinecure; if the younger branches of the great families are still to swallow such immense sums; if so many of your dependants are to be pensioned; and if the public money is still to be squandered in the same way that it is upon the executors of **BURKE**? To talk of economy while these things are to be suffered to exist, is to merit, for the talkers, the old most apt and most comprehensive charge of "saving at the spigot while they spend from the bung-hole;" a saying worth fifty volumes of the verbose declamation of him, whom you unfortunately took for your friend, your philosopher and your guide.

Nothing can be more clear, than that taxes, in whatsoever degree they are taken, tend to impoverish all those who live by their labour, or out of their own means, of any sort, and who have no participation in those taxes. I have proved this so often, and in a manner so clear, that I will not now go into the illustrations again; but I will observe, and no man will deny the truth of the observation, that the fact has been proved by the experience of all the nations in the world of whom we know any thing. In all despotic States, which are also military from necessity, the people have always been in the most wretched state, so as hardly to possess any thing of their own, though in quantity the most trifling. This was the case in France, before the Revolution. The military, the Seigneurs, the lazy part of the clergy, all the innumerable dependants upon the Court, lived in ease and in splendour, while the people, the mass of the people, were clad in the coarsest of dress; while the habitations of a very considerable part of them were wholly unworthy of horses, and while their food, of frogs, chesnuts, snails, roots and herbage of all sorts, was such as was fit for a lean hog, but which was wholly incapable of fattening an animal of that species. There were two classes of men; one living in the greatest of luxury, and the other living in the deepest of misery. How should it have been otherwise, when the whole system was simply that of taking from those who laboured to give to those who did not labour? Such is very nearly the state, into which you and your associates have brought our own country. In order to make the people of France endure such intolerable oppression, it was necessary to employ force; it was necessary to have an *immense standing army in time of peace*; it was necessary to have *Bastilles and lettres de cachet*; it was necessary to have an *execrable police*; it was necessary to have *spies and informers*; it was necessary to have *licensed booksellers and a licensed press*! If your Lordship does not hang your head upon being reminded of these facts, and upon reflecting on the proud boast of England in former days, your heart must have been hardened much more than I really hope and believe that it is.

I am quite certain that the people of England will recover their liberties, and that despotism, all over Europe, will wither to dust soon after that change shall take place. But, in the meanwhile, we have to inquire into the cause of their present sufferings, and to put the result of our inquiries upon record. There may be men, who may hereafter wish

their present deeds to be forgotten. I trust I shall be found amongst those, who will wish their present deeds to be remembered.

The American war left a heavy debt and a deep wound on the prosperity and liberties of England; but that war was trifling in its consequences, compared to the war of which you, my Lord, were one of the principal authors, and for which great injury to your country your recent conduct is by no means calculated to atone. To see the French nation, after so many ages of suffering, rising and shaking off its oppressions, was a sight, one would have thought, to have gladdened the heart of an English nobleman, especially a nobleman priding himself upon being a *Whig*, and claiming the right to resist oppression. I appeal to all the political writings of the English nation for centuries back; not only to all her political writers, but to all her parliamentary speeches; to all her poets; to all her lawyers, from FORTESCUE downwards. I appeal to all the maxims, the proverbs, the toasts, the songs, the pictures of the nation. All these remind me that the English nation, down to the very year of the French revolution, regarded the French king as a tyrant, his clergy as bloody persecutors, and his people as wretched slaves. What, then, was ever so unnatural as for England to become the head and heart and hand and soul of a combination to smother the liberties of France in the cradle, to restore that same clergy, and re-throne that same dynasty of kings? This was the time, my Lord; this was the important epoch, when the fate of England was decided; then it was that that series of measures commenced, which have finally produced all that we now behold, and, amongst the rest, that huge mass of human woe, a small particle of which, it appears, your Lordship has been endeavouring to diminish. Out of the decision of that day have arisen all the barracks, all the academies for training dependants up to be military commanders, distinct from all common feeling with the people; all the laws for shutting up and transporting the people of Ireland; all the dispensations with juries; all the police establishments; all the employment of soldiers to collect the revenue; all the Dungeon Acts; all the innumerable restraints upon the press; all the employment of foreign troops in the heart of our country; all the spies, all the informers; nine-tenths of the crimes, ninety-ninth hundredths of the ignominious deaths, and such a scene of general misery, compared to the former happy state of the people, as never was before witnessed since the creation of the world. And you, my Lord! what hand had you in the fatal decision of that day? I assert broadly, that you had *more* to do with it than any man then living. Your Lordship formed one of the great and powerful members of a powerful opposition then existing to Mr. PITT. If you, the DUKE OF PORTLAND, LORD SPENCER, and the rest of those persons who went over to Mr. Pitt upon that occasion, had remained in the opposition, and had opposed a war against France, that war never could have taken place. But, this was not all, for it was you and the persons just named, who *compelled Mr. Pitt to go to war*, or to quit the seat of his power and his ambition. He was indisposed to the war; a fact clearly proved by the correspondence of M. MARET, and confirmed by the unequivocal declaration of his associate, DUNDAS. Your defection from the opposition compelled him to yield against his judgment and against his inclination; a circumstance that only tends to render his memory the more hateful. But though your Lordship was only an associate with the DUKE OF PORTLAND and others as far as direct and open power went, you are much

more than an associate in the origin of that fatal step. It was your Lordship who fostered BURKE; it was your Lordship who had put him into Parliament; it was your Lordship for whom he wrote; and it was your Lordship who obtained for him, out of the public money, all those immense sums which he and his executors have received as a reward for being the trumpeter to that bloody and long crusade, which has at last ended in destroying the liberty and peace of mind of every man in the kingdom; which has saddled the nation with a debt that it never can pay, and which, having deprived even your Lordship, as you appear to imagine, of the sacred protection of the laws, has hung your star and your parchment deeds upon the point of the bayonet.

What I have stated here is all so notorious, that the nation needs only to be reminded of it by the bare mention of the facts. Other circumstances may not be so notorious; and, therefore, let those who sing forth the praises of your donation, follow you through your other acts of the last twenty-five years. From 1793 to 1801, they will find you one of those Ministers who made it high treason to send a bushel of potatoes from England to France, or to send relief or assistance of any sort even to a brother, a father, or a mother. They will find you proposing to the Parliament grants of millions of the people's money to be given to those who had fled from the people of France, and from that just indignation excited by their long oppressions and cruelties. They will find you putting in force all the Power-of-Imprisonment Acts passed during that period, and afterwards joining in voting a Bill of Indemnity to yourself and your colleagues for the deeds which you had done, outstretching the powers given even by those Acts. In that transaction of transcendent injustice, that unparalleled violation of law and good faith, the protecting the Bank of England against the demands of its creditors, they will find your Lordship's name at the head of the list of those who signed the Order in Council. And, glad to hurry on to the close, they will find your name amongst those of the Members of that Secret Committee, who were unanimous in making that report, which was contradicted by Mr. CLEARY'S petition, and for the Bill founded upon which report, you voted, notwithstanding that petition. Let those who are engaged in blazoning your bounty forth to the world, add these facts to the tail of their account, and then your Lordship will appear in your true and proper colours.

There is something, too, in this eulogium on your bounty, which is objectionable, as conveying a kind of censure upon other proprietors of estates, for not doing as you have done. The eulogium says that your liberality "is most singular." And, in another place it says, that this "act will place the noble Earl conspicuously amongst those who have "embarked in the cause" of humanity in this period of general distress "and embarrassment." Now, my Lord, though I have no pity for the trodden-down gentry of the kingdom, who, in their turn, would tread the people to death, there are some gentlemen, and even some noblemen, who have not the power of imitating you in this respect, and yet who deserve much greater praise than it appears to me is merited by your Lordship. All the world knows, that my Lord HOLLAND, for instance, cannot toss down three thousand pounds to a parcel of the starving people; but, my Lord Holland has taken no share in the passing of those Acts which have deprived the people of all the benefits of law and justice. On the contrary, he has done all that he was able to do to

prevent the passing of those Acts. Nor could I trace to my Lord Holland any enormous waste of the public money as I can to your Lordship. I showed, in a late Number, the enormous sums which the prostituted Burke had received out of the public money, and as I also showed, his executors are now receiving, *to be disposed of according to his last will and testament*, three thousand pounds a year out of the taxes; and they are to continue to receive it, too, for three or four lives yet to come! Is not this something monstrous? Your Lordship should pay this grant every year out of your pocket, seeing that it was you who saddled the nation with this encumbrance; you should pay this grant out of your pocket, annually; nay, you should refund to the people the whole of the money that this prostituted slave swallowed up; you should do this, before you talk of your *charity* to the people; you should be just before you are generous. I know of no other person that you have saddled upon the country; I mean you particularly; but, as one of the Ministry, what enormous sums have you squandered in this manner! You were a Minister when the Rosks obtained their grants, and when grants and pensions were bestowed upon hundreds of others, who are now wallowing in luxury while the people are starving. The remains of the once numerous gentlemen are now so cowed down, as to be of little more estimation with you than so many menial servants; but it is a little hard for those who are praising your munificence, to reflect on these poor wretches for not giving away their money, after you have assisted in given their fortunes to French emigrants and stock-jobbers. There is still, however, enough of them left, if they had common spirit, to assert their rights; but this they cannot do without allowing the people to assert their rights at the same time; and it would seem that the only relic of the blood of their ancestors that is left in them, is that which consisted of empty pride. Thus they are the tools of the great aristocracy and of the stock-jobbers. Each reptile of them thinks, that the thing will last out his day. He looks at his sons with the consciousness that they will be beggars, or beggarly dependents, and he strives to hide his real insignificance by holding the language of insolent superiority. He knows he is despised by the people, and therefore he hates them; and he assumes the office of an officious persecutor, in order to be able to creep into the hunt or to the table of such men as your Lordship. Therefore, I feel no compassion for these dregs of a degenerate race, though at the same time, I cannot help observing on the cruelty of your eulogists in thus sneering at their poverty. - However, it is a specimen of the treatment which all those must expect who become tools in the hands of those who oppress their country.

I lately read, in the reports of the Parliamentary Debates, that your Lordship has dissented from the second bill for taking away the liberty of the people. I can imagine no good ground for this. No reason, no argument, which would not have applied, and with more force, against the first bill; and yet that bill had your assent. If the people being in a state of misery, was a sufficient reason to put their bodies in jeopardy, that misery has by no means declined. If the expectation of open riot was sufficient to justify you in urging the adoption of the first bill, there has now been open riot. Indeed, it was produced by the first bill; but that is no matter. The thing has taken place; and the argument of the Ministers was conclusive; *that if the first bill was proper, the second was, at least, equally so.* Indeed, if the first bill was just and fit, there

never was and never can be a time when the people of England ought to enjoy liberty, or, rather, *safety*; for real liberty they have not enjoyed for a great many years. It was the first bill that was the act never to be forgotten. That was the answer which the oppressed and injured people received to their humble and earnest petitions. That was the answer to all our supplications and all our arguments, and, it is the basest of hypocrisy, or weakness perfectly contemptible, to suppose that the wound thereby made is ever to be healed by any thing short of a restoration of the people to their rights.

Your Lordship will find me ready to do you that justice which you have refused to the people. I have always heard that your conduct was excellent towards your tenants, towards your neighbours, and towards every body in private life; that your establishment at home was such as became you; that the good old English hospitality even still lives under your roof. And, I am very far from supposing, that, in the present case, motives of real compassion for the suffering objects of your donation have not found a place in your heart. I believe, too, from every thing that I have ever heard of you, that you were misled by the arts of BURKE at the commencement of the French revolution. He himself has observed: "Let any one tell you his story every day for a year without contradiction, and at the end of the year he is your master." The observation was one of *experience*, I dare say; and he might have added, that such a man will induce you to do wicked things and think it your duty to do them.

If England could possibly be placed all at once just in the same situation, relative as well as positive, as she was in 1793, would your Lordship, with the experience which you now possess, act as you then acted? Let me put this question home to you. If you would, there is no punishment ever yet invented by man that you do not deserve to endure. But, I will do you the justice to say, that I am confident that you repent of what you then did; that you now see how useless it is to draw the bayonet for the extermination of principles; and that you would give one-half of your estate at this very moment, if you could secure for yourself and your family, the enjoyment of the remainder, accompanied with all the popular love and respect which your ancestors enjoyed, and which, too, I believe, they very well merited. But, my Lord, you must be conscious that all you possess must now depend upon the bayonet, unless you speedily relent and yield those rights of the people, a considerable part of which you yourself have engrossed.

Your Lordship knows nothing of the mind of the public in England. You are placed, by your rank and your riches, in a situation to deprive you of the great advantage of knowing any thing of the state of the people's minds. Yours are a set of notions which belong to a period fifty years ago; and you are surrounded by those who would fain persuade you, that the minds of the people are as destitute of all political knowledge as they were at that period. One would think, indeed, that it is impossible that this should be; but from every thing I hear from any of your lips I am sure that it is so, and that the horses which draw your coach are little less ignorant of the real state of the public mind than you yourself are. If this were not the fact, your conduct could not possibly be accounted for upon any supposition short of downright insanity.

Whatever you may suppose, the fact is, that the people not only un-

derstand all that has been done against them recently ; not only understand all the motives ; all the secret windings and twistings which led to the several Acts levelled against their liberties and their lives ; but, as in the reading of a novel we are let by degrees into the history of things existing previous to the commencement of the novel, so the people have now been led to *look back* and to examine into the real motives of the late wars ; and thus they have a fair and clear view of a chain of causes and events, all making a complete whole, and impressing upon their minds the indelible conviction that all the blood, all the misery, and all the ignominy which have been brought upon the nation, have arisen out of a desire to prevent them from enjoying their rights, rights which they have proved to be theirs, the enjoyment of which is consistent with reason as well as with law, and also consistent with the permanence of every establishment, which has tended to give dignity to any order in the society, and which is necessary to uphold the honour and renown of the kingdom.

There are conceited projectors who would fain persuade such men as your Lordship that the mind of the people is to be *brought back again*. That by the means of sermons, on Sundays ; of charges to juries ; of talkings of Magistrates ; that, in short, by wheedling and by bullying alternately, the people are to be brought to think that all is right, and that their safety has been taken from them for their own good. Your Lordship may be well assured, that a grosser deception than this never was attempted to be palmed upon any portion of mankind. I have talked with some hundreds of men, labourers, mechanics, and tradesmen, and I most solemnly declare, that I have very seldom met with one who was ignorant of scarcely any one material point upon the subject of politics. The people know the origin of your title as well as you do yourself. They know the title of the King to his crown. They know how the Debt came ; the manner in which it was created ; the motives from which it was created ; and the manner and the degree in which they themselves are affected by it. The questions of political economy, formerly thought so intricate, as to be comprehensible to only few minds, are now as familiar to the people as that butter-milk and oatmeal which have supplied the place of their bread, bacon, and beer. So that, if misery brings us sufferings, it brings, also, that knowledge, which, when acted upon, prevents the recurrence of similar misery. The weaver at WIGAN, who, when the gentry, as they call themselves, held a meeting in the hall of that rotten borough, to consult about the distribution of soup, exclaimed, after hearing the speech of the borough-owner : " We do not want your soup ! Give us our rights, and we shall be able to eat roast beef ! " That weaver, my Lord, spoke the sentiments of the whole of the people. And a great deal was contained in his short declaration. Certainly, if the people had their rights, they would want neither the Wigan soup nor the Wicklow oatmeal and rice. If one-half of the labourer's wages were not taken from him in taxes, he would again have plenty of his own, and of good food and drink, too, such as satisfied the hunger and slaked the thirst of his forefathers. His cottage would again have a pig for a neighbour in summer, in his sty, and for an inmate in winter, hung upon his rack. It would again glisten with brass and pewter utensils, and again a pot of ale of his own brewing would send him forth cheerful to his work, and comfort him by his evening fireside.

In the whole world there was not so happy a country as England was. In the reading of our books and in the hearing of our verbal descriptions of cottages in England; of the industry, the neatness, the order and regularity of those dwellings of our labourers, the people of other countries think they are listening to romances. I can remember, myself, when there was scarcely a single labourer's house destitute of an abundance of all those things that *Fortescue* describes, and of a great many others of more modern invention. Brass and pewter were seen everywhere. It was a disgrace not to have window-curtains, bed-curtains, and feather-beds. Trenchers were used sometimes, even in the farm-houses; but all was *solid* and in great store. To see a person with a hole in his stocking was a thing to talk about through a neighbourhood. A man with a dirty shirt or a long beard of a Sunday, or with a dirty smock-frock on a Monday morning, was a thing not to be seen once in a year, in any town or village in Surrey or Hampshire; and, it was in those times a thing to be mentioned only in a whisper, that John Such-a-one or Tom Such-a-one received parish-relief. I am at a long distance from Surrey and from Hampshire, but I cannot reflect on the change which has now taken place without thinking myself present there, without all the miserable objects rising up before my eyes, and without execrating those who have thus stripped my country of its best inheritance: that is to say, the means of comfortable living amongst the mass of the people. If the labourer be not comfortable at home, he naturally quits that home. If nothing but misery there stares him in the face, he seeks to shun that misery, if it be but for an hour. Unfortunate, my Lord, is the man who can find no happiness *at home*; and when this is the case with a great proportion of the people; when the labourer cannot be in a worse situation, and when he cannot possibly hope to be in a better, general despair, or, what is very little short of it, general carelessness, must prevail. And, when your Lordship reflects that you have been one of the principal causes of this sorrowful change in the situation of the labourers of England, I cannot imagine how you can lay your head down one night upon your pillow, until you have made all the atonement that lies in your power.

The state of the people relative to the nobility and gentry used to be such as to be productive of great advantages to both. The labourers were happy. Each had his little home. He had things about him worth possessing and worth preserving. His clock, which had come to him from his father, in many cases, and from his grandfather, was preserved with as much care and veneration, as you would preserve your title-deeds, or any building upon your estates. Men lived in the same cottage from the day of their marriage till the day of their death. They worked for the same masters for many years. They were so well off that there was no desire for change. Whole families were in the service of the same nobleman or gentleman, without any legal engagement and without any other dependence than that occasioned by respect and good-will. In numerous instances, son succeeded father, generation after generation, as the workman or the servant of son after father. The liberality and kindness of the employer were repaid by the respect and fidelity of the servant. All this is now swept away. That inexorable system of taxation, that fraudulent and ruinous system of funding, which have enabled the Borough-holders in England to smother liberty and reinstate despotism in Europe, have, at last, almost wholly destroyed this most

beautiful and happy state of society, and, in the place of mutual confidence and mutual good-will, have introduced mutual distrust and mutual hatred. The American war, as I said before, gave the nation a great blow. That blow, however, might have been overcome; but, the blow given by the late wars never can be overcome, except by that regeneration which a Parliamentary Reform would produce; and there is now no alternative; there must be that Reform, or a naked military despotism. There is a fatality which pursues wrong-doers until it finally brings them to destruction. To what sort of this can be ascribed your perseverance in talking about Jacobins and levellers, even after the Bourbons were restored, and after Napoleon, in defiance of law, had been imprisoned on a rock? You went to war; you expended eight hundred millions of money; you stretched three hundred thousand natives of the kingdom dead upon the ground or upon the deck; and all this, to do what? Why, as you alleged, to preserve the Constitution. And now, at the end of twenty-five years of bloody war, you keep on foot an army of a hundred and fifty thousand men; you arm the yeomanry all through the country; you destroy the liberty of the press; you make it death to attempt to seduce a soldier from his duty; you enable the Ministers to employ bastiles at their pleasure; you shut a large portion of the people up in their houses from sun-set to sun-rise; and ALL THIS STILL TO PRESERVE THE CONSTITUTION!

It is useless to dwell upon exposition when the thing so clearly exposes itself; but your Lordship will do well to reflect, while yet there is time, upon the vast difference between this period and that of 1793. Then there was a foreign enemy; no matter by what means he was made such; there was a foreign enemy, and that, too, the ancient enemy of England. To hate France and all belonging to France was regarded as a sort of duty amongst us. We sucked in the feeling with our mother's milk. This prejudice, and the deep rooted attachment that Englishmen have to their country, together with their national pride, served you as a host. They supplied the place of all reasoning upon the subject. But, long suffering and most dreadful ill-treatment from the hands of their leaders, have at last taught and compelled the people to reason, and your Lordship will never live to see the day when they can be induced again to burn a TOM PAINE in effigy. The spirit which is now on foot is not that of any leader or set of leaders. It arises from reasoning in the minds of the people. They meet with no answer to their arguments. They meet with nothing to shake their conclusions. They have a perfect conviction that they are in the right. They are convinced that they are injured and oppressed; and nothing will satisfy them short of complete justice. The despotism may be tried, but those who try it will be tired first. The boys who are now twelve years old will be far more violent, as you call it, than their fathers are; unless, indeed, Mr. WILBERFORCE can prevail upon them to read nothing but *Sinful Sally*, or Commissioner Grey's wife of Portsmouth can take off their attention by her little books. A woman in one of my cottages had a printed letter, purporting to have been written by Jesus Christ, which informed her, amongst other things, that she must abstain from meddling with politics. I found, upon inquiry, that this letter, which had been printed in London, was very common about the country, where it was hawked and given away. The woman was surprised when I told her that it was printed by a man who printed and sold smutty trials and bawdy songs, which was absolutely

the case. This letter, if you could by any means get the people to believe in it, would go a great way in rendering the dungeon and gagging laws unnecessary. As to the *blasphemy* of it, that would be nothing; for, in such cases, the end sanctifies the means, as I am sure the whole of the Holy Alliance will agree. But, the misfortune is, that the people would not relish this letter. They would know it to be a cheat. They would believe it to come from the persons who passed the Dungeon Bills, and they would disbelieve every word of it accordingly; or read it backwards, as witches are said to do their prayers. And, if all the HANNAH MORIS in the kingdom were put into a state of requisition, and all the Bible Societies and all the Saving-Bank gentry were to become hawkers of their works, those works would never efface from the mind of one single Englishman, the conviction that he is pillaged and oppressed, and that nothing can better his lot but a Reform of the Commons' House of Parliament.

Nothing has so strongly tended to produce this conviction as the manner in which we have been answered. Had the Petitions for Reform been kindly received; had they been listened to patiently; had Sir Francis Burdett brought in his Bill, as the nation called upon him to do; had the Bill been discussed; though it had been, finally, rejected, we might have borne the rejection with patience; and, at any rate, without any great degree of resentment. But, when we saw that the Houses did not wait even for the presenting of the Petitions; that the characters as well as the conduct of the Reformers, and that all their motives, were grossly calumniated, even before their Petitions arrived; when we saw that their Petitions themselves were treated as dirty papers sent from the scum of the earth; when we saw that the most serious and sober and decent of complaint and of argument were answered by nothing but reproach, scurrility, and affected contempt; when we heard men vastly inferior to the general run of us, affecting to consider us as low, ignorant, semi-barbarians; when we met with this foul and insolent treatment, our pride, as well as a sense of the injustice, came to our support, and filled us with indignation; and, at last, when we saw that even this treatment being found insufficient to move us to acts of violence, pretended plots were conjured up, in order to give countenance to a new system of despotism, what bounds ought there to have been to our resentment?

My Lord it is deep, and deep it ought to be. This was not the manner in which your son gave us reason to believe that he would meet the question of Reform. *He*, generous antagonist! He said that he "longed to come to close quarters with the Reformers." We were approaching, as fast as we could, to gratify his longing. But, instead of an argument, he met us with a Gagging Bill; a new Treason Bill; and a Bill to make it death to talk to a soldier and endeavour to persuade him not to shoot us. If he had been a legislator under Robinson Crusoe, he would have put Friday to death for his prayer to the gun. Your Lordship acted more manfully; for you, without any whimperings or whinings, without any pretendings about pains and qualms, voted, in addition to all the rest, that all our bodies should be placed at the absolute mercy of SIDMOUTH or CASTLEREAGH, or any six of those of whom CANNING might be one. Your son was ready to meet us at close quarters; but then we were to have a gag in our mouths, and have our hands tied behind us. This was a new species of warfare, or rather, a new interpretation of the meaning of words. The next time we receive a challenge from his Lordship, we

shall know better how to understand him. In the meanwhile, he will enjoy, unenvied, all the glory of his victory, which, whatever he may think of it, will never be forgotten by the people of England, as long as he has a head upon his shoulders.

This is not a thing, my Lord, that is to *die away*, at some future day. It is not a wild freak of Government in time of war. It is not to be *laughed off*. The people are not to be satisfied with being permitted to give their punishers the nick-name of "*alarmists*." O, no! It is not a summer-cloud. It is a deep, settled, lasting cause of resentment, and which resentment nothing can take wholly out of our hearts, and nothing can soften in its effects, but complete justice.

For my part, I think it much better that the despotism should exist in its present shape, than that things should fall back into the state of 1816. Things are now come to a certain known point. We now understand that it is force, sheer force, to which we yield. The struggle is open and avowed; and when men fall, they have, at any rate, the compassion of their countrymen, and of all the good part of mankind. Before this revolution, it was a nondescript sort of thing. Men were destroyed in estate and in person; and the world hardly knew why or how. Somehow or other they were destroyed, and that was all that was known. There was such a mixed medley of Liberty of the Press and truth being a libel; of trial by Jury and of Juries chosen by the Master of the Crown-Office; of Habeas Corpus Act and of commitment for want of bail in cases of libel, the parties being too poor to find bail; of compulsion to come to trial, and of power of the Attorney-General not to bring on the trial but just when he pleased, and to stop the trial, if he pleased, after the Jury was empanelled, without consent of Court, and then bring it on again when he pleased, to the end of a man's life. All this mixed medley has now given place to one plain, simple Act of Parliament, giving absolute power to the Ministers, to take any man that they please, native or foreigner, to put him into any jail that they please, and any dungeon that they please, to treat him there in any manner that they please, to deny access to him by any human being, and to keep him in that state just as long as they please. This is a plain simple thing, that scorns all hypocrisy; and it plainly tells the people that "thus it is that you shall be, as long as we have the power of keeping you so."

This is something to be understood. We all understand it. All the world understands it; and the only question now is, how long this can go on. My opinion is, that three years will be the utmost period of its duration. Four is the very outside that I give it, and even two is more than I think it very likely to last. Your Lordship and the rest of you have found it difficult enough to get this new system into play; but you will find it much more difficult to get rid of it. You will be, I imagine, like LEICESTER and his soldiers in the Rehearsal. You will be puzzled how to *get off*; and I shall be very much surprised, if you do not, like them, go off upon your knees. Like LEICESTER, you have appealed to the God of Battles; and, like him, you have had very little scruples about the means you employ.

It is quite useless to set the hirelings of the press to abuse the people. Dr. JOHNSON observed, that it was foolish for a man to fall out with the *world*; for that the world went on its usual train, and cared nothing for him. It is useless for Mr. EDWARD CHRISTIAN, the Chief-Justice of the Isle

of Ely, in his charge to the Grand Jury, to assert, that, "there are probably *fifty thousand* of the most dangerous and profligate of his Majesty's subjects traversing the country in all directions, without any legitimate license or control, and yet not one of them ought to move a single step, unless in custody of a constable, or accompanied by a parish-officer." It is useless for this grave personage to add that these are "the most debauched, profligate, and desperate characters; and it is WELL KNOWN, are frequently the emissaries and messengers of *treason and rebellion*." It is quite useless, my Lord, to cry out against the people in this way. It will neither soften their resentment, nor will it tend to do credit to their rulers. But, if this Chief-Justice spoke *truth*, to what a pretty termination has your war against principles led? And how completely were you all disappointed when you thought that the storm of the rights of mankind was hushed for ever in England!

It is said in that Report to which your Lordship gave your sanction, that the people aim at a *Revolution*. This is alleged against them as a crime; a positive crime, and taken for granted to be such, as much as murder or arson or burglary or sheep-stealing, or any other capital offence known to the settled laws of the land, and bottomed in natural justice. This is very surprising, indeed, when we recollect that the King sits upon his throne in virtue of a Revolution; when we recollect, also, that that Revolution is called *glorious*; and when we moreover recollect, that numerous individuals have been severely punished for having what is called, libelled the Revolution! But, if this sort of language were to be excused in others, how shall we find an excuse for it in your Lordship, who is descended from the Revolution; who bears a name which shows that descent, and who can trace the branch on which you hang to nothing else as its principal trunk. It is very fine, indeed, for you, for the BENTINCKS, the KEPPELS, and several others, who really sprang from men imported by the Revolution, to affect to regard revolutionary notions in the minds of Englishmen, who have no Dutch blood in their veins, as a crime! The charge is false. The people wanted no revolution, in the extensive sense of the word. They wanted no change in any one establishment of the country, except such change as the law of the land, and the statutes require to be made. But, if they had wished for a Revolution, the grounds of their wish ought to have been met and argued, and the wish itself not stigmatized as a crime, especially by those who had been chiefly instrumental in making a former Revolution, and who owe their estates and their titles to that event.

To hear the language of persons in office and in Parliament, and of the clergy and even of the fundholders, one would imagine, that the people of England, once so famed for their freedom and for their high and honourable sentiments, were now become a set of grovelling animals, but one degree superior to the brute creation. They are spoken of as a grazier would speak of his stock. They are called "*the subject*." This is the slang of CANNING, particularly. "He would not deprive *the subject* of his right of petition." Rose talks in the same style. They seem to forget that their sinecures, and the sinecures and pensions of their sons, mothers, and sisters, come out of the sweat of "*the subject*." Others call the people "*the population*." If they meet to complain of their sufferings, they are called the rabble; and the famous insolent pensioner, BURKE, called them plainly "*the swinish multitude*;" while

the tenor of his writings plainly said that he considered them very little above real and literal swine. There is a species of thinking, my Lord, which approaches to dreaming; and, surely, it is this sort of thinking that is now in vogue amongst these persons; otherwise they would, for their own sakes, treat the people with becoming respect. They do not seem to recollect, that to be treated insolently is the last thing which a man forgives. Indeed, they have all along shown as little of understanding as they have of justice.

It is curious to observe how this language changes, when the people are *wanted to fight*. The moment they cast off the smock-frock, and put on a red coat, they seem to attract a new set of feelings from these gentry. They are then brave fellows, gallant fellows; men full of sentiments of honour; men full of love for their king and country; and all the qualities of the swine are cast off with the smock-frock. And, does your Lordship believe that they are so very swinish as not to perceive this? Do you in good earnest believe, that the man who has been oppressed with a smock-frock over his shoulders, will, with it, cast off all recollection, and even all feeling for his parents and his brethren?

The people are the subjects of the king; and your Lordship is as much his subject as is the poorest servant of the poorest of your tenants. You yourself make part of "the *population*;" and you and your family are as liable to the objections of MALTHUS as any pauper in the kingdom. The poor man has as much right to claim his share of the renown belonging to the country as you have. The country, taken as a whole, is as much his as it is yours. You owe allegiance, and he owes no more. He is as much entitled to protection, in consequence of that allegiance, as you are. If, in any case, the honour of the country has been tarnished, it never has been by the people's good will. When you, and the rest of the ministry to which you belonged, sneakingly withdrew the title of *King of France* from the king and from his coins, you did an act that you would not have dared to do if the Parliament had been chosen by the free voice of the people. What was the union of other kingdoms to our kingdom? What had that to do with the matter? It was the people of England, who served as volunteers, under their ancient kings, that won the title of *King of France*; and, if I had been in the Parliament, I would have divided the House; I would have made every stand, inch by inch, in order to expose, at any rate, the abandonment of a plume, won by the valour of my forefathers. I would have contended for my share of the honour of that plume; and I would have insisted, that no new dynasty, and that no unions of any sort had a right to take any portion of that honour from the people of England. Why does not the Prince of Wales fling away his feathers? He condescends to wear them, though they were won by Englishmen on the soil of France. They were imported neither from Hanover nor from Holland. He has a right to wear them. The Revolution which the English people made, gives him that right; but he has that right upon no other ground than as being the depository of the honours of the English people. The abandonment of the title of *King of France* was an act of baseness without a parallel. It was an act, too, of very dangerous precedent, because, if one part of the king's title could be laid aside, so might another part. Talk of *innovation*, indeed! This was an innovation worth notice; but, in the guilt of this innovation the people had no share.

I could proceed, my Lord, to state numerous instances, in which the honour of the nation has been sacrificed against the loud cries of the people, who have always had the highest notions respecting their country's character for good faith and for glory in deeds of arms. I would trust the first ten men I met walking into London on any turnpike-road; I would trust those first ten men with the guardianship of the good faith and honour of the country, rather than I would trust any ministry that I have ever known. The people have always shown a warmer heart in these cases than has been shown by those who have the insolence to call them "*the subject*," "*the population*," and "*the rabble*;" and, my Lord, the people, take them in general, have more just sentiments regarding their country, than those have who affect to consider them as little superior to the stock upon a farm.

In conclusion, my Lord, I wish to remind you of the probable consequences which will result from the present struggle. That the people will triumph in the end is certain, and then I shall wish to see BURKE alive, that he might witness the helter-skelter of the despots all over the world. The pullings down of Napoleon were nothing. He was a despot humbling despots. It was genius against feebleness of mind. It was valour against cowardice; but there was no *principle* at work; there was none of that electric sentiment which flies from mind to mind. There was nothing in his victories which invited mankind to rally round his standard. The effect of his deeds was to astound and not to cheer and encourage. To set all Europe free, there requires only the regaining of their rights by the people of England. All the world have their eyes upon her. Every bosom in which freedom breathes, feels an interest in the termination of this struggle. The despotisms, even now, totter to their very base, and the bare restoration of the people of England to their rights, would crumble them to dust. This would be accomplished, too, without any other revolution in England than the mere restoration of the people to the enjoyment of what the law says they ought to enjoy. It is the borough system and the borough system alone, which has restored the Bourbons, the Pope, the Inquisition, and all the other causes of tyranny and persecution; and with that system, which is their sole prop, they will fall never to rise again. Though the thing is very singular in appearance, nothing is so natural, as that his Holiness the Pope, who condemns Protestants to the fires of hell, should call the Prince Regent (that is to say, the mass of power of which he is the ostensible head) *his best friend*; nothing is so natural as that LOUIS, the *beloved* by the French, should thank the Prince Regent for his Crown; nothing is so natural as that the monks of Spain should profess more confidence in the Prince Regent than in the Virgin Mary herself; nothing is so natural as to see the Pope's Legate bowing amongst the heretics of St. James's. But, if once the Chapel of St. Stephen were to contain a set of men really elected by the people of the kingdom, away would go Bourbons, Pope, Monks and Legates, as I now see the dead sticks and leaves flying before a stiff breeze from the north. The struggle in England, therefore, at this moment, is the struggle of oppressed Europe. There is the leaven, which will lighten the whole lump; or the whole lump will remain dead as a stone for ages to come.

I feel confident that the former will be the result, and in a letter lately addressed to my Lord FOLKSTONE, I have endeavoured to prove, and I think I have proved, that such a result would be greatly to the advantage

of the nobility of England. But, in saying this, I proceed upon the hope that a returning sense of justice towards the people, will very soon operate with that nobility; and, my Lord, as you once thought it not beneath you to yield yourself up to the councils of a selfish, cunning, pension-hunting writer, permit me to hope that you will not think it presumption in me to suppose it possible that you may lend an ear to one who has shown, through the whole course of his life, that his ruling passion has been a desire to see his country happy and great.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

PETITION TO THE PRINCE REGENT.*

(*Political Register, December, 1817.*)

To his Royal Highness the PRINCE, Regent of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

The Petition of WILLIAM COBBETT, of Botley, in the county of Southampton, now residing at North Hampstead, in the State of New York, this 17th day of October, 1817,

MOST HUMBLY SHOWETH,—

That, next after the present situation of England herself, the object the most interesting to every well-informed and patriotic Englishman must, as your petitioner humbly presumes to believe, be the present situation of the Spanish colonies in America, in whose immense and fertile regions there are preparing, and, indeed, there are now in progress, such changes as will, in all human probability, produce a new distribution of wealth and of power amongst the most considerable of the nations of the world; and, as will, at the very least, materially affect many of those nations, not only in a commercial, but also in a naval and military point of view. Of all those nations no one is, as it appears to your humble petitioner, nearly so deeply interested as England in this grand revolution, which, if your Royal Highness's Councillors be wise,

* This petition to the Prince Regent was written by Mr. Cobbett in consequence of several interviews that he had at his residence on Long Island, with some military men, who came to him for the purpose of obtaining his aid. They were acting as agents for the South American Patriots, in fitting out vessels from the United States to carry on the war in the South; but, being thwarted by an extraordinary Act of the American Congress, Mr. COBBETT wrote the above petition, which being circulated in America, the Act was amended in the next session.—Ed.

prompt, and faithful to their king and his people, may greatly tend to restore her to prosperity, may secure to her an undisputed maritime pre-eminence for ages not to be numbered, and may, at the same time, and from the use of the very same means, crown her with the unfading glory of having given freedom to twenty millions of people, who now groan out their lives under the double-thonged scourge of civil and religious tyranny.

Such being the opinion of your petitioner, it is impossible for him to refrain from soliciting most humbly, though most earnestly, the attention of your Royal Highness to this important matter. And, he begs leave here to be permitted to represent to your Royal Highness, that, while taking this step, he forgets not the injuries at this time unjustly inflicted on his fellow-subjects in general, and on himself in particular; but, that, bearing these in mind, as he trusts he shall, to the last moment of his life, he also bears in mind those sacred obligations of law and of nature, which bind him to the land of his birth, and which bid him upon this occasion, as upon all other occasions, to make every exertion, within the compass of his humble means to promote the welfare and advance the honour of England.

To the mind of your Royal Highness the bare fact of a revolution being in existence and agitating the breasts of the whole of the population of a country, which reaches from the 18th degree of North latitude to the 50th degree of South latitude; a country which thus extends four thousand miles in length, which, in breadth, at some points, extends three thousand miles, and which is unbroken except by the comparatively trifling possessions of the Portuguese and the Dutch; a country which borders, at one extremity, on the part of the United States, at once the most fertile and the most important as to all probable future military and naval operations; a country, which has numerous ports on the side of the Pacific, as well as on that of the Atlantic, ocean; a country, which, to all the articles of European produce adds many articles that are refused by nature even to the most favoured part of the United States; a country, which, while it is cheered by a continual summer on the surface of the earth, has mines beneath inexhaustible in silver and in gold; a country which abounds in, or is capable of producing, almost all the commodities, greatly useful, as imports, to England, and which, at the same time, offers to England the surest, the most extensive, and the best of all possible markets; a country, which, if independent, nature would forbid to become, in any respect, the rival of England, and which from necessity must seek her friendship, and rely, in a great measure, on her power: to the mind of your Royal Highness the bare fact of a revolution being in actual existence in such a country; to the mind of every one who feels for the interest and honour of England, this bare fact, as your petitioner humbly presumes to believe, must suggest the strongest desire to know the true state of that revolution, and to see clearly developed the probable consequences of its ultimate success.

Deep is the sorrow of your petitioner when he reflects on his incapacity to perform this task in a manner worthy of the magnitude and importance of the subject; but, urged thereunto by a sense of imperious duty towards your Royal Highness and his country, no conviction, however perfect, of his inability can be sufficient to restrain him from making the attempt.

Minutely to describe the state of the revolution in Spanish America; to lay before your Royal Highness in detail the number of men in arms

in the several provinces and Vice-royalties ; to state the precise situation of the hostile armies and armaments ; to say what are the exact means, which, in the several warlike scenes, the parties possess, or may speedily expect : these would demand a mass of information not only greater than is possessed by your petitioner, but greater than can, at this time, possibly be possessed by any one man. But, the information which your petitioner has acquired, not from mere rumour or from published accounts, but from a personal communication with men of high character, coming directly from the spot, enables him confidently to state to your Royal Highness, that, in the Vice-royalty of Mexico, which is the most northern part of the Spanish dominions on the main, and which borders on the United States, the people are wholly disaffected to the Government ; that they have a Junta, or Assembly of Representatives, in the province of Valladolid ; that they have leaders of great enterprise and talent, and that arms only are wanted to decide, at once, the struggle in their favour ; that the Vice-Roy, indeed, raises troops, but that even these are disaffected towards him ; that, on the Atlantic side, the only considerable seaport of this vice-royalty, La Vera Cruz, is, as yet, in the hands of the Spanish Government, but that, to drive the present possessors from that port, and to afford every necessary assistance to the oppressed people, one single English frigate, with twenty thousand stand of arms, sent to the Gulf of Mexico, would be sufficient ; that this vice-royalty, which proposes to form itself into a distinct independent State, has a population of from seven to eight millions, nearly equalling the population of the United States of America, on which it borders on one side, and with regard to the resources and power of which United States, the establishment of the Independence of Mexico, must, as your petitioner will hereafter humbly endeavour to show, have a most important effect.

That, with regard to the second grand division of these immense regions, which division includes New Granada and Venezuela, and which extends from the isthmus of Darien to the mouth of the Orinoco (along more than seven hundred miles of sea-coast, the most important in every point of view), containing a population of from three to four millions, a declaration of independence, and a new form of government have, long since, been proclaimed ; that a war, extensive and sanguinary, has, for years, been going on ; that the patriots have commanders regularly appointed and commissioned ; that they have a representative assembly, officers of State, a national flag, and, in short, that they exercise the powers of sovereignty over a large portion of this extensive, fertile, rich and important territory. Here, as in the case of Mexico, arms only and a trifling maritime force are wanted to put an end to the contest, and, as your petitioner humbly hopes that he shall be able to show, to open to England the fairest prospect of immense advantages.

That, in Peru, which forms the third division, and which is bounded to the north by the last-mentioned territory, to the east by the Portuguese possessions, to the south by the territory of Chili, and to the west by the Pacific Ocean, and which has a population of from two to three millions, the spirit of independence is as active as in the aforementioned territories, and that here also a mere trifle in the way of maritime force and of arms would decide the contest, even, perhaps, without further struggle.

That, in the southern division, including the territories of Buenos Ayres and of Chili, and containing a population of from three to four millions, the contest is nearly at an end. The patriots have established a new

Government, and, with the exception of a trifling portion of territory on the borders of the Pacific Ocean, on which Spain is endeavouring to keep up the struggle, the whole of this division is under the actual control of the patriot Government.

But, though your petitioner places, in relation to the state of the revolution, great reliance on the particular information which he has, from most respectable and authentic sources received, he places much greater reliance upon the natural and inevitable tendency of the existence throughout the afore-mentioned countries, of a general spirit of revolt against oppression and insult exercised by imbecility, and which spirit of revolt, together with which oppression, insult and imbecility are notorious to all the world. The history of nations, as your petitioner humbly ventures to believe, furnishes no instance of the re-subjugation of a people, once in arms for their rights and perfectly enlightened as to the nature of those rights, unless such people were overwhelmed by an irresistible combination of foreign powers; a circumstance that cannot happen to the Spanish independents, unless through the consent, or the connivance, of England, acting, as in such case she must, not only in violation of the dictates of justice and humanity, but, as your petitioner humbly hopes he shall be able to show, in direct opposition to her own most important and most permanent interests.

In order to obtain an insight as to the probable consequences of the ultimate success of the Revolution of Spanish America, especially as those consequences will affect, permanently as well as for the present, the prosperity and power of England, and that he might be able the better to discharge his duty to your Royal Highness and his country, your petitioner has carefully attended to the nature of the products throughout the territories which are the subject of his petition. And, as to this matter, he begs leave humbly to beseech your Royal Highness to bear in mind that Mexico produces all those articles of commerce, which are produced in the United States, such as cotton, tobacco, ship-timber, and many others, and besides these, cochineal, indigo, dye-woods, and mahogany, while it abounds in those mines of silver and of gold, of which the United States have none. The city of Mexico, situated nearly about the centre of this Vice-Royalty, and which city contains a hundred and eighty thousand inhabitants, is blessed with a climate that knows no winter; a never-fading verdure clothes the fields; two crops of any kind of European grain are, with facility, made, in the same year, to succeed each other on the same plot of ground, and even two crops of maize, or Indian corn, while one crop of this latter grain is the utmost that can, even with difficulty, be raised in the northern part of the United States. In the Division of New Granada and Venezuela, which approaches more towards the south, all the products of Mexico abound. Here, as to the mines, silver and gold receive the addition of platina metal. Tobacco is here produced long acknowledged to be the finest in the world. The vine and the olive have been forbidden by despotism to produce wine and oil in this their favourite clime, lest these countries should, in this respect, injure Old Spain. At Chili, where the people have been permitted to make wine for their own use only, a proof has been afforded of the eminence to which almost every part of these territories would, if free and independent, speedily arrive, to the great injury, no doubt, of France and Spain and some other of the nations of Europe, but to the incalculable benefit of England. In the Division of Buenos Ayres and Chili; in that

of Peru; in every part of these territories, are produced all that the United States produce, with a small portion of the labour required in the latter. Hides and tallow, from droves roaming at pleasure, unfed and unsheltered, are even now an object of considerable traffic, and, under independent governments, would naturally become such to an immense extent. Lumber and all the articles in wood, together with flour, rice, and all the articles of food, occasionally necessary to England or to her West India Colonies, and which articles are now chiefly supplied by the United States, would, at a much cheaper rate, all be supplied from Mexico and the other countries bordering on the West India Seas, while the resources arising therefrom to these new nations could not possibly, at any period of time, be employed, like the resources of the United States, in the formation of a marine threatening to rival, sooner or later, the navy of England.

But, amongst the articles, in which Mexico, and more especially New Granada and Venezuela would supplant the United States, there is one, which your petitioner humbly presumes to point out as worthy of the particular notice of your Royal Highness. The articles of rice, flour and tobacco are, each of them, of great importance, but that of *cotton* far surpasses any description within the humble powers of your petitioner to give. The annual amount of this article of raw material, imported into England from the United States, great as that amount is, bears no proportion in point of consequence to the circumstances of its being the material of one of the greatest English manufactures, giving employment to a multitude of hands, causing an immense capital to be productively employed, and the interruption of a sufficient supply of which raw material must, of necessity, be attended with injuries too obvious to be detailed, and too great not to be, if possible, provided against. In the territories which are the subject of this Petition, and especially in those which border on the Gulf of Mexico and on the West India sea, cotton is not only naturally of a quality greatly superior to that of the United States, but it is produced at a small portion of the expense demanded by the cultivation of that of the last-mentioned country. So that, if the territories of Spanish America were freed from the monopoly, the restrictions, and all the selfish and oppressive shackles imposed by Spain; if industry and enterprise were left to take their natural course, those countries would furnish the English manufacturers with the most essential article of raw material at a price greatly reduced, and the close friendship which must necessarily exist between England and those territories, would prevent the supply from being interrupted by any of the clashings of interest or any of the casualties of war.

If your Royal Highness's Ministers, too busily engaged in the promoting of Holy Alliances abroad and in sacrificing the freedom of the people to the interest of an usurping borough faction at home, have overlooked these obvious commercial consequences of the success of the Revolution in Spanish America, and have also overlooked those still more important consequences of a military and naval character, of which your petitioner will by and by beg to be permitted to speak, the rulers of the United States, have, as he will now humbly proceed to show, overlooked neither the one nor the other, but seem to have had all those consequences clearly in their view, and to have done all that lay in their power to prevent them accordingly.

Your petitioner will not so far presume the existence of perfidy in

your Royal Highness's Envoys, or Ministers, as to suppose your Royal Highness not to have been informed, that the Envoys from the Patriot Governments have been refused to be received, in that capacity, by the Government of the United States; but he does presume, that perfidy, or, at least, criminal negligence, must have existed somewhere, because, otherwise, an Act, which was passed by the Congress on the third day of March last, would, with all possible speed, have been laid before your Royal Highness, and in which case your petitioner is sure that the said Act would have been, by your Royal Highness's order, communicated to the two Houses of Parliament. This being the firm conviction of your petitioner, he deems it his duty to recite here the words of this Act, and to subjoin to the recital such matter as appears to him necessary to exhibit a clear view of all the bearings and intentions of this singular and most important document.

"An Act more effectually to *preserve the neutral relations* of the United States.

"Section 1.—Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled,—That if any person shall, within the limits of the United States, fit out and arm, or attempt to fit out and arm, or procure to be fitted out and armed, or shall knowingly be concerned in the furnishing, fitting out or arming of any ship or vessel, with intent that such ship shall be employed in the service of any foreign prince or state, or of any colony, district, or people, or to cruise or commit hostilities, to aid or co-operate in any warlike measure whatever against the subjects, citizens, or property of any prince or state, or of any colony, district, or people, with whom the United States are at peace, every such person so offending shall, upon conviction, be adjudged guilty of a high misdemeanor, and shall be punished and imprisoned at the discretion of the Court in which the conviction shall be had, so as the fine to be imposed shall in no case be more than *ten thousand dollars*, and the term of imprisonment shall not exceed *ten years*; and every such ship or vessel, with her tackle, apparel and furniture, together with all materials, arms, ammunition and stores, which may have been procured for the building and equipment thereof, shall be forfeited, one-half to the use of any person who shall give information, and the other half to the use of the United States.

"Section 2.—And be it further enacted, That the owners of all armed ships, sailing out of the ports of the United States, and owned wholly or in part by citizens thereof, shall enter into bond to the United States, with sufficient sureties, prior to clearing out the same, in double the amount of the value of the vessel and cargo on board, including her armament, that the said ship or vessel shall not be employed by such owners, in cruising or committing hostilities, or in aiding or co-operating in any warlike measure against the subjects, citizens, or property of any prince or state, or of any colony, district, or people, with whom the United States are at peace.

"Section 3.—And be it further enacted, That the collectors of the Customs be, and they are hereby respectively authorized and required to detain any vessel manifestly built for warlike purposes, and about to depart from the United States, of which the cargo shall principally consist of arms and munitions of war, when the number of men shipped on board, or other circumstances, shall render it probable that such vessel is intended to be employed by the owner or owners to cruise or commit hostilities upon the subjects, citizens, or property of any prince or state, or of any colony, district, or people, with whom the United States are at peace, until the decision of the President be had thereupon, or until the owner enters into bond, and sureties to the United States prior to clearing out the same, in double the amount of the value of the vessel and cargo on board, including her armament, that the said ship or vessel shall not be employed by the owner or owners, in cruising or committing hostilities, or in aiding or co-operating in any warlike measure against the subjects, citizens, or property of any prince or state, or of any colony, district, or people with whom the United States are at peace.

"Section 4.—And be it further enacted, That if any person shall, within the territory or jurisdiction of the United States, increase or augment, or procure to

be increased or augmented, or shall be *knowingly concerned* in increasing or augmenting the force of any ship of war, cruiser, or other armed vessel, which at the time of her arrival within the United States, was a ship of war, cruiser, or other armed vessel, in the service of a foreign prince, or state, or of any colony, district, or people, or belonging to the subjects or citizens of any such prince, state, colony, district or people, the same being *at war* with any foreign prince or state, with whom the United States are at peace, by adding to the number or size of the guns of such vessels prepared for use, or by the addition thereto of any equipment, solely applicable to war, every such person, so offending, shall, upon conviction, be adjudged guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall be fined and imprisoned, at the discretion of the Court in which the conviction shall be had, so as that such fines shall not exceed one thousand dollars, nor the term of imprisonment be more than one year.

"Section 5.—And be it further enacted, That this Act shall continue in force for the term of two years.

"H. CLAY,

"Speaker of the House of Representatives.

"JOHN GAILLARD,

"President of the Senate, pro tempore.

"Approved,

"JAMES MADISON."

"May 3, 1817."

With regard to the *title* of this Act, your petitioner begs leave humbly to represent to your Royal Highness, that it is a perfect novelty, in the history of nations, for any Government to pass laws to punish its citizens or subjects for violating the public laws of neutrality; that the law of nations provides the punishment which, upon this score, nations have deemed to be amply sufficient; that, in virtue of this law, every citizen or subject, of a neutral State is, if he trade to a belligerent State, in articles contraband of war, and such as are enumerated in this Act, liable to have those articles seized and condemned by the belligerent with whose enemy he so trades; that this general law of nations has rendered any interference in such cases, on the part of neutral Governments, wholly unnecessary; that if individual citizens or subjects, belonging to a neutral State, supply one of the belligerent Powers with arms or other munitions of war, the other belligerent has no ground of complaint against the neutral State, seeing that such offended belligerent has, by the law of nations, the right, lodged in its own hands, of punishing such individuals. That, the matter has been, thus, wisely settled by the law of nations; for if neutral States were to acknowledge, as a duty, the passing of laws to punish their citizens or subjects for violations of the laws of neutrality, neutral States would, by such acknowledgement, give to any and to every belligerent a right to demand of them the passing of such laws, and, thus, would one nation have a right to dictate to another nation not only punishments, but the measure of punishments, to be inflicted on that other nation's citizens or subjects, and this, as your Royal Highness need not be reminded, is a species of degradation, to which no really independent nation has ever submitted.

It appears, therefore, evident to your petitioner, and he ventures humbly to express his conviction, that it will appear evident to your Royal Highness and to the whole English people (for whose benefit, as your Royal Highness has publicly and truly declared, your Royal Father wears his crown), that the above recited Act of the American Congress was not called for by any neutral duty known to the law of nations, and that it could not in any wise, possibly be necessary to the preservation of the neutral relations of the United States. Besides, it will at once

occur to your Royal Highness and to the people of the whole kingdom to ask, how it happens, that, in order to preserve its neutral relations, an anxiety, on the part of the American Government, so extreme as to produce this signal work of supererogation, has now, for the first time, made its appearance to the world? The Government of the United States has had to preserve its neutrality during many years of war amongst the European States, and, which is exactly in point, during a long and sanguinary struggle between France and her important colony of St. Domingo; and yet, as your petitioner begs leave to state, the Congress has never before passed an Act to punish its citizens for trading in articles contraband of war; and, of course, it has now, for the first time, discovered, that such Acts are necessary to the preservation of its neutral relations, which discovery appears, too, to be the more extraordinary as its effects manifestly tend to prevent a people, groaning under the worst of despotisms, from obtaining any share of that freedom and that happiness, to have obtained which by an open war against the mother country is the boast of the people of these United States.

Moreover, with regard to the *principle* of this law of the American Congress, your petitioner begs leave humbly to observe to your Royal Highness, that, it not only imposes a new, and hitherto unheard-of duty, and a most weighty responsibility, on the Governments which shall adopt it as a precedent; but that cases may frequently arise, in which, to act upon this principle, would be, in substance, though not in form, to take a part in the war, and, of course, to commit hostility on one or the other of the belligerents; for, if one of the belligerent nations have, within herself, or at her command, an ample supply of arms and of all the munitions of war, and if the other must necessarily depend upon neutrals for such supply, your petitioner humbly conceives that there can be no doubt in the mind of your Royal Highness, that a neutral nation, who should pass an Act, commanding her people to carry arms, or munitions of war, to neither of the belligerents, would, under the outward show of impartiality, be, in fact, guilty of obvious partiality in favour of the well-armed and well-provided belligerent; would, in reality, join that belligerent in hostility against the unarmed and unprovided belligerent, and would thus afford full justification to the latter to consider, and act towards, such neutral nation as an enemy. So that the principle upon which this law of the American Congress professes to proceed, instead of tending to preserve the neutral relations of States, must, as appears to your petitioner, naturally tend to make such States, sooner or later, parties in every contest between other nations, and, instead of repressing and confining, must tend to render boundless the extent, the duration, and the miseries of war.

Feeling, as your petitioner does, profound respect for the American Congress, as the real representatives of a people truly free, as legislators whose seats are not obtained by the base means of bribery and corruption, as men whose votes are not the price of wealth wrung from the hard hands of a toiling and starving nation; and feeling, too, great gratitude towards the whole American people for that protection, which the effects of their wisdom, virtue and valour, now afford him against the power of the Borough-faction, who so daringly oppress and insult his native country; with these feelings in his breast, it is with unaffected grief, that your petitioner, in proceeding most humbly to solicit the attention of your Royal Highness to the provisions of this Act of the

Congress, finds himself compelled to express his confident belief, that your Royal Highness will, in the three first sections of the Act, clearly perceive all that impartiality in words and all that partiality in tendency and in object, so manifest in the above-supposed case; and of which supposed case of pretended neutrality and of real hostility, this Act of Congress is, it appears to your petitioner, nothing short of a full, practical illustration. But, while, in the three first sections, the Act assumes, and closely wears, the garb of impartiality, in the fourth section, which is the most material, this garb becomes loosened, and renders visible the real character of the Act. For, while this section forbids the augmentation of the force of any vessel *belonging* to any *foreign prince, state, colony, district, or people*, if such prince, state, colony, district, or people, be *at war* with any foreign *prince or state*, with whom the United States are *at peace*; while this section forbids this, it does *not* forbid the augmentation of the force of any vessel *belonging* to any prince, state, colony, district or people, if neither of these be at war with a *prince or state*; so that, as old Spain is not at war with a *prince or state*, but with *colonies, districts, or people*, the vessels belonging to old Spain may enter, receive augmentation of force, and sail out again to make war upon the *colonies*, which colonies are neither *princes nor states*; but the colonies of Spanish America, being at war with a *prince or state*, can enjoy none of those advantages which are here exclusively given to their inexorable oppressor.

That a government, founded on the principles of the natural and unalienable rights of man, and arising out of a revolt of colonists against the mother country, because that mother country, by her conduct, gave them good reason to apprehend oppression at some future day; that a government, chosen by a people, who annually listen to orations from the pulpit, in praise of revolution, who, by all kinds of demonstrations of joy, celebrate their successful revolt, and who hold in the highest reverence the persons and memory of all the men, who distinguished themselves in the securing of that success; that a government, which boasts, and justly boasts, of exhibiting to the world a practical proof, that the greatest degree of political, civil and religious liberty, is perfectly consistent with the greatest degree of public order, tranquillity, and obedience to the laws, and also with the greatest degree of national security in time of war; that a government, which holds, in the broadest sense, the right of men to cast off, or transfer, their allegiance; which tenders the right of citizenship, and promises protection as citizens, to all men of all nations, upon the sole condition of a five years' residence and an oath abjuring all allegiance to their native sovereigns and country; that a government thus implanted, thus growing up, thus extending its sheltering branches and dropping its nourishing fruits; that such a government, should have voluntarily passed an Act, punishing with severity, surpassing, in fact, the penalty of immediate death, such of its own citizens as may aid or abet the colonists of Spain, compared to whose real and actual oppression all that the people of the United States could possibly have apprehended from England was as the finger of the dwarf weighed against the loins of the giant; that such a government should have passed such an Act, must, if men suppress their indignation, necessarily excite throughout the world the utmost degree of sorrow and surprise.

But, if your Royal Highness shall be graciously pleased to advert to

what your petitioner has humbly stated in the foregoing part of this his petition, relative to the superiority in point of products, and relative to all the numerous commercial advantages, which would enable the Spanish Colonies, if become free and independent Governments, speedily to rival, to surpass and supplant the United States, and more especially if your Royal Highness shall, in your great condescension, be pleased to suffer your petitioner humbly to draw your attention to the prodigious effect which the liberation of the Spanish Colonies must necessarily have on the United States in a naval and military point of view, your petitioner is fully persuaded, that all ground for surprise at the passing of the above recited Act of Congress will wholly disappear; and that, though it may be difficult, upon moral principles, to find a justification for that extraordinary measure, the Congress will clearly appear to have displayed, upon this occasion, a degree of political foresight and wisdom equal to that of its legislative energy, it being impossible not to perceive, that the real object of this measure is to prevent the independence of Spanish America from giving a great check to the increase of the population, pecuniary resources, commerce, naval power and territorial dominion of the United States.

While this enlightened body of Legislators so clearly saw, that the independence of Spanish America generally would naturally and necessarily divert the current of European emigration from the United States to the more genial climes of the South, whither the taste for novelty, the love of ease, and the desire of gain, are all pressingly invited, and where they are all promised indulgence in the most ample degree; while the Congress clearly saw, that the independence of those countries could not fail to take from the United States the chief part of their export of tobacco, rice, flour and cotton, these staples of their commerce, the Congress also saw, that a proportionate diminution would, from the same cause, arise in the amount of imported articles, which are the objects of exchange for the products exported, and the Custom Duties on which imported articles form the main part of the pecuniary means of the United States wherewith to maintain and increase their navy and to defray the interest of their Public Debt; while the Congress must have seen clearly, and with great anxiety, these inevitable consequences of the independence of Spanish America generally, that body could not have seen but with real alarm the prospect of the establishment of a free and independent government in Mexico, a country bordering on the United States for many hundreds of miles, surpassing the United States in white population, having a capital city with nearly two hundred thousand inhabitants, abounding in mines of the precious metals, abounding in ship-timber and in sea-ports in both oceans, having, from the very nature of things, the absolute command of the mouth of the Mississippi, the great and only outlet to all the most fertile and flourishing of the United States, and, above all, a country, which every interest and every feeling must necessarily bind in fast and permanent alliance with England.

But, while your Royal Highness and His Majesty's faithful people will clearly perceive, that it was, and is, perfectly natural for the Congress to feel anxiety and alarm at the appearance of these impending consequences of the independence of Spanish America; that sentiments of patriotism and considerations of duty might make them dread, and endeavour to prevent, a revolution, which, if successful, would check the growth of the resources and power of their own country; which would

raise up and establish rivals in liberty as well as in power, on the same Continent; which, while it put a stop to the increase of their own marine, would create other American marines, sufficient to cope with theirs in point of force, and naturally in constant rivalry with it; which would make England the absolute arbitress amongst all the transatlantic nations, and which, while it necessarily tended to enrich the manufacturers, merchants and ship-owners of England, as necessarily tended to give to the English flag an undisputed predominance on the seas for ages beyond the reach of human foresight or calculation: while your Royal Highness and His Majesty's faithful people will perceive, that, with these prospects and considerations in their minds, it was perfectly natural and patriotic in the Congress to endeavour to prevent the success of the Revolution in the Spanish Colonies, your petitioner does not hesitate to express his firm belief, that your Royal Highness and the people will also perceive, that the inactivity, the torpor, the cold-hearted indifference, shown, on this occasion, by the Ministers of your Royal Highness, are altogether as unnatural and as unpatriotic, and discover a want of even the most ordinary feeling equally for the interests of the country and for the honour of His Majesty's Crown.

It being always less painful to impute mischief to folly than to wickedness, gladly would your humble petitioner ascribe this inactivity, this torpor, this cold-hearted indifference, so manifestly injurious to his country and his King, and apparently so unaccountable, wholly to that want of talent, that incapacity for the managing of great affairs, that grovelling propensity of mind, for which the Ministers, imposed on your Royal Highness by the Borough-faction, and not the objects of your own Royal choice, are so strongly characterized and are so notorious; but, the same sense of duty towards your Royal Highness and towards his beloved country, which has urged your Petitioner to submit, with feelings of great diffidence and humility, to your Royal Highness the foregoing representation, also urges him to declare it to be his conviction, though, as an Englishman, the declaration covers him with shame, that this inactivity, this torpor, this cold-hearted indifference, this shameful neglect of the interest, the happiness, and the glory of England, are chiefly, if not solely, to be ascribed to a reluctance on the part of that Borough-faction, by whom your Royal Highness's Ministers are removable at pleasure, to suffer the taking of any part in behalf of the Spanish colonies, lest the principles of Holy Alliances and of pretended legitimacy should thereby receive their condemnation and their overthrow, and lest, upon the ruins of those detestable principles, and upon those of the Borough-usurpation, the rights and liberties of the people of England, and the just powers and prerogatives of their lawful Sovereign, should be built on sure and lasting foundations; for, while your petitioner is too well aware of the magnanimity which prevails in the breast of your Royal Highness, and not less in that of the nation, to suppose either capable of being, upon this occasion, actuated by feelings of revenge for the conduct of the family of Bourbon, during the North American revolution, and, while he has too great a dread of the just displeasure of your Royal Highness to suffer him, for one moment, to entertain the thought of daring to suggest to your Royal Highness to act upon that perfidious example of that most perfidious family; he cannot refrain from humbly expressing his hope, that your Royal Highness, who well recollects that memorable instance of envy, insolence, and perfidy, will

see, therein, no reason that England, by standing with her arms folded, should now make a manifest sacrifice of her present and permanent interest and of her immortal glory, lest, in the frank and honourable pursuit of these, she should sterilize the vineyards of France and dry up the sources of the Treasury of Spain.

Therefore, your petitioner, well assured that your Royal Highness can have no feeling, not in perfect harmony with the interest and honour of the nation, and also well assured of your Royal Highness's disposition to listen with indulgence to the representations and prayers of even the most obscure of His Majesty's faithful people, ventures, upon the grounds of that assurance, to pray, that your Royal Highness will be graciously pleased to espouse, in the manner which to your Royal wisdom shall seem meet, the cause of the Colonies and Countries which have been the subject of this his most humble petition.

And your Petitioner,

As in humble duty bound,

Will ever pray.

WM. COBBETT.

PETITION OF WILLIAM COBBETT.*

(*Political Register, February, 1818.*)

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of WILLIAM COBBETT, of Botley, in the county of Hants, now residing at North Hampstead, in the State of New York, this 20th day of November, 1817,

HUMBLY SHOWETH,—

That your petitioner, always tremblingly alive to those feelings of respect, reverence and awe, which the character and conduct of your honourable House are so well calculated to excite and perpetuate in the breasts of all mankind, could not, though thereunto urged by a sense of imperious duty, have been induced thus to venture to beseech even one moment's attention from your honourable House, had he not been sustained by reflecting on the well-known indulgent and benign deportment of your honourable House towards all his Majesty's subjects, and more especially towards those who approach you with their petitions.

Your petitioner, though living in safety and happiness; though in no danger of arbitrary arrests; though in no danger of changing his house for a dungeon and his own clothes for a criminal's garb; though surrounded by his family who can lay their heads on their pillows unhaunted

* This petition was never presented to the House of Commons, Lord Folkestone having declined to present it on account of its length.—Ed.

by the apprehension of seeing him no more ; though there is no fiscal extortioner to wrest from him his money, and no spy to sell his blood : though thus happily situated, under the protection of a Government, founded on the common law of England, and carried on by men, amongst whom bribery, corruption, vote-selling and seat-selling, are not only not as notorious as the sun at noon-day, but are wholly unknown and almost unintelligible in point of meaning ; though, as the natural consequence of this just and wise Government, your humble petitioner sees around him no starvation, no beggary, and scarcely hears he of any of those acts which the law regards as crimes ; though his eyes are never shocked by those erections, exhibitions and circumstances, inseparable from the ignominious exit of malefactors, and though his ears are never annoyed and his heart wounded by the cries of the fatherless children and the widows of men, who have sought shelter from the shame of pecuniary ruin in death inflicted by their own hands ; though, in short, your petitioner is in the midst of a state of things, where all is order, content, peace and goodwill, yet the calamities of his native country are ever present to his mind, and that true and faithful allegiance which he bears to his lawful king, together with the unalterable attachment which he bears to his country, impel him to submit to your honourable House his opinions as to the causes of those calamities and his prayer as to the remedy to be adopted, all which, however, he does with sentiments of deference the most complete and of humility the most profound.

Powerful as are the motives by which your petitioner is actuated, the contemplation of the dignified character and of the renowned wisdom of your honourable House produces in his mind so complete a conviction of his utter insignificance, that it would be altogether impossible for him to support himself under the thought of becoming an object of the displeasure or contempt of your honourable House ; a thought, which is, happily for him, wholly removed from his mind by that great indulgence, that kind condescension, that extreme candour, that charitableness of interpretation, that scorn to listen to abuse of persons who have no power to answer, that magnanimous disdain of taking advantage of involuntary error, that fairness in representing, that abhorrence of foul play, and that more-than-maternal tenderness for a petitioning people, which have, as the nation and the world so well know, invariably marked the proceedings of your honourable House.

Emboldened by reflecting on these facts, not less important to him than they are notorious throughout the world, your petitioner, though still filled with a sense of his insufficiency for the performance of so arduous a duty, will, with all humility, proceed to submit to your honourable House his opinions as to the principal causes of the calamities, under which his native country is now suffering, calamities which have already swept away whole classes of the community, and which, if not speedily arrested in their course, appear to your petitioner likely to produce a total dissolution of society.

In pursuance of this object your petitioner humbly begs to be permitted to state to your honourable House, that he has seen, in documents of high authority, but to which documents, from his profound respect for the sacred privileges of Parliament, he refrains from directly referring ; in these documents your humble petitioner has seen, that the calamities of the nation have, in great part, at least, been traced back to the *Poor-laws*, operating, as here laid down, so as to create a *redundant popula-*

tion, a population exceeding a proportionate exertion of labour and production of food.

Your petitioner most humbly beseeches your honourable House to permit him to express his surprise, that this doctrine should have ventured to show its face, while the Statute-book of your honourable House proves, that the Poor-laws have existed nearly three hundred years, and while the facts are undeniable, that, during those three hundred years, the nation has, for long spaces of time, enjoyed the highest degree of prosperity, and that, until now, a redundant population has never been regarded as amongst the effects of that now-reprobated code; and, if your petitioner be indulged by your honourable House in a permission to express his surprise as to this novelty, he fears not that your honourable House will refuse to permit him to express his astonishment, and, if he may presume, in your presence, to exercise such a feeling, even his indignation, at the doctrine of an augmented and augmenting population being an *evil*, when it is well known, that the records of your honourable House contain volumes upon volumes of details, collected and arranged at great expense, to establish the fact of a greatly augmented and augmenting population, as an incontestible proof of greatly augmented and augmenting national prosperity, wealth and power.

With not less surprise, and with scarcely less indignation, can your petitioner hear the calamities of the country ascribed to a surplus of mouths exceeding the quantity of the produce of the exertion of labour, when not only is your petitioner sure that your honourable House is well aware, that the food produced by the labour of one labourer is, on an average, more than sufficient to sustain a hundred persons, but when the Statute-book and other records of your honourable House, of not more than twenty months' standing, prove to the world, that your honourable House imputed all the distresses of the country to a superabundant quantity, not of mouths, but of food; and that, upon this very ground, clearly and formally expressed in several solemn Reports, your honourable House proceeded to pass, and actually did pass, and now keep in force, a law, the real as well as the avowed object of which was to raise the price, by diminishing the quantity, of human food.

Impotent as is your petitioner, feeble as is his voice, insignificant as he knows his means to be, he, nevertheless, humbly begs to be allowed to express his hope, that your honourable House will not disdain and treat with scorn the jealousy which he feels for the consistency, nay, for the common sense, of your honourable House, at which qualities in your honourable House these new doctrines appear to your humble Petitioner to be aiming a mortal blow; for, though your Petitioner is too well aware that the wisdom of your honourable House is invulnerable to all sorts of assault, yet the pride with which, as an Englishman, he must necessarily contemplate the spotless character of your honourable House, and the zeal which he feels for your renown, urge him to resent, with all the hostile feelings of his heart, the affront offered to your honourable House, in the formal and authoritative promulgation of doctrines directly at war with the records and acts of your honourable House.

Were it the misfortune of your humble petitioner to be addressing himself to an assembly ignorant of such subjects from the nature of its component parts, or rendered such by a disregard of every thing not connected with the gratification of a desire to amass private wealth by base and corrupt means; were your humble petitioner addressing himself to

an assembly of this low and disgraceful description, he should think it necessary to endeavour to prove the absolute impossibility of the Poor-laws and of a surplus of mouths having produced the calamities under contemplation ; but, having the good fortune to be addressing himself to your honourable House, not less famed for your profound knowledge of all the various branches of political science than for your extreme disinterestedness and matchless purity, he dares not to seem to suppose such proof to be necessary, more especially as all the propositions of the innovators alluded to stand decidedly negatived in the Reports, the Resolutions, and in the venerated Acts, of your honourable House ; and, therefore, your petitioner will, without longer trespassing on the great indulgence of your honourable House, proceed, though with inexpressible deference and humility, to submit to your honourable House a brief exposition of what he deems to have been, and to be, the real immediate causes of the nation's calamities, of which calamities your humble petitioner and his family bear their full proportionate burthen.

Your petitioner is confident, that your honourable House will not withhold your candid and ready acquiescence from the following undeniable propositions ; to wit : that the Poor-laws continued in operation, from their first enactment, two hundred and seventy years, without producing, and without having imputed to them, any national calamity ;—that, in all ages, there have been alternately times of scarcity and times of plenty, times of high price and times of low price, and that never, until now, a *want of employment* accompanied adverse seasons any more than favourable seasons ;—that it is manifest, that the want of employment, which is the great symptom of the present national disease, and which is altogether peculiar to the present times, has not arisen from bad seasons, or high prices of food, it being notorious that it began to be severely experienced in 1814, and has continued to increase, under all circumstances of good seasons as well as of bad seasons, and of low prices as well as of high prices ;—that in 1815, the advocates for the Corn Bill all proceeded upon the principle, taken by them for granted, that the *low price* of farm produce was the cause of the want of employment and of the national distress ;—that, the Board of Agriculture, and that a Committee of your honourable House, made reports containing an assertion of this principle ;—that the numerous reports made to the Board of Agriculture to prove, that want of employment, a great increase of pauperism, and wide ruin amongst farmers and traders, had taken place along with a great reduction in the price of food ;—that it was then held, by all those who sought the enactment of a Corn Bill, that high prices were necessary in order to remove the *prevalent want of employment*, and in order to diminish pauperism and to prevent the total ruin of landlords, farmers, and traders ;—and that, it was upon the ground of these principles and of the evidence produced in support of their truth, that your honourable House passed the Corn Bill, the real as well as the declared object of which was to raise and keep up the price of the produce of the land.

To these propositions, which are altogether undeniable, your petitioner begs leave to add some others, to the truth of which he also believes your honourable House will not hastily refuse your assent ; to wit : that, though it be possible, that the case may in nature occur, that national calamity may arise from a superabundance of population, such calamity can never arise from this cause while the already-enclosed lands of the

country are imperfectly cultivated;—that the already-enclosed lands of the kingdom admit of a great quantity of additional labour being profitably employed upon them;—that this proposition has been maintained in several Reports sanctioned by your honourable House;—and that, therefore, it is an obvious conclusion, that it is not the want of materials whereon to employ labour, but the want of means to pay for that labour, from which the now-deeply-felt want of employment has arisen.

That this want of employment, together with all the dreadful calamities, of which it is only one characteristic, should have arisen from a sudden transition from war to peace, is in such direct hostility to the experience of the world as well as to the dictates of reason, that your petitioner is sure that the wisdom of your honourable House will treat with scorn the advancing of a doctrine so preposterous;—that the transitions from war to peace, being changes from one state to another, which states are directly opposite in their natures and can by no possibility co-exist in any degree, must *always be sudden*;—that changes of this sort have taken place in all the civilized nations in the world a great number of times, and that never, until now, has it happened, that such a change has produced great and general national calamity;—that a transition from war to peace has, in all former cases, if accompanied by success or by no loss of dominion, in war, invariably been attended by a return, or an increase, of national prosperity and happiness;—that, from the nature of things this must be, seeing that peace naturally restores to productive labour the enjoyment of a large part of that which war requires to be given to unproductive labour, seeing that peace naturally renders certain many things which war keeps in a state of uncertainty, and seeing that a great mass of individual bodily and mental suffering is removed by a change from war to peace, on all which and numerous other grounds, all mankind speak of the *calamities of war* and the *blessings of peace* as they speak of the *torments of hell* and the *enjoyments of heaven*.

That, besides what has, in the above propositions, been, by your petitioner most humbly submitted to the wisdom of your honourable House, he begs permission to add, that even the experience of the present case affords ample ground for asserting, that a transition from war to peace has not been the cause of the nation's distresses and calamities, in proof of which your petitioner has only to remind your honourable House, that the want of employment and all the other symptoms of national pressure began to assume their present character in the autumn of the year 1813, and that the progress of the calamity through war and through peace, through high prices and through low prices, through plenty and through scarcity of food, has been undeviating from that time to this, though, at particular periods, its pace has been rendered quicker or slower by the adventitious circumstances of seasons or of foreign commerce.

In the face of these undeniable propositions, these notorious facts; in the face of the experience of all civilized nations in all ages; in the face of reason and of nature: in the face of these, no one will, your petitioner would fain hope, have the hardihood to insult your honourable House by persevering in imputing the calamities of the nation to causes so perfectly imaginary, and, if they were real, so entirely inadequate to the producing of such tremendous effects.

That no effect can proceed from an inadequate cause is a proposition

not necessary to be stated to your honourable House, and it is not less obvious, that the cause of great and general national calamity, bordering on an extermination of the people, must be not only powerful in its nature but all-searching in the objects of its operation and influence: in short, your petitioner scruples not to express his conviction, that when your honourable House shall deign to turn your great contemplative powers to the *amount of the taxes* and the operation of the *paper-money system*, you will seek no farther for a *cause* of the calamities of the country, and that the *remedy* will not long remain hidden from your sight.

It is so well known, it must be so obvious to common sense, that the welfare of every community must depend on productive labour receiving just remuneration; that labour is property, and that not to pay for it when received, or to take from it its produce, is to destroy, or set at nought, the vital principles of property; that to take from those who labour and give to those who do not labour, is to put a band round the arms and prevent the blood from flowing into the hands, while the hands, thus benumbed, are called upon to produce food for the body; that in whatever degree a man *pays* without receiving *to his own use the worth in return*, he is *the poorer*; that what a man pays in taxes has no channel whereby to return to him, other than the channels by which he may expect the return of money lost by him at the gaming-table or on the highway: these things are so well known, they are truths so obvious, that your petitioner begs your honourable House to be assured, that he states them merely to show his great anxiety to keep clear of all conclusions, absurd in themselves, or in anywise offensive to your honourable House, without whose kind indulgence he is but too conscious that he is less than nothing.

Deeply penetrated with this sense of his own weakness, but feeling strong in his reliance on the cherishing countenance of your honourable House, your humble petitioner proceeds to express his conviction, that, as, in whatever degree a man pays without receiving to his own use the worth in return he must in that degree be poor, it inevitably follows, that in whatever degree the great mass of the people pay without receiving to their use the worth in return, they must also be the poorer; and he begs leave to think, that from these premises it again inevitably follows, that taxes, in proportion to their amount, produce straightened means in some of the classes of society, poverty in other classes, actual want of a sufficiency of food and raiment in a third, and extreme misery bordering on starvation and accompanied with numerous crimes, and occasional madness, and death, in the lowest and most numerous class of all; whence it has come to pass in our unhappy country, that Taxes, Public Debts, Standing Armies, Military Staffs and Colleges, Lists of Place-men and Place-women and Pensioners, Police Establishments, Penal Laws, Poor-houses, Jails, and new modes and means of Hanging and Transporting, have all gone on increasing together.

The thought of appearing to prefer, in any respect, any country in the world before his own country, would be too painful for your petitioner to endure, and he trusts that your honourable House, in your well-known justice, will not suppose him to entertain such a thought, merely because he states to your honourable House, that, in the country which now affords him protection against dungeons and dealers in human blood, there are few taxes, and those taxes so insignificant as for their very ex-

istence to be unknown to the far greater part of the people; and, that the consequences are, that instances of misery and of crimes are so rare as to be a subject of wonder; that ease, happiness and content every where abound: and that an increase of population is regarded as a blessing and not as a curse.

Manifest, however, as your petitioner humbly presumes your honourable House will perceive it to be, that taxes, in proportion to their amount must necessarily occasion poverty, and all the evils attendant on poverty, and that the amount of the taxes in the kingdom is calculated to produce such effects in an unprecedented degree, yet he ventures, under the indulgence of your honourable House, to express his conviction, that this cause of evil has received great addition and most mischievous force from the co-operation of a *paper-money*, forced into circulation and acceptance by divers artful and unjust contrivances, and *changeable in its value* at the pleasure of those by whom it has been made, issued and managed.

Your petitioner fears not to state, that, if your honourable House will be pleased to refer to the history of the calamities and convulsions, which have taken place in civilized states, during the last hundred and twenty years, you will find, that one of the most powerful of the causes has been a false, or fictitious, money, under the denomination of bills, notes, assignats, and others, and always composed of paper, bearing on it a promise to pay such or such sums to the bearer or possessor of such paper. In France, many years ago, a scheme of this description spread ruin far and wide, and, of late years, it has actually produced, by its co-operation with heavy and vexatious taxes, two distinct and sanguinary revolutions. In some of those colonies of North America, which are now the United States, a colonial paper-money, introduced more than sixty years ago, spread ruin and beggary amongst a people, who appeared to be so happily situated as to have no want ungratified. In the States of Austria, in Denmark, in Sweden, and in every other country, where such a system of fiction has prevailed, ruin and misery have always, sooner or later, been its fruits, of which fruits the United States themselves have not, as your petitioner will hereafter beg leave to be permitted to show, wholly escaped the bitter taste.

The chief reason of this universally evil effect of such fictions is not less evident than the effect itself is notorious. Money being the universal standard, by comparison with which the value of all things bought and sold is ascertained; or, being the sign, which represents the value of all things which men buy, sell, or with regard to which they enter into contracts of loan, or otherwise, in a pecuniary way; such being the character of, or the office performed by, money, and money being inseparable from the daily concerns of every man from the prince to the ploughman, it is obvious, that when money, when this standard of value, is *changeable*, whether at pleasure or from accident, and especially if the changes be sudden as to time and great in degree, a real violation of contracts, a transfer of property unjustly from one to another, and ruin, misery and confusion must ensue.

It is out of those just notions of the sacredness of money, as a standard of value and as the vital principle of contracts, that the law has arisen which considers to be *treason* the counterfeiting of the coin of the realm, such act of counterfeiting being to strike at the very root of society itself; and, as your petitioner humbly presumes to believe,

counterfeiting is neither more nor less than a *changing of the value of money*, an operation, which, when it takes place partially and in a small degree, produces injuries in a similar extent; but, when such changing of the standard of value is *general, sudden*, and, with regard to the community, as *secretly performed* as the works of the traitorous coiner, then it becomes a scourge more mortal than the pestilence that walketh by day and the arrow that flieth by night.

If your humble petitioner were addressing himself to a body less enlightened than your honourable House; if he had the misfortune to have to offer his opinions and prayers to men so profoundly ignorant of all the principles of political economy as to hope to cure the national calamities by voluntary contributions, or by setting labourers to dig holes one day and to fill them up the next; if he had the mortification to be addressing his prayers to men of this shallow and vulgar-minded description, he might think it necessary to illustrate his representations by supposing the number of cubic inches of the Winchester bushel, or the number of ounces of the pound weight, or the number of longitudinal inches of the foot measure, to be, all of a sudden, changed in a great degree, and without any previous notice to the public; and he is certain that even the most stupid assembly that ever disgraced the forms of legislation would perceive, that such changes would cause a real violation of innumerable contracts, and that distress and ruin to innumerable persons must inevitably follow; but, having the unspeakable felicity to be addressing himself to your honourable House, whose fame for profundity is surpassed only by your fame for candour and purity, your petitioner has no need to resort to illustrations of any kind, and, therefore, hastening on by the fear of abusing the well-known indulgence of your honourable House, he proceeds to trace to your honourable House the progress of this unrelenting scourge, called Paper-money.

In the early stages of its existence this mortal enemy of human happiness and freedom, was, like the first fibres of the cancer, felt only in occasional twitches; but, as it advanced in bulk, its effects became more and more regularly and severely felt, till, at last, it has produced all the deadly effects now before our eyes. For a long series of years its visible effects were a regular increase of gambling, of fraud, and of all the vices engendered by a dependence on trick rather than on industry and talent; and its visible effects were a gradual changing of the real property of the country from the hands of the ancient owners into the hands of the dealers in paper-money, a gradual undermining of that natural magistracy which is ever the best bond of society, a consequent gradual hardening of the penal laws, and, finally, a gradually produced dislocation of all the joints and ligaments which held together without grudging and without violence all the orders of that admirable community that formed the people of England. As the powers of paper-money increased, real property naturally grew into larger parcels, small farms became gradually less numerous, till, at last, they became wholly extinguished, while their industrious and virtuous cultivators sunk down into a state of labourers, and while the labourers, seeing no hope of ever acquiring any share of the profits of their labour, became less and less desirous of abstaining from demands on the parish-rates.

Such, as your honourable House must have perceived, were amongst the effects of this baleful system of paper-money previous to the year 1797, when it assumed a bolder and more desperate character; for, at that

period, the makers and issuers of this fictitious representative of value, who had amassed to themselves, in exchange for their paper, large portions of the real wealth of the nation, under promises to exchange the paper into gold at the pleasure of the holder, did, all of a sudden, and by an act unparalleled in its extent as well as in its wickedness, fulfil, to the very letter, the predictions of that Great Political Writer, who had foretold, only a year before, that such would be their conduct. Thenceforward these makers and issuers poured forth their fictitious money so as to enhance prices to an astonishing degree, and, when they had given their paper in exchange for men's real property, for their estates in fee, or, more generally, in exchange for mortgages or other securities, they suddenly, and without any previous notice, so diminished the quantity of their paper in circulation as to lower prices one-half in nominal amount, to lower the nominal value of real property, of stock in trade, and of labour; and, they thus, by a changing of the standard of value at their own arbitrary will, acquired a legal demand upon all borrowers to double the real amount of the sums lent.

When your honourable House reflects, that it is in the class of *borrowers* that you see all the greatest motives to exertion, all the most active and most enterprising part of the persons engaged in agriculture, trade, manufactures, and commerce; when your honourable House reflects on this circumstance, and sees clearly, as your petitioner humbly presumes you will, the mortal blow that this numerous and active part of the community must have received from this arbitrary change in the standard of value, he is quite sure that your honourable House will need seek no farther for the cause of a want of employment and great national misery; and yet, in this sweeping violation of all private contracts, in this ruinous oppression of private borrowers, in this stab into the heart of individual industry, enterprise and hope, your petitioner is convinced that your honourable House will permit him to say, that there is seen a part only of the cruel effects of this arbitrary changing of the standard of value; for, it must be manifest to your honourable House, that, if the private borrower must inevitably be ruined by this fraudulent operation, the bare possibility of which never could have entered his mind at the time of receiving the loan, the whole nation, except the lenders to the public, and except those persons who derived emolument from the taxes, must also be ruined by the same operation, by which, in fact, the sums required in taxes, great as those sums were, were doubled in real amount.

Here, then, and, as your petitioner presumes humbly to express his belief, here only, is the real immediate cause of the present frightful calamities of the nation; for, when your honourable House reflects on the numerousness of the class of borrowers, on the great portion of the productive labour of the country which this class sets and keeps in motion; when you reflect on the vast proportion of the product of labour which the taxes take away from those who labour and convey to those who do not labour; when you reflect that the total ruin of many borrowers, the straitened means of others, and the discouragement of all, must necessarily cause the money raised in taxes and paid to the lenders to be retained in a state of comparative inactivity, and, in numerous instances, transferred in loans public and private, and in other investments to foreign countries; when your honourable House reflects on these circumstances, your petitioner is sure that your honourable

House will here find the real immediate cause of the nation's calamities, and that all the new notions of the injurious effect of the Poor-laws, of a surplus-population, and of a sudden transition from war to peace, will at once vanish, and, "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wrack behind."

Could it be possible, however, for a doubt still to remain in the mind of your honourable House, the experience of the United States of America must, as your petitioner confidently believes, wholly remove that doubt; for, though the whole of the principal of the public debt in this country does not exceed in amount the annual interest of the debt with which our country is unhappily burthened; though the taxes here be so light as for their very existence to be absolutely unknown to the great mass of the community; yet, *from a sudden diminution of the quantity of paper-money* which had been in circulation previously to 1815, ruin and misery were spread far and wide over all the commercial part of the community, a consequent stagnation of trade ensued, and, for the first time in the history of the country, a want of employment and pauperism and soup-shops began to rear their hideous heads, and to produce what in their very nature they must produce, idleness, mendicity, and crimes. A wise and economical system of government, an absence of standing armies, a reliance on the hearty good-will of the people for the defence and due execution of the laws, a return in peace to all the habits and diminished expenses of peace, will, it is hoped, wholly eradicate the evils produced by the paper-money, and which evils had been confined to the commercial towns and their immediate environs; but, if a country, situated as to pecuniary matters, and governed, as the United States are, could feel sensibly a blow from a sudden changing of the standard of value; if a country, in which there is scarcely any such thing as a lease of lands, where mortgages are comparatively unknown, and where borrowing for purposes of agriculture and trade in general is carried to so trifling an extent; if, in such a country, the changing of the standard of value could be felt as a blow at its prosperity, and could produce, even in the smallest degree, *a want of employment*, while the richest of land is calling for cultivators, your honourable House will not, your petitioner is certain, entertain any doubt that a cause, similar in its nature but a thousand-fold greater in degree, has, as it necessarily must have, produced proportionate calamities in England.

Therefore, as your humble petitioner has the unutterable happiness to be confident that he shall be honoured with the concurrence of your honourable House as to the great immediate *cause* of the nation's manifold sufferings, so is he not less confident, that, in seeking for a *remedy*, your honourable House will reject, as the vision of weak-minded dreamers, any project for altering the Poor-laws, and that you will treat with ineffable contempt and scorn all the schemes for collecting the savings of a starving people, for preventing the labouring classes from marrying, and for causing holes to be dug one day and filled up the next; but, that, following the dictates of your own instinctive energy and wisdom, you will put an end to the evil by removing the cause; and that, as that cause manifestly is the taxes which drain away from productive labour so large a portion of its fruits to be, as above stated, conveyed, by the hands of the lenders of paper-money, into unproductive or foreign depositories, you will largely reduce the proportion of the money so raised and so conveyed away.

Therefore, your petitioner, full of confidence in the well-known justice of your honourable House, and fearing that he may already have trespassed beyond the bounds even of that great patience and indulgence which are traits so prominent in the now-well-established character of your honourable House, proceeds with all humility, distinctly to pray, that your honourable House will be pleased, by measures, which, to your great wisdom may seem meet, to cause the interest of the Public Debt to be reduced; to cause all salaries, pensions and pay of every description proceeding from the public money to be reduced; to cause a revision of contracts between lenders and borrowers and letters and renters: so that the nation at large and that individuals in their several particular cases, may receive from the hands of your honourable House protection from that injustice, which has been done them by an arbitrary change in the standard of value, and which change has produced such dreadful and so notorious calamities.

To this his humble and earnest prayer your petitioner begs leave only to add a representation, that, long foreseeing the calamities, which have now fallen upon his country with such astounding force, your petitioner, has, during eleven years, omitted no means within his humble sphere and capacity to produce the adoption of measures such as those now humbly submitted to the transcendant wisdom of your honourable House; and that, upon several occasions, he has earnestly besought Members of your honourable House to aid him, by proposing resolutions or otherwise, in the discharge of this important public duty; but, that, whether from indolence, indecision, or some other cause to your petitioner unknown, he has never been able to obtain any thing beyond repeatedly broken promises of such aid; and, therefore it is that your petitioner, in whose breast no time, no distance, no calamity, no injuries, can ever extinguish or damp the ardent love which he has always borne his native country, has now ventured, though with great deference and humility, to address directly to your honourable House the exposition and prayer contained in this his most humble petition.

And your petitioner,
As in all duty and humility bound,
Will ever pray.
WM. COBBETT.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE GEORGE TIERNEY,

ON HIS OPPOSITION TO THE BANK-PROTECTING ACT.

(*Political Register, September, 1818*)

North Hampstead, Long Island, July 1st, 1818.

SIR,

I address you upon the subject of the debate on the thing called the *Bank-Restriction Act*, passed in May last, and in which debate you took

a part. I make use of your name upon this occasion for two reasons : *first*, that the letter, which I am writing, may, without much of circumlocution, have an appellation to distinguish it from other of my letters on the same subject ; and, *second*, that I may directly, and, as it were foot-to-foot, place myself, as to some of your opinions, in opposition to you, whom I regard as being by far the most able man now in what is called the House of Commons. The question upon which we are at issue, involves considerations of most tremendous importance ; and the decision of it must take place at no very distant day. Therefore, though my opinions respecting it stand already, over and over again, recorded in terms the most positive as to meaning and the most distinct as to expression, I am anxious, from a sense of duty towards my country, as well as from a love of honest fame, to put them once more into print. If events should prove that I am in error, as to this weighty matter, justice towards those whom I may have misled, demands that I put into their hands the power of detection ; and if events should prove that I am correct, justice towards myself demands that I put beyond all dispute, my claim to that public confidence, which may serve as some compensation for all the persecution which I have suffered, chiefly for having promulgated these very opinions, which I am now about to re-assert.

During the far greater part of my political life, I have entertained, and have, with very little intermission, been endeavouring to produce in the minds of others, a hatred and a horror of the funding and paper-money system. In referring to its origin, I found it bottomed in a settled design to sap the foundations of the Constitution of England ; and, in tracing its progress, I found this detestable design had, by the intended means, and in the intended manner, been but too fully accomplished. But, it is not of the silent, the sapping, the corrupting effects of this bishop-begotten and hell-born system that I am now about to speak : nor is it of the misery, the starvation, the stripes, and the deadly wounds, which, with the aid of a standing army, it is, at this time, inflicting on the nation. It is of the effects which it has yet in reserve ; and with regard to which effects, I perceive, that you hold opinions opposite to mine.

I will not waste my time, as you thought proper to waste yours, in an exposure of the flimsy, the shuffling, the false, the ridiculous pretexs, which the Chancellor of the Exchequer put forward as the grounds of his proposition for continuing the Protecting Act in force for another year. It can never be worth the ink that one writes with to be listened to by those, who could, for one single moment, listen to those pretexs as something worthy of attention. Your observations on the *future effects* of the system and your opinions as to the *practicability* and the *means* of preventing those effects : these constitute the only parts of the debate that merit the notice of any rational being.

It has always been an opinion, openly avowed by me, that the funding-system would be *marked in its last stage by a great national change* ; and, more recently, since it has been upheld as co-partner of the Borough-system, and since such and so many acts of tyranny have been committed in the upholding of these systems, I have been of opinion, as I yet am, that the end of the funding will be the end of its atrocious associate ; that they will die in each other's arms amidst the shouting of the people, and this we may, I take it, call a *great convulsion*.

You are, I see, Sir, also of opinion, that the thing will end in a great *convulsion*. "He therefore exhorted the House to show its *earnestness* upon this occasion. If it did not do so, he feared that the consequences would be *dreadful*; that a terrible *convulsion* would take place. This was, probably, the last struggle to guard against that *melancholy event*, and let each man, who felt for the country, have the satisfaction of thinking, that whatever be the result, he had done *his duty*."—These are the words of the close of your reply. Sufficiently impressive; sufficiently awful the warning. But of *what use* was the warning? What was it intended to produce? Much able statement in your speech; a great deal of well-pointed reasoning. But, for *what*? To what *end*?

To put the matter into plain propositions, it stood thus: that the House ought to be in *earnest*; that, if they were not, the paper-money would produce dreadful consequences, and a great convulsion; and that, in order to show their *earnestness*, they ought to appoint a Committee to *inquire*, before they passed the Bill.

Thus far I see my way clearly. It is plain, and I cannot err. A great mischief, a dreadful consequence, a convulsion, may, in some cases, be prevented, by stopping to *inquire* before we proceed to action. But, was this one of these cases? Could any inquiry have tended to prevent that blowing-up, of which you expressed your dread? Was it *possible*; I will not say *probable*; was it *possible*; was it within the compass of human skill or force, to make provision against that "*melancholy event*," which you anticipated with so much apparent sincerity and sorrow? You seem to have been of opinion, that *it was*; I am of opinion that *it was not*.

In order to enter fairly upon the discussion of this question, to wit, whether it was, or was not, *possible* to obtain, by inquiry, any means of preventing a final blowing-up of the paper-system, I must look back at what you say, in your own speech, as to the topics and objects of inquiry. These I find stated in the following words:—

"There remained little for him to say, except on the subject of the *mischiefs* which some persons apprehend from the resumption of cash payments by the Bank of England. To a certain extent he was willing to admit, that these apprehensions might, perhaps, be well founded. He did not believe, however, that any *violent shock* could occur. He by no means supposed that the Bank would try to secure the continuance of the restriction, by making the resumption of cash payments as difficult and as dangerous as possible; and he was convinced, that if the Bank sincerely applied themselves gradually and gently to prepare for that resumption, although, undoubtedly a great diminution must take place in the existing circulation, yet, that it would not be productive of any of those *fatal consequences* which it was the fashion to apprehend from it. If there were no other grounds for going into an inquiry, the expediency of trying if a Committee of that House could not chalk out some course by which the Bank of England might resume their payments in cash without endangering the tranquillity and welfare of the community, would be one amply sufficient. (Hear, hear, hear.) Indeed, were we asked how such a Committee as that for the appointment of which he was about to move, could best employ themselves, he would say, in endeavouring to devise the means by which the cash payments by the Bank might be gradually brought about, and a limit put to the issue of paper, so as to facilitate those objects without risking any serious shock. This, he believed, might be done; but he also believed that it could be done only by a Committee composed of intelligent individuals, who would calmly and dispassionately enter into the investigation of the subject, and collect all possible information upon it from those who were the most competent to the task of affording such information."

This, then, was to be the object of inquiry : the Committee were to "endeavour to devise the means, by which the cash-payments by the Bank might be gradually brought about, and a limit put to the issue of paper, so as to facilitate those objects without risking any serious shock." Your *opinions* as to the probability of the Committee *effecting* this object are in the affirmative. You admit, that, to a certain extent, there may be *mischiefs* attending the resuming of cash payments ; but, you do not believe that any *violent shock* would occur. You believe, that, if the Bank were to apply themselves sincerely to prepare *gradually* and *gently* for the resumption, although a great diminution in the circulation would take place, yet that no *fatal consequences* would ensue.

This was your *opinion*, Sir ; and, no wonder that it was *cheered* by the Boroughmen, by whom you were surrounded. This opinion came, too, so pat just after my dismal predictions and doctrines, contained in that petition, which Lord FOLKESTONE (for what reasons his Lordship best knows) had refused to present, but which had not, for that refusal, been the less read. This opinion had an effect upon the Boroughmen like that of ether or laudanum upon a losing gamester ; or, like that of Loader's dram upon Old Mother Cole. And so you "went out of the House amidst the loudest cheers !" "Thank you kindly, Mr. Loader ! Bless you, dear Mr. Loader !"

I must be insincere myself, or I must treat you with sincerity ; and yet if I do, I am afraid I must offend you ; for, it is quite impossible for me to consider you as having been sincere upon this occasion without considering you as extremely shallow with regard to a matter, which you ought to have well understood, before you attempted to speak upon it in a public assembly ; and particularly before you took upon you to be a leader in the discussion. As being the least offensive of the two, however, I will suppose you to have been sincere ; and, upon that supposition, will proceed to give my reasons in opposition to this your consoling and comforting opinion ; which opinion is, that means can be devised for enabling the Bank to pay in coin *without* producing any serious *mischiefs*, any *fatal consequences*, any *violent shock*.

As to *mischiefs* or *fatal consequences*, I may think so too. But, then, what you may think *mischiefs* and *fatal consequences*, I may regard as *most happy events*. To get rid of all misunderstanding here, I shall, as I fairly may, suppose you to mean, that the payment may take place *without a blowing-up of the paper, and the seat-selling systems*, and that paper-money and the debt and the dividends and army, and all can go on as they now go on.

If, Sir, as a quieter to those persons, who, you say, *apprehend mischiefs* from the resumption of cash payments ; and, if, in answer to the *fashionable* opinions about *fatal consequences* to be apprehended from the same cause ; if you, as might have been expected, had, in answer to these apprehensions, offered some *reasons*, instead of a naked opinion in the negative, you would have saved me a great deal of trouble. However your opinion being wholly unsupported by any reasons does not prevent me from stating reasons in support of my opinion ; and, if my reasons be good, your opinion must be erroneous.

Doubtless a Committee of the House of Commons, as it is called, would consist of some surprisingly ingenious gentlemen ; but, though they would have been able to draw up, in a short time, a *green-bag*

report, there are certain things which they could not have done unless the House could have communicated to them a *real*, instead of an hyperbolic *omnipotence*. And, amongst the things which a Committee could not have done, one would have been, the preventing of the holders of notes from going to get cash for them, as soon as the Bank should begin to pay : yet, unless they could have done this, it is pretty clear to me, that the payment would not have gone on for two days.

That the Bank cannot venture to pay *now* is certain. That fact must be taken as *admitted* ; because, if it could venture to pay now, the Bill would not have been passed ; no, nor asked for. And, why cannot it pay now ? For the same reason that many other people cannot pay their bills ; namely, because it has not money enough to pay with.

There are two ways of enabling the Bank to pay : one by *putting gold into its coffers*, and the other, by *reducing the quantity of paper now afloat*. As to the first, *how* is the Bank to get more gold into its coffers than it now has in those coffers, which, I believe, contain very little ? I ask *how*, Sir ? What scheme could your Committee have devised to effect this purpose ? Suppose I have a parcel of notes out payable on demand. I wish to take them up ; I wish to be able to pay them. I have not money enough to take them up ; what am I to do ? Borrow some money. But, I must give *more notes* for the money I borrow, or must sell my goods, or pawn them. The Bank has nothing to sell or to pawn ; and, therefore, it must *buy gold with new issues of notes*. Now, Sir, if a man who had a hundred pounds out in notes, were to buy a hundred pounds in gold with another hundred pounds in notes, and then pay off the first hundred with the gold, and if all his notes were payable on demand to bearer, would he not be sent to a mad-house without any further proof of his confirmed insanity ?

A Member of Parliament, whom I once (in the Bullion Committee time) endeavoured to prevail upon to go to the House and blow all the absurdities into air, asked me, why goods might not be *sent abroad* and sold for gold, and the gold brought home to the Bank ! My answer was, that there was no other objection to this scheme, than, that the owners of the goods would, in all probability, want to keep for their own use the gold that the goods would be sold for. His next question was, why the Government could not get gold *from South America*. To be sure, the *mines* were the places to look towards. But, then, it unluckily happened, that the owners of the gold in South America would demand *payment* for the gold ; and, what was more, so little bowels would they have for SAMUEL THORNTON and Company, that they would take care and have the *goods* before they would let the gold go ; and, then, if the Bank sent the goods, they must issue paper to pay for the goods. By the help of a fleet and an army, the Bank might, indeed, *rob* the South American Mine-owners to a trifling extent ; or, the Bank-men might *rob* the houses and travellers at home, though, perhaps, they would find little except their own paper. This, probably, the Bank-men would have some scruple to do, unless assured of an *Indemnity Bill* before hand ; though they have done, indeed, a great deal worse things.

Their case, then, as far as relates to augmenting the relative proportion of their gold, is desperate ; for this last is the only *possible way*, in which they can effect that object. How should there be any other, except, to the asses' ears of MIDAS, the Boroughmongers and Bank-men could add his gold-creating touch ? They have a parcel of paper, snips of paper,

of no value, which they want to convert into pieces of precious metal. A few years ago there was a Norfolk farmer, who sold five hundred golden guineas to the guard of the Norwich coach, for twenty-seven shillings each. The dealer brought down the money the next trip, and asked for the guineas. The farmer had them in London, and up he went with the guard in order to deliver them. He had them quite safe in London, for they were in the Bank, where he had lodged them three years before for the sake of *secure keeping*! He went to the Bank, but it was *restrained* from letting him have them out! What a swindle! And is it possible for it to be believed, that these people are never to be called to account! Are these the men, who sit in consultation to determine, *who shall be hanged, and who shall not be hanged?*

There are very few now-a-days, who are so foolish as this farmer was. When that prime tool of the Boroughmongers, Gibbs, was calling for his fellow-labourers to make me a "*blighted example*," he did not, I dare say, imagine, that he was doing that which would produce a *new era*, a totally new era, in political knowledge. "*Paper against Gold*" was amongst the fruits of that act of tyranny; and, Sir, whatever the stupid herd, to whom you addressed yourself, may think, the *people* of England, the oppressed people of England, know all about the paper-money system, and about which, before the *Hall-set* thought they had murdered me, the people in general knew no more than they knew of the feats of witches and wizards. They did not know what a fundholder, a loan-jobber, or a director was. They knew nothing of the manner of making funds and debts; and, they, if possible, knew less than nothing about the manner in which *they themselves* were affected by this mystery of iniquity. Little did they, before this period, imagine that this system of funding took from them fourpence, at least, in the price of every pot of beer; and, that it was in fact, this system, first proposed by BISHOP BURNET, which had, by degrees, stripped the artizan and the labourer of all those conveniences and those means of good-living, which were enjoyed by their grandfathers. The mass of the people knew, in short, nothing about the matter. But Gibbs and his set had tied me to the stake; and their malice and cruelty and insolence were destined to be the means of producing a new era in political knowledge. "*Paper against Gold*" will long and long after the bubble shall have bursted, and overwhelmed all those who now by various means, oppress the nation, live to bear testimony to my fortitude and perseverance and to the infamy of my persecutors.

But, the good of the thing is, that, while *the people* read this little book, the Borough-usurpers and their tools do not read it. So that these latter, to their nature and habit-engendered stupidity, add, in this case, a refusal to use the ordinary means of acquiring knowledge. The *Blanketteers*, who cannot have less than about twenty thousand copies of this little book amongst them, and who have seen all its principles established and its predictions verified, to the very letter, by events; the *Blanketteers*, Sir, if they happened to read the debate, on which I am commenting, would smile with scorn at those *cheers*, with which the ignorant crew honoured your comforting opinion. The *Blanketteers* would laugh at the idea of the Bank *adding to its stock of gold*; they would laugh at the idea of the Bank, "*sending out gold and re-purchasing it*," as mentioned in another part of your speech; for, their little book has, long and long ago, taught them how futile, how childish, how contemptible, all such notions are.

I have said, that it is *impossible*, absolutely impossible for the Bank to add to its *relative stock of gold*, except by direct robbery; that is to say, by a robbery committed in South America (not easy), or a robbery committed on the highway and in the houses at home: a dash at the gold baubles and silver spoons. I can see, I think, what is running in your head upon this subject. You seem to imagine, that, if the Bank were to issue a parcel of notes and to purchase gold with them, though they would thereby add to the *positive* quantity of notes, they would *diminish* the *relative* quantity; for that, the new notes would lodge gold equal to themselves in amount, which the old notes have not done. You will say, that, if a man has a hundred one-pound-notes out, and has only one guinea in his coffers, and then put out another hundred notes and buy guineas with them, and put the guineas in his coffers, he will, by this operation, have added to his *relative quantity of gold*.

This is all very true, only you are supposing what it is impossible to effect. But, let us see how an attempt in this way would work in practice. Suppose the Bank, or the Borough-tyrants (for the paper is theirs) to have 30 millions of notes in circulation, and to have half a million of gold in their coffers. Well; they want to add to their gold; *why?* Because they want to be *able to pay in gold*. They, therefore buy ten millions of gold; but, they do it with *an additional issue of notes*; and, mind, this issue must exceed ten millions; because, the paper must be *below par*, else the Bank could now pay in gold, without any purchase of gold. Very well, then; the Bank has now ten and a half millions of gold in its coffers, and much more than forty millions of paper afloat.

You are aware, I suppose, that this new issue of paper would instantly send up prices to an enormous height: you are, I suppose, aware, that it would sink the value of the paper in the same proportion: if you are not aware of these things, the *Blanketteers* are. But, having this gold in its coffers, the Bank *will then begin to pay*. Indeed! If it does, I can assure it, that I, who hold twenty-one of its depreciated pound-notes, will instantly go and get twenty of its guineas for them. Thus will every other note-holder act, to be sure: so that, in about two days all the gold will be drained out, and the quantity of paper left in circulation will be much greater than before the remedy was applied.

A worthy friend of mine, and one of the most pleasant, hearty, and able men I ever knew, the late Mr. BAVERSTOCK of Alton, used to say of the *Unitarians*, "I want to know what they *would be at*: they will believe, "and will not believe: they will have a *creed*, and yet they will be *infidels*." Your financial faith, Sir, appears to me to be of this description. You think this paper-money a very *dangerous* thing; you think it big with fatal consequences, shocks, and convulsions; and you think it *very easy*, perfectly *easy*, for the Bank to *pay out its gold* and then *buy it back again*, only by experiencing *some loss*. If this be true, Sir, what ground is there for alarm? If this be true, the Borough-men may snore away the whole twenty-four, instead of twenty, hours of their time.

That the Bank is quite able to *pay its gold out*, and that it might effect the thing in a very short space of time, nobody, I believe, will dispute; but, as to getting it *back again*, that would be a very different matter: for, as we have clearly seen, it must be effected by the means of new issues of paper; and, therefore, supposing the paying out not to cause a total blow-up at once, the Bank would, when the operation was over, only be just where it was before the operation began.

The "*some loss*" it is, however, that puzzles me the most. I must quote your words here; for, as I can hardly believe my own eyes, my friends, the Blanketteers, may well doubt of their correctness upon this occasion.

"Let the Bank of England send out large quantities of gold from their coffers. That would alter the rate of exchange. The Bank would have *no difficulty in purchasing gold to replenish their coffers*, though certainly at *some loss*. But the question was which was best—that Great Britain should lose the character for good faith which she had hitherto maintained, or that the Bank *should be obliged to disgorge* a part of the enormous profits which it had made from the country at large? (*Hear, hear, hear!*) Was it more desirable that the public credit should be preserved, or that the Bank, having accumulated millions upon millions, without contributing in the smallest degree to the national expenditure, should be enabled to persevere in that system? (*Hear, hear, hear!*)"

Yes, yes! The Borough-men may cry "*Hear, hear, hear!*" But, Sir, the Blanketteers know very well, that all this affected reproach on the *Bank* is mere words, and that the Bank is only one of the tools of the Borough-men! Be you assured, that all, of the Blanketteer order, are quite proof against every attempt to impose on them by affected reproaches against "*the Bank*."

Aye, Sir, "*let the Bank send out large quantities of gold from their coffers*." They must get these quantities *in first*, to be sure; but, never mind that; let us, for argument's sake, suppose the large quantities to be there. Well; now the gold is sent out. *How* is the Old Lady to get it back? She is, it seems, to *purchase it back*. With *what*? With *what*? With *what*, I say! Answer me, or I die! With *what* is she to *purchase* it back? Why, with a *new batch of notes*, to be sure; unless she go and plunder the gold and silversmiths' shops and rife the butlers' pantries. In what other way is the old hag to *purchase* it back? A witch, indeed, she is, as far as tormenting and murdering goes; but, as to the turning of paper into gold, she is as harmless as the innocent in the cradle. It is all nonsense; it is all absurdity indescribable; for, what would be done *at home*, while the gold was travelling to and from the Continent. But, never mind this; let us swallow this: she would, by the operation, supposing it to be as you say, gain nothing in the way of ability to pay.

But the "*loss*;" the "*some loss*," that she would experience: what can that mean, I wonder? Pray, Sir, what has the old Lady to *lose*? Do you happen to know the precise, or probable, place of deposit of any of her *valuables*? If you do, it would be but friendly dealing to apprise the Blanketteers of it; for they will, one of these days, be glad to possess information upon the subject. Do you allude to *her shop*, or to the *houses and lands and chattels* of the Directors and others of her Company? These she might, indeed, lose, and, in the end, she probably will; but they would amount to little. Do you allude to the several millions of what is called *Stock*, or *Funds*, or *Per Cents.*, of which she is the *owner*? Come, here we have, then, the great book before us, and here we find her written down for, suppose, twenty millions. Now, then, what is your notion? That she can get people to come and purchase part of this stock *with gold at a loss* to her; that is to say, *below the current paper-price*? Why, Sir, the very thought of such an operation would send down her paper fifty to the hundred; and, an attempt to put it into practice would blow up the whole thing.

No : you mean none of these. Your meaning is, that she must give *more* for the gold in paper than the nominal value of the gold, if in coin ; and a *higher price* than the real money-price, if in bullion : and this would be neither more nor less than making, upon the whole of the operation, an addition, relative as well as positive, to the quantity of her paper.

There remains, then, as I said before, no way, but that of direct robbery and plunder, to add to the relative quantity of her gold by the *bringing in of gold*. I have, indeed, overlooked one way of effecting this grand purpose, and which way I must notice before I proceed to the second part of my subject. It is this : the Boroughmongers might give up their estates, equipages, and other moveables. These, which have chiefly been derived from public plunder, would bring *gold* quickly. This gold might go to the Bank, and it would, as Mr. CATLEY truly said, enable the Old Hag to face her creditors, pay off her notes, and to pass once more for an honest dame. Whether these conscientious Boroughmen, who cheered you, and who are so anxious to see guineas return, would voluntarily acquiesce in this measure, I leave for wiser men to decide ; but, that this (with the exception of the robbery and burglary plan) is the only means by which gold can be brought into the Bank in such a way as to augment the relative proportion of gold now in the coffers of that prime instrument of the Borough-tyranny, must, I think, now be clear as day-light to every one, who is not wilfully and obstinately blind.

We now come, Sir, to the *other mode of augmenting* the relative quantity of the cash of the Bank-men : namely, *the reducing of the quantity of their paper*. It is your opinion that this *can* be done in such a degree as to enable the Bank to resume cash-payments, and that, too, without producing any shock ; and that, by this means, the present system of sway in England may be carried on for ages yet to come.

In combating this opinion I shall hardly be a cool, because I shall be a deeply-interested, reasoner ; for, if I could believe your opinion to be sound, I should be the most mortified and most miserable of human beings. It is a directly opposite opinion, firmly settled in my mind, that forms the sole foundation of my hope. Were it not for this hope, I should droop down into a state of despondency, and, without another effort, give up my unhappy country to the base, black-hearted, and bloody tyrants, by whom she is now robbed, scourged and insulted.

But, whatever my wishes may be, they cannot impair my reasoning. I know well, that, according to the creed of your hearers, truth is not truth, if it drop from my pen ; nor is this of any importance in my eyes ; with the rest of mankind the case is different. They will reject, or adopt, my opinions, as these are unsupported, or supported, by undoubted fact and conclusive argument. I do not, like you, Sir, hold forth naked opinions to be adopted and acted upon by others : I tender not anything of *mine* as the grounds of their belief : I tender reasoning, which is the common property of all mankind.

You say, Sir, that you think, that “ means may be found, by which “ cash-payments may be *gradually and gently* brought about, and a limit “ put to the issue of paper, *without risking any serious shock.*” I say, that such means *cannot* be found.

You speak, indeed, with some *diffidence* ; and, in a former sentence, you “ are willing to admit, that *mischiefs*, to a certain extent, might

arise." This is an altered tone. The Bullion Committee did not talk in this way. They, and especially your wise patron, Lord GREENVILLE, boldly said, that the Bank ought to be compelled to pay on a day to be fixed, as the *only means* of restoring the currency of the country to a *healthy state*. A man must be a lord to utter a foppish phrase like this without being hooted.

But, to get rid of all loop-holes, I admit your qualifications to mean, that the greatest of all possible precautions must be taken, and that, even with all these precautions, some *mischief's*, as you call them, *something of a shock*, must and will take place. Even this view, which is the most favourable that you, an orator of the Borough-men, can take of the matter, would be quite sufficient to alarm any one but a besotted English fundholder.

I, however, set at nought all your qualifications; and, I say, that the thing must go on as it now is, that the Bank *never* can pay, or, that the whole system, Borough-men and all, must be blown up. This is my opinion; and I now proceed to state the reasons, upon which that opinion is founded.

The use of the words "*gradually*" and "*gently*" make a great drawl in the expression of your opinion. They discover great diffidence, great unfixtness, and, indeed, great *confusion*, in your mind. You advance like one of us Englishmen here, when, in the burning hot weather, we attempt to imitate the natives in going without shoes. You had been set up by your party to put to shame the poor stick that had been appointed to bring forward the Bill. You were compelled to oppose him, and yet you had too much regard for your own reputation to say point blank, that the Bank could be enabled to pay. Hence all your qualifications and reservations. But, you do not seem to have perceived, that these, in certain cases, lead to, instead of keeping clear of, embarrassments; and, that, instead of saving a general position, they destroy it altogether.

Precisely thus has it happened here; and if I had a mind to make short work of your opinion, I might stop at showing the complete absurdity of this notion of a *gradual* and *gentle* resumption of cash payments; but from this temptation to laziness, I abstain, and will, therefore, reserve the folly of this notion for exposure in a subsequent part of my letter.

To enable the Bank to pay in gold on demand *the Old Lady must reduce the quantity of the floating paper*. Indeed, you say, that a *great diminution* must take place in the currency of the country. Now, it is incontestibly true, that such *diminution* must create a *great lowering of prices*; and, it is not less true, that this lowering of prices must be *far greater in proportion* than the diminution in the quantity of paper-money. Because, the first effect of the lessening of the quantity of money afloat, is to straiten and throw into discredit many persons who got along pretty well amidst the abundance of money. The operations of this class, therefore, do not remain in *degree*, but are *put an end to altogether*. When money is plenty, it moves *quicker* than when it is scarce. A horse will be sold and re-sold *ten times* amidst abundance of money; and, perhaps, not *twice* when money is scarce; and, a shilling which passes twenty-one times a day from hand to hand, is just as efficient in its effect upon prices, on a national scale, as a guinea that changes possessor but once a day.

What, then, are the *unavoidable* consequences of a great diminution in the quantity of currency afloat, and of this lowering of prices? The ruin and misery of a great part of the people, and the actual starvation of many. These are the inevitable consequences of a lowering of prices by the means of a *change in the value of money*; and, it is clearly seen, that such change must be effected by a diminution of its quantity.

Suppose me to be a haberdasher. I have my shop full of goods, as many as I shall sell in a year. I lay in my stock to-day. It amounts to three thousand pounds, two of which I have credit for. I deal in gloves only, and they are laid in by me at four shillings a pair. I begin selling; and six shillings a pair give me a good profit. But, at the end of a month the Bank, the Boroughmongers' Bank, goes to work to prepare for cash payments. It draws in a great deal of its paper. Money becomes scarce; prices fall. I can sell my gloves at only two shillings a pair, and I am done for at a blow. Thus it must be with the farmer, the manufacturer, and with every person engaged in trade, no matter of what sort.

A man borrows a thousand pounds, to-day, upon a house worth two thousand. Next month the Bank draws in its paper, and the house is not worth one thousand. He loses his house for ever.

Another dies to-day, leaves an estate to his son, worth three thousand pounds, with legacies to pay out of it to the amount of fifteen hundred. Before a sale of the estate takes place, the drawings-in of the Bank have lowered the worth of the estate to one thousand. The legacies can be paid only in part, and the son is a beggar.

Wheat is 15s. a bushel, and a man, calculating upon that price, rents a farm at a hundred a year. The drawings-in at the Bank brings wheat down to 5s. a bushel. The man cannot pay his rent, his stock is seized and sold. He goes to jail, and his family to the poor-house.

In the meanwhile there is no money to pay the journeymen and labourers. Employment cannot be had; and starvation follows. However, men do not, in very great numbers, starve to death, without an effort to save life. Hence robberies and thefts; and, to prevent detection, come murders. This is the natural, this is the inevitable progress.

These would be the consequences if there were no taxes at all. What, then, must the consequences be, in a country where the taxes amount to double the sum that the rent of all the houses, lands, mines and canals amount to? And, how is the army and how is the interest of the Borough-debt to be paid, if the wheat fall to 5s. a bushel? You know very well, Sir, that they are now paid partly by *loans*, in one shape or another. You know, that there is not so much raised as is wanted, *by fifteen millions a-year*. You know that loans to this extent are annually made. You know that these loans go to augment the Borough-debt and the dividends, and that this requires an augmentation of the paper-money. How, then, are the dividends and the army to be paid, if prices be lowered to the standard of wheat at 5s. a bushel? If money enough cannot be raised now; if the Borough-debt keeps on increasing *now*, what is it to do when this lowering of prices shall take place? And you complain of the amount of the debt; blame the poor stick for not making an effort to reduce it; and, yet you would add to it by an attempt to make the Bank pay in coin! You would reduce it by *doubling its real amount!* Yes, by giving the fundholder three bushels of wheat, where you now give him but one! The Borough-tyrants are sadly pestered! Sadly bemired!

As I am not for arguing upon any *disputed* fact, I do not think it necessary to bind myself down to wheat at *five* shillings a bushel. I am decidedly of opinion, that the resumption of cash payments would bring it down to three shillings a bushel, and then we should come to one of the sides of the favourite alternative of Mr. HUNT, who has, for ten years past, been giving as a toast, "Wheat at *three* shillings or at *thirty* shillings the bushel." This is much in little. It is not yet *treason*; but, it is saying all in few words. It is a pithy prayer for the destruction of the Borough-tyranny. Either side of the alternative would do the job; but I am always for the *three*-shilling side; for then the howl begins with the yeomanry cavalry crew. The Bank, by its mere *attempt to prepare* for cash-payments, brought down the wheat to *seven* or *eight* shillings a bushel. It brought it down to this price from fifteen shillings a bushel; and, why are we to believe that it would not have come down to three if cash-payments had really been begun?

The miseries of 1816 and 1817 are hardly forgotten yet; and the acts of the Borough-tyrants *never* will be. The thing saved itself then, partly by violence; but, it could not have done that long; and, therefore, *out it tumbled its paper again*. Without *this*, dungeons and gags and gallowses and bayonets would have been, in a very short time, of no avail. It is not the return of *prosperity* that you now behold; but the return of *paper*.

When the misery was at its height, the Borough-men put out their new gold and silver coin. The fools thought they were getting back to *the chink* of coin. But, compelled to slaughter a starving people, or to bring back the paper, they yielded, and brought the paper back; and instantly flew away all their gold and silver; and CASTLEREAGH, during the debate, says, *that the new sovereigns were all melted down and sent out of the country!* The Borough-tyrants have, in order to obtain a *respite*, put forth the paper again, and *you*, their orator, would have them, in order to *avoid a convulsion*, draw it in again!

In "*Paper against Gold*," Letter XXV., I had said, that, if the Bank attempted to draw in its paper, universal ruin would ensue. Pray, Sir, read that letter. Never mind its *cheapness*. The Blanketteers have all read it. Why should not you be as wise as they? If you had read it, before you had made your speech, you would, I think, not have said what you did. I there *proved*, that universal ruin *must* be the effect of such an attempt. The attempt was made, and the ruin came!

But, you wish the Bank to proceed *gradually* and *gently*. When a man has *means* that are dropping in *gradually*, he may pay gradually; but, this is quite another case. The Bank has *now* all the means that it ever will have, or can have. If the paper be drawn in gradually, the approach of the misery and ruin and uproar will be gradual: that is all. The want of employment will come on *gradually* and *gently*, but it will *come*. The convulsion will be the *end* of the scene, but there will be a *convulsion*. The notion of the man, who attempted, by slow, and very slow, very gentle, degrees, to teach his horse to live without food, was much about a level with this notion of yours. The man succeeded, at last; but just at the moment the *horse died*. To draw in the paper-money, without reducing the interest of the Borough-debt and all public pay and salaries, is to ruin all persons in trade and to starve the labouring classes; and, what signifies it whether this ruin and starvation come all at once, or by degrees?

But, besides this argument founded on the nature of the case itself, we have before us one of experience. The Bank did proceed *gradually*; it did proceed *gently*. It began drawing in, in 1814; it kept on, until 1816, about October. This was gently enough. The *nonsense* of those years will stand far ever recorded as the tip-toe nonsense of the world. The tradespeople called for cheap corn; the farmers and their greedy landlords for dear corn. The landlords would "tell the House of it, that they would!" And away they went to the "omnipotent house" to secure them a fair price for their corn. The House passed a Corn Bill "to protect the farmer, that useful member of society." And, corn grew cheaper and cheaper! I kept telling Mr. COKE and Mr. WESTERN, that they were upon a very wrong scent. I told them, that *the Old Lady was at work*, and that no Corn Bills would protect them against her craft. The distresses kept on increasing; and, in 1816, on came the wise landlords again with long strings of resolutions for *the relief of agriculture*. Nothing could open their eyes. Mr. HUNT told a set of these dolts at Bath, that there only wanted new packages of paper-money to make them all happy. They affected to laugh, talked a little of their nonsense, and parted as wise as they met. These were some of Sir Francis Burdett's "*gentlemen of the country*."

The true history of all the miseries of 1815, 1816, and 1817, is this: When *peace* came, the shame, the disgrace, the infamy, and, more than all these, the *danger* of not paying in gold, or, at least, not appearing to pay in gold, stared the administering tools of the Borough-tyrants full in the face. An attempt to *appear* to pay could not be made without drawing in a great deal of the paper. These tools were too weak to perceive the full extent of the consequences of even such an attempt. They appear, however, to have been afraid to make it. But, there was I, baiting them weekly with charges of insolvency. Foretelling that they never would pay; foretelling that they would finally be the scorn of all the world; and, in short, galling them in all sorts of ways; not forgetting to remind them, that when their paper-money blew up, we should have *our Parliamentary Reform*. To work they went, therefore, drawing in their paper, and on came the ruin and misery; slowly, gradually, gently enough; but, still it *came on*. I kept, even-on, as the Yorkshire-men say, telling them that their scheme would not succeed; that they would never be able to pay; *that they must put out the paper again*. They, like fools as they were, *persevered*. We, as we had a right to do, pressed them *for Reform*. We beset them with arguments and prayers. They threw off their mask, and drew their dagger!

But, while we gained the clear advantage of seeing them in their naked, odious, and detestable form, they gained nothing at all. They were, though well set out with dungeons and gibbets, compelled to *bring back the paper again*; and, to stand before the whole world, as they now do, irretrievable insolvents. The ruin and misery they produced by this vain attempt opened the people's ears to the various causes of their sufferings; they made men listen, who before turned a deaf ear; they were the cause of the spread of knowledge more extensive than any people ever before possessed. In the course of the struggle of the Boroughmen to save themselves, their various underhand dealings, their spies, their mode of prosecuting, the conduct of juries and judges, all become topics of minute discussion; and, in short, this struggle, has done a great deal in preparing the minds of the people for the grand struggle which is yet to

come, and which, I trust, will terminate in a restoration of the rights of the king and the people.

If, Sir, you want *more* proof, than has now been offered, to convince you, that the Bank *never* can pay, without producing a convulsion in the country, I confess my inability to furnish it; and, therefore, I here close my arguments upon the subject.

But, then, there remains the question, *What is to become of the thing at last?* That is quite another matter; and I am as fully convinced as you appear to be, that the consequences will finally be "*fatal*;" in which conviction I am as happy as you seem to be miserable. You say, in one part of your speech, that you are "perfectly aware, that there are persons in the country, who are *alarmed* at the prospects of cash-payments. These persons applaud *all sorts of horrors*; that *nobody will get his rents, that the funds will be at zero*, and that there will be "*a general bankruptcy*." Oh, oh! They begin to see this, then, do they! Ah, ah! I am glad to find, that they are coming to my opinions at last! Very well, then, the thing is, I suppose, to *remain as it is?* Is that what they mean? If it be, they are deceived. It will not remain as it is long. The blowing-up will come, whether the Bank draw in its paper, or not. There are means, as I have already shown, of *putting the thing down, of abating the nuisance*: secure means, too, and neither troublesome nor expensive. I firmly believe, that these means will be adopted, *in less than a year*, though I have no sort of knowledge of any one who entertains, that I know of, the intention. But, whether such means be, or be not adopted, the blow-up will come. The Boroughmen must go on *borrowing*, unless they instantly issue such quantities of paper as to make the guinea sell for thirty shillings. This borrowing must regularly add to the quantity of paper. This paper will, in spite of their teeth, come, at last, to an *open* contest with gold: *two prices* will show their faces, and then, good-by Bank-men and Boroughmongers! The taxes will be paid in the paper; the law-men and spies and fund-holders and bayonet-men, will be paid in taxes; and the butcher, baker, and brewer, will insist on having real money!

This will be the end, if the thing go on in its present way. Your scheme would, probably, bring the thing to a close sooner; but, be the end when it will, or how it will, the prediction of PAINÉ will be verified: the Borough-system will last as long as the paper-money-system, and not one moment longer.

Precisely *how* the thing will terminate, whether it will die gradually down into the bottom of the socket, or go out at once by a puff, is a question that I do not pretend to be able to determine: it is sufficient for me to know, that the total extinguishment will come; and that it will bring with it the destruction of that Borough-tyranny, of which it was the twin-monster, and of which it has, from its birth to the present hour, been the principal support.

These monsters are now of a hundred and twenty-four years standing. The aristocracy having driven out James the Second, immediately set themselves to work to engross all the lawful powers of king and people. They instantly began the work of plunder, and, having tasted the sweets, they resolved never to give it up. They soon took from the people in one year, more of their property than King James had taken from them during his whole reign; and, in order to perpetuate their sway, they created, at the suggestion of Bishop Burnet, a debt, which should, for ever, have

the effect of binding to them, be their deeds what they might, all the people who had money. In order to fortify themselves still more securely, they first made Parliaments *triennial*, which, by the Constitution, were *annual*; and, not satisfied with this, they, under favour of a false alarm, made those triennial Parliaments *septennial*; while, at the same time, they set about a system of corruption even in the remnant of suffrage that was left, and which system has, at last, become so notorious, that when proof of seat-selling is tendered to them, they refuse to receive it, on the ground, that it is too common to be criminal, and even that it is *necessary*, and *makes a part of the constitution in Church and State!*

The effects of this system have well corresponded with its character and motives. The nation has been plundered without sparing: king and people have alike been stripped of their rights, degraded and insulted without any measure. This tyranny, of which there is no parallel either in being or upon record, by its attempts to subject the people amongst whom I now am, to its plundering grasp, severed this fine country from the British dominions, and thereby created a formidable rival to England in naval power as well as in commerce. Fearing the effects of the rays of freedom, beginning to dart forth from France twenty-six years ago, it arrayed itself against the people of that country; and, by twenty-three years of violence and fraud, it, at last, succeeded in re-establishing despotism in that country and in every part of Europe where freedom had made her appearance. The twin monster, unable to repose in quiet, while there was a free man left upon the face of the earth, next bent all its force to destroy the Government, the freedom and the happiness of America. The agents it employed in this enterprise were well worthy of their employer: fire and sword against the defenceless; treachery and plunder, but, above all things, *plunder*; and, it was now for the first time, that officers of the English navy were seen writing to each other congratulatory letters upon having captured *tables and chests of drawers*. The brave yeomanry of America, however, so different from a base and servile Boroughmonger tenantry, drove the spoilers from their shores in disgrace; and thus preserved an asylum for the oppressed of all nations, and especially for those escaping from the fangs of the English minister, amongst whom is to be numbered him, who, in this address to you, is able, in safety, to describe the character and acts of that monster, and who has unspeakable delight in foreseeing and foretelling his doom.

There is, they say, a viper, the poison of which is of so malignant a nature, that the reptile will die, if it bite its own tail. It is a property of evil to destroy, in time, its own cause. The main lever of the Borough-tyrants has been their paper-money. By a series of frauds of unbounded magnitude, these tyrants have been able to bribe, and to set to butcher each other, a very considerable part of mankind. Under the pretext of warring for humanity and freedom and religion, where is the bayonet, where the dagger, where the stiletto, where the prostituted pen, that they have not employed in the cause of bloodshed, slavery, and real blasphemy? The grand instrument of mischief, however, is now turning its powers against themselves. The viper has, during its works of malice and of death, bitten its own tail; and the poison is hastening on to its heart.

War! The monster can make war no more. Its teeth are drawn completely out. The arming for war would send the paper down to five shillings in the pound; and a war of a year would send the debt up to

two thousand millions ! Not the people of England alone, but, the people of the whole world, are deeply interested in the fall of these tyrants, who employ the resources of matchless industry, skill, perseverance and valour, favoured by the most happy local circumstances that Providence itself could combine ; who employ all these, not to better the lot of mankind, not to assist feeble innocence against powerful guilt, not to enlighten the ignorant or to free the enslaved, not to promote peace and friendship amongst nations ; but, to erect obstacles to harmonious intercourse, to create suspicions and feuds, to shut out light from the human mind, to back tyranny wherever to be found, and, in all parts of the world, to make human affairs uncertain and human life a burden. Towards friends, allies, colonies, they have been firm or false, kind or cruel, alternately, at the calls of their own safety or interest. Towards enemies they have, from the same motives, been creeping or insolent, but always perfidious. This has been the great, unvarying characteristic of their policy and their actions. Those who spoke of us, formerly, might say that we were rude, proud, and arrogant ; but, they could not say, that we were hypocritical, treacherous, or unfeeling. The English nation, famed for its open, manly dealings, for its plain, blunt sincerity, and for its kindness and humanity, these tyrants have placed at the tip-top of the list of the crafty, the perfidious and the cruel, where it stands written in the blood of *Nev*, and of thousands upon thousands of the victims of their relentless rapacity.

And, is this character *always* to belong to our nation ! Is the name of England to have *for ever* this infamous pre-eminence ! Sir, I am, at this moment, sitting beneath the deep shade of a walnut-tree, the thermometer at ninety-eight degrees, nearly naked and sweat pouring down my breast ; yet, the thought of heat ten million times as great as this, to be endured for ages, would not be to my mind half so horrible, as the thought of impunity to these base and savage tyrants. No : a day of *justice* is to come ; a day of justice will come ; and the very act which you oppose, and with regard to which I have troubled you with my remarks, ought to satisfy the minds of the people, that the day is near at hand.

From your task, Sir, you retired amidst the *cheers* of the Borough-mongers ; I shall be sufficiently gratified, if the Blanketteers will attentively read what I have written ; and if they will constantly bear in mind, that *EMPSON* and *DUDLEY* were *legally and justly hanged*, though they truly pleaded *Acts of Indemnity*.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

TO JACK H A R R O W,

AN ENGLISH LABOURER;

ON THE NEW CHEAT, WHICH IS NOW ON FOOT, AND WHICH
GOES UNDER THE NAME OF SAVINGS' BANKS.

(Political Register, January, 1819.)

North Hampstead, Long Island, November 7th, 1818.

FRIEND JACK,

You sometimes hear the Parson talk about deceivers, who go about in sheep's clothing; but who, inwardly, are ravening wolves. You frequently hear of the tricks of the London cheats, and, I dare say, you have, often enough, witnessed those of mountebanks and gipsies. But Jack, all the tricks of these deceivers and cheaters, if the trickery of them all were put together, would fall far short of the trick, now playing off under the name of *Savings' Banks*. And, seeing that it is possible, that you may be exposed to the danger of having a few pounds picked out of your pocket by this trick, I think it right to put you on your guard against the cheat.

You have before been informed of who and what the Boroughmongers are. Therefore, at present, I shall enter into no explanation of their recent conduct. But, in order to give you a clear view of their motives in this new trick, and which, I think, is about the last in their budget, I must go back and tell you something of the history of their *Debt*, and of what are called the *Funds*. Some years ago the Boroughmongers put me into a loathsome prison for two years, made me pay a thousand pounds fine, and made me enter into recognizances for seven years, only because I expressed my indignation at the flogging of Englishmen, in the heart of England, under the superintendence of hired German troops, brought into the country to keep the people in awe. It pleased God, Jack, to preserve my life and health, while I was in that prison. And, I employed a part of my time in writing a little book, entitled *Paper against Gold*. In this little book I fully explained all the frauds of what is called the *National Debt*, and of what are called the *Funds*. But, as it is possible that you may not have seen that little book, I will here tell you enough about these things to make you see the reasons for the Boroughmongers using this trick of *Savings' Banks*.

The Boroughmongers are, you know, those persons (some Lords, some Baronets, and some Esquires, as they call themselves), who fill, or nominate others to fill, the seats in the House of Commons. *Commons* means the mass of the *people*. So that this is the *House of the People*, according to the law of the land. The people, you, I, and all of us, ought to vote for the men who sit in this House. But the said Lords, Baronets and Esquires have taken our rights away, and they nominate the Members themselves. A *monger* is a *dealer*; as *ironmonger*, *cheesemonger*, and the like; and as the Lords, Baronets and Esquires sometimes sell

and sometimes buy seats, and as the seats are said to be filled by the people in certain *Boroughs*, these Lords, Baronets and Esquires are very properly called *Boroughmongers*; that is to say, dealers in boroughs, or the seats of boroughs. As all laws and all other matters of government are set up and enforced at the will of the two Houses, against whose will the King cannot stir hand or foot; and, as the Boroughmongers fill the seats of the two Houses, they have *all the power*, and of course, the king and people have none. Being possessed of all the power; being able to tax us at their pleasure; being able to hang us for whatever they please to call a crime; they will, of course, do with our property and persons just what they please. And, accordingly, they take from us more than the half of our earnings; and they keep soldiers (whom they deceive) to shoot at us and kill us, if we attempt to resist. They put us in dungeons when they like. And, in Ireland, they compel people to remain, shut up in their houses, *from sunset to sunrise*, and, if any man, contrary to their commands, goes out of his house in the night, in order to go to the *privy*, they punish him very severely; and, in that unhappy country, they transport men and women to Botany Bay *without any trial by jury*, and merely by the order of two justices of the peace appointed by themselves.

This, Jack, is horrid work, to be going on amongst a people, who call themselves *free*; amongst a people who boast of their liberties. But, the facts are so; and now I shall explain to you how the Boroughmongers, who are so few in number, compared to the whole people, are able to commit these cruel acts and to carry on this abominable tyranny; and you will see, that the trick of *Savings' Banks* makes a part of the means, which they now intend to use for the perpetuating of this tyranny.

Formerly, more than a hundred years ago, when the Kings of England had some real power, and before the Boroughmongers took all the powers of King and people into their hands, the people, when the kings behaved amiss, used to rise against them and compel them to act justly. They beheaded Charles the First, about a hundred and seventy years ago; and they drove James the Second out of the kingdom; they went so far as to set his family aside for ever, and they put up the present royal family in its stead.

This was all very well; but, when King James had been driven out, the Lords and Baronets and Squires conceived the notion of ruling for ever over king and people. They made Parliaments, which used to be annual, three years of duration; and when the members had been elected for three years, the members themselves made a law to make the people obey them for *seven years*. Thus was the usurpation completed; and, from that time to this, the Boroughmongers have filled the seats just as it has pleased them to do it; and, they have, as I said before, done with our property and our persons just what they have pleased to do.

Now, it will naturally be matter of wonder to you, friend Jack, that this small band of persons, and of debauched wretched persons, too, any half-dozen of whom you would be able to beat with one hand tied down; it will be matter of wonder to you, that this contemptible band should have been able thus to subjugate and hold in bondage so degrading the whole of the English people. But, Jack, recollect, that, once, a parcel of fat, lazy, drinking, and guttling monks and friars were able to make this same people to work and support them in their laziness and

debaucheries; aye, and almost to adore them, too; to go to them and kneel down and confess their sins to them, and to believe, that it was in their power to absolve them of their sins. Now, how was it, that these fat, these bastard-propagating rascals succeeded in making the people do this? Why, by *fraud*; by deception; by cheaterly; by making them believe lies; by frightening them half out of their wits; by making them believe, that they would go to hell, if they did not work for them. A ten thousandth part of the people were able to knock the greasy vagabonds on the head; and they would have done it, too; but they were afraid of going to hell, if they had no priest to pardon them.

Thus did these miscreants govern by *fraud*. The Boroughmongers, as I shall by-and-by show, have, of late, been compelled to resort to *open force*; but, for a long while they governed by fraud alone. First, they, by the artful and able agents which they have constantly kept in pay, *frightened* the people with the pretended dangers of a return of the old king's family. The people were amused with this scarecrow, while the chains were silently forging to bind them with. But, the *great fraud*, the *cheat of all cheats*, was what they call the *national debt*. And, now, Jack, pray attend to me; for I am going to explain the chief cause of all the disgraces and sufferings of the labourers in England; and am also going to explain the reasons, or motives, which the Boroughmongers have for setting on foot this new fraud of Savings' Banks. I beg you, Jack, if you have no other leisure time, to stay at home, instead of going to church, for one single Sunday. Shave yourself, put on a clean shirt, and sit down and read this letter *ten times over*, until you understand every word of it. And, if you do that, you will laugh at the parson and tax-gatherer's coaxings about Savings' Banks. You will keep your odd pennies to yourself; or lay them out in bread or bacon.

You have heard, I dare say, a great deal about the *national debt*; and now I will tell you what this thing is, and how it came, and then you will see what an imposture it is, and how shamefully the people of England have been duped and robbed.

The Boroughmongers, having usurped all the powers of government, and having begun to pocket the public money at a great rate, the people grew discontented. They began to think, that they had done wrong in driving King James away. In a pretty little fable-book, there is a fable which says, that the *frogs*, who had a log of wood for king, prayed to Jupiter to send them something more active. He sent them a *stork*, or *heron*, which gobbled them up alive by scores! The people of England found, in the Boroughmongers, what the poor frogs found in the *stork*; and, they began to cry out against them, and to wish for the old king back again.

The Boroughmongers saw their danger; and they adopted measures to prevent it. They saw, that if they could make it the *interest* of a great many rich people to uphold them and their system, they should be able to get along. They, therefore, passed a law to enable themselves to *borrow money* of rich people; and by the same law, they imposed it on the people at large to pay, for ever, the *interest* of the money so, by them, borrowed. The money, which they thus borrowed, they spent in wars, or divided amongst themselves, in one shape or another. Indeed, the money, spent in wars, was pocketted, for the far greater part, by themselves. Thus they owed, in time, immense sums of money; and, as they continued to pass laws to compel the nation at large to pay the *interest*

of what they borrowed, spent and pocketed, they called, and still call, this debt, the *debt of the nation* ; or, in the usual words, the *national debt*.

It is curious to observe, that there has seldom been known in the world any very wicked and mischievous scheme, of which a *priest*, of some description or other, was not at the bottom. This scheme, certainly as wicked in itself as any that was ever known, and far more mischievous in its consequences than any other, was the offspring of a Bishop of Salisbury, whose name was BURNET ; a name that we ought to teach our very children to execrate. This crafty priest was made a Bishop for his invention of this scheme ; a fit reward for such a service.

The Boroughmongers began this debt a hundred and twenty-four years ago. They have gone on borrowing ever since ; and have never paid off a farthing, and never can. They have continued to pass Acts to make the people pay the interest of what has been borrowed ; till, at last, the debt itself amounts to more than all the lands, all the houses, all the trees, all the canals and all the mines would sell for, at their full sterling value ; and the money to pay the interest is taken out of men's rents and out of their *earnings* ; and you, Jack, as I shall by-and-by prove to you, pay to the Boroughmongers more than the half of what you receive in weekly wages from your master.

Is not this a pretty state of things ? Pray observe, Jack, the debt far exceeds the real full value of the whole kingdom, if there could be a purchaser found for it. So that, you see, as to *private property* no man has any, or can have any, as long as this debt hangs upon the country. Your master, Farmer GRIFE, for instance, calls his farm *his*. It is none of his, according to the Boroughmonger law ; for that law has *pawned* it for the payment of the interest of the Boroughmongers' debt ; and the pawn must remain as long as the Boroughmonger law remains. GRIFE is compelled to pay out of the yearly value of his farm a certain portion to the debt. He may, indeed, sell the farm ; but, he can get only a *part of the value* ; because the purchaser will have to pay a yearly sum on account of the *pawn*. In short, the Boroughmongers have, in fact, passed laws to take every man's private property away from him, in whatever portions their debt may demand such taking away ; and, a man, who thinks himself an *owner* of land, is, at best, only a steward who manages it for the Boroughmongers.

This, however, is only a small part of the evil ; for, the *whole* of the rents of all the houses and lands and mines and canals would not pay the interest of the debt ; no, and not much more than the half of it. The *labour* is, therefore, *pawned* too. Every man's labour is pawned for the payment of the interest of this debt. Aye, Jack, you may think, that you are *working for yourself* ; and that, when, on a Saturday night, you take nine shillings from Farmer GRIFE, the shillings are for your *own use*. You are grievously deceived, for more than half of the sum is paid to the Boroughmongers on account of the *pawn*. You do not see this, but the fact is so. Come, what are the things in which you expend the nine shillings ? Tea, sugar, tobacco, candles, salt, soap, shoes, beer, bread ; for no meat do you ever taste. On the articles, taken together, except bread, you pay far *more than half tax* ; and, you will observe, that your master's taxes are, in part, pinched out of you. There is an army employed, in Ireland, to go with the excisemen and other taxers to make the people pay. If the taxers were to wait at the ale-houses and grocer's shops, and receive their portion from your own hands, you would

then clearly see, that the Boroughmongers take away more than the half of what you earn. You would, then, clearly see what it is that makes you poor and ragged, and that makes your children cry for the want of a bellyful. You would clearly see, that what the hypocrites tell you about this being *your lot*, and about *Providence* placing you in such a state, in order to *try* your patience and faith is all a base falsehood. Why does not Providence place the Boroughmongers and the parsons in a state to *try* their patience and faith? Is Providence less anxious to save them than to save you? If you could see clearly what you pay on account of the Boroughmongers' pawn, you would see, that your misery arises from the designs of a benevolent Providence being counteracted by the measures of the Borough-tyrants.

Your *lot*, indeed! your lot assigned by Providence! This is real blasphemy! Just as if Providence, which sends the salt on shore all round our coast, had ordained that you should not have any of it, unless you would pay the Boroughmongers *fifteen shillings a bushel tax upon it!* But, what a Providence must that be, which would ordain that an Englishman should pay 15s. tax on a bushel of English salt, while a Long Islander pays only 2s. 6d. for a bushel of the same salt, after it is brought to America from England? What an idea must we have of such a Providence as this? Oh, no! Jack; this is not the work of Providence. It is the work of Boroughmongers; and the pretext about Providence has been invented to deceive and cheat you, and to perpetuate your slavery.

Well: all is pawned then. The land, the houses, the canals, the mines, and the labour, are *pawned* for the payment of the interest of the Boroughmongers' debt. Your labour, mind, Jack, is pawned for the one-half of its worth. But, you will naturally ask, how is it that the nation, that *everybody* submits to this? There's your mistake, Jack. It is not *everybody* that *submits*. In the first place, there are the Boroughmongers themselves and all their long tribes of relations, legitimate and spurious, who *profit* from the taxes, and who have the church-livings, which they enjoy without giving the poor any part of their *legal* share of those livings. Then there are all the officers of army and navy, and all the endless hosts of place-men and place-women, pensioned men and pensioned women, and all the hosts of tax-gatherers, who alone, these last I mean, swallow more than would be necessary to carry on the Government under a reformed Parliament. But, have you forgotten the *lenders of the money* which makes *the debt*? These people live wholly upon the *interest* of the debt; and, of course, they approve of your labour, and the labour of every man, being *pawned*. The Boroughmongers have pawned your labour *to them*. Therefore, they like that your labour should be taxed. They cannot be said to *submit* to the tyranny; they applaud it, and, to their utmost, they support it.

But, you will say, still the mass of the people would, if they had a mind to bestir themselves, be too strong for all these. Very true. But, you forget *the army*, Jack. This is a great military force, armed with bayonets, bullets, and cannon-balls, ready at all times, and in all places to march, or gallop, to attack the people if they attempt to eat sugar or salt without paying the tax. There are forts, under the name of barracks, all over the kingdom, where armed men are kept in readiness for this purpose. In Ireland they actually go in person to help to collect the taxes; and in England they are always ready to do the same. Now, suppose,

Jack, that a man who has a bit of land by the sea-side, were to take up a little of the salt that Providence sends on shore. He would be prosecuted. He would resist the process. *Soldiers would come and take him away to be tried and hanged.* Suppose you, Jack, were to dip your rushes into grease, till they came to farthing candles. The Excise would prosecute you. The sheriff would send men to drag you to jail. You would fight in defence of your house and home. You would beat off the sheriff's men. Soldiers would come and kill you, or would take you away to be hanged.

This is the thing by which the Boroughmongers govern. There are enough, who would gladly not submit to their tyranny; but, there is nobody but themselves, who has an army at command.

Nevertheless, they are not altogether *easy* under these circumstances. An army is a two-edged weapon. It may cut the employer as well as the thing that it is employed upon. It is made up of flesh and blood, and chiefly of English flesh and blood too. It may not always be willing to move, or to strike when moved. The Boroughmongers see, that their titles and estates hang upon the army. They would fain *coax* the people back again to feelings of reverence and love. They would fain wheedle them into something that shall blunt their hostility. They have been trying bible-schemes, school-schemes, and soup-schemes. And, at last, they are trying the *Savings' Bank scheme*, upon which I shall now more particularly address you.

This thing is of the same nature, and its design is the same, as those of the grand scheme of Bishop Burnet. The people are discontented; they feel their oppressions; they seek a change; and, some of them have decidedly protested against paying any longer any part of the interest of the debt, which they say, ought to be paid, if at all, by those who have borrowed, and spent, or pocketed, the money. Now, then, in order to enlist great numbers of labourers and artizans on their side, the Boroughmongers have fallen upon the scheme of coaxing them to put small sums into what they call *banks*. These sums they pay large interest upon, and suffer the parties to take them out whenever they please. By this scheme they think to *bind great numbers to them and their tyranny*. They think, that great numbers of labourers and artizans, seeing their little sums *increase*, as they will imagine, will begin to conceive the hopes of becoming rich by such means; and, as these persons are to be told that *their money is in the funds*, they will soon imbibe the spirit of *fundholders*, and will not care who suffers, or whether freedom or slavery prevail, so that the *funds be but safe*.

Such is the scheme, and such the motives. It will fail of its object, though not unworthy the inventive powers of the servile knaves of Edinburgh. It will fail, first, because the men, from whom alone the Borough-tyrants have anything to dread, will see through the scheme and despise it; and who will, besides, well know that the *funds* are a mere bubble that may burst, or be bursted, at any moment. The parsons appear to be the main tools in this coaxing scheme. They are always at the head of everything which they think likely to support tyranny. The depositors will be *domestic servants*, particularly women, who will be tickled with the idea of having a *fortune in the funds*. The Boroughmongers will hint to their tenants that they *must* get their labourers into the Savings' Banks. A preference will be given to such as deposit. The *Ladies*, the "*Parsons' Ladies*," will scold poor people into the funds. The parish-officers will act their part in this compulsory

process : and, thus will the Boroughmongers get into their hands some millions of the people's money by a sort of "forced loan : " or, in other words, a robbery. In order to swell the thing out, the parsons and other tools of the Boroughmongers will lend money in this way themselves, under feigned names ; and, we shall, if the system last a year or two, hear boastings of how rich the poor are become.

Now, then, Jack, supposing it possible, that Farmer GRIFE, may, under pain of being turned out of your cottage, have made you put your two-pence a week into one of these banks, let us see what is the natural consequence of your so doing. Two-pence a week is 8s. 8d. a-year ; and the interest will make the amount about 9s. perhaps. What use is this to you ? Will you let it remain ; and will you go on thus for years ? You must go on a great many years, indeed, before your deposit amounts to as much as the Boroughmongers take from you in one year ! Two-pence will buy you a quarter of a pound of meat. This is a dinner for your wife or yourself. You never taste meat. And why are you to give up half a pound of your bread to the Boroughmongers ? You are ill ; your wife is ill ; your children are ill. " Go to the bank and take out your money," says the overseer ; " for I'll give you no aid till that be spent." Thus, then, you will have been robbing your own starved belly weekly, to no other end than that of favouring the parish purse, upon which you have a just and legal claim, until the clergy restore to the poor what they have taken from them. As the thing now stands, the poor are starved by others : this scheme is intended to make them assist in the work themselves, at the same time that it binds them to the tyranny.

But, Jack, what a monstrous thing is this, that the Boroughmongers should kindly pass an Act to induce you to save your money, while they take from you *five shillings* out of every *nine* that you earn ? Why not take less from you ! That would be the more natural way to go to work, surely. Why not leave you all your earnings to yourself ? Oh, no ! They cannot do that. It is from the labour of men like you, that the far greater part of the money comes to enrich the Boroughmongers, their relations and dependents.

However, suppose you to have gotten together *five pounds* in a Savings' Bank. That is to say, in the funds. This is a great deal for you, though it is not half so much as you are compelled to give to the Boroughmongers in one year. This is a great sum. It is much more than you ever will have ; but, suppose you have it. It is in the funds, mind. And, now, let me tell you what the funds are, which is necessary, if you have not read my little book, called " *Paper against Gold.*" The funds is no place at all, Jack. It is a nothing, Jack. It is moonshine. It is a lie, a bubble, a fraud, a cheat, a humbug. And, it is all these in the most perfect degree. People think, that the funds is a place, where money is kept. They think, that it is a place which contains that which they have deposited. But, the fact is, that the funds is a word which means nothing that the most of the people think it means. It means the descriptions of the several sorts of the debt. Suppose I owed money to a tailor, to a smith, to a shoemaker, to a carpenter, and, that I had their several bills in my house. I should, in the language of the Boroughmongers, call these bills my funds. The Boroughmongers owe some people annuities at three pounds for a hundred ; some at four pounds for a hundred ; some at five pounds for a hundred ; and these annuities, or debts

they call their funds. And, Jack, if the Savings' Bank-people lend them a good parcel of money, they will have that money in these *debts*, or *funds*. They will be owners of some of those debts, which never will and never can be paid.

But, what is this *money*, too, in which you are to be paid back again? It is no money. It is *paper*; and though that paper will pass just at this time, it will not *long pass*, I can assure you, Jack. When you have worked a fortnight, and get a pound-note for it, you set a high value upon the note, because it brings you food. But, suppose nobody would take the note from you. Suppose no one would give you any thing in exchange for it. You would go back to Farmer GRIFE, and fling the note in his face. You would insist upon real money, and you would get it, or you would tear down his house. This is what will happen, Jack, in a very short time.

I will explain to you, Jack, how this matter stands. Formerly bank-notes were as good as real money, because any body that had one might go, at any moment, and get real money for it at the Bank. But, now the thing is quite changed. The Bank *broke* some years ago; that is to say, it could not pay its notes in real money; and it never has been able to do it from that time to this; and, what is more, *it never can do it again*. To be sure, the paper *passes* at present. You take it for your work, and others take it of you for bread and tea. But, the time may be, and I believe is, *very near at hand*, when this paper will not pass at all; and then, as the Boroughmongers and the Savings' Bank-people have, and can have, no real money, *how are you to get your five pounds back again?*

The bank-notes may be all put down, at any moment, if any man of talent and resolution choose to put them down; and, why may not such a man exist, and have the disposition to put them down? They are *now* of value, as I said before, because they will *pass*; because people will take them and will give victuals and drink for them; but, if nobody would give bread and tea and beer for them, would they then be good for any thing? They are taken, because people are pretty sure, that they can pass them again; but, who will take them, when he does not think that he can pass them again? And, *I assure you, Jack, that even I myself* could, before next May-day, do that which would prevent any man in England from ever taking a bank-note any more. If you should put five pounds into a Savings' Bank, therefore, you could, in such case, never see a farthing in exchange for it.

This being a matter of so much importance to you, I will clearly explain to you how I might easily do the thing. Mind, I do not say, that I *will* do the thing. Indeed, I will not; and I do not know any one that intends to do it. But, I will show you *how I might do it*; because it is right that you should know what a ticklish state your poor five pounds will be in, if you deposit them in the Savings' Bank.

You know, Jack, that *forged* notes pass, till people find them out. They keep passing very quietly till they come to the Bank, and there being known for forged notes, the man who carries them to the Bank, or owns them at the time, loses the amount of them. Suppose, now, that Tom were to forge a note and pay it to Dick for a pig. Dick would pay it to Bob for some tea. Bob would send it up to London to pay his tea-man. The tea-man would send it to the Bank. The Bank would keep it, and give him *nothing* for it. If the tea-man forgot whom he

got it from, he must lose it. If he could prove that he got it from Bob, Bob must lose it; and so on; but, either Dick or Bob or the tea-man must *lose* it. There must be a loss somewhere.

Now, it is clear, that, if there were a *great quantity* of forged notes in circulation, people would be afraid to take notes at all; and, that, if this great quantity came out all of a sudden, it would, for a while, put an end to all payments and all trade. And, if such great quantity can, with safety, be put out, I leave you to guess, Jack, at the situation of your five pounds. I will now show you, then, that I could do this myself, and with perfect safety and ease.

I could have made, at a very trifling expense, a million of pounds in bank-notes of various amounts. There are fourteen different ways in which I could send them to England, and lodge them safely there, without the smallest chance of their arrival being known to any soul, except the man to whom they should be confided. The Boroughmongers might search and ransack every vessel that arrived from America. They might do what they would. They would never detect the cargo!

There they are, then, safe in London; a famous stock of bank-notes, so well executed, that no human being, except the Bank-people would be able to discover the counterfeit. The agent takes a parcel at a time, *and drops them* in the streets, in the dark. This work he carries on for a week or two in such streets as are best calculated for the purpose, till he has well stocked the town. He may do the same at Portsmouth and other great towns, if he please, and he may send off large supplies by post.

Now, Jack, suppose you were up at London with your master's wagon. You might find a parcel of my notes. You would go to the first shop to buy your wife a gown and your children some clothes, yourself a hat, a great coat, and some shoes. The rest you would lay out at shops on the road home; for, the sooner you got rid of this *foundal*, the less chance of having it taken from you. The shopkeepers would thank you for your custom, and your wife's heart would bound with joy.

The notes would travel about most merrily. At last they would come to the Bank. The holders would lose them; but you would gain by them. So that, upon the whole, there would be no loss, and the maker of the notes would have no gain. Others would find, and nearly all would do like you. In a few days the notes would find their way to the Bank in great numbers, where they would all be stopped. The news would spread abroad. The thief-takers would be busy. Every man who had had his note stopped at the Bank would alarm his neighbourhood. The country would ring with the news. Nobody would take a bank-note. All business would be at a stand. The farmers would sell no corn for bank-notes. The millers would have nothing else to pay with. No markets, because no money. The baker would be able to get no flour. He could sell no bread, for nobody would have money to pay him.

Jack, this thing will *assuredly* take place. Mind, I tell you so. I have been right in my predictions on former occasions; and I am not wrong now. I beg you to believe me; or, at any rate, to blame yourself, if you lose by such an event. In the midst of this hubbub what will you do? Farmer GAIPs will, I dare say, give you something to eat for your labour. But, what will become of your *five pounds*? That sum you have in the Savings' Bank, and, as you are to have it out at any time when

you please, your wife sets off to draw it. The banker gives her a five-pound note. She brings it; but nobody will take it of you for a pig, for bread, for clothing, or for any thing else! And this, Jack, will be the fate of all those, who shall be weak enough to put their money into those banks!

I beg you, Jack, not to rely on the power of the Boroughmongers, in this case. Any thing that is to be done with halters, gags, dungeons, bayonets, powder, or ball, they can do a great deal at; but they are not conjurers; they are not wizards. They cannot prevent a man from dropping bank-notes in the dark; and they cannot make people believe in the goodness of that which they must know to be bad. If they could hold a sword to every man's breast, they might, indeed, do something; but, short of this, nothing that they can do would be of any avail. However, the truth is, that they, in such case, will have no sword at all. An army is a powerful weapon; but, an army must be *paid*. Soldiers have been called *machines*; but they are eating and drinking machines. With good food and drink, they will go far and do much; but, without them, they will not stir an inch. And, in such a case, whence is to come the money to pay them? In short, Jack, the Boroughmongers would drop down dead, like men in an apoplexy, and you would, as soon as things got to rights, have your bread and beer and meat and every thing in abundance.

The Boroughmongers possess no means of preventing the complete success of the dropping plan. If they do, they ought to thank me for giving them a warning of their danger; and for telling them, that, if they do prevent the success of such a plan, they are the cleverest fellows in this world.

I now, Jack, take my leave of you, hoping that you will not be coaxed out of your money, and assuring you that I am your friend,

WM. COBBETT.

TO HIS

ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE PRINCE REGENT,

ON THE MEANS BY WHICH THE BOROUGHMONGERS HAVE
DEGRADED THE KING AND HIS FAMILY.

(*Political Register*, February, 1819.)

LETTER I.

North Hampstead, Long Island, January 1st, 1819.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS:

I have reason to believe, that the paper-money, which is now current in England, will be speedily destroyed. I will frankly own to your

Royal Highness, that, as a loyal subject of his Majesty, as an Englishman to whom the freedom and renown of England are as dear as is his own life, I wish for that destruction; because, until that paper be destroyed, there can, I am convinced, be no safety for his Majesty's crown and none for the property, liberty, or lives of his faithful and brave people.

Let me, with great respect, though with great urgency, beseech your Royal Highness to look steadily at the picture, which England now presents, though I will not point at particulars; for the sight is so odious and so disgraceful, that I cannot bring myself to the act of exhibiting its parts to your view. But in this group of objects, every one so offensive to the mind, what is the station that your Royal Highness occupies? There you are, surrounded by a set of Ministers, protected against the law of the land by a *Bill of Indemnity*, yourself protected by a *Treason Bill*, made for the avowed object of *preserving your life from the violent hands of the English people!* Eight hundred years have kings reigned in England, and, never until these our days, has a King or Regent of England needed such protection, the very idea of which must fill your Royal Highness with indignation, and especially when you perceive the real, though artfully disguised, object of this odious measure.

The Bill provides, that it shall be *high treason* to do certain things, which were *high treason before*, and then it adds, that it shall be high treason to endeavour to "*put any restraint, or force upon, or to intimidate, or overawe, BOTH HOUSES, OR EITHER HOUSE, OF PARLIAMENT.*" This was the object, and the *sole* object of the Bill; and yet it is entitled, "*An Act for the safety and preservation of His Royal Highness, THE PRINCE REGENT'S PERSON and Government.*" And thus stands your Royal Highness before the world, a person so thought of by a part, at least, of the people; aye, even the *English* people; that a new and terrible law has been found necessary in order to save you from destruction by their hands! What a situation for a King of England to be placed in! What a light wherein to be exhibited to your own people and to the world! What an outrageous slander on us, or what an imputation against you!

This Act, which was first passed in 1795, and which was to last during the life of the King, has now been applied to your Royal Highness. If it had said nothing about his Majesty or you, it would have been only one amongst the rest of the effects of the Borough usurpation; one amongst those numerous deeds which have been committed in order to uphold that usurpation. But, by including your *personal safety* in its objects, and by its being called an Act to protect your person, it levels against you all the odium, while, in fact, it does nothing new but tend to protect and uphold those who dispose of the seats, in the people's house of Parliament. The inference from this Act is too obvious not to be seen by every one. The real object is disguised; but, the ostensible one is to protect your person against the people. Whence it follows, of course, that, as no such act was ever passed before, this Act was wholly unnecessary, or, the king and yourself have been *more hated by the people than any former king of England ever was.*

The Borough-usurpers and their instruments frequently complain of attempts to bring the king and Government into *hatred and contempt.* Men have been severely punished on charges of this kind. But, was there ever thought of by mortal man any thing so well calculated as this

Act to bring your Royal Highness into hatred and contempt? This Act proclaims to the world; records amongst the national archives; sends down to posterity, the fact, that your Royal Highness is *in danger*; in danger from the hands of those whom you call your loving subjects; in *greater danger* than any former king of England, except your father, ever was!

I was astonished to hear Lord Holland say, when this Act was proposed, that he was willing to *extend to the Prince the protection given to the King*. Just as if the Act had been *asked for* by your Royal Highness: just as if you had sent to the Parliament to pray them to protect you against the people! This Act gave to the King, and gives to you, no *protection*, which the law did not give you *before*. It is a *new treason-bill*; it has made a *new treason*; but this *new treason* is a treason against "*both Houses, or either House, of Parliament.*" Having usurped all the real powers and prerogatives of the crown as well as the rights of the people, the seat-fillers appear to have thought it time to assume the last characteristic of sovereignty by making it *high treason* to compass their destruction! And by this Act they have made it *hanging, beheading, quartering, with forfeiture of estate and corruption of blood, to attempt "to put any restraint, or force upon, or to intimidate, or overawe them."* What a band of *sovereigns* are here! Oh, fie upon us! Dare to put these tender creatures to affright! Dare to *intimidate* any of this thousand tender-hearted beings, who passed a bill of indemnity for those who crammed RILEY into a dungeon, and who were so *merry* at the description of *Ogden's rupture!*

It is impossible that your Royal Highness should not *feel* the insult contained in this Act; and if Lord Holland, by his conduct at the passing of it, astonished me, how much more ought I to have been astonished, that it passed without a word of reprobation on the part of your Royal Brothers. They had seats in Parliament, if you had not: they could have opposed it, if you could not; and, if one of them had moved an amendment; if he had moved so to alter the title and provisions as to make the Bill appear in its true light; if he had said, "pass a law, my Lords, "if you find it necessary, to protect your *own persons* against the hands "of the English people; but, my Royal Brother is not hated by the people; he stands in need of no such protection; he is in no danger from "the hatred of a just, brave and humane people: and if my vote is the "only one against this odious Bill, it shall never pass without that vote "and my solemn protest." If either of the Royal Dukes had thus spoken, and thus acted, what an effect would it have had upon the nation!

But they appear to have believed all the calumnies which were heaped upon the people. They appear to have thought it necessary to their own preservation to make common cause with the Borough-usurpers; or, rather, to submit to their sway. *Now*, however, when it must be clear to every eye, that the Borough usurpation rests wholly upon a little bit of their paper, and that that paper *can* be destroyed at any moment, I shall hope, that your Royal Brothers will lose no time in shaking off *their* dependence on that slender foundation.

The fact, may it please your Royal Highness, has come to me, that Mr. BAGOT, your Envoy in America, has, through the Consul at Philadelphia, applied to artists in that city for *specimens* of bank-notes, in order that he may transmit them to his employers! Thus is the representative of the King of England acting as the agent of a company of paper-money

makers, who have falsified their contracts and violated their charter, and who have an annual Indemnity Bill to protect them against the operation of the offended law; and thus is the name of your Royal Highness associated with those of these plunderers of your father's people. It was not enough, it seems, to render null the prerogative of the King as to the uttering of money; it was not enough to degrade his Royal name and office by affixing his portrait to pieces of money issued at the sole will and pleasure of persons who wholly disowned his control or authority, and who made the money of what weight and what quality and of what nominal amount they pleased: this degradation of the king's person and office was not enough without the suffering of these same persons, a company of merchants who had falsified their promises, to employ his ambassador as *their representative*.

This single fact, may it please you, Sir, speaks with a voice of thunder to all those, who make common cause with this base institution of paper-money. It can hardly be supposed, that the ambassador would have been employed thus without the concurrence of your Ministers, though I am very sure, that your Royal Highness's sense of duty and of dignity would have prevented your assent to an act so degrading. The connection, then, between your Ministers and the Bank here shows itself in a most glaring light. But, which is far more interesting to your Royal Highness and the people, it shows, that the state of the Bank's affairs is so desperate as to make them resort to aid such as no rational man, in private life, would rely on in *any case*. It must be in contemplation to *adopt* the specimens. To make English notes according to the specimens. And, if this be done, the *imitating* of these notes is as easy *here* as the making of the specimens.

To address your Royal Highness on matters of so vulgar, so low, so peddling a nature, I bring myself to do with the utmost reluctance. But, those who have been your Ministers for so many years, and those who are in reality their masters, have brought the affairs of England into a low and peddling state. When a loan-jobber is a principal personage at a Congress of Crowned-Heads, and when a King's ambassador has full powers to negotiate with manufacturers of bank-notes, loan-jobbing and bank-note-making may be tolerated in an address from a subject to a sovereign.

It is a gross delusion to hold forth, that the notes made at Philadelphia are inimitable. They are imitated here continually. And I, on my duty and allegiance, of which no man can entertain a higher idea than myself, most solemnly assure your Royal Highness, that the Bank in London can make nothing in the shape of notes, fac-similes of which cannot be made here for two guineas a hundred. The making of bank-note-paper has been pushed to a degree of perfection which is wholly without a parallel. All commercial intercourse between the two countries must be cut off, and that instantly, or the English bank-notes can have not one day of security.

I bear constantly in mind the oppressions of my country; the tyranny which has laid its iron hand upon myself I never forget for one twenty-four hours; but, I still love my country, and would prepare for the inevitable destruction of the paper-bubble. That the estates and distinctions of the wrongers of the people will be in danger is *nothing*; but, that all should be thrown into confusion is what no considerations of private, or or even of public vengeance, however just, can induce me to wish.

Therefore, I shall, before I conclude, endeavour to point out to your Royal Highness, what ought to be done, on a sudden blowing-up of the paper bubble, to prevent universal confusion, and, above all things, to prevent danger to his Majesty's person, and his lawful government.

I am aware, may it please your Royal Highness, of the constant endeavours, on the part of our oppressors, to induce your Royal Highness to believe, that, because we seek the restoration of our rights, we wish the destruction of the kingly government. If we are to judge from acts, those oppressors, indeed, wish ardently for such destruction; for, nothing within their power have they left undone, to render the royal authority detested and abhorred: while they have missed no opportunity of degrading, personally, every branch of your Royal House. Their constant endeavour has been to make the people believe, that the Royal Family was the principal cause of the people's sufferings. They have harped upon the *extravagance* of this family, to whom they have, indeed, voted money, but which money, they have, for the far greater part, taken away again, and for their own use. They always speak of the Civil List Allowance as a sum expended at the *royal pleasure*; while, as your Royal Highness well knows, the whole of the money is expended at the pleasure of the seat-fillers, and the far greater part of it pocketed by themselves, their relations and dependents. It is a fact, but a fact not generally known to the people, that your Royal Highness has not the choosing of your Ministers, your Steward, your Master-of-Horse, your Chamberlain, your Bed-chamber Lords, your Groom of the Stole, nor any one of the Officers of your Royal Household. The seat-fillers, upon some occasions, have complained (as in the case of Lords Essex and Milton) that the horse-guards, on Court-days, prevent them from passing in carriages along certain streets. Of this they make a great matter. They talk of it as being dangerous to liberty: they talk of the danger of a standing army in the hands of *the King*: while, at the very same moment, they keep an immense army on foot to attack *the people*, who meet legally to petition for a restoration of those rights, which these same seat-sellers have usurped. They employ their press to blazon forth every expense of your Royal Highness: they descend even to household furniture and cooking utensils: while they themselves wallow in luxuries and extravagance purchased with the public money. They have, by the management of the Crown Lands, divided the estate of the Crown amongst themselves. They have, in this one item, swallowed more than has been expended at the will of the Royal Family during two centuries. They talk of *the danger* of suffering the Royal Family to possess landed estates; while they, in the shape of sinecures and pensions and grants, receive the public money to the amount of millions, and with it purchase up the lands of those who are, successively, ruined by the taxes. All the patronage, all the power of bestowing dignities and emoluments in the Church, in the Law, and of Commissions either in the Army, the Navy, the Colonies, they keep in their own hands. They appoint Ambassadors and Consuls. And yet they have the impudence to talk of the *influence of the Crown*. There are two greedy factions contending for this power, and, while the faction who is *out* rails against the *influence of the Crown*, the faction who is *in* defends *the Crown*; not by avowing that the Crown has no influence at all, but by pretending that *it is the Crown which has the influence*, and by asserting that the influence is just and proper.

It is in this way, may it please your Royal Highness, that the Royal

Family of England has long been rendered objects of what I will not name, amongst the people at large, who have been in no fault, however; because it was next to impossible, that they should not be deceived by the everlasting falsehoods of the press, always in the hands of those who had the public money at their disposal. Of the conduct of these vile factions towards the Royal Family nothing can be wanted, in the way of specimen, other than their paying, out of the public money, for libels published against the King's sons. The elder WALTER was prosecuted by the King's Attorney-General for libels against the *Duke of York* and *yourself*. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for each. He suffered the first sentence; and your Royal Highness applied for a remission of the sentence for the libel against yourself. The libels were published at the instigation of the *King's Ministers*, as they were called; and they *paid to Walter* the expenses and damages attending the prosecutions. These facts I saw stated, in a letter from the elder Walter to a noble Lord, in the elder Walter's own handwriting; and which letter that noble Lord will, I hope, lay before your Royal Highness. At the time when those libels were published, your Royal Highness and your brothers were endeavouring to make a stand for your rights. This was the cause of the calumnies now spread abroad, by the same factions, against the people. The factions had usurped the rights of the Crown, and were resolved to keep them: they have also usurped the rights of the people, and will, as long as they are able, keep them, too.

The factions play off the King against the people, and the people against the King alternately as their interests dictate. When you were demanding your *hereditary rights*, you were calumniated as a would-be tyrant, as a man aiming at despotic sway, and were told that the Crown was to be disposed of as the *people pleased*. Thus were the people cajoled to take part against you. But, now, when the people are demanding their rights, *their birthright*, they are calumniated as traitors, who wish to depose and kill you, though, in no one instance, has there appeared proof, that any one man of us entertained even the *wish* to touch any part of your rights, much less to abate your royal office, or injure or insult your person. When the factions are attacked for their frauds, corruptions, and tyranny, they hold you out before them, and pretend that it is *you* that we wish to destroy. When we complain of their *selling and hiring seats*, they accuse us of a wish to *overthrow the House of Brunswick*. When Perceval and Castlereagh were distinctly accused of selling a seat; when proof of the vile, corrupt, and treasonable transaction was offered at the bar, the two factions joined, and swore most vehemently, that the accusers had in view a *democratic revolution*; and, for that reason, above all others, they refused to hear the proof.

The Long Parliament, who, at last, cut off a King's head, have always been justly accused of great baseness in using the *King's name to levy war against himself*. Yet, Sir, that was not more base than is the conduct of the factions, who make use of your name in the commission of all their acts of oppression on your people and of insult on yourself, and who pay out of the taxes, raised in your name, the expenses of calumniating you and your family.

In order the more securely to carry on their work of making the King suspect the people and the people hate the King, the factions have, step by step, cut off all communication between them. The *law*, that law which placed your Royal Highness's family upon the throne, says,

that the people have a right to *petition the King*. This is declared to make part of our "*birth-right*." This right so necessary to the King as well as people, has now been wholly set aside, as far as regards those who are in danger of being oppressed, or who may be disposed to give your Royal Highness any information displeasing to the factions. No oppressed man can cause his petition to reach your sight. The Secretary of State presents, or burns, whatever is presented to him. He, and not your Royal Highness, is the person petitioned; and with your people, you have no more communication than you have with the people of Africa.

A state of things like this never could have been wished for by any other but guilty men; by any but men who wished, and who ardently wished, to see the King and people live in mutual distrust. Not content with regulations (having the effects of laws) to prevent the King from hearing the complaints of his subjects, the factions have actually taken measures to prevent a casual approach of King and subject to the persons of each other. They have surrounded you with their civil guards and spies: they have their runners to dog your steps: they have their purveyors of the press to blind you to the truth: you are their slave, under the name of Regent.

Their audacity went so far as to surround the King with *police-officers*; and to give him for companions men famed for their adroitness at the discovering and catching of thieves. I once saw his Majesty in a race-box, into which nobody was admitted but his own Royal Family and those renowned personages *Townsend* and *M' Manus*, whose fame will endure as long as the pages of the Newgate Calendars shall exist. "What," thought I, who had just then returned from America, "and have I been so long boasting of being the *subject* of a King, who stands in need of thief-takers to guard his person, by day as well as by night?" O, no! Sir; the feelings of my own heart; the countenances of the surrounding people; every thing told me, that the degradation was *not needed*. I wondered what it could be for; but, that wonder has long since ceased. The seat-fillers have, at last, however, brought themselves into a state to need, or to think that they need, such protection. The entrance to their places of meeting is guarded by ill-looking men, with the means of death under their doublets. The entrance there now resembles that of the vaults of the Inquisition.

In common life nothing more offends inferiors in point of rank, and nothing engenders deeper hatred and resentment, than a haughty, a distant, deportment on the part of superiors. The act speaks disdain ten thousand times more plainly than words can do it. Charles II., to dislike whom there were so many good reasons, reconciled the people to him by his affability. Queen Elizabeth, the most high-toned sovereign that ever reigned in England, said to a foreign ambassador, when he, during one of her processions, asked where *her guards* were, "*These are my guards!*" pointing to the people, who are now, by those who rob them, called *the mob*. When a shot was fired into her barge, she said, that she was *sure* that it was impossible for it to have been intended to harm her. By this line of conduct, by her frequent appearance amongst *her people*, by her readiness to listen to the meanest of them, by her constantly associating their honour and their interest and safety and happiness with her own, she gained and preserved their love and admiration. And this was perfectly natural. They loved her because she continually

convinced them, as well by her acts as her words, that she made common cause with them ; and having their cordial good-will, she was enabled to govern most gloriously even while a new religion was introducing into the country. Towards those who had a share of the power in their hands she behaved with sternness enough ; but, towards *her people* she was all graciousness, kindness and confidence. She was wise : she well knew where the *strength* lay, at last.

The language which the seat-fillers now suffer the people to hear, is full of haughtiness, severity and suspicion. We now hear no gracious expressions. A *division* amongst the people is always supposed : a part is always marked out as *the disaffected* : a large portion to be restrained, or punished, or at least *watched*. New punishments, new crimes, new shackles form the main part of that which we hear of from the source of honour and mercy. It is impossible to receive any other impression from this, than that *the people* are looked upon as a body that the King suspects, and that the seat-fillers are to keep in awe.

I know of no ruler, however despotic, that may not be approached with *a petition*. To the Autocrat of Russia, any man may, in person, deliver a paper. Napoleon received petitions in the streets. In short, England is the only country in the world, where writing is practised, where any man, be he who he may, cannot present a petition to the Chief Magistrate. This is a great mischief to the Royal Family, and particularly to your Royal Highness. When men have complaints to make, they feel some mitigation of their displeasure, when they have *made their complaint*. But, to you men cannot complain ; and yet, it is in *your name* that they are *taxed* and *punished*. It is in that state, when hope leaves us, that we are most to be feared ; and what hope can we have, when we cannot hope that our prayers for redress will be *heard* ?

It matters not, may it please your Royal Highness, that *you are not the real cause* of these haughty and repulsive regulations. It is impossible for the mass of the people to know that. They find that they can have no communication with you ; they never know whether you hear them or not ; they are never informed whether you receive their petitions ; they never hear anything you say, or anything of your thoughts ; they never *see you* ; the few of them, comparatively, who see the coach in which you ride, see a bullet-proof vehicle only ; a perambulating fortress surrounded by armed cavalry ten deep, and these accompanied by an immense army of men on foot with staves in their hands, ready to seize hold of, and to drag away, as an assassin, any one whose curiosity pushes him on but a yard too near you. What a life for any man, and particularly, what a life for a *king of England*, to live ! Can I, without being guilty of the grossest slander, without committing almost treason, say that these precautions are *necessary* ? And, if they be not *necessary*, what a slander is here wantonly committed on the people !

To go forth, thus armed from head to foot, is an act the most ungracious as well as the most provoking. It is an attitude, which, at once, discovers fear and hurls defiance : an attitude, which never did, and never can, fail to excite both contempt and resentment. And *for what* is all this ? If, indeed, the people, or any part of them, had petitioned to abolish the throne, or to lessen its powers, there might have been some reason for this preparation for defence : though, even then, it would have been better to perish from the violence of their hands.

But, the people had asked only for their own rights. *They had asked

only for a Reform of their *own House of Parliament*. They did not cry out against you or any of your family: they cried out against seat-selling, and all the corruptions and perfidy of the vile wretches who deal in seats. And, for *this cause*, you were to be put into a moving fortress and to have a new treason-law passed to preserve your life!

The base usurpers know, that their cause is rotten. They know, that no man, who is not a real prostituted wretch; that no man but a public robber, in one shape or another, will attempt to defend and uphold bribery and perjury for their own sake; that no man but a villain, whom all must despise, will say, that perjury is a *right thing*. Therefore, the usurpers associate your cause with theirs. They say, "if we be not, by the means of bribery, corruption, and perjury, suffered to go on robbing the nation, the throne will be destroyed, and confusion and bloodshed will succeed property and safety." And, thus, they have on their side the *hands* of many who curse them in their *hearts*.

This is the course which they have pursued for a long series of years; and, having with them prodigious numbers, who depend solely on the debt, which must become nothing in case of reform, they stand, though they have against them so many things likely to produce their fall.

The truth is, however, that they can no longer *deceive*: they can maintain themselves no longer by *deception*: they were compelled in 1817, to throw aside the mask: and they now rule as the Dey of Algiers; that is, by mere force and terror. Yet, weak as well as wicked, as they are, they are far from being *tranquil* in their minds. They see that they have embarked with them all the timid, all the rich, all the sordid, all the public plunderers, and even the descendants of public plunderers; but, these are nothing *without the ability to continue to bribe*; and that ability, they now begin to see depends *wholly* upon the durability of the *bank-note*. This, which is a state, in which no set of rulers were ever before placed, staggers the insolent tyrants, who, for the first time in their lives, begin to reflect on what may be the consequences of their iniquity. I know that one of them has said, that it is a sorrowful thing to know, that his "*title and estates depend on what a band of base bankers shall do*;" but he forgot that that base band derived their power from a baser band, of which he was one of the most efficient and most malignant.

If the seat-fillers could place themselves in the situation of 1792, with a full view of the present perils before them, they would yield, and gladly yield. If they had now a debt (for the debt is theirs) of only two hundred and fifty millions, and could see all the consequences of raising that debt to its present amount: if they were told, and believed, that unless they agreed to a reform they must make the debt *eleven hundred millions*; that they must have Dungeon Bills, Gagging Bills, New-Treason Bills, Alien Bills, and a standing army, posted all over the country in time of peace; that they must have soldiers to guard the judges at the assize-towns, and to guard the sheriffs at the gallows; that they must employ spies and blood-money men; that the judges must be objects of what I will not name, instead of that more than religious reverence that used to belong to that great station; that they themselves must become hated, detested, abhorred by the very best people in the whole world, a people by whom their ancestors were so much respected and beloved and so cheerfully obeyed and honoured: that they must make common cause with a band of paper-money makers and loan-jobbers, degrade themselves by so vile an association, and, finally place

their sole dependence for title and estate upon a bubble, which any man might cause to burst in a few months, and that, in the meanwhile, they must assemble under the protection of *trusty* police-officers, first taking care to *inspect the caves beneath the building*: if such were now their situation and such their prospect, gladly would they close with us, and give us back our birth-right.

Such was their situation and such their real prospect in 1792. They, intent only on the present, were blind to the future. Right, reason, expediency, morality, religion: all were in favour of Reform. The usurpers, however, possessed *force*; and force they employed, without being at all aware of what the employment of that force would finally produce. They saw danger to their usurped authority and their gains attending it. To destroy those who were the cause of this danger was their only object. They never dreamt, that, out of their temporary success a ten-fold danger might arise. If your Royal Highness follow them in their progress, you will find them, at every stage of it, wholly careless about consequences, like those, which have now arisen. They have, at times, talked like coffee-house soldiers, at others like Philpot-lane negotiators, at others like Burn's Justice lawyers, at others like spies and thief-catchers, at others like stock-jobbers, at others like Bank Directors; but never, no, not upon any one occasion, like statesmen and legislators. Not a single man in either House, has ever, from first to last, seemed to have a correct idea as to the effects of their measures, and which effects are now throwing themselves in such alarming shapes. It was not until they had *completely succeeded*, that they began to see the consequences. It was not until they were drunk with joy at the thought of being able to trample on the people for ever; it was not until they had actually voted money to erect lofty columns and solemn temples with cloud-capped towers to immortalize their triumph over liberty, law and justice, that they began to perceive that there were *consequences*, of which they had never thought.

Gladly would they now be in the state of 1792, and suffer the people to have their birth-right. But they never can retrace their steps. They have now such a load of guilt upon them: they have now committed so many wicked acts: they are now so completely embarked with the Jenkinsons, Addingtons, Cannings, and Castlereaghs: they are now so entirely identified with the Olivers, and Castleases, and Reynoldses: they are now so closely allied to the Crosses, the Parson Powises, the Hampshire Parsons and the Bolton Fletchers: they have now incurred the mortal hatred of so many able and determined men: they are now the objects of such a mass of deadly vengeance, that they think it *too late* to save themselves by any means other than those of hostility. And I frankly confess, that I think their opinion correct. Their progress has been so unprincipled, so insolent, so perfidious, so cruel and bloody, that there is scarcely a town or village which has not its victims to avenge. *Ruin; kill; destroy*: this has been their unvarying cry against every living creature that opposed them. For the attainment of their object they have spared neither force nor fraud. They have had no compassion on any mortal from the poor starving woman at Manchester to the brave and loyal sailor, Cashman, who went out of the world blessing his king and country, and cursing these infamous tyrants; who are now happily reduced to an absolute dependence on a piece of thin paper not worth a farthing.

But, whatever may be their fate, it behoves every Englishman to do his best to prevent them from dragging down the crown along with

them ; and, therefore, in the ensuing letters, I shall fully state to your Royal Highness my thoughts upon this important subject.

I am,

May it please your Royal Highness,

Your most obedient

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

TO HIS

ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE PRINCE REGENT,

ON THE DANGERS TO WHICH THE CROWN MAY BE EXPOSED,
BY ITS BEING IDENTIFIED WITH THOSE WHO TRAFFIC IN
SEATS, AND IN BRIBERY, CORRUPTION, AND PERJURY, AT A
TIME WHEN A SUDDEN BLOWING-UP OF THE PAPER-MONEY
SHALL TAKE PLACE.

(*Political Register*, March, 1819.)

LETTER II.

North Hampstead, Long Island, January 5th, 1819.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS :

Before I proceed to address your Royal Highness on the subject of preserving the Crown and preventing universal confusion, it is my duty to endeavour to convince you that there exists danger ; and this I shall do in the present letter.

Those, whose object it is to amuse and deceive your Royal Highness, give you accounts of the amazing *resources* of the country ; and, we all well know, that its resources are surprisingly great ; and, not only great in amount, but, when things are in their natural state, of such a nature and deposited and bestowed in such a way and in the hands of such a people, as to make them ten-fold *in effect* what resources of equal mere magnitude are in some other cases. All those who know any thing of the uses of property in England, or who know any thing of the character and habits of the people, must estimate very highly the resources of the country. Those only, who are under the blindness of ignorance or of envy, can suppose it possible, that England ever can, for any length of time, become a feeble, insignificant country. It belongs to politicians like the Edinburgh Reviewers, who, at reading the romances about America, burst cut into prophecies relative to the *power* and *glory* of immense regions, which now are but a wilderness : it belongs to such men, and only to such men, to estimate the resources of a country by fertility of soil and extent of acres. Dunderheaded Chalmers and thief-taker Colqu-

houn, have displayed the strength and resources of England in a *guess* at the number of pigs, sheep, beeves, and so forth, in which respect the United States far surpass Great Britain and Ireland.

The thief-catcher's book was clearly intended to gain him a title; though I do hope, that your Royal Highness will not be induced to bid him rise up a Baronet, at any rate; though, after Sir BATE DUDLEY, it is difficult to say what may not be expected. The thief-catcher labours hard to show, that the pigs, sheep, beeves, horses, mares, colts, cocks and hens, are *so numerous*, that *the amount of the debt is nothing at all*; or, at least, nothing worth speaking of.

This is the sort of stuff, by the means of which the people's minds have been buoyed up for the last twenty-six years. No man pretends that England has not great resources, particularly in the ingenuity, industry, and punctuality of her people; and, which is of more value than all the rest, in their *public spirit*, their love of country, their pride of country; in which respect they exceed the people of any other country in the world.

But, Sir, the resources of the country; that is to say, the mere amount of the valuable things in a country, has very little to do with the safety of the Government of that country; nor has it but very little to do in certain cases with the happiness of the people; nor with the capacity of the nation for great enterprise. A nation may possess the soil of Egypt, the population of China, the mines of Peru, and yet have *no resources at all*; for, with all these, it may be unable to bring any of its means so to act as to make the people safe in their persons at home, or to defend themselves against an invader. England, at this moment, is not very far from this state; for, while her people are shut up in dungeons with impunity to the oppressors, her resources are so managed as to render her wholly incapable of carrying on war.

However, the view to which I am about humbly to endeavour to draw the attention of your Royal Highness is of a very different description from that of these pig-pokers and hen-roost peepers; a view more worthy, I hope, of being presented to your mind.

If, by *the resources* of a country, we mean the *things of value* in it, these may abound to an incalculable extent, and yet they may tend to the destruction, rather than to the preservation of the Government; for, if the part which ought to remain with some men be taken away and given to other men, the greater the quantity of valuable things, the greater the quantity of injustice, and the greater the quantity of ill-will and irritation. *Labour* is one of the articles of value, and it is of more value than all the other things put together. But, if the men who labour have the *half of its produce taken from them*, the greater the quantity of labour the greater the danger to those who cause this act of injustice. In such a community no harmony can exist: the oppressed must *wish*, at least, for the destruction of the oppressors, and, whenever they can do it with a chance of success, they will seek their destruction.

But, these reflections aside, valuable things are of *no value* to any man, unless he can *use* them. Stockings are of no value to the stocking-maker, unless he can turn them into bread and meat and house, and so forth. Horses are of no use to the horse-breeder, unless he can turn them into other things. Land is of no use to the landowners, unless they can turn their annual worth into other things, or, indeed, unless they really eat dirt, which, from the muddiness of the heads of most of

them, one would almost suppose them to do. Nor are the valuable things of a country of any use to that country in war, unless they can be turned into soldiers and sailors and implements of war.

It follows, then, of course, that, except in the *hunter-life*, where every man provides everything for himself, nothing is of any value, which cannot, by some means or other, be turned into some other thing. In a very thinly settled country, where each family provides for the greater part of its wants, and where the wants are few in number, this transmutation may, with great inconvenience, be effected by the exchanging one valuable thing for another of a different nature but of equal value. But, this mode of dealing, if greatly inconvenient in the half-hunter-life, becomes intolerable in a populous community, and, indeed, it is impossible.

Hence men sought a *standard of value*, a sign which they might give to each other; and this has, with us, taken the name of *money*. Clearly, therefore, this must be a thing of vast importance, seeing that, without it, *nothing is of any value* at all; seeing that, without it, the stocking-maker must eat and drink his stockings, or be starved, and that the landowner must dress out his wife and daughters in dirt, or, at best, in boughs and grass. BURTON, in his foolish and base speech, which he called a *defence* of the Duke of York, told a rigmarole story about some bishop having told him, that when he was tutor to some of the Royal Dukes, he never could make them clearly *understand the value of money*; which is likely to have been true enough, though coming from a bishop; for, besides that the bishop might not have a very clear mode of conveying his meaning, I dare say his ideas of the value of money went no further than the very simple business of hoarding, the utility of which it would indeed have been strange if a prince had been able to comprehend. But, to the value of money as a *performer of labour* and as a *cement of civil society*, the Royal Dukes would, I hope, have paid attention.

SWIFT, who, in one short and beautiful poem, has more sound and useful matter on political economy than is contained in all Adam Smith's bulky volumes, calls money "the *life-blood of the nation*." And it is really nothing less; for, without it, not a member can stir. If disordered, the whole frame instantly feels the effects. If too abundant, the lenders are ruined. If too small in quantity, the borrowers are ruined, and the pennyless starved. If wholly stopped in its circulation, the society, if populous, is dissolved, and even if not populous, plunged into confusion.

A matter of such vital importance has never, heretofore, been left to the management of any hands but those of the *sovereign*, under whatever name he has been acknowledged. In England, to make and issue money, has, until of late years, been an attribute belonging solely to the king; to usurp this function of royalty is *treason* at Common Law; many men have suffered, and justly suffered, as *traitors*, for the act: and yet, we now behold a band of money-makers, issuing false money, too, and hanging men for imitating their false and fraudulent money.

Without a true money; without a true standard of value; without this there can be no *contracts*. The denomination of the law is: "*good and lawful money*." But, no good and lawful money can there be, if any man, or body of men, any company or any band, can change the value of the money at their pleasure; and as often as their whims, or their interests may dictate. At every change a sweeping violation of contracts takes place; a *treason* is committed at every change; and, I

do most sincerely hope, that your Royal Highness will have to order the execution of many of the traitors, in spite of their Bills of Indemnity. Empson and Dudley were hanged, though they pleaded Acts of Parliament in their defence. These were the real conspirators and traitors in January, 1817. The dungeons ought to have sounded with their groans; the gallows ought to have lifted them, and not the brave Cashman, into the air.

However, it is of the yet unaccomplished acts of these traitors that I have, at present, to speak. In order that the *standard of value*; in order that so very important a thing as the *sole cement of society* should be exposed to no danger of injury, or destruction, at least, it has wisely been the practice of all nations to make it consist, not only of materials little liable to perish, but, from their comparative *rareness* and the *labour expended in getting at them*, of great intrinsic value, in proportion to their weight. Having taken these precautions, and having confined the power of issuing to the sovereign, a nation might with truth say, that it had a *standard of value*, or a *money*. But, when the king was robbed of his exclusive right of coining and uttering the money, and when the component matter of the money was changed from the precious metals to *paper*, there was *no standard of value*, and the property of every man lay prostrate at the feet of the new money-makers, their associates, abettors and protectors.

Suffer me to explain to your Royal Highness *how* it is that the paper-money crew pillage your father's people. They make paper-money. They lend the money so made, taking what they, in their cheating jargon, call a *discount*. Therefore, the borrower, when he brings the money back, brings a quantity, suppose a *hundred pounds*, more than he has received. With this hundred pounds the money-makers *buy an acre of land*. This is the way they plunder; this is the way they grow rich; this is the way they are enabled to live like princes, while princes and people live like beggars. If, indeed, they lent *real money*; if they lent even paper *for which they had given any thing of value*, they would have a right to their *discount*; because they have a right to receive interest for their money. But, they *make* the thing they lend. It is the representative of nothing but their *will*; and their will is to take away the property of others. If they were *liable* to be called upon for payment in money, not of their own making, the case would be different. But, they are not. They were protected by what is called law against the just demands of their creditors. Not only can no creditor touch their bodies; he cannot touch their lands and goods; he cannot take back any part of his own property, of which they have defrauded him.

One of the great reasons, which have long been acted upon by nations, in lodging the sole power of making, issuing and regulating money; one of the great reasons for lodging this power in the hands of the *sovereign solely*, was, that the sovereign could not, by possibility, be suspected to make, or to wish to make, a *dishonest use of this power*. The sovereign, unless supposition would admit a monster to become a sovereign, could not possibly have a *selfish motive* for any act calculated to injure the *great mass of the people*, and especially if the same act tended to throw the nation into confusion. But, if such were lodged in the hands of any private person, or any body of private persons, then the holders of such would naturally use it for their own advantage, be the consequences to the people at large what they might.

And thus has it been with that audacious and rapacious body, called the Bank of England, who, from a Company of Merchants, have, in conjunction with the seat-dealers, become the real sovereigns of England, as far as power is concerned. While this Company were held by the law; as long as they were subject to the ordinary laws of the land; as long as they were compelled to make good their pecuniary engagements, or to answer the complaints made against them in the king's courts; so long the king was master. But, from the moment, that they had a protection against the ordinary laws, they became the arbiters of the property of all men. They, by their sole will, determined what the king should receive in the shape of taxes, and whether contracts between man and man should be fulfilled or broken.

These money-makers are now protected and upheld by the seat-fillers, by annual Bills of Protection; and, while this state of things lasts, there can be no *certainty* for property. There can, in fact, be no property, seeing that nothing is worth having with a *real money*. This combination of tyrants can, at any time, make money plenty, or scarce. They, to-day, can ruin all the lenders of money, and all creditors; they can make debts and bonds and settlements and annuities worth not a quarter part of the value agreed for. They can *reduce* rents, wages of servants, and every thing in the same proportion. Then, in the course of a few months, they can ruin all the borrowers and debtors. They can augment the value of debts of all kinds; they can double or triple rents, wages, and every thing, payment on account of which is contracted for. Works of this description they have carried on; and they can repeat them at their sole will and pleasure. It was this band of usurping coiners, who caused the severe pressure of misery in 1816 and 1817. Their seat-dealing associates ascribed the misery to a *sudden transition from war to peace*, and they ascribed the discontents of the people to my "*Two-penny Trash*." But it was the coiners who produced the misery, and it was reason which produced the complaints of the people.

What a monstrous power, then, is this! If a king were to ask for such power, if he were to show a desire to obtain the absolute power of causing all contracts to be violated at his pleasure, and to render his people miserable whenever he pleased; if he were openly to endeavour to obtain the absolute power of inflicting starvation on a majority of his people, that people would be fully justified in destroying him as a monster, unfit to live. Yet, the seat-dealers and their bank have not only sought for such power; but they have obtained it and *exercised* it.

This is something wholly *new* in the affairs of nations. Such a thing never existed before. Paper-money, banks, bubbles, have before existed; but a power like this was never before heard of in the world; and this power has been created by the seat-dealers, solely for the purpose of obtaining the means of upholding their own usurpation.

But, happily for the nation, this monstrous, this diabolical power, contains within itself the sure means of its own destruction. It is of the very essence of this power, that the money made by the usurpers is, in itself, *worth nothing*, and that it is not exchangeable into real money at the will of the holder; because, the moment it becomes so exchangeable, the *power ceases*. The king's coin becomes the standard of value, and he again is, in this respect, at least, the *real sovereign*. And, it is this *intrinsic worthlessness* of the sham money that ensures its destruction, and also the destruction of every thing which depends on it for existence.

Such a money, false and mischievous as it is, may, when once it has, either by force or fraud, been made to usurp the lawful money, last for a considerable time, even though *all* the people well know how false and base and mischievous it is. For, money is so necessary to every minute of the life of man; it is so completely the "life-blood" of civil society, that it cannot be done without for a single day, without producing the greatest of inconveniences, and, indeed, without producing, in a populous country, evils of the most terrible description, unless there be uncommon wisdom and energy at the head of affairs. All the people; every man and every woman may detest this spurious money as heartily as I do, and yet they may feel half-frozen with horror at the thought of the nation being left, only for a day, *without money*. Hence they look at the system with detestation, while they fear to see it destroyed. But, indeed, if these feelings of fear had no weight at all: if these feelings did not exist, men's *daily and hourly necessities* would make them acquiesce in the system, so far as to *use* the paper; and, if I myself were now under the sway of this complicated system of violence and fraud, I must take and pass the paper, or go without food and clothing. Nay, your Royal Highness, whose authority is, by this vile and impudent system, usurped, and whose office it degrades and insults, cannot dine, or ride out without the aid of this base money.

So that its existing and passing current, and being sought after and kept with care, are no proofs, nor signs, of its goodness or stability; but, they are complete proofs of the vast powers of money, of its indispensable necessity, and of the confusion that must inevitably arise from a total, or even a partial want of it. And hence we come to consider the dangers to the *Crown* and to the *people*, which are involved in this fraudulent system.

The counterfeiting of the king's coin to a great extent would, by creating distrust in many persons, produce great alarm and confusion. But, besides that, to do this wicked act to a very great extent, is a work of extreme difficulty: there is, in the coin, an intrinsic value to rest on, and, as to the distinguishing of counterfeits, there are, in the nature of the coins themselves, in the materials of which they are composed, certain qualities which prove their goodness, and which qualities are easily *ascertained* by almost every person in trade, and, indeed, by a great part of the labourers and mechanics. So that, from a counterfeiting of coin no very great and general evil can arise. There is a *part*, at least, of the standard of value left in circulation, however sweeping the art of counterfeiting may be. But, the base rubbish now in circulation has no foundation to rest on. It depends on mere opinion. Or, rather, on the mere supposition, or hope, or presumption of the *taker* of it, that he shall be able to pass it again. He has a horse, he wants a cow in exchange, and, if the bank-note will but answer the purpose of the transmutation, it *serves his turn*. But, let any thing happen, which shall make him afraid to let the horse go for the note, lest no one will give him a cow for it: let this happen, and the nation is *without money*. The standard of value is gone, and there can be no buying and selling.

It is not here as in the case of a sweeping counterfeiting of coin; for, in the case of the coin, there is always *something* left as a standard for temporary use, at any rate. This gives breathing time. Prices fall, perhaps, prodigiously, and contracts must be violated; but still, it is impossible, that there should not be left the means of keeping people quiet

till things can be put to rights a little. Not thus in the case of the paper, which if a good blow be given it, falls at once. It is not a night, with moon or stars to succeed the sun, and brought on by degrees : it is total darkness and darkness all at once by the extinguishment of the sun.

I beg your Royal Highness to contemplate the consequences of this, at least, *possible case*. Amongst the least of the consequences would be a total stop to all commerce and every species of dealing. The rich would have nothing to distinguish them from the poor, except their inferiority in point of capacity to obtain and use the necessaries of life ; for, vain is the imagination of him who can hope, that, in such a state of things, and in such a country as England, and especially in such a city as London, *laws* would have any force, or that any thing like peace and order could be preserved, except by general voluntary consent. Foolish is the man, who supposes, that he could obtain temporary subsistence by his promises or his credit. Physical force would be fed first ; and the right of the strongest would return backed and urged on by a mass of resentment, such as mankind never before witnessed.

In such a state of things of what use would be these *resources* of which the pompous thief-catcher, Colquhoun, talks ? The number of *hares* and *conies* would signify very little, I believe. The beeves and the colts, and the cocks and the hens would avail the nation little. The debt and the fundholders would be as completely forgotten as if they were clods of earth or tufts of grass. The army would melt down instantly into the mass of seekers for victuals and drink. The scene would be surpassed in sublimity of horror by nothing that the world has ever heard of, except by that of the last judgment, as described by St. John the Divine.

I am not to suppose either want of talent, of courage, or of inclination in your Royal Highness to perform your duty upon any occasion ; but, I may, and do, doubt the use of any talent, courage or inclination in a case like this, unless your mind be *now* duly impressed with *the possibility of the occasion arising*, and unless you be *prepared beforehand* with a set of measures to be put into *instant execution*. And, upon these two topics it now remains for me to address your Royal Highness.

I am fully convinced, that such an event, such an end of the paper-system, is not only *possible*, but *very likely*. Your Royal Highness will permit me to observe, that Mr. TIERNEY, in his last year's opposition to the Paper-coiner's Protecting Bill, declared in the most solemn manner, that if that Bill should pass, the system would end in a horrid *convulsion* : so that I, as to this particular, only join in sentiment with him. The Bill *did pass* ; and, unless the debt be reduced, another such a bill must pass ; or, the thing ends at once by the hands of those who have created it, and under whose hands it has grown to its present magnitude of enormity.

When Mr. TIERNEY made his speech, the idea of the whole fabric of fraud being blown-up at once by the distribution of notes, after the manner practised against the French assignats, had not been publicly started ; though I now find, that there are several gentlemen in *England*, who lay claim to the invention. At any rate it did not originate with me. The moment I heard of it I made it public ; for doing which I merit, I am vain enough to hope, the thanks of all real friends of the king and country. There appears to be no doubt, in the mind of any man of common sense, that, *if put ably into execution*, the mode of attack could

not, by any possibility, fail of being successful to the entire extent ; and I again most solemnly assure your Royal Highness, that my firm belief is, that it will be ably, and most ably, put into execution, unless the object of destruction be, by some means or other, speedily removed. I state this my conviction to your Royal Highness, from a sense of duty towards his Majesty and the people. I would, if any written paper of mine could be delivered to you sealed, state to you all the grounds on which this conviction rests ; but, no consideration shall induce me to commit anything to the discretion of such a man as he who sent RILEY to a dungeon : no man protected by a Bill of Indemnity shall hold a paper written by me.

The facility of imitating a worthless money must always exist ; because that which one man can make, another man can make, the materials being within the reach of all men. The terrors of the gibbet have not prevented imitation of the spurious money in England, and that, too, to a very great extent, by needy persons, who make the imitations for the sake of mere food and raiment, and who carry on the work under every disadvantage that can be imagined. Even these poor distressed and desperate men have been able to give the paper-system a *rude shock*. What, then, may not be apprehended from a coolly devised plan of imitation and circulation ! And, your Royal Highness will please to observe, that such a plan may be, if the thing were to go on, acted upon by any hostile nation, in time of war. It would be a work of *some difficulty* for France or America, in war-time between either of them and England, to spread about in England imitations of the base money ; but, Sir, what are difficulties in the face of half a million of money ; and what would that sum be to either of those nations, as the price of the overthrow of their enemy ? With that sum every street in London might be sowed with bank-notes. Some of the American prisoners of war in Dartmoor Prison made bank-notes in the prison ; purchased their way out with the notes ; travelled to Ireland with the notes ; and with the notes purchased their conveyance out to sea to be put into American privateers, in which they attacked the English commerce. I had this information from one of the parties ; and he gave reasons and facts to convince me of the truth of his story. The effects of this false and base money are mischievous beyond all the bounds of imagination.

We want no other proof of the impossibility of discerning an *inimitable* money, which is, at the same time, *worthless* in itself, than the fact, that the coiners of the English money have applied to foreign artists to assist them in devising the means of preventing imitation. A Royal Commission has been appointed ; and, only think, Sir, of a *Royal Commission*, appointed to inquire into the mode of *making promissory notes for a Company of Merchants* ! A Royal Commission to consult with them as to the best means of upholding their traffic ! That is to say, to consult with them what is best to do, in order to enable them to continue their power of plundering the nation ! Nothing speaks more plainly than this appointment. What need have a king and houses of Parliament to care about the affairs of this particular Company of Merchants ? Why should a Royal Commission interfere in their particular concerns, any more than in the concerns of any other company ? The cause is clear ; those who recommended this appointment, were convinced, that the whole system of *sway* in England, rested entirely upon the paper of these merchants, and on the further conviction, that this paper could no longer stand, unless the imitation of it could be effectually prevented.

The Bank in London was offered, by Mr. MEAR of Philadelphia, a plan for making their notes *inimitable*. They refused the offer, upon the ground, *that they never relied on the artist*. The answer was sensible; for, indeed, no reliance can be placed there. Yet, finding that *secret marks* will no longer serve their purpose; finding that *juries* no longer feel disposed to find men guilty on evidence founded on *secrets* which the *witnesses will not divulge to the juries*; finding this, the *artists* are, it seems, to be *relied on*; and, which is quite a new thing, *foreign artists* are applied to for their aid! It is imagined, that by rendering the imitation *expensive*, it will be rendered impossible to common men. The best proof that it cannot be rendered expensive is, that the *patent notes* of the Philadelphia fabric are now imitated here and in Canada with the greatest success; so successfully as to impose on the Banks themselves.

Besides, Sir, what is the *expense*? Only a few hundreds of pounds; or, at most, a few thousands. Suppose a purse were found by only a few of those men, who have left their native country, because they could not any longer enjoy their property there; suppose a plan deliberately digested by these men, with all the opportunity of examining specimens and consulting artists; suppose this plan put into execution; suppose the whole business to be conducted with ability; in such a case the false money *must* be destroyed; and, if destroyed in this way, all the consequences of a sudden total want of a standard of value must inevitably follow.

I am aware, that those who have the real power in England *now* see this danger; and, I suppose that, seeing it, they will *endeavour* to provide against it. To do this, however, they have no means, other than such as would, though step by step, *put an end* to the paper-money. What measures they may adopt I do not pretend even to *guess* at. Whether they will reduce the debt, and, by that means, make a return to real money *possible*. Whether they will do this in *direct terms*, or, by a reduction of the value of the paper, this reduction being effected by giving to the real money an augmented denomination. Whether they will make *two prices*, a money price and a paper price, and demand, in the receiving of taxes, a larger nominal sum in paper than in coin: there is no guessing at what they may do, or attempt to do. Their plans and shifts and tricks and shuffles are matter of curiosity rather than of interest, seeing that the *result* must be the total destruction of the false, base, and mischievous paper.

There is no man, who now believes, that this scandalous system of fraud and oppression can *much longer* exist; and yet, no man, in his senses, believes, that coin can resume its place without a very serious *shock* of some kind. The lowering of prices to the standard of coin would, if there were *no debt and no taxes*, produce something nearly amounting to general confusion. Contracts must, even in that case, be *revised* by public authority, and debts must be lowered in their amount by the same authority. To bring back the paper to the state of 1792, which I believe to be impossible, would produce effects nearly similar, even if there were no greater debt and taxes than then existed. The private affairs of all men are affected by the system, which cannot be changed without public authority to arrange and settle those affairs so as to make them correspond with the change in the system, or without inflicting *starvation* on a majority of the people. And this, may it please

your Royal Highness, is on the supposition of little, or no, debt and taxes ; to which I will add the supposition of there being no injuries, nor recollection of injuries, rankling in the breasts of the people; and, I will, moreover, suppose the people to be as ignorant of these matters now as they were before, the " *Two-penny Trash*," convinced them that butchers, bakers, millers and farmers, were not the cause of their misery and the proper objects of their vengeance.

If in such a state of things, a return to coin, or, to part coin and part paper, would produce *confusion*, what would such return produce *now* ? And, what then would be the consequence of a *sudden* and complete annihilation of the paper ? It is of no importance if we believe, that it is *not likely* that this latter will ever take place : it is sufficient for us to know that it *can* take place whenever it be judiciously attempted. Your Royal Highness may think, that my information as to the *likelihood* is incorrect ; but, in order to induce your Royal Highness to endeavour to be *prepared* for such an event ; to be sure, that it is in the power of any man to produce it by the judicious use of a thousand pounds, it is much more than sufficient. And, therefore, in my next letter, I shall have humbly to beseech the attention of your Royal Highness to my opinion as to *the means of preserving the Crown and preventing universal confusion, in case of a sudden blowing-up of the paper-money.*

I am, may it please your Royal Highness,

Your most humble
And most obedient servant,
WM. COBBETT.

TO HIS

ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE PRINCE REGENT,
ON THE MEANS OF PRESERVING THE CROWN AND OF PREVENTING
UNIVERSAL CONFUSION, IN CASE OF A SUDDEN BLOWING-
UP OF THE PAPER-MONEY.

(*Political Register, March, 1819.*)

LETTER III.

North Hampstead, Long Island, Jan. 12th, 1819.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS :

In the two foregoing letters I have shown, I think, that the Borough-mongers have done great injury to the king and his family as well as to the people ; that it has been their unvarying policy to assail each, alternately, by the means of aid afforded by the other ; that, at last, however, they have brought their affairs into a state of great danger ; that their power now depends solely upon the duration of a fictitious money ; and that, in case of a destruction of that money, the crown must, as matter of course, be exposed to great danger, if it be in the minds of people,

identified with these traffickers in bribery, corruption and perjury. It, therefore, now only remains for me humbly to lay before your Royal Highness my opinion as to the means, which ought to be employed, in order to obviate that danger. I am fully aware of the powers of delusion; I know well how difficult it is for your Royal Highness to be induced to believe, that there *exists any danger*: I know well that we may listen to the most glaring falsehoods, till we regard them as undoubted truths: I know how prone all men, and princes rather more than others, are to be slow to see any danger which calls upon them for great exertion; I know how ready we are to repose *confidence* in any bold promiser, who pledges himself for our protection. But, still, I am in hopes, that your Royal Highness has now seen enough of the seat-fillers to doubt, at least, of their wisdom and capacity, as well as of their disposition to do any thing efficient for the preservation of the crown and for the people's safety in case of a sudden blowing-up of the paper-money.

Surely we ought, in their case, as in the case of all other men, to judge of their capacity by their past actions, and the effect of those actions. They themselves acknowledge, that the country is in a *state of difficulty*; they themselves acknowledge, that *danger exists*; they have, in full peace, an army of a hundred and fifty thousand men on foot; dungeon-bills, gagging-bills, new treason-bills; and they have indemnity-bills to protect themselves against the operation of the ordinary laws of the land. Yet, they boast, that they have *succeeded* in their enterprise; and they have voted large sums of the people's money for the purpose of erecting monuments to commemorate the glory of that *success*. If such, then, be the effects of their *past success*, what hope can your Royal Highness have from any future *success* of theirs?

There is nothing, may it please your Royal Highness, by which we can judge of the wisdom of statesmen and legislators, but the *effects* produced upon the nation, during the operation of their measures. The seat-fillers have, since the year 1792, adopted and pursued a certain set, a series, of measures. Nobody has been able to thwart them. They have, by force or by fraud, had at their command, and have used at their pleasure, all the resources of a great kingdom; they have had all the purses and all the persons of a great nation at their absolute command. They have done just what they pleased. They have been restrained by no customs of the land; no law, written or unwritten; no law of nature or of nations; no considerations of compassion for sex or age. The property and the people of the whole kingdom have been as completely under their control as the shoes upon their feet.

And, what is the result? To what a state have they brought this concern of theirs! How do we *now* find that nation which was so happy when they took it in hand to manage it according to their own new system? We find it with *twelve millions* of annual poor-rates, instead of *two millions and a half*. We find it with a debt of *eleven hundred millions*, instead of *two hundred and fifty millions*. We find it with a tax of ten pounds upon every *eighteen pounds worth of labour*, instead of a tax of *two pounds* upon the same worth of labour. We find it with a false, base paper-money, upheld by the horrors of the gibbet, and by annual bills of indemnity, and still exposed to instant destruction; instead of seeing it with a king's coin, solid and sure as the earth we walk on. We find it with jails of five-fold dimensions, and with transportings and hangings five-fold in number.

If such be the *result* and we all know, that it is the result, of the measures of these seat-fillers ; if nobody can deny the existence of this result, what ground of confidence do *they* present to your Royal Highness ? Upon the supposition (a very strange one, to be sure) that they have *meant well* ; that they really meant, to do *no harm* ; to the King or people ; that, though they were resolved to keep their power, they meant not to bring the people to starvation and the throne into jeopardy : upon this supposition, does the result of their plans and measures warrant any reliance on their wisdom *for the future* ? But, at any rate, we must suppose them to have meant, and ardently desired, to provide for *their own safety*. It is impossible to believe, that they ever meant to place every inch of their land in *pawn* to scrip-dealers ; to expose themselves to a forfeiture of the pledge ; and at the same time to render themselves so viewed by the people at large, as to need for their protection a large standing army, dungeon-bills, gagging-bills, new treason-bills, soldier's-talking-to-death-bills, spies, blood-money men, and, besides all these, police-officers to watch over them in their very lobbies. It is impossible to believe, that they ever *meant* to place themselves in this situation. They have done, therefore, that which they did *not mean to do*. Their plans and measures have produced effects contrary to the effects that they were intended to produce. What reliance can there be, therefore, on their wisdom *for the future* ?

If your Royal Highness condescend to think on the grounds and arguments put forward by them for the adoption of some of their most prominent measures, you will easily perceive abundant proofs of their want of capacity for the managing of even those affairs of the nation, in which their own interests were deeply involved. Who, that had professed capacity to provide against the now-existing perils of the country, would have ever thought of making the Bank pay in specie, without first reducing the interest of the debt : when it was obvious, and when it was told them by so humble an individual as I am, that such a measure, which was, besides, hideously unjust in itself, *must* spread ruin and famine over the kingdom ? Who, that had capacity for great affairs, would have issued a new coinage, at a moment when, in order to put a stop to general starvation, it was absolutely necessary again to put forth paper-money in quantity sufficient to cause that new coinage to be melted down and exported ? Who, that possessed any capacity at all for thinking, would have talked, from year to year, of a return to cash-payments, when every year afforded new proof, that the thing, without a reduction of the debt, could never take place ? Who, that was not, in point of capacity, below the level of common labourers, would have, one year, believed and acted upon the belief, that cheap corn was a national evil and was the cause of want of employment, and would, the very next, have believed and acted upon the belief, that dear corn was a national evil and the cause of want of employment ? Who, not that possessed mental capacity, but that had even a cavity in the skull intended for brains ; whose very formation did not exhibit a want of the possibility of conception and comparison, would ever have proposed, amongst his remedies for a want of employment, to set men to dig holes one day, and to fill them up the next ?

Your Royal Highness has been precluded, by your rank, from being amongst the *hearers* of these people. If you could once *hear* them, all doubts as to what may be expected from their *foresight* and other useful endowments would soon vanish from your mind. But, at any rate, you

have before your eyes the result of their *past* plans and measures ; and this result will, I confidently hope, be quite sufficient to make you listen, at least, to what I am now about most humbly to submit to your Royal consideration.

In whatever way the paper-bubble shall burst, it will give rise to occasion for great *energy* as well as great *wisdom* at the *helm* ; and at that helm your Royal Highness will, I trust, firmly stand. There is *now* no patching up of the paper-system for any length of time ; and, it has so completely wound itself into the private affairs of every one, that its dissolution must, happen in what manner it will, and when it will, give a rude shock to the whole fabric of the Government. But, what I contemplate, as being within the compass, not only of *possibility*, but of *likelihood*, is, a *sudden* blowing-up of the paper-money ; a sudden bursting of the bubble, from causes, and attended with immediate effects, such as those which I have already done myself the honour to describe to your Royal Highness. What aid, in such an emergency, your Royal Highness would be able to derive from the seat-fillers I must leave you, after all that you know of them, to determine ; but, I am of opinion, that you, acting in the name and on the behalf of his Majesty, would be able to do every thing necessary to the safety of the crown and of the nation.

In 1806, when the nation had just been delivered from that great enemy of king and people, the late William Pitt, and when a New Ministry had been formed, including in it the late Mr. Windham, I addressed, and delivered a memorial to that gentleman on the subject of the *extinction of the debt* ; and, as many of the suggestions, contained in that Memorial, are applicable now, I will first beg leave to lay before your Royal Highness a copy of that paper ; to which I shall humbly add other suggestions, called for by the changes which have since taken place.

" SIR,—You are now a *Minister*, and, therefore, a thing, which I deem of the utmost moment, and which has, up to this time, been a subject of conversation only, I will now take the liberty to make the subject of a written and formal communication.

" In your eloquent speech of the other night, you dwelt, with great force, on the danger which we have to apprehend from the never-ceasing encroachments of the *Usurper* of France. Without any desire to speak slightly of those dangers, I must say, that I think nothing of them, when I compare them with the dangers to be apprehended from the never-ceasing encroachments of the *Usurpers* in Threadneedle-street. The former are visible, they require nothing but loyalty, public-spirit, and bravery, to face and overcome them ; but, the latter are invisible, and, if suffered to proceed but a little further, will become such as to render loyalty, public-spirit and bravery, of no avail. These *Usurpers* have already assumed some of the most important functions of the King and even of the Parliament. This *muck-worm* and *bloodsucker*, as Lord Chatham justly called it, collects money at its pleasure under the name of subscriptions ; it makes itself a fountain of honours and rewards for military and naval services, it grants pensions and heir-looms, it bestows badges of distinction ; and, which is, indeed, more than all the rest, it has taken wholly to itself the high prerogative of making, issuing, and affixing a value on, the *money* of the country ; which prerogative is, in point of efficiency, the very highest that can belong to a sovereign.

" You will please to observe, Sir, that a King, in the exercising of this mighty prerogative, has numerous legal checks, besides the absence of all particular and private interests, and besides his acts relating to metallic *coin*, having an intrinsic value. But, on these *Usurpers* there is, and can be, *no check*, while they are strongly urged, by their particular private interests to do as much as they can in a way that must of necessity draw away the fruits of labour to be consumed by those who do not labour.

"But in the end, if these encroachments be suffered to proceed, there will be no certainty in any pecuniary transaction. There is no property but as it is made of use by money. They are inseparable in society. Render one uncertain, and that act renders the other uncertain. Leave the money at the absolute command of the muck-worm, and all your property is at the mercy of the muck-worm.

"I am, however, well aware that the muck-worm is not to be stopped in his ravages as long as interest shall be paid upon the debt; and, therefore, I am for *extinguishing* that debt; or, in other words, for paying no longer any interest upon it. For holding and promulgating this my wish, I have been charged with *injustice* and *cruelty*. In the Registers of the 25th of January, the 22nd of February, and the 1st of this present month, I have, I hope, clearly shown, that this charge against me is unjust; and, also, that the measure I propose is *just* and *necessary*, unless it be maintainable, that the nation ought to perish rather than ruin the fundholders.

"Nevertheless, as I seriously propose this measure for adoption, it is my duty frankly to state my opinions with regard to the dangers which might arise out of it; and with regard to the means which ought to be adopted for the meeting of those dangers.

"The sweeping away of the debt would sweep away the whole system of paper-money, which could not be again speedily revived. One consequence would be, the loss of income to a great number of persons. But this would not be so terrible a thing as one might, at first thought, suppose. For, the very talking of the measure in Parliament would alarm those who had their *all* in the Funds. These would sell out, in whole or in part; for there would be speculators as long as a hundred three per cents. would sell for twenty silver shillings. The servants and trades people of the fundholders, for a great part of whom reside in or near London, would be a more formidable body; but, the incomes, which would remain in the hands of others, would very quickly invite and employ those servants and tradesmen, while the enormous burdens *now imposed on labourers and artisans to support idlers*, would cease, and their cessation would be hailed with universal acclamation.

"But, then, there comes a danger, compared with which, those above-mentioned are not worthy of a moment's notice. The very proposition to extinguish the debt, would throw such discredit upon the paper, that it would not sell for five shillings in the pound for real money. Every piece of gold, silver and copper, would come forth into circulation; the guineas and half-guineas would flock in from abroad; as, in the case of the assignats of France, our paper would, to our great surprise, be almost instantly replaced by real money. But, the *quantity* of this would be so small in comparison with that of the paper, which it would supplant, that *prices would fall amazingly*, and, though this would not affect *present dealings*, it would affect all contracts, in such a way as to spread about ruin with an unsparring hand, unless means were promptly adopted to set this matter to rights.

"The first measure, therefore, would be an Act of Parliament to appoint a commission to sit in every county, and to change the place of its sittings from market-town to market-town. This commission should have full power to reduce debts of all sorts, rent, interest, and, in short, to make the letter of every contract agree with its spirit. I will not trouble you with *detail*. That would easily be arranged. Thus, no injustice would arise from the change in the quantity and value of the currency. Men would stand upon precisely the same footing towards each other that they stood on before the change. This measure should be *ready*, and well digested beforehand. The Act should suspend all *process* for debt; and allow defendants, in actions for debt, to plead the Act and the decision of the Commission.

"It will hardly be said, that the Parliament has not the *power* to pass such an Act; but if this should be said, you have, first, the precedent set by the Parliaments, which, in 1797, protected the Bank against the demands of its creditors, which stopped process against it, and which has continued to do the same from that day to this. You have also the precedent of the Parliament, which in 1800, suspended the process in actions of debt brought against many of the clergy, though these actions were grounded upon express Act of Parliament. This suspension of process was continued for two years; and, then by a third Act of Parliament, the debts were *annihilated*, and the plaintiff ruined by the payment of costs!

"With these precedents before us, it will hardly be pretended, that there is any deficiency of *power* in the Parliament. Surely the same body, which has so long protected the Bank against the demands, the legal demands, of its creditors, and which protected the clergy in the same sort of way, can protect other debtors for a few weeks while the Commissioners are adjusting the amount of the demands against them.

"As to the fundholders, I would think of *no compensation* to them, unless their property had been *forced* into the Funds by some law, or some regulation of the Court of Chancery. Those who have deposited their money there have nobody but themselves to blame.

"Those whose money has been placed there by others, and who have the power of removing it, are in the same situation. Money, deposited by *will* or *deed* of others, and is kept there by such will or deed, must, as in all other cases, submit to the injuries arising from the folly or wickedness of relations. Those only have a claim to compensation, whose money has been, by *law*, or by the *Orders of Courts*, taken from them and put into the Funds.

"It is evident that the same *nominal amount of taxes* could not be levied, when wheat would have fallen from twelve shillings a bushel to three or four shillings. But, this would be an extremely easy thing to arrange. A much shorter Act than Mr. Addington's Property-tax Act would settle this business. It is equally evident, that all *salaries*, and all other fixed sums, annually paid out of the taxes, must be reduced in the proportion of the reduction in the amount, or rate, of the taxes. But, there is not half so much difficulty here as there is in making *loans* and in negotiating with stock-jobbers.

"As the fundholders would no longer have any demand on the nation, the *twenty-seven millions* a-year, which they now swallow, would cease to be paid to them. This sum, in specie payments, would be about *nine millions*; and, all the expenses of war being reduced *two-thirds*, there need be *no loans*, if only one-half of the taxes now imposed for the funds were kept on during the war. So that, besides dispensing with loans, the taxes, or many things might be, at once, done away, and especially the tax on *soap, candles, leather, salt, beer and malt*.

"This last would be a very gracious act, and there is another, which you will, at once, perceive to be my favourite scheme for making all the cottagers, who are now called trespassers, *owners in fee*. In 1804, I had the honour to address to you an enumeration of the cottagers round a piece of waste land, in this neighbourhood, called *ХОТОНЪ ХЕАТН*. I showed clearly, I thought, that, if the whole of that common had been enclosed land, it would have been impossible for the nation to derive a tenth-part of the benefit from it that it derived from the chain of cottagers, with which the spot is surrounded. This I showed from the quantity and value of milk, calves, pigs, poultry, garden stuff, honey and fruit, which was raised by the cottagers in the year just then ended, and which quantity I ascertained by a particular personal inquiry made of each. What I then suggested as a wise and just measure, I now take the liberty to recommend for adoption. I would pass an Act giving a little in fee to every one who has built a house on *any waste land*, and award him land not exceeding two acres in measure; let the Lord of the waste be who he may.

"The number of these cottagers, throughout England, is immense. The inhabitants of them are the best of people; and, as to the *exclusive right* of the Lord and his tenants, it would, I believe, not bear any very strict investigation *even in law*; and, I am quite sure, that, in the sight of natural justice, it cannot stand for a moment. At any rate, surely, a Parliament which has power to protect bank-note makers against the demands of their creditors; that is to say, to take the property of those creditors, to the amount of many millions, and give it to the Bank Company, must have the power, if it have the will, to give quiet possession to those, who have made gardens out of waste land, on which the owner set no value till it was made valuable by their *labour*.

"With this gracious Act, emanating, as it ought, from a message from the king, and with such a reduction of taxes as would enable a poor man to make his heart glad with beer for a groat, the king might set Buonaparte, and you set the *Pittites* at defiance.

"But, if things be to go on in their present way; if you and your colleagues have to run a race with your opponents for the favour of the Sovereigns of 'Change Alley, you will be defeated, and the changes which this Government and nation have to undergo no man can even guess at.

"I assuredly do not expect to see anything that I have here taken the liberty to recommend, adopted; but, as I most sincerely believe, that something like these measures, at last, would save the country from misery, if not from a total revolution, I shall always have, under all the chances and changes that I may live to witness, great satisfaction in reflecting that I have performed what I deemed my duty. From what has already taken place; from the receiving of such men as Addington and Ellenborough into the cabinet; and from the stock-jobbing propositions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it is but too plain, that the Pitt-system is to be adhered to. Indeed, as you will please to remember, I anticipated this, when you told me, that *Lord Grenville* was to be at the head of the Ministry. However, observations of this sort are now of no use; and, therefore, I hasten to put an end to this letter, which, as it is, in all probability, the last that I shall ever have the honour to address to you, I conclude by assuring you, that, whatever may be done by the Ministry to which you now, unfortunately for your own fame, belong, I shall always be convinced, that no Act, hostile to the happiness and honour of the country, has had your approbation; but, I am still more anxious, that you should be assured, that I shall always, to the end of my life, be forward to bear testimony to your manly and liberal and generous conduct in advising me, at all times, to follow the dictates of my own mind, while you have never sitten in silence and heard my character or my notions impeached, though to defend them was evidently to risk your own character with the selfish and hypocritical crew by which you are surrounded.

"I am, Sir, your most obedient and most humble servant.

"*Fulham, March 6, 1816.*"

"W. M. COBBETT."

The usurping muck-worm has, may it please your Royal Highness, now made the dangers much greater than they would have been in 1806. As to the debt, and as to the rectifying of private contracts, salaries and taxes, the above suggestions appear to me sufficient. The giving of the cottage lands in fee to the holders, now called trespassers, appears now to be more necessary than before. But, the shock would now be so great, that other, and far greater measures appear to me to be necessary, in order to prevent general confusion and devastation.

If, indeed, the Parliament were reformed, the people, or, at least, the main mass of them, would be *patient* under any circumstances; and, indeed, with such a Parliament, your Royal Highness would, at once, I presume, proceed to put down the paper-money and the debt. But, I am proceeding upon the supposition, that a sudden blowing-up of the paper-money will take place, while the Parliament is in its present state. The distress, the famine, the uproar, I have described; and the main thing, therefore is, to secure safety for property, by which I mean houses, goods, manufacturing establishments, ships, barns, mills, stacks and cattle: for, as to articles of *food* and *drink*, they would undergo somewhat of an arbitrary distribution. The main thing, therefore, in any such sudden emergency, would be to *keep the peace* for a short time: until real money found its way into circulation.

It is, your Royal Highness will please to observe, the great mass of the people: two millions, at least, of *men*, who live from hand to mouth, and who are now, in a great part, paid their *wages* under the degrading name of *paupers*; two millions of men who have nothing to lose; two millions of men who all know that they have been long paying, and are still paying, in taxes partly, to support fundholders, sinecure-placemen and pensioned men, women, boys and girls; two millions of men, who now know the real cause of all their pains and humiliations; two millions of men who clearly understood all their rights, and many of whom, in a struggle for those rights, have most severely suffered; two millions of men, who have seen the bravest of their fellow-sufferers dungeoned,

transported, hanged, beheaded, and quartered ; two millions of men, who see Oliver, Castles, and their aiders and abettors, protected by a Bill of Indemnity ; two millions of men with bodies smarting with pain and hearts full of indignation and vengeance : it is this two millions of men, may it please your Royal Highness, who will have to be appeased and to be restrained from the use of physical force, in a case such as that which I have in contemplation. To restrain them by *force* would, in such a case, be impossible ; and, therefore, they must be restrained, if at all, by inducements of sufficient power.

In addition, therefore, to the measures proposed for 1806, I would humbly recommend an Act of Parliament making every man and woman *owner in fee-simple*, of whatever house or land he or she may now *rent*, under the amount of *ten pounds a year*, upon the sole condition that such renter should not commit a *breach of the peace* in the eye of the common law within sixty days from the passing of the Act, and that he, if a man, should come forth, on the call of any peace-officer to assist in the keeping of the peace. Another Act for a *Reform of the Parliament*, proposed and passed at the same time, with the other act, would keep the country as quiet, as to obedience to the Government, as it ever was at any period of its history.

These measures, I would wish to see arise out of a *message* from your Royal Highness. If the Parliament were not sitting, it might be called, and your Royal intentions announced to the people by proclamation, which would be quite sufficient to secure the keeping of the peace.

The parish-officers should, by order in council, or Act of Parliament, be commanded to provide *subsistence* for every one who wanted it, and they should have power to seize provisions for that purpose, upon giving promises of payment at a future day.

As to the *time* required for the *passing of Acts*, we have seen a bill passed in a day for *putting the people into dungeons* ; and, it would be hard indeed if similar dispatch could not be made in so pressing a case as the one now contemplated. And, as to the *right* of the Parliament to pass such Acts, it had a right, it would seem, to pass an Act to put men into dungeons ; it had the same sort of right to punish artizans for agreeing together to secure such wages as they wished to have for their labour ; it could pass a law to enable the Bank to refuse payment to its creditors, which, indeed, was done before by an Order in Council ; it could pass a law to set aside actions for just debts due from the clergy ; it could pass law after law to take money from the people and give it to the clergy ; it could pass many laws to take money from the people of England and give it to the French Emigrants : a Parliament that could do all this, could, surely, pass a bill or two like those above suggested. A Parliament could, in the reign of George the First, turn the pockets of the South Sea Bubbles inside-out, and leave them hardly a shirt to their backs. It could strip a Chancellor of the Exchequer as bare as a board. A Parliament, then, could, surely pass an Act to tranquillize the people at a time of such imminent peril.

As to the *present owners* of the property conveyed away by the above suggested Act, there would be ample means of compensation to them. For, in the first place, the standing army would no longer be wanted. The necessity of having it now arises solely from the weight of taxes and the want of Reform, and these arise from the paper-system and the debt. The debt gone, there needs no standing army ; for the nation is now in

peace as to *foreign nations*. The army is now an army of *observation* in part, and in part an *auxiliary of taxation*. This expense once lopped off, what an abundance of means would arise out of a simple and honest mode of raising and expending the public money!

Besides, what riches would the nation possess, if all the grants of crown lands, all leases of crown lands, all sums due from peculators and defaulters, all sums paid wrongfully to numerous hundreds of persons, and now forming what those persons have the audacity to call *their estates*; if all these were *resumed*, what need the nation fear for the means of compensation to the owners of conveyed tenements? And, what has been more clearly settled, than that *grants* of all sorts can be resumed; and that *refunding* can take place, as in the case of the South Sea bubble?

Your Royal Highness ought, it appears to me, to signify, from the very first, your gracious intention to recommend to the Parliament to cause strict inquiry to be made into the injuries suffered, in body or estate, by all persons who may have been wrongfully imprisoned, or, in any way harassed or punished, and to recommend speedy and ample compensation to be made to all such persons. *Justice* on all those, great or small, who might be found to have been in any way, directly or indirectly, concerned in the doing of these wrongs, would follow, as a matter of course, in due time and form, according to the law of the land.

But, long before these matters could be *entered on*, the king's coin would be in general circulation. The nation would be tranquil. Trade and dealings would have resumed their proper operations; the people would be busy and happy, and these works of inquiry, of restitution, and of justice, would go on with temper, though with *resolution*.

As I am only suggesting measures for the immediate wants of an hour of great peril, I shall not, upon the present occasion, trouble your Royal Highness with any remarks with regard to that species of property which is enjoyed *by the clergy*; though it never can be supposed, that that body would not, in due time, be called upon to *refund* the immense grants which have been made to it out of the fruit of the people's labour. Besides which there is the *one-fourth of the tithes*, which *originally belonged to the poor*. To be sure, this has been taken from the poor by the subsequent laws; but, if a Parliament can make laws to take away, it can, surely, make laws to restore. When the *Reformation* took place, a law was passed to make clergymen *reside* and to prevent them from *farming land*. This law was violated; the violators were protected by Act of Parliament; and, surely, then, other Acts of Parliament may meddle with them and their livings in any way, that the "*wisdom of Parliament*" may determine. However, for the present, it is sufficient merely to point out this great source of natural means.

Abler heads will, doubtless, be found, in case of the emergency supposed, to advise your Royal Highness. But, if by the humble offer of *my* opinions, I awaken in others a desire to offer theirs, I shall at any rate, have rendered some service to my king and country. The danger is nothing, if it be *foreseen* and provided for; but, it is tremendous, if blindness with regard to it, continue till the moment of its arrival. When ships founder from oversetting, it is only because the storm is not foreseen.

After all, the danger, the *sudden blowing-up* of paper-money, may possibly never happen. But, as I *think* it will, I should be guilty of

great neglect of duty not to say that I think thus. I have good opportunities of *knowing* what is likely to happen in this respect. I do know for a certainty, what *can* happen; I know for a certainty that the whole fabric can be blown to air by the expending of a *thousand pounds*. Were I to listen to my own feelings, my own vengeful and justly vengeful feelings, I should, perhaps, be quite silent upon this subject; but when I look at the enemies of myself and of my country, I see that the same stroke that will destroy them, may, if no warning be given, also destroy the king, his family and many of his good and faithful and worthy people; and, therefore, I have given the warning.

Were there no other motive for wishing for the destruction of the paper-system, there is one, as it appears to me, quite sufficient, arising from the contemplation of the emigration from England to this country. Only yesterday, four men, just arrived in the *Lorenzo* from Liverpool, came to me. They were from Berkshire; one a little farmer with two hundred guineas in his chest at New York; another a wheelwright; the other two labourers: all hearty, able, fresh-looking, and honest-looking Englishmen. All said that they came away to avoid *ruin and starvation*. One brought with him a written character from a master, with whom he had lived *five years*. This man said that he had got money enough together to pay his passage, and that he fled from misery while he was able; for, that every one foresaw, that all the people in England must finally be starved, or become paupers. Thus it is, precisely as I predicted in 1815; those who can get money together; the able; the enterprising; the useful, the valuable men *flee*, while the helpless and unhealthy poor remain. And yet, this emigration is, as yet, *nothing* to what it will be; when there has been time for some of the *effects* of the emigration of this class of men to be made known. Here are no taxing tyrants. Here, whatever a man sees about him he can truly call his *own*. Here there are no spies to dog our footsteps and to sell our blood. Here men are happy, because they have freedom and abundance. And, shall we *never* see England equally happy! Shall we see her people, or, at least, the most valuable part of them, scattered over the face of the earth like the Jews! And shall we see this, rather than put an end to a false, base, and infamous paper-money! I trust, that we shall not: I trust that an end, of some kind or other, of this diabolical system is near at hand; and I have humbly endeavoured to prepare your Royal Highness's mind for the event.

I have now discharged a most solemn duty towards your Royal Highness and my country, and I have only to add my ardent wishes for the happiness and glory of both.

I am,
 May it please your Royal Highness,
 Your most obedient
 And most humble servant,
 WM. COBBETT.

TO PARSON MALTHUS,

ON THE RIGHTS OF THE POOR; AND ON THE CRUELTY RECOMMENDED BY HIM TO BE EXERCISED TOWARDS THE POOR.

(*Political Register*, May, 1819.)

North Hampstead, Long Island, February 6th, 1819.

PARSON: .

I have, during my life, detested many men; but never any one so much as you. Your book on POPULATION contains matter more offensive to my feelings even than that of the Dungeon-Bill. It could have sprung from no mind not capable of dictating acts of greater cruelty than any recorded in the history of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. Priests have, in all ages, been remarkable for cool and deliberate and unrelenting cruelty; but it seems to have been reserved for the Church of England to produce one who has a just claim to the atrocious pre-eminence. No assemblage of words can give an appropriate designation of you; and, therefore, as being the single word which best suits the character of such a man, I call you *Parson*, which, amongst other meanings, includes that of Boroughmonger tool.

It must be very clear to every attentive reader of your book on *Population*, that it was written for the sole purpose of preparing beforehand a justification for those deeds of injustice and cruelty, of which the *Parish Vestry Bill* appears to be a mere prelude. The project will fail: the tyrants will not have the *power* to commit the deeds, which you recommend, and which they intend to commit. But, that is no matter. It is right that the scheme should be exposed; in order that, as we ought to take the will for the deed, we may be prepared to do justice to the schemer and to the intended executors of the scheme.

In your book you show, that, in certain cases, a *crowded* population has been attended with great evils, a great deal of unhappiness, misery, and human degradation. You then, without any reason to bear you out, predict, or leave it to be clearly inferred, that the same is likely to take place in England. Your principles are almost all false; and your reason, in almost every instance, is the same. But, it is not my intention to waste my time on your abstract matter. I shall come, at once, to your practical result; to your recommendation to the Boroughmongers to pass laws to *punish the poor for marrying*.

I have in my possession a list of 743 parsons (of the Church of England I mean) who have taken an active part in the Dungeon and Oliver proceedings, either as justices of the peace, or as suppressers, unlawfully, of my publications. They have threatened hawkers; they have imprisoned many; they have starved the families of not a few; they have threatened booksellers; they have, in many instances (not less than twenty that have come to my knowledge) caused "*Paper against Gold*" to be excluded from *reading-rooms*, though that is a work which ought

to be read by every one, high as well as low, rich as well as poor. I must hate these execrable Parsons; but, the whole mass put together is not, to me, an object of such perfect execration as you are. You are, in my opinion, a man (if we give you the name) not to be expostulated with; but to be punished. And, I beg the public to regard this paper of mine as intended merely to prove, that you deserve the severest punishment that outraged laws can inflict upon you.

The bare idea of a law to punish a labourer and artizan for *marrying*; the bare idea is enough to fill one with indignation and horror. But, when this is moulded into a distinct proposal and strong recommendation, we can hardly find patience sufficient to restrain us from breaking out into a volley of curses on the head of the proposer, be he who he may. What, then, can describe our feelings, when we find that this proposition does not come from an *eunuch*; no, nor from a *hermit*; no, nor from a man who has condemned *himself* to a life of *celibacy*; but from a *priest* of a church, the origin of which was the incontinence of its clergy, who represented views of chastity as amongst the damnable errors of the Church of Rome, and have, accordingly, fully indulged themselves in carnal enjoyments: what can describe our feelings, when we find that the proposition comes from a priest of this luxurious, this voluptuous, this sensual fraternity, who, with all their piety, were unable to devote their own vessels to the Lord!

But, before I proceed further, let us have your proposition before us in your own insolent words; first observing, that, at the time when you wrote your book, the Boroughmongers began to be alarmed at the increase of the *Poor-rates*. They boasted of wonderful *national prosperity*; wonderful ease and happiness; wonderful improvements in agriculture; but, still the poor-rates *wonderfully increased*. Indeed, they seemed to increase with the *increase* of the Boroughmongers' *national prosperity*; which might, I think, very fairly be called the eighth wonder of the world.

Being in this puzzle, the Boroughmongers found in a priest the advocate of a method to rid them of their ground of alarm. You, overlooking all the *real causes* of the increase of the paupers, assumed, without any internal proof, and against all experience, that *the giving of relief* is the cause of the evil; and then you came to your proposition of a *remedy*. The words, the infamous words, are as follows:

“ To this end I should propose a regulation to be made, declaring that *no child* born from any marriage taking place after the expiration of a year from the date of the law; and no illegitimate *child* born two years from the same date, should ever be entitled to parish assistance. After the public notice, which I have proposed, had been given, to the punishment of nature HE should be left; the punishment of severs want: all parish assistance should be rigidly denied him. HE should be taught that the laws of nature had doomed him and *his family* to starve; that HE had no claim on society for the smallest portion of food; that if HE and *his family* were saved from suffering the utmost extremities of hunger, HE would owe it to the pity of some kind benefactor, to whom HE ought to be bound by the strongest ties of gratitude.”

I never yet knew a parson that understood *grammar*, so that I am little surprised at this HE, which, according to the words, means *the child* (though it may be a *girl*); but which HE does, I suppose, mean the *man*, who shall dare to marry or to have a bastard by some unmarried woman; and yet, in this *latter case*, what mean you by talking of the

man's family? Cruel, impudent, and muddle-headed: a parson all through! I will, however, suppose you, by HE, to mean the *man*; and will, if I can, coolly remark upon this atrocious proposition.

You talk of the "*punishment of nature*;" you talk of "*the laws of nature* having doomed him and his family to *starve*." Now, in the first place, the laws of nature; the most imperative of all her laws, bid him *love* and seek the gratification of that passion in a way that leads to the procreation of his species. The laws of nature bid man as well as woman desire to produce and preserve children. Your prohibition is in the face of these imperative laws; for you punish the illegitimate as well as the legitimate offspring. I shall not talk to you about *religion*, for I shall suppose you, being a parson, care little about that. I will not remind you, that the Articles of the Church, to which articles you have *sworn*, reprobates the doctrine of celibacy, as being hostile to the Word of God; that the same article declares that it is lawful for all Christian men to marry; that one of the Church prayers beseeches God that the married pair may be fruitful in children; that another prayer calls little children as arrows in the hand of the giant, and says that the man is happy who has his quiver full of them; that the Scriptures tell us that *Lor's* neighbours were consumed by fire and brimstone, and that *ONAN* was stricken dead; that adultery and fornication are held, in the New Testament, to be deadly sins: I will not dwell upon any thing in this way, because you, being a parson, would laugh in my face. I will take you on your own ground; the *laws of nature*.

The laws of nature, written in our passions, desires and propensities; written even in the organization of our bodies; these laws compel the two sexes to hold that sort of intercourse, which produces children. Yes, say you; but nature has *other laws*, and amongst those are, that man shall live by *food*, and that, if he cannot obtain food, he shall *starve*. Agreed, and, if there be a man in England who cannot find, *in the whole country*, food enough to keep him alive, I allow that *nature has doomed him to starve*. If, in no shop, house, mill, barn, or other place, he can find food sufficient to keep him alive; *then*, I allow, that the laws of nature condemn him to die.

"Oh!" you will, with parson-like bawl, exclaim, "but he must not commit *robbery* or *larceny*!" Robbery or larceny! what do you mean by that? Does the law of *nature* say any thing about robbery or larceny? Does the law of nature know any thing of these things? No: the law of nature bids man to take, whenever he can find it, whatever is necessary to his life, health, and ease. So, you will quit the law of nature *now*, will you? You will only take it as far as serves your purpose of cruelty. You will take it to sanction your barbarity; but will fling it away when it offers the man food.

Your muddled parson's head has led you into confusion here. The *law of nature* bids a man *not starve* in a land of plenty, and forbids his being punished for taking food wherever he can find it. Your law of nature is sitting at Westminster, to make the labourer pay taxes, to make him fight for the safety of the land, to bind him in allegiance, and when he is poor and hungry, to cast him off to starve, or, to hang him if he takes food to save his life! That is your law of nature; that is a parson's law of nature. I am glad, however, that you blundered upon the law of nature; because that is the very ground, on which I mean to start in endeavouring clearly to establish the *rights of the poor*; on

which subject I have, indeed, lately offered some observations to the public, but on which subject I have not dwelt so fully as its importance seemed to demand; especially at a time, when the poor ought to understand clearly what their rights are.

When nature (for God and religion is out of the question with parsons); when nature causes a country to exist and people to exist in it, she leaves the people, as she does other animals, to live as they can; to follow their own inclinations and propensities; to exert their skill and strength for their own advantage, or, rather, at their pleasure. She imposes no shackles other than those which the heart and mind themselves suggest. She gives no man dominion over another man, except that dominion which grows out of superior cunning, or bodily strength. She gives to no man any portion of the earth or of its fruits for his own exclusive enjoyment. And, if any man, in such a state of things, cannot get food sufficient to keep him alive, he must die; and, it may truly enough, *then*, be said, that "the laws of nature have *doomed* him to be starved."

But, when this state of things is wholly changed; when the people come to an agreement to desist, *for their mutual benefit*, from using their cunning and strength at their sole will and pleasure: when the strong man agrees to give up the advantage which nature has given him, in order that he may enjoy the greater advantage of those regulations which give *protection to all*, he surely must be understood to suppose, as a condition, that no state of things is ever to arise, in which he, without having broken the compact on his part, is to be refused, not only protection from harm, but even the bare means of existence.

The land, the trees, the fruits, the herbage, the roots are, by the law of nature, the common possession of all the people. The social compact, entered into for their mutual *benefit* and *protection*; not Castlereagh's "*social system*," which means the employment of spies and blood-money men and the existence of mutual suspicion and constant danger to life and limb. The social compact gives rise, at once, to the words *mine* and *thine*. Men exert their skill and strength upon particular spots of land. These become *their own*. And when laws come to be made, these spots are called the *property* of the owners. But still the property, in land, especially, can never be so *complete* and *absolute* as to give to the proprietors the right of withholding the means of existence, or of animal enjoyment, from any portion of the people; seeing that the very foundation of the compact was, the *protection* and *benefit* of the whole. Men, in agreeing to give up their rights to a common enjoyment of the land and its fruits, never could mean to give up, in any contingency, their right to *live* and to *love* and to seek the gratification of desires necessary to the perpetuating of their species. And, if a contingency arise, in which men, without the commission of any crime on their part, are unable, by moderate labour that they do perform, or are willing to perform, or by contributions from those who have food, to obtain food sufficient for themselves and their women and children, there is no longer *benefit* and *protection* to the whole; the social compact is at an end; and men have a right, thenceforward, to act agreeably to the laws of nature. If, in process of time, the land get into the hands of a comparatively small part of the people, and if the proprietors were to prevent, by making parks, or in any other way, a great part of the land from being cultivated, would they have a right to say to the rest of the people, you shall

breed no more, if you do, *nature* has doomed you to starvation? Would they have a right to say, "We leave you to the *punishment of nature*?" If they were fools enough to do this, the rest of the people would, doubtless, snap them at their word, and say, "Very well, then; *nature* bids us live and love and have children, and get food for them from the land: here is a pretty park, I'll have a bit here; you take a bit there, Jack;" and so on. "What!" say the proprietors, "would you take our *property*?" "No: but, if you will neither give us some of the fruits without our labour, nor give us some of them for our labour, we will use some of the land, for starved we will not be." "Why do you *love* and *have children* then?" "Because *nature* impels us to it, and because our right to gratify the passion of love was never given up either expressly or tacitly."

But there are the *helpless*; there are those who are *infirm*; there are babies and aged and insane persons. Are the proprietors to support them? To be sure they are; else what *benefit*, what *protection*, do these receive from the social compact? If these are to be refused protection, why is the feeble and infirm rich man to be protected in his property, or in any other way? Before the social compact existed, there were no sufferers from *helplessness*. The possession of every thing being in common, every man was able, by extraordinary exertion, to provide for his helpless kindred and friends by the means of those exertions. He used more than ordinary industry; he dug and sowed more than ordinary; all the means which *nature* gave were at his command according to his skill and strength. And, when he agreed to allow of proprietorship, he understood, of course, that the helpless were, in case of need, to be protected and fed by the proprietors. Hence the *poor*, by which we ought always to mean the *helpless* only, have a right founded in the law of *nature*, and necessarily recognized by the compact of every society of men. Take away this right; deny its existence; and then see to what a state you reduce the feeble shadow of a man, who calls himself a landowner. The constables and all the whole *posse* of the county are to be called forth to protect *him*. The able and hearty labourer is to be *compelled* to fight for this frail creature; but if the father of this labourer become *helpless*, this father is to be handed over to the *punishment of nature*; though *nature* would enable the son to provide most amply for the father, if there were not laws to restrain the son from using for the supply of the father that same strength which he is *compelled* to use in the defence of the feeble proprietor! Oh, no! Mr. Parson! If we are to be left to the *punishment of nature*, leave us also to be *rewarded* by *nature*. Leave us to the honest dame all through the piece: she is very impartial in *rewards* as well as in her punishments: let us have the latter and we will take the former with all our hearts. Their Boroughmongerships were extremely angry with the *SPENCEANS* for their talking about a common partnership in the land; but the *Spenceans* have as much right as you to propose to recur to a state of *nature*; yet you have not yet been *dungeoned*.

By this time the Hampshire Parsons, who are at the bottom of all projects brought forward by *STURGES BOURNE*, who is the Chairman of their Quarter Sessions, may, though they are as stupid as they are malignant, begin to perceive, that you might as well have left the *law of nature* alone. Let us next see how the case stands according to the *law*

of the land, which, I fancy, you and Sturges and his sable crew will find, awards some *rights to the poor*.

To suppose such a thing possible as a society, in which men, who are able and willing to work, cannot support their families, and ought, with a great part of the women, to be *compelled* to lead a life of celibacy, for fear of having children to be starved; to suppose such a thing possible is monstrous. But, if there should be such a society, every one will say, that it ought instantly to be dissolved; because a state of nature would be far preferable to it. However, the *laws of England* say, that no person shall be without a sufficiency of food and raiment; and, as we shall see, this part of our laws is no more than a recognition of those principles of the social compact of which I have just been speaking.

The lands of England, like those of any other country, were, at one time, and before society was formed, the common property of all the people in England. *Proprietorship* in individuals arose as I have above stated; till, at last, all the land was appropriated. But, so far (when society came to be formed completely) was the proprietorship of individuals regarded as *absolute*, that it was made a thing wholly dependent on the sovereign power of the nation. The sovereign power (which with us, is in a king as chief of the nation) was regarded as *the proprietor of all the land*: as the *lord* of it all. And, at this very hour, there is not an inch of land in the kingdom, to which any man has any *title*, which title does not acknowledge that the land is *held under the king*. There are lands held under Lords of Manors; but, then, these Lords of Manors hold their manors *under the king*. So, that, as the king has no Divine Right to rule, but rules and holds his office for the good of the people, and as he may, in case of violation of the laws, be set aside, and see another put in his place, he, as Lord Paramount of the land, is only the chief of the nation; and, of course, all the lands are *held under the nation*.

Agreeably to this notion we daily see the lands of men taken away for public uses sorely against their will. We know that armies may be encamped on them, without liability to actions of trespass. We know that men are *paid*, indeed, for their lands taken away; but they are *compelled* to give up the lands. Nay, their lands may be *ceded to foreign nations*. All which, and many other things that might be mentioned, prove, that the nation never gives up its paramount right to the lands.

Now, Parson Malthus, were there not some *conditions*, on which the lands of England were granted to, or made the property of, individual persons or families? Every one, who knows any thing at all of the laws of England, knows, that to every grant of land was attached the performance of some *service* or *duty* towards the *sovereign*, or chief of the nation. Sometimes the service was of a military nature; sometimes of an agricultural nature; sometimes of a pecuniary nature. Nay, the hold which the sovereign still kept of the lands was so strong, that he was regarded, and he acted, too, as guardian of all heirs and heiresses; and, in default of regular heirs, took back the lands, no one being able to give his lands by *will*.

Thus the king or sovereign, held an estate in the lands. From this estate the sovereign drew his means of carrying on the government, of making war, alliances, and so forth. These services have, for the greater part, been abolished by Acts of Parliament; and taxes have been raised to sup ply their place.

As to the *poor*, when the lands were at first granted to individuals, those individuals were the heads of *bands* or little *knots* of men. The leader, in time, called himself the *Lord*, and those under him his *vassals* or *villeins*, or, under-tenants, and almost slaves. The lords had the services of the vassals and villeins, and the vassals and villeins were protected and taken care of by the lords. So that, in this, the worst state of things (always excepting the *present*) the *poor* must, of course, have had a provision, they being in some sort the property of the lords.

When Christianity came to make considerable progress in England, and the lords of the lands became Christians, they caused churches and parsonage-houses to be erected; they were allowed to give lands to, and to settle tithes on, the priest. And now mark me, Parson, for we are now coming to the point at which you will be pinched. These priests, you will observe, were to have *no wives*, and, of course, *no children*, to keep. Therefore, it would have been preposterous to give them the tenth part of the produce of the lands, seeing that besides, they disclaimed all worldly possessions. *What should they do with this tenth part of the fruits of the earth?* The fact is, that the endowment was made upon the condition, that the priest should expend a fourth in his own way; a fourth was to go to the bishop of the diocese; a fourth was to maintain the edifice of the church; and a fourth was to *maintain the poor*. For a long while there was no *general law* for the yielding of tithes; but, when that charge was legally imposed on all the lands, the poor were, of course, every where entitled to this fourth part. *Villeinage* being at this time greatly diminished, it was proper to provide a resource for the helpless other than that of the tables of the lords, and, therefore, this species of hospitality was transferred to the church, from which the poor had a *right* to demand a maintenance, and from which they received it, too, until the *robbery of the poor* (which has been called a *robbery of the church*) took place, in the reign of King Henry the Eighth.

Before that time, the poor were, according to the *common law*, that is, the settled law of the whole kingdom, to be *sustained by those who received the tithes*, in the several parishes, or districts, which, indeed, all became parishes, except some particular spots, now called extra-parochial. That this was the *law of the land*, at and before the grand robbery of the poor in the time of Henry the wife-killer, and defender of the faith, is certain, not only from the *law-books*, but from the *statute-book*.

This is so important a matter, that, though I have, on a very late occasion, gone pretty fully into it, I will not be deterred, by the fear of a charge of repetition, from doing the same again.

When the regular clergy, or monks, or, more properly speaking, the persons of whatever order, who lived in religious houses, or monasteries, came to be in high repute for their piety and for the efficacy of their prayers in behalf of the souls of rich persons, they very soon persuaded those persons to give them a part, at least, of their property; and, some of these rich persons gave *advowsons* to the monasteries,

When churches were founded and endowed, the founder and endower became the *patron*, or *protector*, of it; and he had the right to *present* to the bishop the *priest*, who was to officiate in the church and receive its revenues. This right of presenting is called an *advowson*, and we know that *advowsons* are now become objects of *traffic*, and have been frequently *gumbled for*.

Rich persons frequently gave to the monasteries *advowsons* as well as

other things; and then the monasteries sent a priest of their own to act as parish-priest, who was allowed a small part for himself; but who was obliged to send away the far greater part of his revenues to the monastery. So that, out of this arose great distress to the poor, who thus lost their share of the tithes. This gave rise to two Acts of Parliament, one passed in the fifteenth year of the reign of Richard the Second, and one in the fourth year of Henry the Fourth, ordering that, in all such cases, a sufficiency of the revenues of the church should be retained in the parish for the sustenance of the poor.

Thus, then, clear as daylight stood the *legal* rights of the poor, previous to the grand robbery of them, in the reign of Henry the Eighth, when, and in a few years afterwards, they were despoiled of the whole of their reserved resources. The tithes were either *given to courtiers*, or to *priests with wives*, and thus they have continued to this day.

But, still, there would be poor and helpless persons; and as there was no such man as you at hand to recommend the "*punishment of nature*," provision was made for the poor in the way of *rate*, or *tax*. Hence arose the present system of Poor-laws, which, for those unable to work, provide food and raiment; and, for those able to work, employment, whereby they may obtain food and raiment. And BLACKSTONE, in his enumeration of the *Rights of Persons*, has this right to be sustained in case of need. "The law," says he, "not only regards *life and member*, and protects every man in the *enjoyment* of them, but also furnishes him with every thing *necessary for their support*. For there is no man so indigent, or wretched, but he may demand a supply sufficient for all the necessities of life from the more opulent part of the community, by means of the several statutes enacted for the relief of the poor; a humane provision, and dictated by the principles of *society*."

Surely it was dictated by those principles; but the necessity of making it arose out of the *robbery of the poor* by Henry the Eighth's courtiers, and by priests of the succeeding reigns, which priests have, from that day to this, chosen to have wives and families. According to the law of the land, it is not *larceny* nor *robbery* where a person (not owing to his own fault) is reduced to extreme necessity, and steals victuals merely to satisfy present hunger, and to prevent starvation; and, I have no hesitation in saying, that a jury, who convicts a person, under such circumstances, are guilty of *perjury*. The law is just here; for, if there be a state of society, which exposes persons to starvation, without any fault on their own part, such society is a monster in legislation; it is worse than a state of nature, and ought to be dissolved. What! a social compact, formed for the purpose of punishing persons (who have been guilty of no fault) for using the only means left within their power to preserve their lives! A social compact, which does not recognize the right to live! Oh, no! you do not deny any body a right to *live*: you only wish for a law to make them *live on grass or dirt*, if they marry after a certain day, or are the fruit of any marriage, or of any cohabiting or carnal communication after that certain day! That is all you want. Only that! Those, who are alive now, whether married or single, may have a right to *live*; but all that marry, or that shall proceed from any marriage or any unlawful commerce, *after this time*, are to feed with the crows or the rabbits! So that, at the end of about forty or fifty, or, at most, eighty years, there shall be no person entitled to re-

lief; and, that, in a few years, the number of persons so entitled shall be very small.

Callous parson, hardened parson, I have proved, that the relief now given, and that ought to be more largely given, by the statute-law, to the poor, is their *right*; that it came to supply the place of that relief which the law of the land gave them before the thing called the Reformation; and that the law of the land only supplied, in this respect, the place of the law of nature. I have traced the rights of the poor; meaning the *helpless*, either from inability to labour or from inability to find labour; I have traced their rights down, from the origin of the social compact to the present day, and have shown that men, when they originally gave up their right of possessing the land in common, now gave up, either for themselves, or for future generations, the right of living, loving, and perpetuating their like.

But, muddy-headed Parson, while you deny the labouring classes these rights; while you choose to consider them as having no claim *on society* for "the *smallest portion of food*." Oh! impudent Parson! *Your wife and children have, I suppose!* But, to be cool, if possible. While you consider the labouring classes as having no claim *upon society* even for the smallest portion of food; you do not say a word about the claims, the *many and great claims*, which society *has upon them!* If a young man, a labourer, just one-and-twenty, were to hear your proposition; if he were to hear you say, that, if he married, he should be left to the laws of nature, and should have no claim on society, even for the smallest portion of food, one may suppose that the *answer*, which he would give you, would be in somewhat the following words:

"MR. PARSON MALTRUS:

"I have no objection to your proposition; for, though I and my brother and our two sisters have a father and mother, who, owing to the taxes, have never been able to save any thing for old age, and though we may have large families of children, yet I am not at all afraid, that in consequence of this new regulation, we shall be able to do very well for the future. As we have not any claim upon society, when we are infirm or helpless, for even the smallest portion of food, it will certainly not be pretended, even by the Hampshire parsons, with he of Botley at their head, that society has any claim upon us. We have been *born* here in England, to be sure; but, as society was not to blame for our not remaining in our progenitors' loins, so we are not to blame for coming into the world. Here we are, however; and as we now find, that we have no right to protection from society, we will set to work, and do the best we can for ourselves. The society has shaken us off; and we will shake it off. You send us to the law of nature for food in our distress; and we will avail ourselves of that law for our benefit. As to any other laws we know nothing of them.

"We love good beer very much. And we will work for barley and make malt; and we will grow hops; and we will make our beer for three half-pence a pot. We will go to the sea-side and rake up our salt, which will not cost us more than sixpence a bushel. We will get our tea, sugar, coffee and tobacco, from American ships, for a tenth part of what they cost us now. We will get some wine and brandy from men, whom the society-people call smugglers. We will get some rushes and dip them in our fat, and make us candles. We will boil up our grease and steep our ashes, and make us soap. All these things and many more that I can name, are perfectly agreeable to the law of nature, and are only forbidden by the laws of society, with which, in future, thank God, we are to have nothing to do; and our savings, which will arise from this change, will be so great as to put us out of all danger of future want.

"We shall soon have a little farm in the family; and, though we may owe something for awhile to the man who may sell us the farm, it will soon be our *own*. No contributions from us. You, who will, perhaps, be the parson of the parish, shall never put your head over our gate, nor poke your nose into our

pigsty. You may be useful to the *society*, perhaps; it may think it wise to keep you and your wife and children in idleness; but, we want nothing of you, and, therefore, we shall keep the tenth part of the crop to ourselves. If we should want a priest, we will engage him and pay him for his work.

"As to personal service, as soldiers or sailors, we shall not need to waste our time and strength and to hazard our lives in that way. We shall be always able to defend ourselves against any body that can be supposed likely to attack us. The safety of the society is nothing to us. There may be riots or rebellions, or treasons or invasions by dozens for any thing that we need care. Your proposition, frees us from all *duties* towards the society, since it frees the society from the *only duty* that it had to perform towards us. It is impossible for you to point out one single advantage that society ever offered us, save and except that of giving us food, in case we were wholly unable to earn it for ourselves. And the society having freed itself from that duty, we owe it no duty at all; and no duty shall it have from us."

Reply to him, Parson! Reply to John Chopstick! And yet John might have gone much further; for, it will be denied by no man living, except a parson, that if such an act of *outlawry* were passed against the labouring classes, the bonds of society would, as to them, be wholly broken. They would have a right to recur to the laws of nature, and to take, every man of them, whatever lands and houses and goods he was able to take. The doctrine of *natural allegiance* is, that every man is bound to be faithful to the sovereign, to aid, assist, and obey him; and *for what?* Because every man receives *protection* from the sovereign; and, that he contracts the obligation of allegiance *before he is born*; because, he is *protected before he is born*. But, you hardened and impudent Parson, are for passing a law to *cast him off before he is born*, and for leaving him "to the *punishment of nature*."

You see the labouring classes heavily *taxed*; you see part of the money raised from them given to swarms of lord and lady pensioners; you see the children and other relations of the Boroughmongers supported in idleness out of the taxes; you see whole families of women and children upon the list of splendid paupers; you see every parish with its priest's wife and her litter of children, living on the tithes; you see millions of the people's money given away to French emigrants, some laymen, and some Popish clergy; you see hundreds of millions of taxes squandered on war for the restoration of the Bourbons, and a debt, which never can be paid, contracted for the same purpose, and that of restoring the Pope and the Inquisition; and, seeing all this, you who are a Protestant priest, have the infamy to affect to believe, that the miseries of the nation are occasioned by the *labouring classes*, and, accordingly, you propose to *punish them!*

If you had not been a shallow and muddle-headed man, you never could have supposed, that the increase of the paupers in England had been caused by the practice, of affording parish-relief, seeing that, at the end of *two hundred years* of that practice, the poor-rates amounted to less than *three hundred thousand pounds a year*; that, at the end of another *eighty years*, they amounted to *two millions and a quarter*; and that, at the end of the last twenty years before you wrote, they amounted to about *five and a half millions* a year. Seeing that such were the facts communicated to you by authentic records, any one but a mud-headed parson, or a perverse knave, would have looked about him for causes of the increase other than the practice of giving parish relief. When any rational and sincere man had seen, that this practice of giving relief had, in the first two hundred years, not debased the people and

made them improvident; when he had seen, that, during the last hundred, while the increase of taxes had been gradual, the increase of paupers had been gradual, till the enormous taxes began to be raised; and when he had seen, that the last twenty years had been so very fruitful in producing paupers; he would soon have looked out for the real causes in operation during those several intervals. But, to have stated these causes would not have pleased the Boroughmongers, who had imposed the taxes, and who had livings to give to prostituted priests; and, therefore, you pitched upon the *labouring classes*. They were to be *punished* for the rapacity and waste of those who had tyrannized over them, and brought them to misery. The cause of the increase of paupers has been *taxation, co-operation with a false money*. But, as this has been proved so many times, I will not now prove it again. Amongst the labouring classes there wants no more proofs of this kind. *They* now know the real causes of their misery and slavery.

As to your notion of *danger* from an increase of the population of the kingdom, it is too absurd to merit serious remark; seeing that, at the end of a thousand years of the kingly government, there remain *six or seven acres of land* to every man, every woman, and every child! However, in order to expose the follies and falsehoods of the Boroughmongers as to this matter, I will here make a remark or two on it. These tyrants, caused what they called an *enumeration* to be taken in 1801, and another in 1811. The tyrants wanted to cause it to be believed, that the people had *increased in number under their sway*. This would have been no *proof* of an absence of tyranny to be sure; but, at any rate, it would have been a proof that the number of their slaves had augmented. They were extremely eager to establish this proof; and to work they went, and, at last, put forth the population return of 1801, which made the total population of *England alone* amount to 8,331,434. Now, mind, Parson. In 1811, they caused another enumeration to be taken, when they made the population of *England alone* amount to 9,538,827. Bravo! Impudent mountebanks! Here is *more than a seventh* of increase in ten years! So that, at this rate of going on, the population of *England alone* will, in 1851 (only 32 years from this time) amount to 16,292,527; and, at the close of this present century, if their *paternal* sway should continue to that time, the population of *England alone* will amount to 27,891,009. Oh! monstrous liars! And, this is not all; the increase must be much greater than this; for, from 1801 to 1811, were ten years of most bloody war, when not only many men were killed, but when *two hundred thousand* of the men, and those of the most efficient of papas, were always *out of the country*, either on ship-board or in foreign lands! Impudent liars! The Boroughmonger sway began in 1688; and, if the population have gone on increasing only since that time, the population at that time could not have exceeded 2,000,000! Talk of "our Creator," indeed! The Boroughmongers are the most active creators that this world ever heard of.

The second return is made very nicely to keep pace, in most of its parts with the first. The *houses, families*; all increase in very *exact* proportion. But, there is one difference in the mode of making up the *lie*, which is worthy of attention, and which blows up the whole mass of cheatery. In the first return the persons were divided into three classes as to occupations, as follows:

1. Persons employed in agriculture	1,524,227
2. Persons employed in trade, handicraft, and manufacture	1,789,531
	<hr/>
	3,313,758
	<hr/>
3. All other persons	5,017,434

This was a damning fact for the Boroughmonger system! Here were almost *two idlers* for every *one working man*! No wonder that the *labouring classes* were *oppressed*! No wonder that they were *starving*! I, in my Register, very often observed upon *this fact*. Therefore, when the *second* return came to be made out, care was taken to *suppress this fact*, and yet to preserve an appearance of fairness. The classes, as to *occupation*, were now stated in *families*, and not in *persons* as before.

1. Families employed in agriculture	697,353
2. Families employed in trade, handicraft, and manufacture	923,588
	<hr/>
	1,620,941
	<hr/>
3. All other families	391,450

This is a pretty change in the space of ten years! To be sure, the families of idlers are the *most numerous*; but what a monstrous difference is here! They must amount upon *an average* to nearly 20 persons in a family, whilst the labourers, journeymen, farmers, and tradespeople, amount to little more than *two* in a family, including *lodgers*; so that there could have been no children at all amongst these labouring classes! Take heart, Parson! There can be no fear, then, of *their overstocking the land*! Oh, foolish Parson! Oh, lying Boroughmongers!

The returns were *ordered* by *Boroughmongers* and *executed* by *Parsons*; and, of course, no truth could be expected to be found in them; but the falsehood might have been *better disguised*. This band, or, rather, two bands, of liars, should have remembered the old rule: "When you have told a lie upon any subject, *never speak on the same subject again*."

In 1801, there were 3,313,758 persons of the labouring classes; and, as the increase upon the whole population was, in 1811, a *seventh*, these labouring classes would, in 1811, contain 3,787,029 persons. But, this last return states them in *families*, of which the return says, that there were (in 1811) 1,620,941. So that, in 1811, there were, amongst the labouring and trading classes, only *two* and a *third part of another*, to each family, including *lodgers*; or, only *seven persons* to *three families*!

Now, Boroughmongers and Parsons, take your choice: was the first return a lie; or was the second a lie? Both. It has all been a lie from the beginning to the end. It is a mere fabrication to delude, deceive, cajole, and cheat the nation and the world; and the money expended to propagate the cheat ought to be, every farthing of it, refunded by the cheaters, and given back to those labouring classes, from whence the greatest part of it was taken, and to whose detestation I now leave you, Parson Malthus, and your foolish and insolent performance.

WM. COBBETT.

TO HENRY JAMES, Esq.,

MERCHANT, OF BIRMINGHAM,

ON HIS PROJECT FOR SAVING THE BOROUGHMONGERS BY
MAKING A SHILLING PASS FOR EIGHTEEN-PENCE.

(Political Register, May, 1819.)

North Hampstead, Long Island, March 1st, 1819.

SIR,

It is now much about two years since your project was first made public. It had been proposed by you to the Ministers, who had rejected it, and then you put it into print, after the manner of play-writers, whose performances are rejected by the stage. Since the time that you published your project, some curious changes have taken place ; many shifts and tricks have been resorted to ; but, still, the base paper-money continues to be at once the support and the dread of the Borough-tyranny. As I think it likely, that your scheme may be the last in the budget, I will now offer to the public, under the form of an address to you, some remarks upon it ; and, the better to make my meaning understood, I will begin by describing the state of things in which the scheme was promulgated.

During the years 1814, 1815 and 1816, the Boroughmongers' bank, commonly called the Bank of England, had been *drawing-in its paper* by the lessening of its discounts. The scheme was, to *pay in specie without reducing the interest of the debt*. How such a scheme could be entertained by any people out of a mad-house it is not for me to say ; but, it is *evident* that it was entertained ; because, during the session of 1816 (some time in the winter) an Act was passed for issuing a *new coinage*, which *must* have had the payment in specie in view ; for, unless the paper could be brought up to par, the new coinage *must* disappear as soon as out.

This project for paying in specie without reducing the interest of the debt, and without reducing salaries, pensions, sinecures and soldiers' pay, necessarily induced the Borough bank to *draw in its paper* : but, the fools did not perceive, though I had warned them of it in 1811, that this drawing-in of the paper would produce ruin and starvation amongst the labouring classes. The ruin and starvation came on gradually, just in the proportion of the diminution of the paper. And, the paper was, at last, lessened so much as to embolden the tyrants to issue their new coinage ; but, alas ! the wisacres then perceived, that, though they had now got dungeon and gagging bills, it was absolutely necessary to *put out the paper that they had drawn in* ; for, that nothing else could save them for six months. They put it out : it is out now : and, accordingly, their new coinage has wholly disappeared. And these are men, are they, fit to govern a great nation !

It was at the close of 1816, just at the time that they were going to

issue their coinage, and just at the time that the ruin and starvation were at their height, that you came forward with *your project* which was, that the money should be made *lighter*; so that a shilling should pass for eighteen-pence, or be made into eighteen-pence. Your correspondence with the tools of the Boroughmongers was going on in *December*, 1816, and your publication appeared early in 1817. Your *motive* was to *keep up the system*, and to enable the Boroughmongers to perpetuate their usurpations; and, as I think it likely, that they may, in their present embarrassment, and as a last shift, resort to your scheme, I will endeavour to show what would be the effects of that scheme, if put into practice.

First, however, let me take from you your pretended *originality* as to the scheme as well as to the cause of the distress. The scheme is as old as *roguery itself*. It has been resorted to by almost every tyrant in every country; when such tyrant has been in debt, or wanted to get the property of his people quickly into his possession. It is not a "new way of paying old debts," but a very old way. There is nothing of *ingenuity* in it. What can be more simple, than telling a man that he shall take a shilling instead of eighteen-pence that are due to him, and that, if he will not take the shilling, he shall have nothing? The Congress here might do the same thing. They might *call* half a dollar a *dollar*, and by paying the fundholders at that rate, rob them of the half of what they have lent. The Congress might, perhaps, be assailed with stones and broom-sticks; but, if they had *power* to do the deed, it would be a very *simple* matter.

Therefore, as to *originality*, the scheme itself has no pretensions. And, as to your statements of the *causes of the distress*, though your statement is correct, the causes had all been stated to the nation, over and over again, *while you were perfectly silent*. In 1811 (six years before your publication), I had in "*Paper against Gold*," demonstrated, that, if the Bank ever attempted to draw in its paper, all the labouring classes (including traders and farmers) must be ruined. The moment the ruin began, I told the nation that the Bank was at work. I pursued the devastations, step by step, from 1814 to the hour of your publishing. In *January* 1816, Mr. HUNT, whom the tools of the Boroughmongers represent as an ignorant man, told an assemblage of lords and gentlemen at Bath, that the cause of the distress was the *drawing-in of the paper*. Lord Cochrane told them the same at the London Tavern. While they were all bellowing for corn-bills and soup-kettles. I had, in *December*, 1816, stated this cause, proved it, demonstrated it, in publications, *three hundred thousand copies* of which had actually been sold in the kingdom: and it was at this moment, that you came out with your *discovery* of the same causes, and with saying, that the cause of the misery had "not yet been *clearly explained*." You quoted ADAM SMITH and MONTESQUIEU most amply. You even wrote the words of the latter in *French*, the more surely to make your meaning *clear* to Englishmen, and to show them that you could read French. But, not a word did you quote, with acknowledgement, from my "*Two-penny Trash*," which, though it was driving our villains on to adopt the desperate expedient of *dungeon-bills*, and though it had been, as Sidmouth said, read in all the towns, villages, hamlets, houses, cottages, and hovels in the kingdom, you appeared never to have either seen or heard of!

So much for your *discovery*; so much for your *originality*. I will now speak of your scheme itself considered as a *remedy*. I have said,

that it is *roguish*; that it is barefaced villany and barefaced tyranny united; that, for a Government to adopt such a measure is to commit an act meriting death to the proposer and the adopter; that any man has a right to attack, by force or stratagem, so base a set of tyrants; or else, we must acknowledge the *divine right* of tyrants. Such a deed includes a robbery of all those who have lent money to the Government or to any individual; it includes a violation of all contracts; it is, like a tender-law, a legalizing of robbery; it is a law against moral honesty; it is calculated to make men despise the very name of law.

But, observe, though the deed would be of this character generally; though this would be its character if adopted, for instance, in this country where I now am; yet a nation may, in consequence of previous measures of its rulers, be so situated as to render such a measure *not unjust*. To seize hold of a man and rifle his pockets is an unjust act in itself considered; but, if this man have got in his pockets what he has taken fraudulently or forcibly from another man, the rifling is not unjust. Your measure, therefore, as far as it would go to deduct from the unjust gains of the fundholders and from the salaries, pensions, and pay of the tax-eaters, would be just enough, only it would not go so far as it ought to go. It would not be unjust as towards persons who had let leases, or taken bonds, or mortgages, and so forth, previous to the drawing in of the paper. It would have, indeed, *no injustice* in it; but, it would not be a *remedy* of the sort that you say it would; that is to say, a remedy of a *permanent* nature, and one that would secure the present usurpation of the Boroughmongers.

It is very true, that the raising of the nominal value of money; or, to speak more plainly, the making of three shillings out of two and two guineas out of two, would, in fact, take *one-third* from the fundholders and from all the tax-eaters. It would reduce the real amount of the taxes *one third*. It would relieve all the class of *borrowers* in the same degree. It would make money *plenty*; and, for awhile, would *create employment* for labourers and artizans. But, all this is done as effectually and *more quietly* by putting out of large quantities of paper-money. We saw, that the drawing-in of the paper produced the distress; and we have since seen, that the putting of it out again has brought relief. You have nothing to do but to look at the *bushel of wheat*; if there be paper enough out to keep that, *on an average of years*, at about fifteen shillings a bushel, that will do, for some time; and, it signifies not a straw, whether this be effected by the *putting out of paper*, or by the making of *little shillings and guineas*.

But, you say, that your scheme will *enable the Bank to pay in specie at once*. This is the point! There is no want of paper-money. There is no want of the means of raising or lowering prices. There is no want of the means of relieving *the borrowers*, in the nation, private or public. There is no want of the means of making *money plenty*. But, there is a want of *real money*; a want of *coin*. A want of the means of enabling the Bank to *pay its notes in coin*. And, if your scheme can create these means, you will certainly be made into a Lord; and, taking your title from your scheme, you may, perhaps, be known to posterity by the name of *Lord Little-Shilling*. But, I am of opinion, that this brilliant destiny does not await you; for though I think it likely, that your scheme will be adopted, as a last shift, it will, I am convinced, fail of accomplishing its chief object, and in its failure, send you to be huddled in amongst the

crowds of projectors, who are only remembered for their folly, and who are distinguished from each other only by their different degrees of foolishness.

When the money of a country consists *wholly of the precious metals*, to clip those, or to make them of a smaller size, is a very simple affair. A robbery of all those who are, at the time, lenders or creditors, takes place; and there is an end of the matter; except, indeed, that it destroys all confidence for the future, and makes men detest and despise the Government and the law. But, when the money of a country is *almost all paper*, to clip the real coin is not so very simple an affair; or, at least, its effects are not so clearly seen; and, it appears to me to be very difficult to show how such clipping is to enable *the issuers of the paper to pay in specie*; for, *this is, now*, the only point worth attending to. My opinion is, that the clipping of the coin would have no such effect; and, I will now proceed to give my reasons for this opinion.

In order to make myself clearly understood, I will first speak of the state of the paper-money in England. When the Bank stopped payment, it stopped, like other insolvents, because it had not money to pay. The cash was so low, that the Directors went to Pitt and *asked him to interfere*. The Order in Council was passed on a *Sunday*. The cheats could not have paid on the Monday. There were all the reasons in the world, at that time, for continuing to pay, if it had been *possible*. Therefore, the cash that remained must have been very small indeed in quantity.

At that time, if the Bank-fellows spoke truth, they had notes out to the amount of *eight millions*. If they speak truth now, they have, at this time, notes out to the amount of *twenty-eight millions*; and, if we include the country banks (about a thousand in number), all depending, in a great degree, on the mother bank, the paper-money now afloat, does not fall much short of a *hundred millions*.

Now, if the Bank-fellows, to call whom by any name implying respectability or common honesty is to vilify the mass of the nation and to pervert the use of language; if these fraudulent fellows, who, by a clandestine confederacy with the false Pitt, obtained security against the demands of the holders of their notes; if they, with *eight millions out*, could not face their creditors for *four days* (the run had been only for three days), how are they to face their creditors now, when they have *twenty-eight millions out*? Not an ounce of gold can they ever have received since in the way of payment; for, they made directly, *one and two pound notes*; and, in notes have all the taxes been paid. How, then, can they have *augmented* their quantity of gold and silver? The notes, which they have issued since their stoppage, have gone to pay the interest of loans, and to answer other similar purposes. So that the *positive quantity* of their real money can hardly have been augmented; while their *relative* quantity must have greatly diminished. Being, then, in a worse state, than when their insolvency was first declared, how are they *now* to face their creditors?

This is the very question that you, Lord Little-Shilling, have taken upon you to answer. You will make *small money*, and with this *small*, or clipped, money, enable them to *pay in specie*; that is to say, you will, you think, enable them to pay about *thirteen shillings* (of the present coin) in the pound. Now, the whole of the coin in the kingdom, *before the stoppage*, was estimated at *twenty millions*. You would, by clipping, or re-coining, or new-naming, make this into *thirty millions*.

Three-fourths of this must, to be sure, be always circulating about the country. The banks could never have more than about *eight millions*; and how with this sum could they face the holders of a *hundred millions in paper*? The twenty millions, in coin, are not *now* in the country; nor, perhaps, the third part of that sum; but, if the twenty millions were all in the country, and all clipped to your standard, the banks would be unable to pay in specie for any length of time.

Real money, however, small as it may be, is still better than paper-money. The paper would soon sink below the real money in value, even if a *farthing* of the latter were to be called a *pound*, unless the paper-money were, at any moment, convertible into gold and silver. If, indeed, you make a *shilling* of the present money, or thereabouts, pass for a *pound*, then I grant that the Bank will be *able* to pay in specie; for it will, *perhaps*, be able to *pay off all its notes*. But, then, that is neither more nor less than a blowing-up of the whole of the bubble.

If, as I before observed, you could get rid of the paper-money, your task would be *easy*; but, with that in your way, your scheme can answer no purpose, except for the moment. The small money would certainly be greater in nominal amount than the present money; and, if you could keep the quantity of paper-money *what it now is*, or, at least, effectually *prevent it from increasing*, the quantity of your small money might not diminish; out, you must, *before* you can prevent this, really and truly make the banks pay in specie; for that is the only way of preventing the quantity of paper-money from increasing.

However, let us suppose a parcel of small money to be coined. The banks, each with some of this money in its hands, would begin to pay in specie. Money, real though small, would get about the country. There would be *some* real money at any rate. People would *like it*, though small. They would *prefer* it, in payments, *before paper*, especially as the paper is now so frequently forged. This *preference* would produce *two prices*. All would instantly be suspicion, as to the paper; and the paper would depreciate at a famous rate. The paper is suspected now. Nay, the Bank is *known* to be insolvent. But, now, it is HOBSON'S CHOICE: *that, or nothing*. As soon as you could get real money about, no matter how *small*, men could buy and sell in real money; and they would then make a difference in the price of their goods: so much for money, and so much for paper. The banks must stop again immediately; for their cash would not last them a month.

You do not pretend, that you could get enough, even of your small money, to supply the wants of the Boroughmongers in the paying of their army the interest of their debt; and, therefore, you would make "Bank-of-England-notes a *legal tender* between *man and man* and in "the payment of *taxes*, but convertible into specie *on demand at the* "Bank."—This is a curious sort of *legal tender*. What would be the use of it? If a man *owe* me five pounds, I must take his five pound-note, or go unpaid. But, the moment I have it, I carry it to the Bank and get five pounds in your guineas and shillings, small as they are.—They are clipped; but, they are better than the Bank-paper; because, the bank-notes having required the coin to be clipped *once*, in order to bring it down to their standard, may require it to be *clipped again*; and then my five pounds' worth of guineas and shillings, little as they are, may, each of them, make *two* of the same amount! One effect of this

legal tender of yours, would be an unwillingness to *lend* or to *trust*; but, as the ready-money transactions would completely set your tender-law at defiance, nobody but the Government would, in a very short time, take bank-notes. The fundholders and all the other tax eaters would be paid in bank-notes, and the rest of the community would be paid in your pretty little money.

When this game was once begun, the tyranny would soon be at an end. But if one could suppose it to last for a year with your money afloat, and your tender-law in force, the scenes would be truly entertaining. The pound-note, if any of that denomination were still in being, would not pay for a tooth-pick for a gentleman pensioner or fundholder to use to make-believe that he had been to dinner. The *two prices* are now kept off by the absolute impossibility of carrying on business without the paper, there being *no real money* in circulation; but, the moment that men could contrive to get along with two prices, they would make two prices; and *then* there would be plenty of real money in a short time.

This would effectually *keep the money in the country*. You remind Mr. VANSITTART, that Lord LIVERPOOL, when he, in introducing the *New Coinage Bill*, in 1816, said the "*coin was a little reduced in value*," and that, in case it was *found expedient* for the future *protection* of "the coin, it would always be in the power of the Government *further to reduce it*." To be sure, this picknose wisacre was right enough. To render coin of *little value* is the best way in the world to *protect it*. We seldom hear talk of robbing a beggar, or of stealing an old shoe. In order to make their new coinage quite secure, they should have made it of *lead*: and, yet, perhaps, that, in a short time, would have made it not quite base enough to circulate with their notes. They debased their coinage; but that would not keep it from being "*melted down and exported*," as CASTLEREAGH declared it had been in March last. Base as it was, it was not base enough to circulate with their paper, when they were compelled to put out the paper again. Therefore, it is possible, that the wise gentlemen now contemplate that *further reduction*, of which wise Liverpool spoke; and, perhaps, they may come, at once, to the point where you are willing to stop.

But this will not be sufficient to "*protect*" the coin; and nothing will protect it, except a vast reduction in the quantity of paper-money; and, if that reduction take place, the interest of the debt cannot be paid. It is the *quantity* of the money, all sorts taken together, that will regulate prices, let the *name* given to the money be what it may. If every one of the present shillings were called a pound, still the paper might be so great in quantity (unless in case of two prices) as to drive the coin out of the country, or into hoards; for, if a nominal pound of the paper were sunk below the value of a real shilling, that shilling, though called a *pound*, would not continue to circulate with such paper, unless, as I have said, in the case of *two prices*.

It appears to me, therefore, to be perfect *nonsense*; not wickedness, not erroneousness, not an inefficient measure; but *pure nonsense*, to make a shilling, a guinea, or a dollar, into two, in order to *keep the coin in the country*. The bit of gold, or silver, has in it an *intrinsic value*, which is neither augmented nor lessened by clipping it, or new-naming it. If the paper-money afloat be on a *par* with the present gold and silver coins, they will remain; and so would your small coins as long as the

paper-money was on a par with them. The moment the paper fell below your small coins, they would disappear; and what security have you, that the paper should *not* fall below them?

To keep the coin in the country, therefore, the *quantity of the paper should be diminished*; for, as far as paper goes, it renders coin unnecessary in the country; and, of course, it will go out; for, out of the country it is necessary. *Two prices* in dealings is sufficient to keep coin in the country; because, then, the coin will pass for its real worth; but, two prices is the *death of paper-money*.

It is a notion of some persons, that there is not *money enough* in the country to serve the purposes of an increased commerce; and by commerce I mean *dealings of all sorts*. This is a curious notion! In the first place, the whole quantity of real money in the world is constantly increasing. Paper-money was almost unknown in the world, until it was invented by a crafty Bishop to keep a foreigner, not heir to the crown, on the throne of England. Yet, the quantity of real money had been greatly augmented at that day, seeing that prices had greatly augmented from the time that the coin arrived at its then and present standard. The present standard was fixed about the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth.—*Wheat had doubled in average price* at the "*glorious*" Borroughmonger revolution. It was clear, therefore, that before paper-money came to scourge the world, the quantity of money in the world had *gone on increasing*. The produce of the mines, like that of the land, is an article of traffic. It comes forth as fast as any body has got any thing to exchange for it. What *sense* is there, therefore, in supposing, that *now*, all of a sudden, there is not real *money enough* in the world? Every nation, according to the worth of its valuable things and the extent of its traffic, will have its *share*, without any extra-natural effort or any positive regulation. Or, at least, this will be the case generally and naturally. To be sure, the *carelessness about self*; the *extreme moderation* in desires as to the possession of wealth; the *rare generosity*; together with the total *want of adroitness and sharpness* in money matters; all which are so strongly marked in the invariable conduct and in the very character of *English traffickers*, and which runs in the blood of those on *this side* of the Atlantic, may, possibly, have deprived these two modest and unenterprising and unambitious nations of a small part of even that share, which the very nature of things had allotted them. But, this can hardly have been the case in any considerable degree. In short, it is all nonsense. The laws of *necessity* say, that, of all the gold and silver in the world, every nation shall have its *due share*. But, the same laws say also; that, when a nation makes, or tolerates, a paper-money, it shall lose of the coins of gold and silver whatever portion that paper-money shall supply the place of.

What *sense* is there in supposing, that a large quantity of money is *better* than a small quantity, viewed on a national scale? If the whole quantity of money in the nation were *twenty millions*, wheat would sell for *three shillings a bushel*, perhaps. And would not twenty millions then perform the same offices as a *hundred millions* perform when wheat is at *fifteen shillings a bushel*? A man, a common labourer, in America, now receives a *dollar a-day*. That is to say a *hundred copper cents*. Now, suppose the whole of the infamous paper-money were swept away here, which paper-money is a great curse to the country; suppose these

rags all swept away. The labourer would receive about *fifty cents.*; but, then, he would give *five cents.* a pound for his hog-meat instead of the *ten* which he now gives. What *inconvenience*, then, would arise from this *reduction of the quantity of the money*? Would not the fifty cents. perform all the offices, which are now performed by the hundred cents.? Aye, and perform them *better* too; because when there was no longer any paper-money, there would no longer be any bankers to live on the losses sustained by the farmers and tradesmen in consequence of the failures and other rogueries of those bankers. A farm that now sells for ten thousand pounds, would, if the quantity of money were reduced nine tenths, sell for only one thousand pounds, and that one thousand pounds would purchase as much of any other commodities as can now be purchased with ten thousand pounds. A pound of meat would sell for a penny instead of ten-pence; therefore, the penny would be *as much money* as ten-pence now is. What folly, then, to suppose, that there is not *money enough* in the country!

But, if we take another view of the matter. If we see a set of oligarchs, whether Boroughmongers or Bankers, who, by a long string of contrivances, each of which merits a halter, have put forth a paper-money and contracted enormous debts; who, by repeated issues of false money, have risen prices in an unnatural degree; who have lent paper-money to a great extent, or have got things of real value in exchange for it; and who, usurping the *greatest of all the powers of sovereignty*, regulate the standard of value; who raise, or lower, the value of money at their discretion, and who have an *interest* in doing this to the *injury* of all but themselves: when a nation has suffered itself to be inveigled into the hands of such monsters as these, then a cutting short of the paper (called money) may have a terrible effect. Such a band of usurpers, who ought all to be considered as *traitors*, may make money *plenty* or *scarce*, at their pleasure. They may, whenever it suits them, ruin all *creditors*; and when the same motive for measures of a different stamp exist, they may ruin *all debtors*.

The precious metals have, by all nations, been considered as the best standard of value, because they have *in them* a real value as *merchandise*, and because they are *scarce* commodities. They are very durable in their nature. They are difficult to counterfeit, because they have in them qualities by which almost any one is, with a little practice, able to distinguish them from any thing else. With a currency of this sort, the community is safe. But, with a paper currency, that any one almost can cause to be imitated at a trifling expense, how can a nation be said to be safe? How can it be said to have any *standard* of value at all? How can people venture to make contracts for time? Especially when the making and issuing of money is taken out of the hands of the *sovereign* power, and left to the absolute will of a particular set of men, who *must* desire to grow rich, let the means be what they may? When the business of coining and issuing is in *such* hands, money will, of course, be *plenty* or *scarce*, just as their interests shall dictate.

It signifies not to *talk*; this abominable nuisance *must* be abated; and those who shall abate it, will justly be esteemed amongst the greatest benefactors of the world. The bank-men have violated their charter; they have, by acts of fraud wholly without a parallel, ruined hundreds of thousands of families; and they merit, not only to be made to *disjorge*, but to undergo the most infamous of corporal punishments. There was

a man, who had accused the LORD CHANCELLOR BACON of having done injustice for the sake of lucre. This man was sentenced to pay a fine of a thousand pounds, to ride on a horse, with his face to the tail, from the Fleet to Westminster, with his fault written on his head, to acknowledge his offence in all the Courts at Westminster, to stand in the pillory, to have one of his ears cut off at Westminster and another in Cheapside, and to be imprisoned for life! This man offered to prove the *truth* of his allegations; but this, so far from being regarded as *favourable* to him, constituted an *aggravation* of his offence. The scoundrel BACON was afterwards guilty of taking so many bribes, that he was finally expelled from the House of Lords.

Now, the punishment inflicted on the innocent and meritorious man, who charged the villain, BACON, with bribery, may, surely be not *too much* for the guilty paper-money swindlers, who have reduced to abject misery so many hundreds of thousands of people. But, I would, for my part, take from them *all* that they have gained by their frauds. I would, in addition to the above punishment of the innocent accuser of BACON, have their noses split, and have the letters B. S. (Bank Swindler) burnt in each cheek of every man of them. Their fate should be a warning to rogues upon a grand scale for centuries to come.

Property is of no value; property does not exist; that which we call property is not property; unless there be a *standard of value*. It is the *money* of a country, and nothing else, that can make property of any use. To the mass of people the land can be of no more use than the vacant space above it; unless there be money whereby to determine and denominate its value, and to cause labour to be performed on it, and to remove its produce to the backs and mouths of the people. Seeing, then, that money is of so much importance; that it gives value to every thing; that it is the main cement of civil society; what a monstrous thing it is, that this thing should be left to the discretion of bands of men, who have no general interest with the people, in this respect: but who *must* wish to *gain* by the management of the money; and whose gain *must* be detrimental to the nation at large!

Such are the evils of this atrocious fraud and usurpation, that you have proposed, as a *remedy*, the *clipping of the coins*, which has, in all ages, been regarded as a most atrocious act on the part of any government that may have done it. What a monstrous thing, then, must this be, which, as a *remedy*, looks to a general clipping of the lawful coin! However there is a *real remedy* for the whole of the evil; namely, the *imitating of the paper*, which is commonly called *forgery*, and which, under that denomination, has, by the Boroughmongers of England, and by all those who have thought proper to tread in their steps, been made a *crime*, punishable with *death*.

The Common Law knows of no such punishment for such an offence. That law punished *forgery* as a *fraud*; but as nothing more; but to forge, or imitate, the *coin* was, at an early period, made *treason*. It was not till after the paper-money system began, that the punishment of death was inflicted for what is now called forgery. Since that time more than *five hundred Acts of Parliament* have made death stare us in the face for the commission, in various ways, of this one crime. The paper-money system is a system of murder as well as of robbery. The Bank of England, as it is called, has out a million or two of *false promises*. They *are* promises to pay, and there exists neither the intention nor the capa-

city to pay. The issuing of each of these promises is an act of *fraud*, and yet, to imitate one of the promises is to be punished with *death*.

It was easy to see, that it was the gallows, and the gallows alone, that could uphold such a system; and, if the support of the gallows be withdrawn, the system will not live long. The *juries* in England seem to have resolved to shed no more blood in this way. This villainous Bank has slaughtered more people than would people a *State*. With the rope, the prison, the hulk and the transport-ship, this Bank has destroyed, perhaps, fifty thousand persons, including the widows and orphans of its victims. At the shop of this crew of fraudulent insolvents, there sits a *council* to determine, which of their victims shall live, and which shall swing! Having usurped the Royal prerogative of coining and issuing money, it was but another step to usurp that of pardoning or of causing to be hanged! Thus, a set of fraudulent dealers, of open cheats, of flagrant delinquents, are, as to two essential points, the real sovereigns of England.

It is an insult to common sense to ask whether such an abominable thing *ought to be suffered to exist*; but, of the *mode* of abating the nuisance a word or two may be added here.

If the juries persevere in their honest and spirited conduct; or, in other words, if they resolve *not to find a verdict without good evidence*; that is to say, if they resolve not to be *bullied into perjury*, it is very clear, that the nuisance will soon come down without any *extraordinary* effort. A great deal has, of late, been gained against the swindlers. They used to carry things with a high hand. When they chose to say, that a note was *forged*, they, without any ceremony, stamped it, "*forged*," and kept it, and the *bearer*, instead of payment on demand, was very frequently seized by the windpipe, nearly strangled, and dragged before a magistrate. Though the vagabonds would *not pay* the note, though they would not *take it*, they would *keep it*. It was *not theirs*, they said; but yet they would have it. At last, a Mr. BROOKES of *Holborn*, resolved to *keep* a note, that they had refused to pay; and, at the request of the Bank, a magistrate had the folly, or wickedness, to commit him to prison, where he lay 24 hours, when he gave up the note, in order to get out; but he brought his action against the Bank-fellows for *false imprisonment*, and recovered *fifty pounds damages*! This was a great blow. Since the striking of this blow, for which the nation is very much indebted to Mr. BROOKES, people keep their forged notes, or, rather, those which the Bank refuse to receive in payment; for, they have often refused their *own notes*. The notes, which they now stamp, "*forged*," people carry away, and *paste up in their shop-windows*, if they be shop-keepers. And thus they increase daily, and, of course, tend greatly to discredit the whole thing.

Another thing has taken place, of no small account. A man, a labourer, went to the gin-shop of Mr. THOMPSON, the "Free-thinking-Christian"-priest, in *Holborn*, to get a glass of gin, and presented a pound-note. The servant of Thompson, one COATES, said the note was a forgery, and questioned the tenderer as to *how he came by it*. The man said he had it from his master. COATES bid him fetch his master, and *kept the note in the meanwhile*; for which, by the bye, he ought to have been severely punished. The labourer, instead of a master, brought *another labourer*, and the two said, that they *found the note in the street*. The "Free-thinking-Christian" seems to have thought this an excellent

opportunity for making an offering to the Bank Moloch. He and his people throttled the labourers; gave information to the Bank; the minister of death was soon at hand; the labourers were committed, brought up for examination, re-committed, brought up again, when the magistrate, Mr. ALDERMAN BIRCH, *discharged them, for want of proof that the men knew the note to be forged*. Moloch's minister remonstrated in very loud terms; but, the Alderman observed, that he had already kept the men too long in prison; and that he would not keep them there a moment longer; for, if men, on such fact of finding, or, on the ground of incapacity to prove the *negative* of knowing a note to be forged, were to be presumed guilty of the affirmative, one-half of the nation would be hanged in the course of a few years.

That this was reasonable as well as just is evident, and that the officious "Freethinking Christian" merited the censure bestowed on him by Mr. BIRCH is also evident; but, there *was a time*, when those two labourers would have been committed *for-trial*; and would have been transported, if not hanged!

So that, whether the juries persevere or not in rejecting the evidence of the Bank Inspectors as to *the fact of a note being forged*, there can be *no safety* for the Bank. For, suppose me to be capable of forging notes, why need I expose myself, or anybody else, in the *uttering* of them? What have I to do, but to forge a parcel; place them in the street; tell my brother where they will be; he *finds* them, and takes care *to have some one with him when he finds them*; he then passes them; and, if traced back to him, *proves* that he found them. I might, for lack of a brother, or trusty friend, *find* my pocket-book, or parcel, *myself*, and having a witness, *prove* that I found it. Impossible, under such circumstances, to convict me, let the Bank-agent *swear* what he will.

However, the making of large quantities of notes, and *sowing* them *in the streets, by night*: this appears to be the most *efficient* of all the modes of attack. I have, in my Registers of the last eight months, *proved*, that this may be done with the greatest facility; and that, in its effect, the destruction of the Bank and its supporter, the Borough tyranny, it would be *infallible*. There is no *precaution* can avail against this blow. Nothing short of payment, real payment, *in specie*, can, by any possibility, protect the system against such a thunderbolt; and, to pay in specie, without a *demolition of the Debt*, or, nearly a demolition, is impossible; and that demolition would be only another name for that *Reform*, for which we have so long been praying in vain, and which we will now have without any praying at all.

Your puny scheme for bolstering up the thing would, if adopted, almost do its business at once. The worthlessness of the paper and the rottenness of the system would then be clearly seen, even by the besotted fundholders who do not now see them. The tyranny would lose its partizans very fast. Its real feebleness would be perceived by every one; and thousands upon thousands, who are now its friends and able supporters, would seek their own safety in fleeing from it. But, at any rate, if your scheme failed to give the thing its death-blow, notes could be made and flung about the streets *after* the adoption of your scheme, as well as *now*. In short, there is no means of providing *safety* for the thing; and horrid would it be if there were any such means.

There is something wonderfully attractive in the system of villany that prevails in England. There is not a greedy, money-loving wretch

crawling about on the surface of any part of the globe, who is not a partizan of the English Funding System; and who would not rather see the half of the English people skinned alive than see that system impaired in the smallest degree. Nothing is so cruel as cowardice; and no species of cowardice so cruel as the fear of losing money. HARPAGON, in MOLIÈRE'S famous play of the AVARE, having lost his box of louis-d'or, is for hanging all the city and all the suburbs *to begin with*. And I verily believe, that the main part of the bankers and fundholders and loan-jobbers and stock-jobbers in England, would, rather than see the cheating-bubble blown up, cut the throats of half the nation with their own hands. Nor is this race of monsters confined to England. There are many *in this country*, who have precisely the same feelings, and who love the English tyranny as cordially as the Boroughmongers themselves.

It is curious to observe how these HARPAGONS fall into the very language of their brethren in England. They, having heard of the dangers that threaten the Mother Fraud, now say, "I am told, that the Parliament will *do something effectual*." When asked *what*, they cannot tell *what*. Push them hard, and, at last, they will tell you of *the army*. This is precisely what the fundholders and loan-jobbers, in England do. Just as if soldiers could fight against forged bank-notes! Just as if bayonets and sabres could make bank-notes *good* when they were bad!

There are men *here*, as well as in England, who place a reliance on the *wisdom* of the Parliament. I have often said, go to any great street in London, leading from the country, where you have a promiscuous mixture of farmers, tradesmen, drovers, artizans, manufacturers and labourers, and, drawing a string across the street, catch up the first thousand men that touch the string, and, if they be not more fit to make laws and govern a nation, than the men who now fill the seats, *nature has turned her back upon England!* The follies, the glaringly foolish acts, the unequivocal proofs of gross ignorance, proceeding from those men during my time only, would, though very succinctly stated, fill many large volumes. But, in order to have the most profound contempt for their understandings, what need we of anything more than a fair view of *their present situation*? True, they are tyrants. True, that they were not to be expected to care a straw how far they degraded the king, or oppressed his people. True, it might be supposed of no account with them how many Englishmen perished in dungeons, or by starvation. But, they *must* have desired to provide *safety for themselves*. And what *have* they done? They had estates, large and free, which, with their titles and privileges, they held ungrudged by a people, who cheerfully honoured them as they had honoured their ancestors. They have now *no estates*. Their last acre and last tree are *pawned*; really and positively pawned to the fundholders; while they themselves are so detested by the people, and so conscious of the detestation, that they, under colour of a law to protect the person of the Regent, have made it *high treason to attempt to overawe themselves*, have filled the country with spies, have stationed police-officers, with dirks and pistols under their cloaks, in the lobbies and avenues to their places of assembling, have made it death to converse freely on public matters with a soldier, have hung their title-deeds and their coronets on the point of the bayonet, and have made the efficacy of that bayonet wholly dependant upon the credit, the imaginary worth, of little bits of paper, which are really worthless, and which, at any moment, may,

in spite of all that human skill and power can do, be rendered worthless in opinion.

If such be the real situation of these tyrants ; if they themselves have been the cause of their being reduced to a state of such complete disgrace and danger ; if, having in their hands, and at their absolute command, all the means of preventing the existence of this disgrace and danger, they have, nevertheless, got themselves into both, and that, too, in order to obtain that "*success*," which they say they *have obtained* ; if such be the effect of their *wisdom* up to this time, what *reliance* can any rational man place on the future efforts of their *wisdom* ?

I verily believe, that, up to the month of *August last*, the main mass of the Boroughmonger crew were *wholly ignorant* of their danger, though it was clearly understood by hundreds of thousands of the labouring classes. They *must* have been ignorant as to this matter, or they never could have thought of paying in specie without reducing the debt. They never could have issued the new coinage, and that, too, in the face of my predictions, that the coin would disappear ; which happened before it had been out *six months* ! One party never could have proposed a renewal of the Bank-Protecting Bill upon the ground that France and Prussia were borrowing money ; and the other party never could have opposed that bill upon the ground of the Bank being *able* to pay. Agreed, that they are liars and hypocrites, and that, to answer their ends they will say any thing and feign any thing ; but, they *could not* have *wished* to expose their own falsehood and hypocrisy, or their worse than brutal foolishness.

Since *August*, however ; since they have heard of the plan for *puffing out* their grand bubble, they *must* have begun to *think* a little seriously on the subject. Before this, the Lowthers and Fitzwilliams and Mannerses and Cavendishes and Smithsons (called *Percys*) and Howards, and the rest of the fox-hunting part of the band, thought, I dare say, that they had no more to do with the *bank-notes* than they had to do with the man in the moon. Little did they imagine, that they had *pawned* all their farms and woods and mines ; and that the time was at hand, when they must redeem the pawn, or see the things sold. They saw no danger from any quarter but that of the Reformers, to receive whose attacks they were ready with their bayonets and halters. They little dreamt, that there was a mode of attacking them, in the resisting of which, spies, blood-money men, and soldiers, would be of no more use than so many flies.

But, *now*, they know better. They *must* see danger now. And *something* they will certainly attempt. *What* they will attempt I cannot say. It is matter of curiosity, and of interesting curiosity. But, it is *nothing more* ; for, certain I am, that they cannot do any thing to insure them even a chance of preserving their usurped power for any length of time. How I shall laugh at their big, pompous talk ; their stupid revilings and their more stupid *threats* ! More new *penal laws* they will, I dare say, soon have before them. Their hirelings have hinted, that they mean to "*close the jury-box*." Let them ! For God's sake, let them ! That is to say, let them *close it quite* ; for they have done it in great part already. They have, in hundreds of cases, taken away the trial by jury in England, where they fine and imprison almost at their pleasure ; but, in Ireland, they *transport* without *judge* or *jury* ! So that, the "*closing of the jury-box*" is not a thing to *scare* us. Be it known to

the tyrants, however, that the closing of the jury-box cannot prevent people from *sowing bank-notes*; and, unless this can be prevented, all other efforts are vain.

We shall hear a great bragging about the revival of the *revenue*. To be sure it will be greater *in proportion to the quantity of paper-money afloat*! It will, of course, augment with the rise of prices. Yet, will the Boroughmongers gather *hope* from this revival! I am anxious, however, to see the "most gracious speech" of the Boroughmongers. It must, one would think, let *something* of their intentions out; and, it may possibly let out enough to make me see what course it will be proper for *me* to steer. The destruction of their usurped power is the great object of all my thoughts, words, and acts. This is my object; and as to the *means*, the *most effectual* are the best.

I beg you to be assured, that I feel no regret at your offering *your project* to the gentlemen; because, while I am sure that it cannot do them any good, I think it may add a little to the interest at the close of the drama. Projects, however, will now become so numerous, that, if you be not uncommonly lucky, yours never will go into effect, for which I should really be sorry; for the paying-off of debts, the lowering of taxes, and the making of money plenty by a clipping of the coins of the kingdom, is a project of so much genuine comic merit, that not to play it off would be a ground of serious accusation against the taste of the nation and of the age. Wishing your piece, therefore, a speedy exhibition and a kind reception,

I remain, Sir,

Your most obedient

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

TO LORD VISCOUNT FOLKESTONE,

ON THE PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT, DURING THE SESSION
OF 1819, RELATIVE TO THE PAPER-MONEY.

(*Political Register, September, 1819*)

LETTER I.

North Hampstead, Long Island, July 11th, 1819.

My LORD,

On this very day of July, last year, I wrote a letter to Mr. Tierney, on the subject of the paper-money. Since the date of that letter many and wide strides have been taken towards the final overthrow of that monster, which has made the finest country in the world the most miserable. New measures have been resorted to; and, it will not, I imagine, be long, before the futility of those measures, as far as their object goes, will be apparent to all the world. During the interval, let us see a little into what has been done, during the last session.

I am perfectly convinced, that the colossus of tyranny and fraud will

come speedily down. It is, in my mind, only a question of *time*. Down it must come. Nothing can support it long. Let us, then, in the meanwhile, prepare ourselves for the fall; and, as far as I am able to work in the way of preparation, I cannot, perhaps, do better than to comment on the Parliamentary proceedings of last winter and spring.

I address myself to your Lordship, upon this occasion, not because you have, in the part you have taken, as to this matter, shown either judgment or public spirit; but, because, the doctrines contained in that petition of mine, which you refused to present to the last, or, the dungeon-Parliament, are now, for the greater part, put forward, as their own, by those by whom that petition has been called "*trash*."

Before I proceed to remark on the proceedings in Parliament, I shall briefly take a view of the causes, which appear to me to have produced these proceedings; for, unless we look a little into these, we shall not so clearly see the objects, which the operators have had in view.

From the moment the Borough-bank (for that is its right name) stopped payment, it was evident, to all men of sense, that it never could pay again. But, first, let us see, why I call it the *Borough-bank*. The revolution of 1688 was a revolution in behalf of the Aristocracy, who had had a part of the property of the Church and all the property of the poor divided amongst them. The second revolution, the *seven-years'*-Parliament revolution, was one having the same end in view. The third revolution, that of dungeon-laws, under Pitt's authority, was of the same stamp. The bank-paper, the funds, the whole of that accursed thing, was invented and extended for the support of these several revolutions; for the support, in short, of the usurpations of the Boroughmongers; and, therefore, I call it, and will always call it, *the Borough-bank*. Again, what do we now see? Do we not see, that the Bank has been lending money to what is called "*the Government*?" Do we not see, that the Bank cannot pay, because the Government, that is to say, the agents of the Boroughmongers, have got its money, as it is called? The Boroughmongers have, then, in fact, *issued the paper themselves*. To all intents and purposes, then, this is the "*Borough-bank*."

It was (to return to my subject) clearly seen by every man, not nearly an idiot, that the Borough-bank, having once stopped, never could resume its payments in the usual way; because, as the company, or pretended company, did not trade in merchandise, and had nothing of real value to *increase* in value; it was impossible for it to *add* to its means of paying. This was, however, plainly proved beforehand by our famous countryman Paine. He, who foresaw *all*, said, in 1796, that the Bank was *insolvent*; he said, that whenever the people should press for payment, the insolvency would become *apparent*. This happened, in less than a year from the date of the prediction. This was not a naked prophecy. It was accompanied with ample reasons. It was shown *why* it should be so. And, in the course of the argument, all was developed, that any man of sense needs to know upon the subject. Read that essay, my Lord; read PAINE'S "*Decline and Fall of the British System of Finance*;" and then blush at the use of the words, "*lower orders*;" blush to think that this man, born in humble life, knew more than all the "*higher orders*" put together. Yet, while such a fellow as pensioned JOHNSON, "*that slave of state*," stands in colossal marble in St. Paul's, PAINE lies in a little hole under the grass and weeds of an obscure farm in America. There, however, *he shall not lie, unnoticed, much*

longer. He belongs to England. His fame is the property of England; and, if no other people will show, that they value that fame, the people of England will. Yes, my Lord, amongst the pleasures that I promise myself, is that of seeing the name of Paine honoured in every part of England, where base corruption caused him, while alive, to be *burnt in effigy*. Never will England be what it ought to be, until the marble of Pitt's monument is converted into a monument to the memory of Paine.

The causes which produced the measures of the last winter and spring, were these. The paper-system had produced great calamities, including in that system, the *taxes* and the *fluctuations in the value of money*. But, still the wretched tyrants appear not to have been alarmed. They could not *see* the cause of these calamities; and they met and met and met again, and resolved and resolved and resolved, that the calamities arose from a "*sudden transition from war to peace*;" and that the increase of paupers arose out of a *redundant population*, accompanied with some *radical defect in the poor-laws themselves*. But, the real causes were stated and developed by me in so many different shapes, and my opinions went on, so long, receiving the stamp of correctness from events, that, at last, the eyes of many began to open. And, then, when the practicability of *puffing-out* the system came to strengthen all the fears that had been before excited, the Boroughmongers took a real alarm. When the gagging and dungeon bills had passed, they had no idea of any danger from the paper-system. They, with the vulgar-minded Castlereagh at their command, and employed as their mouth-piece, ascribed all the discontents of the people to the seductions employed by demagogues. This prime agent of their will had the audacity to say, that the discontents were engendered by the arts of "men of *desperate fortunes*, who had the presumption to think themselves *qualified for high offices*." The reptile could discover no motive beyond that of a love of money and of power in men, who demonstrated the causes of the nation's sufferings, and called for a remedy. This reptile, who now hardly dares show his nose of brass, then talked so boldly and so glibly about the *ignorance of the demagogues*, and CANNING and the base ELLIOT regretted that the people had been taught to read even the Bible; because, by the same means, they had been taught to read the "*Weekly Venom*;" that very "*Weekly Venom*," which was demonstrating the real causes of the nation's distresses, and was urging the people to call for that, which was the only remedy.

At this time a total ignorance prevailed, amongst the Borough crew, of their danger on the side of the paper-money. They did not see, and had no idea of, the situation, in which they were really placed. They had borne every thing down before them so long, that they could not believe it possible, that anything could arise, that they should not be able to subdue by the bayonet. I always told them, that the bayonet would avail them nought against the paper-money. None of their threats ever made me despair; because I saw, that we had an infallible ally in the *Debt*. When SIDMOUTH gaped and spewed out his spite against "*cheap publications*," and when JENKINSON pouted out his lips and said they were "*resolved to pursue the stern path of duty*;" then I laughed at them, well assured, that the day was not distant, when they must change their tone.

We have now before us what they have said in the way of *retractation*, and that is the part of the discussion, that I shall first observe upon. The

Houses have come to *unanimous votes*. Bless us! Then all must be right, to be sure! That which two such bodies vote *unanimously* must be law and gospel too! But, let us hear a little of the confessions of past errors; and, as these have taken place upon this subject, let us hope, that the amiable precedent will be applied to other subjects, especially to that of *Parliamentary Reform*. Do not start, my Lord! After eating their words so greedily as the Boroughmongers have upon this occasion, it is not too much to hope, that they will soon begin to *chew* them a little upon the grand subject of *Reform*.

RYDER began the business in the Lords. He said little. He was *indisposed*; and well he might; for he had been one of them, who, in 1817, had cried up the paper-system as the cause of the salvation of the country. Next came JENKINSON, and he talked as gravely about the notorious depreciation of bank-notes as if he had never asserted the contrary. In the years 1810 and 1811, he scouted the idea of depreciation; and now he expressly says, that bank-notes were *then* depreciated *thirty per cent*. He fairly swallows all; and, as Lord Lauderdale truly observes, they now propose to give the lie, by Act of Parliament, to all their former doctrines. But, there is one passage in the speech of JENKINSON, which I must notice particularly, on account of the flagrant theft he has committed.

“ This first question, however, which it was natural to ask respecting this doctrine, was, had such a system ever existed in any country since the foundation of the world? Iron, copper, and other materials had been employed as instruments of commerce by different nations; but iron and copper had an intrinsic value, and might therefore easily serve as a measure of value in the barter and comparison of other commodities. But no system of circulation had ever existed, in which there was not some fixed standard by which the value of property might be determined. He would ask their Lordships also to reflect what must be the natural effects of any other principle of circulation. They all knew what disgraceful measures had been taken in past times, in this country as well as in the other countries of Europe, by debasing the currency to obtain some immediate profit to the Government. There was, however, this difference between that case and the one which he was now considering—that something of *fixed value* was still given in lieu of that which circulated before. The effect of the new doctrine would be to say, that they would have no fixed standard, but would leave to a body of men, (most respectable he admitted, and who had exercised with signal moderation the great power entrusted to them), to the Bank of England, a *discretionary authority to make money*, which they denied to the *Sovereign himself*, who would exercise it under the control of Parliament. (Hear.)”

The attempt to disguise, here, the robbery committed on me, in my Letters to the Regent of last winter, is like that of scoundrels, who, when they have stolen a horse, cut off his tail and ears and knock out an eye. I beg leave, however, to except the parenthesis in favour of the Bank Directors; for, never have I, at any time of my life, called them, or thought them, a *respectable* body of men: on the contrary, I have always said, that they were most zealous instruments in the hands of a most detestable tyranny.

To be sure, it is a most degrading thing to king and people, that a band of fellows, at a big building in London, should have the power to make money, at their discretion; and that they should be able, whenever they pleased, to cause a violation of all contracts. But, *I have been saying*

this, every month for *thirteen years*; and, which I beg to be remembered, I proposed a remedy for this more than twelve years ago. And yet the shallow and impudent CASTLEREAGH reviled me as a man aiming at distinction, without having capacity to merit it. He shall never pass another session, this hole-digging statesman shall not, so *quietly* as he passed the last.

But, of all the *retracters*, GRENVILLE seems to have been the most eager. His speech contains matter for plenty of fun, if the subject were not too serious for joke. A great part of what he said was, indeed, *very true*; but, not one single truth did he utter, connected with the doctrines of the subject, which I had not uttered before him, and for the uttering of which I had not been *abused*. Let us, however, put upon record a little of his stuff, and then hear what can be said upon it. Any thing said by this man is *unworthy* of remark, except as it may tend to show how impudent and wicked the Boroughmongers have been; and, at the same time, how *ignorant*. The beastly ignorance of the dungeon-making crew, of the insolent pretenders to superiority of *birth*, of the audacious gang who call us all in a lump "*the lower orders*;" this beastly ignorance ought never, for one single moment, to be out of our sight. Now let us hear the dull and arrogant Grenville, who was a volunteer for the Dungeon-bill.

"Lord GRENVILLE.—The Noble Earl who had opened the debate, had explained the plan which he had proposed to their Lordships in so luminous and argumentative a speech, that there was very little occasion for him to add a single word upon the subject. But having considered this restriction as one of the greatest calamities under which this *suffering country had laboured*; having frequently had occasion to lament and deplore the part which he had himself taken, on its original proposition, in prolonging it for the term of the then existing war; having avowed his error in so doing, as became an honest man, at the commencement of the last war; and having *prophesied but too truly all the distress and misery which would befall the nation in consequence of it*, he could not help expressing his joy and satisfaction that the country was at last arrived at that period in which it could look forward with certainty to the repeal of this injudicious and unfortunate measure. He could not remain silent when a measure was proposed to their Lordships, which was almost positively certain of success, but must be allowed to add his voice, weak and humble as it was, to that of those who had spoken so ably and eloquently upon it. The noble Earl had said that the Bank had been of the greatest utility to the Government during the war, and had advanced many large sums to carry it on with vigour and energy: he did not mean to deny this assertion; but he could not help observing, that it was his opinion that no permanent advantage had been derived from the connection between the Government and the Bank, sufficient to compensate the evils to which it had given birth. He need not tell their Lordships his opinion regarding the war which we had waged with France—that must be sufficiently well known to all of them; he need not repeat to them what he had often before stated, that he considered no sacrifice which could be made, too great to bring that war to a successful termination; but he must inform them, that even with those sentiments, he was of opinion that the restriction was an evil of such magnitude, that the sooner it was abolished the better it would be for the country. He did not believe that any men sincerely wishing the welfare of their country, could at any time resort to such a measure, without a sorrowful apprehension of the difficulties and dangers to national and individual interests which must necessarily result from it, and without a conviction that it was for the moment absolutely essential for a particular crisis. Certainly if the question were, whether any extraordinary exertion might at a particular moment avert an impending danger, to meet such a momentary crisis, it might be necessary to resort to a forced circulation; still such forced circulation should not be continued beyond the momentary necessity. For he held it to be a maxim, that there was no differ-

ence in principle or effect, between excessive issues forced upon the country at par by legislative enactment as soon as they became depreciated; and the more direct system pursued by Austria, Prussia, Russia, and the other continental Governments, of at once fixing an arbitrary value upon the national currency. He was inclined to express his sentiments on this subject in the strongest manner, because, hoping as he now did, that an end would at length be put to the restriction, he wished to impress his country with that serious view of the question, which, after long and *anxious* and *laborious deliberation*, he was convinced was the true and only aspect which could bear the test of principle.—He was disposed to go very far on this point; he would say, that under any circumstances, a restriction on cash payments, or in other words, a forced, and consequently an excessive paper circulation must be attended with greater evil than good; he would refer to its natural effects, commercial distress, *increase of prices, increase of taxes*; and he would say, that these circumstances must so cramp and contract all the natural energies of the country, as even in time of war to obstruct the necessary efforts, and thus produce a mischief far to overbalance the advantage accruing from the facility of loans. The war terminated *just before the breaking up of the bubble*, and it was fortunate, it was providential, that it did, for its continuance, jointly with the continuance of the restriction, would have inflicted such distress on the country, as it would have been impossible to bear. If, when no further exertion was necessary than to wind up the war expenses, it had been found to be not only imprudent, but impracticable to remove the Bank restriction; and when it was necessary to have recourse to those methods of raising money, usual only in war; what would have been the case if the country had been called upon to make fresh and extraordinary efforts for the further conduct of a war, or rather for the existence of the country? It would have been this—that the country would have had to learn, by its *absolute destruction*, the effects of a measure intended to preserve its existence. (Hear.) He did not now look to live to see the practical results of any of his opinions; but he was anxious to be explicit, that future statesmen, who might have to propose a similar measure, might at least not have to say, that the opinion of such a measure having once saved the country was unanimous. So far from wishing to be thought a party to such a doctrine, he hoped (if, indeed, any opinion of so humble an individual as himself could be expected to be remembered, he would not say after his death, but even for the few remaining years of life—he hoped) that it would be recorded of him as his decided conviction, that in proportion to the danger under which the country laboured, he would almost say in proportion to the extent of that danger was the *impolicy and desperate madness of such a measure as they were now considering how to rescind*. Having providentially emerged with success from the war (for Providence would not suffer such an example of morals and laws as this country afforded to be lost to the world), they had now to deliberate and decide, whether in time of peace they would consent to prolong the measure of restriction indefinitely, and place its control in the hands of those who act on a system by which it is impossible it could ever be terminated. It was with great surprise and pain that he had heard a most intelligent witness (to whom the noble Earl had referred) declare, that the Suspension Act afforded great *facilities to industry* and commerce, without any countervailing evil. There were others who maintained, that while the measure was of the greatest service to the commercial world, it might be injurious and even ruinous to the other interests of the community.—With the latter part of this opinion he perfectly agreed; from the former part he must express his most decided dissent. The facilities of commerce returned on commerce with aggravated mischief; and whatever temporary advantages might be furnished to individuals, it rarely happened that these individuals did not ultimately suffer tenfold injury. He would refer to the memorable example of 1816. There was, indeed, nothing new in the progress and effects of a depreciated currency. For a time *all seemed brisk and cheering*; the vessel rode along in full sail, and with favouring current, but it never failed to happen that the calm sea became troubled, that the flattering gale swelled into a storm—such a storm as that from which this country had with difficulty saved itself, and from the effects of which it still suffered, and would long continue to suffer. As an illustration of his argument, he would refer their Lordships to the lists of bankrupts, from the year 1790 to the present time; and their Lordships could not fail to remark the striking coincidence of increased bankruptcies with the system of increased facilities.—While the Bank was lending money with one

hand, with the other it was shaking the *foundations of contracts, affecting all prices*, and involving the country in distress, and individuals in ruin, and in a proportion tenfold greater than any advantage that could arise from their liberal issues. He could willingly dwell on this subject, if he were not afraid of detaining their Lordships: he could show how the miseries of 1816 followed on the *issues of the preceding year*: he could show how the excessive issue of country paper which could not maintain itself, like Bank-paper, by legislative enactment, led to a fearful depreciation, and without any fault of individuals, by the mere force of the system, involved the whole kingdom in one general desolation. Not only its trade and commerce, but its agriculture, its landed interest, even classes the most remote from connection with or even knowledge of the paper-system, found themselves suddenly consigned to total and inexplicable ruin. If their Lordships could see at their bar, not merely the *victims* of commercial failure, but those numerous persons of *all ages, sexes, and classes*, who had *unconsciously suffered without even understanding how and where the evil fell upon them*, such a spectacle would fill their Lordships with horror, and he sincerely believed that not only no voice would be raised for the maintenance of such a system in commerce, but not even in war."

"Choke, chicken; there are more hatching:" say the women to the sulky babies, when they are heaving out tears and sighs. But Daddy Grenville vomits out quite freely. Before I got the newspaper, which contains this speech, I had a letter from Liverpool, containing these words: "I have not read the debates yet, but a friend, who has had time, tells me, that Lord Grenville has confessed his past errors, and that he is a convert to your doctrines and to common sense. Repent this our bitter enemy may; but, I doubt his conversion to common sense."

However; Daddy Grenville does talk about the "*suffering country*;" about "*distress and misery*" arising out of the system; he calls the thing the "*paper-system*;" he calls the thing "*a bubble*;" he says that it "*enhances taxes, alters prices*;" he says "*that it shakes the foundations of contracts*;" he says, that, if the noble, noble, noble Lords, those compassionate and tender-hearted creatures, could see the multitude of "*victims*" of the paper-system, the sight would *appal* their noble and compassionate and generous souls. Well done, Daddy Grenville! Thus far the Daddy repeated my opinions and words pretty correctly; but, he omitted to observe, that, out of the eleven hundred millions that have been borrowed, by the means of this system, he and his family have swallowed up about a million; he forgot, that he himself had spent, or had still in his possession, more than two hundred thousand pounds of the borrowed money. He forgot to observe, that he was, even while he was speaking, pocketting four thousand pounds a-year of the public money, in the shape of a *sinecure*. And what was this *for*? For *past services*? What, when he has now to acknowledge, that he was one of those, who were the authors of measures the most injurious that ever were adopted in the country; could he stand up and look people in the face, while he was receiving an enormous annual income for *past services*? Daddy Grenville was the author of the first *Sedition Bills*; of the Bill making it *high-treason* to do anything, by word or deed, to *overawe* either House of Parliament; of the Soldier's-speaking-to hanging Bill; and he was a volunteer for passing all the infamous measures of 1817. Ah! Daddy! You will not, by your vehement censure on your instruments of Threadneedle-street cause these things to be *forgotten*!

You say, that the paper-system *enhances taxes*; and *how, Daddy*?

Not by lowering the value of money; but by making it *easy to borrow money*, and to give it to such men as *you*, and to *soldiers*, and to *judges* in augmentation of their pay, which last has been constantly going on. This is the way, in which the paper system *augments taxes*. It has enabled the Borough tribe to give millions upon millions (taken from the earnings of the people) to rascally French emigrants and to the clergy in England and Wales. This is the way that the paper-system works as to taxes; and, pray, good Daddy, do you propose any *remedy for this evil*? Does your scheme, Daddy, contemplate a *reduction of taxes*? No; but an *addition* to them; for, you propose to pay in gold that which was borrowed in paper, and in a depreciated paper, too!

There are, my Lord Folkestone, a few more extracts to make from the Daddy's speech. Ho is most eloquent upon the subject of the Bank's pretending to be the *guardians of the nation*. Aye, presumptuous dogs! What! had they forgotten that they were *tools*? Thirteen years ago, when the Daddy himself was prime minister, I told him, that the Bank were more dangerous to him than Buonaparte; and yet the Daddy is now surprised to find, that they have pretensions to a *co-partnership in power*. But, let us hear him; for it does one good.

“These were his grounds for asking, whether we ought to go on with a system of variable value, or adopt some plan in order to arrive at the end of a system, which, while it continued, no one could say he did not hold his property, not indeed at the mercy of a despotic Government, but of a body of individuals, who, constituted for other purposes, took upon themselves forsooth the guardianship of the interests of the country. He wanted no such guardianship. He wanted a currency established on public faith—on public laws; and for this he should look to the wisdom of Parliament. If there were no other objection to the paper-system, he would object to it on account of the *self-assumption in this body of men* of the right of calling themselves guardians of interests which they would pretend Parliament was unable to maintain. The question now was, would Parliament perform its own duty; or leave it at the absolute disposal of men, who, however respectable individually, yet as a body not only were not invested with the trust they assumed, but held a trust in its nature totally incompatible with it? His noble Friend (Lord Lauderdale) had asserted his opinion of the necessity of a return to a standard of value; and certainly that opinion was not uncalled-for on presenting such a petition as he had that night presented; for, when all classes acknowledged that *something at least ought to be done* towards a return to such a standard; when none ventured to deny that at some period cash payments should be resumed, it behoved those who came forward with such unqualified abuse of the proposed plan, to propose themselves some plan, or to suggest at least the propriety of one. The depreciation of paper had been nearly one-third, and the loss to all classes of the community who held it to that amount. Whether or not that depreciation arose from excessive issue, it was impossible, nay, *there was no disposition now, in any class, to deny that paper had been depreciated more than 30 per cent.* Against the recurrence of such an evil there was at present no security whatever.—Parliament had by repeated Acts first fixed the termination of the system, then prorogued it, then again; and now again, it being still held impossible to bring it to any, could any man hope that what had not been would now be done decidedly and beyond all doubt? He meant to cast no reflection on the Bank, but he could only judge how they would execute their trust, by the way in which they had executed it in time past. The exchanges at one period had righted themselves, and the *resumption might have taken place without injury*. At that time, the only useful step that the Bank should have taken they did not take. In 1817 the price of gold and paper were at par; what did the Bank do?—They *increased their issues*, and at the same time *issued gold*. When gold and paper were thus at the same moment poured into the market, there could be no difficulty in accounting for the rise of gold. He did not dispute the sincerity of their intentions, but certainly it was most unfortunate that it did not occur to them

that the issue of gold, without a corresponding deduction of paper, must raise the price of the former article. Even now they did not seem to admit the principle of the Bullion Report, so wisely and irrefragably established by a man (Mr. Horner) whose talents were lost to the country, and whose loss was never more *severely felt* than at the present moment. If the Bank now allowed the truth of that Report, there might be some hope that they would prepare for the resumption of cash payments, by *regulating their issues of paper in conformity with the issues of gold*. But as they did not acknowledge that principle, whatever might be their talents and integrity, they were the last individuals to whom a discretion should be allowed unaccompanied by such provisions as should secure the object at last, which all would wish to be accomplished. As to calculations which had been made respecting the quantity of a circulating medium, he thought they were little to be depended on. He did not think that it depended on capital, commerce, or manufactures. If he could form any judgment, he would say that the same quantity of circulation might by an increased rapidity perform twice the operation. He saw no reason for supposing that the payment of the bank-note at par would produce any serious evil. The utmost loss would be three per cent. This he did not conceive to be a serious objection; for at a time when it would have been thought sacrilege that the Bank should ever suspend its payments, there were frequent fluctuations in value to the amount of five per cent. without any serious evil. Why, then, was this loss of five per cent. objected as an insuperable difficulty? His opinion, indeed, had been, that cash payments might have been safely resumed at the end of this year. It would neither be just to the plan itself nor to the country, nor accelerate sufficiently the discharge of that most important duty which was now imposed upon their Lordships, of removing the present pressure, if the plan were not carefully studied and well understood. But the noble Lord had stated grounds upon which he could not go along with him. The statement of the difficulties which they would have to surmount, before the Bank could resume cash-payments, was most ridiculously exaggerated. What would they say at law of those, who, being required to resume their payments in cash, should increase instead of reducing their issues in paper? But it was time that this connection between the Government of the country and the Bank of England should be dissolved. It was a duty, of all others, the most imperative upon their Lordships. As the matter stood now, the fact was this—that the Bank had not acceded to the propositions of Government. They had not pursued the course which was expressly intimated to them. To this there was always a ready answer—it was from the necessities of Government. If, on the other hand, it was asked, what should be done in regard to the Bank's resuming cash payments, they were immediately admonished to remember the state of affairs between the Government and the Bank. They had placed that Government, and Parliament itself, in the hard condition of a debtor, who could not assert his own dignity, nor vindicate his own rights. Now, he said that their Lordships must destroy this state of things, if they meant to restore order to their finances, and security to the Government. It was incompatible with all the principles upon which the Bank was first constituted. It was not merely incompatible, it was in direct contrariety to them. It was contradictory to all precedent; for the history of all the Banks in Europe would prove, that those which had fallen, all fell from the same cause, from the same fatal circumstance—*dependence upon the Government*. If they meant to have what they once possessed, an accredited Bank in this country, they must have one established upon the only principle upon which it could exist—a total independence of the Government. (Hear.) It was, therefore, upon that ground, much more than from any private wish of his, that he now earnestly pressed the repayment of the advances, as absolutely necessary before the Bank could resume cash payments. It was therefore, also, that he most heartily concurred in the measure, as the first step, advancing, he really hoped, to the ultimate result of dissolving this ominous and dangerous confederacy between the Government and the Bank."

This is pretty talk from a man who was in full power during the whole of the time that those Acts were passed, which caused the close and inseparable connection between the Government and the Bank, and which really made the Bank the Bank of the Boroughmongers! That this has long been the case I have proved over and over again; and now it is

openly confessed ; for now the Bank-fellows say, *we* can pay our debts, but the Government debts we cannot pay. However, this was clearly shown to be, in *fact*, though not in *form*, the case before the Bank-stoppage and protection. This was shown by PAINE, who said, that " Pitt and Grenville and their associates *owed* the amount of the bank-notes."

So ; there is no disposition *now*, in any class, to deny the depreciation of bank-notes. I can remember when that profligate wretch, SHERRIDAN, denounced me to the Den, because I said that they were depreciated ; and I can remember when that base tool of the Whigs, Perry, inculcated the necessity of silencing those who endeavoured to destroy the "*credit of the country*," always identifying the Bank with the country.

Daddy says, that cash-payments might have taken place sometime back, *without injury*. What does he mean ? Without injury *to the nation* ? Agreed. But not without blowing-up the Borough-system. The Daddy does not see this ; and let him be blind to it. Mr. HUNT is not. He sees it plainly enough ; and that was what took him to the meeting in the City.

The praises of Lawyer HORNER are now become a standing dish, for which it would, if it were worth while, be easy to account. HORNER, to whom Grenville gave a place, was the author of the *Bullion Report*, in 1810. Horner was the tool of the Whigs, the perfidious Whigs. That Report, as its *object*, recommended a forced return to specie payments in two years from 1811 ; and it professed to show, that that object might be accomplished, without even a *thought of a reduction of the Debt*, and *without a return of peace*, the country being then engaged in war.

There never was any piece of writing more shallow, more false, more foolish, more ridiculous than this Report ; and yet the stupid thing who drew it up is to be incessantly held forth as an object worthy of national admiration ; and the *principles*, as they are called, of that empty and conceited fellow, are said to be those which are, at last, to *save* the country !

The party of the little malignant PERCEVAL contended, that the paper-system was a very good one ; but, that, of course specie payments would come in time of peace.

At this time the tyrants had me safe, as they thought, on the road to a speedy death. Then I smote them with my "*Paper against Gold*," in which I *proved*, that, whether in peace or in war, the Bank never could pay in specie, without a reduction of the Debt, or without a total ruin of all the active part of the nation, engaged in trade or agriculture. I need not repeat the reasons for this opinion. They have been stated over and over again ; and though I shall, in a future letter, show the silliness of the present scheme, all I mean here, is, to point out the beastliness of these praises bestowed on Horner. *Eight* years are passed instead of *two*. No specie-payments have *yet* taken place. *Four more years* are now to be allowed ; and yet stupid Horner is to be extolled to the skies. An attempt has been made to pay, and that attempt has plunged the nation into indescribable misery ; and yet stupid Horner is to be canonized !

Daddy Grenville speaks, in conclusion, of the *writers*, from whom he has received benefit as to this important subject :

" It was a plan recommended by men of science, by men who had made these matters the object of *great study and deep research*. If that objection proceeded from them, he for one should receive it with all the deference which it gratified him on every occasion to pay to talent and to learning. His own experience at least enabled him to say, that greater lights on this important subject had not

been derived from those who had practised, than from those who had written upon it. It was a plan of one now existing in Europe, *whose name, of all others, would be most likely to recommend any question of political economy.* It was recommended by men who, to *profound and intimate acquaintance with the theory of the subject, united the most extensive practical experience.* Men, indeed, without science, experience, or information, in the details of this extensive matter, and only such, considered and treated this plan as whimsical and impracticable. But let it be remembered who those were who supported it, men of *unexceptionable character for knowledge, practice, and sagacity.* He saw no objection to it whatever, and with him its greatest recommendation was this—that although it did inevitably prolong much longer, indeed, than he wished, the period at which the mischief he so much deprecated should be terminated, yet, at its very outset, it recognised and recommended *the sacred standard of metallic value,* which unfortunately had been almost entirely lost sight of, which for the last twenty years we had nearly lost altogether, and which could alone restore its native vigour to our finance. They would thus have the satisfaction of knowing that the very first step which they made was on the right principle, and in the right way. (Hear.) He was sorry to have consumed so much of their Lordships' time: but the deep interest which he took in this momentous subject would not permit him to leave the discussion without strongly urging the incalculable advantages of the proposed measure. It was not his wish, or his design, in anything that he had now said, to reflect on individuals or on the conduct of the Bank of England. That it had not been regulated by sound policy or wisdom could not be matter of dispute. Confident as he felt that they might have more rapidly resumed cash-payments, yet under existing circumstances the doing so might have shaken credit and engendered alarm. It was upon that ground only that he consented to the plan now before them, to which he most heartily declared that he gave his entire, unlimited, and most unqualified approbation."

Well, then, Daddy, this plan will *succeed*? Now, I, in opposition to all these fine sagacious men, tell you, that *it will not succeed.* Events will decide between us; and events are now quick in succession. I am glad, that *dates* are specified; for now detection and exposure are easy.

Mr. PERL went the full length of the Daddy in the way of *recantation*; and, as if he had just been reading one of my parcels of "two-penny trash," he said, that "it was a *mockery to talk of national prosperity while the poor were starving.* Mr. PERL recanted; but Mr. PERL did not acknowledge his obligations to me. While the walls of the two Houses were ringing with descriptions of the fatal effects of the paper-system, there was not a man, who had the manliness to hint that all these descriptions had been given a thousand times over *by me.* But, though this was a proof of meanness in the whole, the meanness of your Lordship, of you, my Lord Folkestone, surpassed that of all the rest; seeing that to you, more than a year before, I had sent a *petition* to be presented to the Parliament, containing all the arguments, which were now made use of against the paper-system, and tracing to that system all the evils now ascribed to it. You were guilty of a breach of duty (if you consider yourself as a representative of the people) in not presenting my petition and causing it to be printed in the Votes of the House; but your meanness, your low envy, your haughtiness, your "meanness that soars, and pride that licks the dust," are ten million times more odious than the refusal to do your duty. What! you had not, then, the courage to be just? You could condescend to become a *plagiary*, but you were too proud to act a dignified part. You were ashamed to own your obligations to one of the "*lower orders*;" but, not at all ashamed to pillage him. Like your broods of uncles, cousins, and dependants, who, while they are too proud to speak to the common labourer, are not too proud to eat part of his dinner, under the name of offices, sinecures and pensions.

As to *your plan* (for every one has his plan) I will speak of that in another letter; but, upon this occasion, when you were quoting old JENKINSON, did not *my petition* occur to your mind? What! you had forgotten it I suppose? You had forgotten, too, Paper against Gold, and all the whole mass of protests of mine against this infernal system of paper-money? Do you think, that, by your silence, you can *make the people forget*? Do you think that you can, by any thing that you can do, or that you can leave undone, check the natural effects which must proceed from all these repeated verifications of my opinions and predictions? Burdett, in his anonymous attacks on me (in the *Examiner*) has called me *vain*; and for what? Because I claim a part only of what is my due? Mine is a singular case. I have a clear right to say of myself things which it would, in a common case, be immodest to say. Indeed, I have too long forborne to claim my due; a fault which I will endeavour to make up for if I can.

I myself never have, in the whole course of my life, been backward to acknowledge the merits of others: my fault has been on the other side. But, it is the fault of a fear of being unjust and ungenerous. These fears appear to haunt the breasts of few others. I was not disposed to expect generous conduct from you, upon this occasion; but, I did expect justice. I did expect, that you would have risen in your place, and holding my petition in your hand, say, that, in that paper were contained all the doctrines, as to the evil effects of the paper-system, which had now been put forward in the House.

You have pretended, my Lord, to disapprove of the Dungeon and Gagging Bills. You well knew, and the whole nation knows, that those bills were levelled solely against *my publications*. There is not a man of sincerity in the whole nation, who will not say, that this was evidently the case. Indeed, this is a fact, too notorious to be insisted upon. The circular of Addington, the persecution of the vendors of the *Register*, the Reports, all the whole of the falsehoods, the infamous pretences and infamous Acts, of the year 1817, arose out of a desire to prevent the circulation of my publications.

Now, the general tendency of those publications was to preserve the tranquillity of the country, by proving to the labouring and distressed classes, that their sufferings did not arise out of the misconduct of any kind, of farmers, millers, bakers, butchers, or employers; but that they arose out of taxation co-operating with a system of paper-money, which by being left to the discretion of interested parties, violated contracts, ruined industrious and honest masters, and deprived the labourers of employment, food and raiment.

This was the main tendency of those papers, which the Borough-ruffians dreaded, and to put a stop to the reading of which they resorted to so many acts of savage tyranny. Well, then, if you were really an enemy to those infamous acts, what so natural as *now* to say openly, that those publications had now received from events the stamp of truth, and that that truth had been acknowledged? What but the lowest of all low motives could have restrained you from making this declaration? A declaration demanded by bare *justice*; a declaration that one might, under such circumstances, have expected from an enemy.

Upon such an occasion, what would have been an honest part? What would a man, worthy the name of nobleman have said? "Sir, it gives me great pleasure to observe, that we appear to be in a fair way of

" rendering justice to that writer, who has so long been labouring to
 " enlighten us upon this great and interesting subject; he whose labours
 " have astonished all the reflecting part of the nation; he who seems
 " never to have enjoyed a moment's rest from those labours; he who,
 " to the disgrace and infamy of the last Parliament, was, by the acts of
 " that degraded body, compelled to cease to instruct us, or to instruct us
 " from a foreign land; he who, notwithstanding this treatment, has re-
 " tained, in their full force, all his sentiments of attachment to his
 " country, and who still labours with unparalleled industry and effect to
 " serve that country; he who alone appears to understand, thoroughly,
 " all the causes and consequences which it is now of so much import-
 " ance to understand; he whom it is the duty of this House, by a
 " solemn vote, to recall from his exile, and to make him ample compen-
 " sation for all the losses and sufferings, whether of himself, or family,
 " arising out of that exile; he whose advice, cordial good-will, and ener-
 " getic exertions, are more likely than any thing else can be, to save this
 " our beloved country from all the horrors of revolutionary madness;
 " he, in whose mind, a selfish thought never existed, and whose whole
 " life contains an unbroken series of proofs, that he has never known
 " any enjoyment so great as that of endeavouring to promote the hap-
 " piness and honour of England; and, above all, he who has been
 " driven from the country for those very writings, the truth and wisdom
 " of which are now echoed within our walls."

Now, my Lord, you may think as you please; but, you are able to say,
 or do, nothing to bring to yourself so much honour as this short speech
 would have brought you; and, be you well assured, that the nation will
 make the speech for you. I am sitting in a tent in Long Island; but, I
 know better than you do what is passing in men's minds in England;
 and it will now be but a short time before I shall hear it from their
 honest lips.

But, you may say, that I preached *parliamentary reform* as well as a
 hatred of the paper-system. And was it not time to take the affairs of
 the nation out of the hands, which had conducted it to such ruin and
 misery? The ruin, the misery, the starvation, are now acknowledged to
 exist; and to have been produced by that system, against which I have
 been protesting for the last sixteen years. What more need we to prove,
 that the affairs of the nation ought to be placed in other hands; that
 they ought no longer to be entrusted to the slaves of the owners of
 Boroughs? Grenville will not leave power any longer in the hands of
 the Bank, because the Bank has not managed the thing well; and, upon
 the same ground, the people of England will no longer, if they can help
 it, leave power in the hands of the Boroughmongers. These are the
 bane of England: these have been, and are, the cause of all the ruin
 and misery and starvation; and, until these be removed from their usurped
 power, there can be no happiness for the people and no safety for the
 throne.

WM. COBBETT.

TO LORD VISCOUNT FOLKESTONE,

ON THE PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT DURING THE SESSION
OF 1819, RELATIVE TO THE PAPER-MONEY.

(*Political Register*, September, 1819.)

LETTER II.

North Hampstead, Long Island, July 22nd, 1819.

MY LORD,

In my last, I took notice only of the retractions of some of the heroes of the Dungeon-bill. In the present letter, it is my intention to observe upon the *grand plan*, which is to put all to rights. To be sure, it is very difficult to see what may be the precise effect of measures so strange and complicated. It is such an odd sort of way of getting to the point proposed; it is so round-about, so crooked, so out of all rule, that one can hardly say what it is likely to produce; but, it is quite easy to say what it will not produce, and that is, specie payments at the Borough-bank.

During the Debates that now lie before me, there were put forth such a multitude of opinions, differing from each other, that one would be astonished (if any thing in the way of absurdity, in those assemblies, could astonish us at this day) at the decision being by *unanimous vote*. This proves, that the decision was not the result of conviction, and forbids us to attach any weight to it. Indeed, the foolish, the contradictory, the childish conduct of those assemblies, for years past, makes us suspect the wisdom of all they say and of all they do; but, in short, what do we want more to induce us to disregard their decisions than the fact, that they have, by their measures, brought the nation into a state, which they themselves call distressed and ruinous, and which we know to be miserable beyond all example? They blame the Bank Directors for their conduct; but, the Bank Directors, bad as they are, could not have done the mischief, if the Boroughmongers had not authorized them to do the mischief.

The opinions and decisions of such people would be wholly unworthy of notice, were it not that they possessed *power* to do mischief. I will, for this reason, make some remarks upon the famous *plan*. But as an introduction to these remarks, I must notice some opinions and notions, which appear to have led to the adoption of the plan.

It was said, on all sides, that the Borough-bank might have resumed specie payments in 1816; for that then *the paper was at par with gold*. Yes, it was at par with gold, but it was only because specie payments *had not taken place*. The Borough-bank could not have ventured to pay in specie without providing itself with *more gold* than it then had. To have made this provision, it must have *issued a new batch of notes*, and this would, in an instant, have raised the gold above the paper; and

would, of course, have made the Borough-bank *unable* to pay in specie. The paper may be brought to a par with gold, and yet the Borough-bank may be unable to pay in gold. Not only that Bank must be prepared for a run; but all the country banks must also be prepared for a run. And, is it pretended, that all those Banks were thus prepared in 1816? Nobody will have the impudence to pretend to believe any such a thing.

To be able to pay, really to pay, in specie, *there must be full as much gold afloat and in the Bank as there is of paper afloat*. Indeed there ought to be more gold than paper. And, it is pretended, that this was the case in 1816? As to the *people refusing gold and preferring paper*, the people had *no choice*. The thing was a mere trick. The tax-gatherers were ordered to refuse gold without weighing it: the bankers played off the same trick. But the trick did not last. Gold was soon preferred to paper; and the gold soon wholly disappeared.

Besides, when it is said, that the Bank *could have paid* in specie, it appears to be forgotten, that the attempt to prepare to pay had plunged the country into the deepest of misery. The misery was at nearly the last stage of endurance at the close of 1816. A very little harder pressing would have blown up the whole system. Farms were deserted. The paupers prowled from parish to parish. Society was nearly dissolved. What, then, would have been the case, if the Borough-bank and all the Banks had enabled themselves to pay in reality? That the Banks could have paid we know well; *for they can do it at any time*; and your Lordship can jump from the top of a chimney of Coleshill House; but, as to the consequences, that is a different matter.

The Borough-bank has been blamed for issuing sovereigns without *contracting its issues of paper at the same time*. How was the Bank to get the sovereigns? It had bought them; and with *what*? Why, with notes, to be sure. So that it was impossible to lessen the *quantity of paper* by this operation. When, indeed, the Bank paid out sovereigns, it would, of course, receive back the paper which it had given for them; but *not all of it*; for by putting out paper to get the sovereigns, the Bank had made the paper be below par. When, therefore, the sovereigns got out, it was impossible that they could remain in circulation, seeing that they *must* be, at once, at a premium; seeing that the golden pound must, at once, be worth more than the paper pound.

What wonder was it, therefore, that the sovereigns marched off to the mint of the Bourbons? The Bank might, indeed, have contracted its issues so as to have kept the sovereigns in the country; but, then, this contraction, together with that of the country-banks, would have produced all the miseries before-mentioned. It would have been the same thing as paying in specie. It would, if the people would have endured it, caused millions to die, being actually starved. The breaking of little banks, *in this country*, and at this season of the year, is, at this moment, producing, all of a sudden, most shocking misery. Men are prowling about *out of employ*. And this, though the national Bank pays in specie. But the *lessening of the quantity* of the circulating medium, no matter what that medium is, must of necessity produce such effects.

And, does your Lordship really believe, that it can be *lessened* in England? Do you believe, that specie-payments can take place *without a lessening*? How then can you believe, that the Borough-bank and all the banks could have paid in specie in 1816?

Lord Grenville said, that the paper-system *added* to the taxes. But

how? Not in the way that he appeared to suppose. It has caused taxes to be *laid*, because it has enabled the Boroughmongers to borrow money for the purpose of paying soldiers, supporting French emigrants, larding the fat clergy of England, and granting sinecures and pensions to themselves and families and dependants. But, the money once borrowed, the taxes once laid, the more paper-money there is, the less is the real amount of those taxes. The price of all things rises; and, of course, fewer things of the same real value are wanted to discharge any given amount of tax. For instance, if I am a farmer, and my taxes amount to a hundred a-year, I have two hundred bushels of wheat to part with in order to pay my taxes, if the wheat be ten shillings a bushel. But, if the quantity of money be augmented, so as to make wheat twenty shillings a bushel, I have only a hundred bushels of wheat to part with, in order to pay my taxes.

Hence it was, that the taxes were paid, and cheerfully paid, until 1815; because, though their nominal amount was great, the great quantity of money enabled the people to pay. But now, when endeavours are making to pay in specie; when, of course, contractions of the paper are taking place; and when prices are, by these means, kept down, the taxes are greatly augmented, not by an increase, but by a diminution, of the quantity of the paper. And, my Lord, do you believe, that specie payments could, then, have taken place in 1816, and that the then nominal amount of the taxes could have been paid? Is it possible that your Lordship can believe this?

Yet, this is JENKINSON'S notion *now*! And, indeed, it appears to be the notion of almost all the members of both Houses. What a monstrous notion!

Upon the nature of the paper-system generally, Lord Grenville observed, that it was, in all cases, a *bad system*; for that, though it gave the appearance of prosperity, though it enabled governments to carry on war, and to do divers other things, for awhile, it was sure to produce great calamities in the end. His Lordship made a long a-do in saying this. I have shown the thing a thousand times over. But, PAINE did it long before, when, in one short sentence, he told his readers, that, "*Paper-money was strength in the beginning, and feebleness in the end:*" words which the Boroughmongers will soon have cause most feelingly to understand.

The strength of the Borough-paper has been enjoyed; and now its feebleness has to be endured. It is now producing evils of every kind that can be imagined. It is ruining respectable families; it is pushing down the middling class of people; it is starving the labouring classes; it is filling the transportation ships, and making the gallows groan; it is breaking hearts by hundreds of thousands, and is arming the hand of self-destruction. A scourge far greater than the sword and the pestilence. To save themselves from the effects of this system, the people are, in all directions, fleeing to foreign lands; and England, which, in a few short months, might, by wise measures, be restored to happiness, now resembles a city infested with the plague.

Now, as to the PLAN, the grand plan, which is to rescue the Borough-system from its perilous state; it is, as I understand it, as follows:—1. That the Borough-bank shall not pay in *coin* until the end of four years: 2. That it shall begin to pay its notes in bullion in February next, provided that those who demand such payment shall not demand less than sixty

ounces at a time ; and even then, the Bank is, for four pounds and one shilling in its notes, to give one ounce of gold ; or, in other words, is to receive its own notes at a discount of about five per centum : 3. That, from October 1820 to May 1821, the Bank is to pay in bullion of thirty ounces, and is to receive its notes at a discount of about two and a half per centum : 4. That in 1823, the Bank, the brave Borough-bank, the old lady, is, without any reduction of debt, *to pay in coin* !!!—If she do, I will give my poor body up to be broiled on one of Castlereagh's widest-ribbed gridirons.*

Now this is the grand plan. This is the remedy unanimously adopted. This is what both the bodies of wisecracs have agreed to. This is the rock of Boroughmonger salvation ; and that this rock is all a *sham* I am now going to prove.—Indeed, this has been, a hundred times, proved before-hand ; for all the notions, on which the plan is founded, have, over and over again, been, by me, proved to be false. The *effects* of the paper-system were, by repeating my opinions and words, pretty well described, during the debate ; but, as to the remedy, every notion, on which it is founded, is false.

It is pretended, that the plan is founded on *evidence*. The evidence, which I have read till I am sick almost unto death, is a mass of heterogeneous trash, such, I believe, as never was before compiled into a book. The witnesses contradict each other as to matters of fact as well as to matters of opinion ; and every witness, either directly or by implication, contradicts himself over and over again. And, of the whole mass of the stuff, called evidence, there is not one sentence worthy of attention, except the matters of fact, stated in the reply of the directors of the Borough-bank. In short, the stuff called evidence, is a parcel of gabble from the lips of a set of stock-jobbers and loan-jobbers, who know very well how to suck blood out of the nation, but who know nothing of the means of putting blood into it.

Such is the *evidence*, on which this plan is founded ; and, it must be confessed, the witnesses, the evidence, the committees and the plan, are all well worthy of being associated together.

The Plan, as a means of deceiving the people, might, if there were no one to expose it, answer its purpose for a short time. For, it puts off the day of real payment to a comfortable distance. The guilty always seek a distant day of trial. But, to have appointed the four *years*, without any intermediate steps, would have shook off a great many of the fools, who will now hang on to the system a little longer.

It is difficult, in all cases, to deal with an absurdity, and especially if the absurdity be complicated. We are often puzzled by the silly things, which are propounded to us by children, or by men of childish minds. We can hardly bring ourselves to condescend to combat notions, which appear unworthy of rational beings. We are seized with listlessness and

* This passage is the "Gridiron prophecy," which, as the Bank of England has been paying in gold ever since 1823, has been said to be falsified. But the reader will see, in a paragraph of this same letter to Lord Folkestone, that Mr. COBBETT, explains his meaning thus : "Is it not impossible for the Borough-bank to pay ? That is to say, without total ruin to the nation ?" This question, whether the nation is ruined, or is only on the road to it, is now (1837) the very one that politicians are disputing ; but it is openly and constantly declared in and out of Parliament, that PEARL'S BILL is the cause of the ruin that has taken place. Thus, then, we say the prediction is verified.—Ed.

disgust upon such occasions ; and we suffer the error to exist and prevail, rather than undertake the irksome task of correcting it. But, when the prevalence of error may possibly prolong the miseries of our country ; and, moreover, when not to expose it is to give the enemies of our country *breathing time* ; it becomes our duty to expose, however irksome and disgusting the task.

The state of the matter is this : there exists, in England, a paper-system, which is now, by both Houses of Parliament, declared to be the cause, or, at least, one great cause, of the ruin and misery, which now abound, and which, until of late years, never did so greatly abound in England. Both Houses agree, that, unless this system can be got rid of, the English nation must become, not only more and more miserable, but, that, in the end, and at no very distant day, it must become a scene of political convulsion, or of the most abject subserviency to the will of other nations.

The object is, therefore, to get rid of this system. To effect this object, there is but one way, and this is to cause the paper-system to give way to a system of gold and silver, or, in a single word, *coin*. And, therefore, the measures of the Parliament are intended to cause coin to come and take the place of paper, in a great degree, at least, in the circulation of the country.

There is a thing called the Bank, which has made and still makes the paper-money, and which sends forth that money instead of coin. It is clear, that, if the Parliament can force the Bank to pay coin in exchange for its paper, the object of getting rid of the paper-system *can be* accomplished ; but, if the Parliament cannot do this, the getting rid of the paper-system *cannot* be accomplished. The heroes of the Dungeon-Bill say that they can force the Bank to pay in coin : I say they cannot. They have produced neither fact nor argument to show that they *can*. Their evidence is not worth a straw ; experience is directly against them ; and not one single argument have they produced to *show*, to cause any one to believe, that they possess such ability. I might, therefore, dismiss the question at once, by calling them fools, or liars, and by appealing to events thus far in proof of the truth of my opinions and assertions. But, as in the instance of my letter to Mr. TIERNEY, I forego my right to indulge in idleness ; and will once more prove, that the case of our enemies is desperate ; a task which I undertake, not for the purpose of enlightening our friends of the "*lower orders* ;" but for the purpose of making the knees of the Fitzwilliams knock together ; for, you will please to observe, my Lord, that the Boroughmongers have now declared, that their Bank must pay in coin, or the country will be *wholly destroyed* ; and, by the *country* these impudent men always mean *themselves*, except when they are talking of debts to be paid or of duties to be performed.

The plain state of the case, as to the ability of the Bank to pay in coin, is this : the Borough-bank and the other Banks have about a hundred millions of paper out.—But, though I believe not one single word, contained in any paper presented by the Borough-bank, let us take that Bank alone, and let us give credit to its accounts. That Bank has, then, now afloat, twenty-five millions of its own paper. Before the stoppage, there were about from 20 to 30 millions in gold in the country, and eight millions in paper. *Less* than this sum will hardly do now ; for, with this sum, the Borough-bank was unable to stand a run of three days.

How, then, is the Borough-bank to get all this quantity of gold into the country ? It is not sufficient to get a little : a mere nest-egg : a little to

utter in the way of sham : enough to make a show. There must be gold to *circulate* throughout the country. And, how is this gold to be obtained ? And *where* is it to be obtained ?

It must come from other countries. There is only *so much* in the world ; only so much *above ground* ; this quantity cannot be speedily added to ; out of the present merchantable quantity it must come. If the Borough-bank notes were really at par with gold at this moment, the price of gold would be *raised instantly* by the purchases that the Borough-bank might make ; so that, even in this bare and short view of the matter, the bank-notes would, at once, sink below par.

Besides, the gold must be bought with a *new issue of notes* ; a parcel of notes, *making an addition to those now in circulation* ; for, this parcel could not be withdrawn from circulation without putting the whole country into a state of the most horrible confusion. Thus, then, the Bank would have obtained some gold ; but, it would have made such an addition to its notes as to cause the gold to be, at once demanded and sent out of the country.

Whether the Bank would be able to issue gold in exchange for its notes at a discount of five per centum, and only in 60-ounce parcels, I am not quite sure ; but, this is not *paying in specie* ; nor is it any approach towards paying in specie. However, I do not believe, that even *this* can be done ; for the Borough-bank *must* purchase the gold, before it can issue the bars of gold. It must issue paper to buy the gold with ; and, will not this *lower* the value of the paper ? And, how, then, is the Borough-bank to face the demands of the 60-ounce-gentlemen ? It is true, that nobody but Jews and such like people will go for the 60 ounces ; but *they* will go for them ; and the Borough-bank will be hard pushed, even in the first stage of the bullion trade.

What, then, is to happen in the subsequent stages ? Is it not *impossible* for the Borough-bank to pay ? *That is to say, without total ruin to the nation* ? I perceive, that your Lordship has a plan of your own. Your plan is to *fix* the Bank-paper at a discount of five per centum ; to make the Bank always pay in bullion at that rate ; and to *forbid the Bank ever to pay in coin again* ! This is a pretty plan enough, especially the latter part of it, which would be so very easy of execution, that it would be sure to be carried into effect. Your Lordship appears to have read old court-sycophant JENKINSON to some profit.

However, this plan would fail, all except the last part of it, and that your Lordship will see before this day twelve months. The Bank cannot pay in the 60-ounce way without first lessening the whole quantity of circulating medium ; and, let them do *that if you dare*. I dare you to do it. I set all such plans at defiance.

The Borough-bank Directors have put the question on the true footing. They say : “ the object of inquiry now is *not* when the Bank will be *prepared* to resume payments in specie ; but, whether the public will be “ able to bear that *reduction of the circulating medium*, which a SPEEDY “ adoption of the measure would render *indisputable*.”

The word SPEEDY shall be more fully noticed by and by.

This is the true ground ; for, it is impossible, turn the thing which way you will, for the Borough-bank to possess the means of resuming cash payments without a great reduction of the quantity of the circulating medium ; and, if such reduction take place, without a great reduction of the Debt, the country will be, by your own acts, plunged into confusion.

The Borough-bank Directors use the word SPEEDY as a *saving* word.

If they had not used some word, or words, to this amount, they would, in fact, have said, that they *never* could pay in specie without a reduction of the Debt, or without producing universal ruin and starvation. It would have been better to say this at once; for this is the fact.

What do they mean by SPEEDY? What difference can it make in the end, whether the progress be quick or slow? The Borough-bank has no gold. It acknowledges, that it has no gold. It says that it cannot pay. It must, in order to pay, *diminish the quantity of the circulating medium*; and will the public ruin be *less* because this diminution may take place by *slow degrees*? If I am a farmer, who would be totally ruined to-morrow, by a reduction of the circulating medium to the full extent required to enable the Bank to pay, will it better my lot if the reduction take place during the space of a year? To be sure I shall keep out of jail for 364 days longer: or, rather, I shall go into jail 364 days later; but, to jail I must go *at last*. The reducing of the quantity of the circulating medium is a drawing of the life-blood out of the nation. To draw it away all at once, as Dr. RUSH of Philadelphia used to do in the case of his yellow-fever patients, would, as the Doctor's practice did, kill at once; kill outright. But, a niggling at the vein every day for a long while, will, when the last drop comes, produce the same effect.

It appears, to me, therefore, to be downright nonsense to talk about resuming cash-payments by slow degrees, or by any degrees at all. And yet this notion, absurd as it is, seems to have prevailed in the adoption of the grand plan. And this, too, in the face of *experience*; recent experience. How, then, can any rational man place any confidence in the efficacy of such a plan?

Your Lordship did state one or two plain and undeniable truths; and, one of these was, that it would be the height of *injustice* to make the nation pay, in gold, interest on a debt contracted in paper; and, if you had just observed, that you took this from the 25th letter of "Paper against Gold," you would, on this occasion, have acted a manly part. But, my Lord, there is something else besides the interest of the debt, which requires reducing. The *Hampshire petition*, which had better luck than the petition, which I sent to your Lordship, you will find, though very *long*, in the votes of the House of Commons of February, 1817; and that petition contains the following words: words, which will, I trust, be remembered, when all the present gabble about *bullion* and *exchanges* and *market* and *mint prices* shall, for the honour of the nation, be wholly obliterated from our memory.

"9. That, as to sinecures, pensions, and grants, not fully merited by well-known public services, your petitioners do hope, that at a time like the present, your honourable House will not suppose it possible that they can be endured, especially when your honourable House sees, on the one hand, the poor-houses crowded with paupers who have seen better days, the jails swarming with debtors whom no degree of care and industry has been able to save from ruin, whole millions of starving creatures, who when they open their eyes in the morning, know not where to find the means of breaking their fast; and, when your honourable House, turning to the other hand, sees the sinecurists, pensioners and grantees, shining with all the brilliancy of wealth, and indulging in all the enjoyments of luxury, each individual of some of whom having, as your petitioners are ready to prove at the bar of your honourable House, received annually more money out of the public taxes than would be sufficient to maintain a thousand of the families who largely contribute towards the paying of those taxes; nor need your petitioners remind your honourable House that there are some of those individuals, each of whom has, within the last thirty

years, received from the aforesaid source much more than half a million of principal money; and if your petitioners were to say nearly a million of money, their statement would only approach nearer to the truth.

" 10. With regard to salaries, paid out of the public money, your petitioners beg leave humbly to observe, that they have only to refer your honourable House to your own Journals, and to the Statute-book for the space of the last twenty years, in order to afford your honourable House ample conviction of the fact that the salaries of the Judges have been doubled, that the salaries of the Police Justices have been greatly augmented, and that a like augmentation has taken place in almost all other salaries, and in the pay and allowances of an enormous military staff establishment, and that all these augmentations have been adopted upon the express ground of the augmentation which had taken place in the price of wages, in the price of all articles of dress, in the rents of houses and land, and in the prices of all the necessaries of life; and, therefore, now, that it is notorious that these latter have all been diminished in the degree of nearly one-half, your petitioners will not insult your honourable House by appearing to suppose that you will refuse their humble request, that the above said salaries and pay may be immediately reduced in the same degree.

" 11. And, as to the interest on the annuities constituting the funded debt, your petitioners, agreeing in opinion with a noble Earl of the other House of Parliament, that the currency of the country had been changed, that the taxes, which were imposed in a currency of low value, are now collected in a currency of high value, beg leave to observe also, that the far greater part of the debt, which was contracted in low currency, is now paid an interest for, by the people, in a high currency, and that this, the greatest of all the causes of the nation's ruin, has arisen from the stoppage of cash payments at the Bank of England, in the year 1797; a stoppage in breach of the Charter of the Bank Company, in breach of all the laws of debtor and creditor, tending only to the advantage of the Bank Company itself, and solicited, and procured to be sanctioned, by that Company. Therefore, your petitioners most humbly pray, that the rate of interest on the funded debt may be immediately reduced, in such a degree that the fruit of the whole productive labour of the country may no longer be swallowed up by the dealers in bank-paper, or, to adopt the words of a petition, received by the House of Commons from the town of Leicester, at the time of the South Sea-Bubble, your petitioners most humbly implore your honourable House, ' that the last drop of the nation's blood may not be poured out to be licked up by the cannibals of Change Alley.' "

I am very far indeed from being satisfied with the reduction, mentioned by you, my Lord. My petition of 1818, which your Lordship refused to present because it was *too long*, contains a prayer for a measure, which would be just, as far as it went; but, indeed, the measures, humbly submitted by me, in my letters, of last winter, to the Prince Regent, contain the *only plan*, which, in my opinion, can prevent a bloody revolution in England.

Nevertheless, the sapient JENKINSON will not hear of a reduction of the value of the circulating medium upon your plan and that of my Lord Little-Shilling of Birmingham; for, this latter nobleman's project is precisely the same as yours in principle, though the two projects differ in degree. You are for making gold pass at four shillings an ounce more than its usual value, and Lord Little-Shilling is for making a shilling pass for eighteen-pence. Oh! no, says wise Jenkinson, we must come back to the *old standard*!—and while Grenville is bawling aloud, that the Bank *has caused* a violation of all contracts, Jenkinson insists, that no contracts shall be violated with the fundholders or other lenders of money.

If this man be in his *usual senses*, what a state must England be in, to have such a *prime minister*? It is clear to me, and I think it must be clear to every one, that the Borough-bank can never *pay in specie*, without bringing wheat down to *five shillings a bushel*. And, can the

interest of the debt be paid with wheat at that price? This is the question and the only question to keep in view. And, indeed, this is the question, which the Borough-bank Directors have in substance, put to the Committees of the two Houses.

However, your Lordship's project of debasing the currency would not succeed. You have borrowed from me (without acknowledgement) a sound principle or two; but your application of them is *all your own*; and it is childish beyond all description.

All the obstacles to the obtaining of coin, on the part of the Borough-bank, applies to the obtaining of bullion. It is agreed, on all hands, that the Bank *has not the bullion now*. The paper is now at discount of about five per centum, and there you wish to *keep it by law*. And yet you wish, by the same law, to compel the Bank to *pay in bullion*. So you think, that, because the gold is *now* at this discount, it will not get to a greater discount, when the Bank shall be compelled to pay in bullion. Before it can pay in bullion, it must *buy* bullion, if you please; for, though Acts can be passed to put men into dungeons, no Acts can put gold bullion into the Borough-bank, without the Bank's *buying* the gold *first*. Now, this very proceeding of buying the gold will raise the value of the gold abroad, and sink the value of the paper at home; for, the wise and omnipotent Parliament, all-wise and all-powerful as it is, cannot, by any means prevent this effect.

But, my Lord, I am weary of proving the truth of these opinions. Look again at "*Paper against Gold*." Look at the supposed case, in that work, of our old friend, MADAME DE YONG, selling gold to the Bank. Look at my *Letter to Tierney*. And then look at the confessions, which the stupidity of the Borough-tyrants has extorted from the Directors of the Borough-bank. Look at these, my Lord Folkestone, and then you will, I hope, clearly see the childishness of your project.

Well, then, after all, how is any such plan to succeed; and, indeed, how is it ever to have effect in any degree? Things utterly *impossible* are required by these plans. They require, that the Borough-bank shall pay in gold; and yet that it shall *not increase* the amount of its notes; though it is clear as the sun at noon-day, that the Bank *has not the gold now*, and that it cannot get it without *first* putting out more notes than it now has out, to get the gold with. Does there need any thing more to show the monstrous, the brutal, absurdity of such a plan, and of every plan of a similar description?

There is, however, one thing yet to notice; one little rag of this bundle of frauds and blunders; and that is, that the Borough-bank will be enabled to pay in bullion, or specie, or in both, by the means of payments to be made to it by the thing that is called *the Government*. Now, how does this matter stand? The Government has to pay an army, judges, police-justices, placemen, pensioners, Oliver's, Castleses, and so on; and in order to do this, it has always, in advance of the taxes, a parcel of bank-notes from the Borough-bank. This is precisely the same thing as it would be for the Government to issue these notes themselves.

Well; how is the Government to *pay the Bank* for these advances? Why, by suffering the Bank to keep the *ten millions* (suppose that to be the sum) of its notes, when they come in, and not advance them again. But, how is the Government then, to pay Castles, Oliver, and the rest? Why, it must make a *loan*; and how is the loan to be paid? Why, by heavens, in *new advances of notes*, or not at all!

No, say you, the loan may be paid in another way. Well, suppose there to be *no loan* for a while; what then; why, at the very least, the ten millions would be taken out of circulation; the circulating medium would be diminished in a great degree; and the consequence would be distress and misery far surpassing that of 1816.

Thus, then, is the system fairly on the breakers. It has, ever since 1814, been endeavouring to get off; but, there it still lies, rocking and rolling, and beating itself about, with ever and anon a shot fired into it by me, striking it, sometimes in the rigging, and sometimes in the hull: and, with the lightning of the "Puff-out," constantly threatening it with instant destruction.

Yet, my Lord, on the safety of this system, so perilously situated, the safety of the Borough-system wholly depends. Not one week can the latter outlive the former. It would, therefore, if the Boroughmongers had common sense, be their object, their main object, to inquire how they can so manage matters as to preserve their *titles* and *estates* amidst the convulsions, which the dissolution of the paper-system will give rise to. But, perhaps, I may treat of this matter in another Register; though, what the Boroughmongers shall do in such a case is a matter of far less consequence than what shall be done by the King and his oppressed people.

It is clear to every man of common sense, that the nation cannot go on in the present path for any length of time. A *great change* must take place; and whether that change shall produce the total ruin and degradation of the order, to which your Lordship belongs, will depend, even now, on the conduct pursued by that order. Scourges, dungeons, gags, halters, axes, will no longer be of any avail. A nation cannot be *killed*; and, killed the English nation must be now, or it must and will have its rights.

Every day's experience tends to add, if that be possible, to the hatred and contempt, which the people have long justly entertained towards those, who have been the cause of their sufferings. The gabbling about *exchanges* and *bullion* and *market-prices* of gold and silver is as ridiculous as the disputes of Milton's Devils about *grace*, *free-will*, *free-knowledge*, and *predestination*; and the situation of those Devils does, upon the whole, afford no very imperfect resemblance of that of the inhabitants of the pandemonium of paper-money.

Who can have any respect for men, who, though differing as widely from each other as opposite colours differ; whose principles all differ; whose opinions as to effects differ; and yet who came to an *unanimous decision*: whose fears haunt them to that degree, that they dare not even back their declared opinions with their votes? It was echoed about that you must *look your situation in the face*. Faith; you dare as much look death in the face. I have, over and over again, held up its face to you; and you have constantly turned away your eyes.

And this, I am disposed to think, will be your conduct to the last moment. "In all human probability, the whole of the interest of the 'debt', and all the sinecures and pensions and salaries, and also the 'expences of a thundering standing army, will continue to be made up, 'by taxes, by loans, by Exchequer bills, by every species of contrivance, to 'the latest possible moment, and until the whole of the paper-system, 'amidst the war of opinions, of projects, of interests and of passion, 'shall go to pieces like a ship upon the rocks.'" This, my Lord, was

my prediction, in that Address, which contained my *taking-care* of England a little more than two years ago; and, perhaps, before I again see the shores of that beloved land, short as the interval may be, the prediction will have been completely fulfilled.

WM. COBBETT.

TO SIR ROBERT PEEL,

BARONET AND COTTON-WEAVER,

ON THE PETITION, PRESENTED BY HIM AGAINST THE RESOLUTIONS, IN PARLIAMENT, RELATIVE TO SPECIE-PAYMENTS.

(*Political Register, October, 1819.*)

North Hampstead, Long Island, Aug. 1, 1819.

SIR,

Few things have given me more pleasure than to hear your dismal tone at the Meeting, at the London Tavern, on the 18th of May last, and your more dismal tone, in the House of Commons, when you presented the Petition of the Merchants and Bankers. This tone bespoke the great change, which had, of late years, taken place. It said, that you *felt*, that the good old times of popular delusion, and of Church-and-king mobs, were gone for ever; and it told me, that you might possibly now be in a proper state of mind to hear some remarks on your past, as well as on your recent conduct. At any rate, this is a proper time, to offer such remarks to the people of England; for now it is that the natural fruits of your conduct and that of your numerous associates are ripening and shedding their poison.

I cannot, it seems to me, proceed, in the performance of this task in a better way than that of taking your two speeches, that made at the Tavern, and that made in the House, and comment upon them. You have been *snug* out of sight for some years; but, since you have thrust yourself forward, you must take the consequences. The speech at the Tavern refers us back to the origin of the paper system; or, at least, to the epoch, when it became daringly unjust; and it also refers us to the part, which *you* acted, upon that memorable occasion.

The speech at the Tavern is given to us as follows:—

“ SIR ROBERT PEEL rose for the purpose of proposing certain resolutions. It gave him much pleasure to see upon the present occasion so numerous and respectable a Meeting. He would take the liberty of occupying their attention for some time, but it was not necessary to offer any apology, when the subject upon which they were assembled was of such vital importance to the country. He observed the effects of the Bank Restriction through its various stages, from the commencement to the present time. *He was in Parliament in 1797, when that great and upright Minister, Mr. Pitt, felt it his duty, under the circumstances*

of the country, to bring forward this measure, which was dictated by necessity. Their enemies at that time, finding themselves unable to overcome them by force of arms, had recourse to another expedient, and endeavoured to ruin them in their finance. It was this which rendered it expedient to propose a Restriction of Cash Payments, and the measure was sanctioned in that City by the approbation of a most respectable meeting. He hoped a like result would take place on the present occasion, and that they would come to such Resolutions as would inspire both the Bank and the country with confidence. He did not attend there from any personal or interested motives, but because he felt that the interests of trade and commerce were deeply interested in the present question. He was under no obligation to the Bank, but as an Englishman he could not but feel the services they rendered to the public. *Through their means the country was enabled to pass successfully through all its difficulties, to terminate a long and arduous struggle with glory, and to give security and independence to Europe.* The measure, when first proposed, was to be of short duration, but it was continued from time to time. During its operation trade and commerce went on increasing, because there was abundant circulating medium to supply all demands. Previous to the Restriction gold was the medium through which trade was carried on. That being drawn away by the necessary calls of the public service, if paper was not substituted, the country could not stand. The Bullion Committee was the first that examined this subject, and it might be said that their Report was the origin of the two others, lately presented to both Houses of Parliament by the Committees appointed to inquire into the affairs of the Bank. He had a relation at the head of one of them, but he did not for this reason consider himself bound by the opinions they expressed, or answerable for them in any way. He differed from these reports in many respects. There were, no doubt, many able men concerned in drawing them up, but they had not, and could not have, so many opportunities as persons in trade, of observing the effects produced by a sudden contraction of the circulating medium of the country. However able they might be, and however deep their speculative knowledge of the subject, he felt convinced, that the sound and most eligible mode of proceeding in the business, would originate in that great city. *Knowing from experience the advantages arising from an abundant circulating medium, the conveniences it afforded to trade, and all branches of industry, he should be sorry to see the time when they were cramped in their circulation and credit.*—Whatever might be the effects attributed to the Bank Restriction, he would venture to say, that the country was at present in a more flourishing state than before that measure was passed. During its continuance trade and commerce were every day extending themselves. He was no longer in trade himself, but his heart was with it, and nothing could give him more pain than to see the means of carrying it on cramped in any degree."

Now, Sir, to follow the order of your speech, what right had you to insult any single Englishman, and much less a company of Englishmen, by saying that PITT was a *great and upright Minister*? As to his *uprightness*, he lies covered by *bills of indemnity* ten-fold, one of which was to protect his carcass, while alive, from the legal consequences of having, in a *secret manner*, misapplied large sums of the public money! If these be proofs of *uprightness*, infamy and honour must change significations. His acts of atrocious tyranny; his cruelties, committed on so many men, during the existence of *his gagging and dungeon bills*; his swarms of spies and informers; his unsparing plunder of the people: all these live in our recollection, and are called up fresh before us, when we hear men impudent enough to speak in his praise. The day is not, I trust, far distant, when those bands of scoundrels, called PITT CLUBS, will think it prudent to change their tone. They have insulted the nation long enough with praises bestowed upon this man; this inventor of all the infamous measures, which in the finance and taxing way, have harassed and tormented England.

As to the GREATNESS of Pitt, the subject of astonishment is, how any

one, not an idiot, can call him great at the very moment when the sins and iniquities of his system are all staring us in the face. At the very moment, when the whole nation, his own partisans not excepted, are ready and forward to proclaim that it is to the infernal system of paper-money, principally, that the country owes all its calamities, and when these calamities are great beyond example, and almost beyond belief. This system has produced evils which the nation never felt before. These evils are now seen as well as felt. It is now manifest, that, unless a change of system take place, the whole form of Government is in imminent danger of going to pieces. All men now agree in this : and, this is the moment, which you choose for trumpeting this man forth as a *great man* ! He was a *great talker* ; a man of "showy but of shallow parts ;" an impudent and dextrous declaimer ; a man always capable to give reasons sufficient to keep his adherents in countenance in doing acts of injustice and folly. But, nothing did he ever understand with regard to the well-governing of a country. He did not see the tendency of his own schemes and efforts. He was short-sighted in the extreme. He appeared to possess not the smallest degree of profundity. He never dipped beneath the surface of things. He lived along from expedient to expedient. And he, at last, died, leaving *bad* to become daily *worse* and *worse*. But, he made you a BARONET ! And, which was more, his measures, while they tended to ruin the nation, tended to fatten you.

Your next assertion is, that the Bank-stoppage Act was first passed to prevent the *enemy* from injuring our finances. You say, that they found themselves "unable to overcome us by force of arms, and that they, therefore, resorted to the expedient of endeavouring to ruin us in our finances." First, this is false in point of fact. The enemy had no hand in the thing : the enemy, though he might have done it effectually, made no attempt on our finances. It was the *people of England*, who, by carrying the notes to the Bank, and demanding gold, compelled the Bank to declare its insolvency, or to seek protection from Pitt.

PITT, indeed, by the means of a PUFF-OUT, had completely overset the *finances of France*. By forged French paper-money he had overset the French system of paper ; but the French, owing to the stupidity of their rulers, never retaliated from first to last. So that this charge against the enemy is wholly false. The enemy was bent on feats *in arms*, while our warrior, in Downing-street, was bent on forgery ; on feats with the graving tool and the press. The stoppage of the Bank was produced by its *want of gold to pay* its notes with. It had not a sufficiency of gold ; and that this was the case had been asserted by PAINE, the year before, in that work, which, seeing how soon its assertions were verified, would have immortalized any other man that ever lived. The *enemy*, therefore, had nothing to do with the matter ; but, if the measure had really been resorted to from *fear of the enemy*, what a state was that for a country to be placed in ? If the financial affairs of the country had been so managed as to put it in the power of the enemy to overturn the Government, or to compel it to declare itself a bankrupt, could the man, who had had the management of those finances, be a *great man* ? Was he a *great man*, who laid the sure foundation of all those troubles and all those miseries, which now afflict the nation ? Was he a *great man*, who was the author of that system, against which all his then colleagues now cry out, and for having participated in the adoption of which they now express their repentance ? But, Sir, go on ; go on to the last moment !

Keep up your insolence. Beard the distressed nation with praises of this profligate and perfidious man. Go on, I say; but, do not complain, if you should share the fate of the atrocious surviving associates of this man, to mention whose name, without some mark of reprobation, is really a *crime*.

You told the meeting, that Englishmen could not help feeling the *services*, which the Bank had rendered the *public*; seeing, that, by the means of the Bank, "the country had been enabled to *pass successfully through* " *all its difficulties* to a *glorious* termination of the struggle, and to give "*security* and independence to Europe."

Now, thou Baronet of the spinning-jenny, *has* the country passed *through* all its *difficulties*? What impudence, or what folly! There lies the poor patient, stretched on his death-bed, evidently getting, hourly, worse and worse: and, in come you, with your soft voice and empty smiles, and extol the doctor who has *cured* him! Oh, no! the difficulties are not "*passed through*." They only now *begin to show* themselves in their formidable shape. When Napoleon was, at last, put down, the COURIER exclaimed, "*The play is over*, let us go to supper!" Upon that text I wrote a long sermon. "*We cannot go to supper yet*," said I; "*we must pay the Bill for the play first*." And, Mr. TIERNEY, in his speech of the 7th of June last, says, on the subject of the late war and of the finances at present, "*We must now pay the bill*." Yes; there are enough to say this *now*. I have used this very phrase a thousand times; and I really wonder how any man can now stand up in public, and thus slavishly repeat my very words, and that, too, without the least allusion to the source, whence they are drawn! I seem to be fair game for all: every one seems to have a pluck at my plumage.

To return to your wise observations: it is, then, according to you, the Bank, to whom all the *glory* is really due. I confess it; and well I may; for I have asserted it many a time. It is very true, that Napoleon was not put down by our armies; nor, by *any* armies; but by perfidy, purchased with bank-notes. The million of men in arms, collected to fight against him, were collected by bank-notes. Bank-notes produced the whole of the success. Bank-notes bought the treasons in France. Bank-notes did the whole; and Wellington had no more to do, as to the putting down of Napoleon, than I had. It ought not to be called "*Waterloo Bridge*;" but "*Paper-money Bridge*." I said, years ago, that, if any monument at all were erected, it ought to be erected in honour of the paper-money makers; and, in this respect, I perceive, that you and I agree in opinion.

But, Sir, where is that *security*, of which you speak? Oh, no! There is no security, which the bank-notes have acquired for us, except, indeed, that they have *insured us* a Reform of the House of Commons in the end; for, the difficulties of the country are now such as cannot be overcome without a *great change of men*. Not such a change as Sir FRANCIS BURDETT had in view, in his speech on the "*State of the Nation*;" not a change of *factions*; but, such a change as shall give confidence to the whole nation, in the integrity and talents of the actors. We are *sure* now to have such a change; and, in this respect, the bank-notes have done great good. But, as to the *object*, it has been wholly defeated. The object in issuing the base notes was to give *perpetuity* to the Borough-monger power. That object has not been accomplished, and it will not be accomplished. In this case, as in all others, a false money is, as PAINÉ

emphatically described it, "*strength at the beginning and weakness at the end.*" The day of its strength has passed away; and that of its weakness is now arrived. So far from giving *security* to the authors of it, it is sure, in all cases, to expose them to continual danger. It is, at all times, big with peril; and, at this moment, the peril is become imminent.

What do you mean, Sir, by saying, that you know "the *advantages of an abundant circulating medium?*" What ignorance is this? How little are you able to judge of such matters? What do you mean by an *abundant circulating medium?* If the quantity of money, the number of pounds, for instance, in circulation, in any country, be *great*, it will require a greater number of them to move a horse from owner to owner than if the number of pounds in circulation were small. Supposing there to be twenty millions in circulation, and that, then, a bushel of wheat sells for ten shillings; how is that state of things *better* than a state of things, in which ten millions would be in circulation, and the bushel of wheat selling for five shillings? Do not the ten millions and the five shillings perform the same offices in the last instance as the twenty millions and the ten shillings in the first instance? If, indeed, there be an enormous debt, enormous taxes, and fixed salaries and pensions without end; then *an addition* to the amount of the money in circulation has an effect very advantageous to the payers of taxes. But, as a general thing, no possible advantage can arise from there being in circulation a great amount of circulating medium.

You are, I dare say, in spite of these remarks, just as wise as you were before; but I have so long been accustomed to "*chop blocks with a razor,*" that I think very little of this waste of time.

I now come to your speech in Parliament, when you presented the *petition of the Merchants and Bankers.* It is a stupid composition; but, stupid as it is, it is worth remembering; and remember it we will. You seem to have been strangely disappointed. The state of things was different, you found, from what it was in 1797! The people were not, now, to be *frightened* into a belief, that it was right to continue a paper fraud.

"Sir R. PEEL said, he rose with difficulty he never had experienced before in that House (hear), though he had to present the petition of a body of men entitled to the highest respect—the Merchants, Bankers, and Traders of the City of London—men who, in the distress of the country, *had been the first to step to the relief of the Government.* He wished those Members of the House, who had been long enough acquainted with public affairs to recollect the Meeting which had been called in 1797, of these gentlemen, but for which the Restriction Act would not have been carried. (Hear.) The present petition was from the same men on the same topic: and if a measure bearing on a subject which they were so competent to understand did not meet with their approbation, he trusted the House would give their sentiments every attention. The petition was one, not from an ordinary meeting, but from a great many merchants and manufacturers, praying that the Resolutions founded on the Report of the Secret Committee might not be carried into effect. The petitioners were the most proper men to judge of the effects of such a measure; yet it was remarkable, that notwithstanding this, and though they were most intimately connected with the interests of the country, they had not been consulted. (Hear.) Before, therefore, a measure so destructive to the commercial interest (to which every other interest was closely joined) was carried into effect, he would entreat the House to pause awhile. In the Report they would find the opinions, not of men likely to know the interests of the country, or fit to give advice on them. (Hear, and a laugh.) Was it fit that the men best fitted to advise them correctly should be left out of consideration on such a question? He had attended at the meeting at which the petition he held in his hand was agreed to, and it was the only one which he had

ever taken an interest in except that of 1797, which was thought by many to have saved the country. The present petition had equal claims to respect. At the meeting with which this petition originated, some proceedings had taken place, respecting which a great deal of misrepresentation had gone abroad. It was not true, for instance, that Messrs. Hunt, Wooler, and Watson, who attended that meeting, had behaved in a disorderly manner; on the contrary, indeed, their conduct was orderly and decorous, possibly in consequence of the influence of the new alliance which they had formed with his Majesty's Ministers. (A laugh.) For they, on this occasion, quite concurred with the Ministers, and such an alliance formed so good a subject for a caricature, that he should really like to see the exhibition of the noble Lord and his friends on the one side, with Messrs. Hunt and Co. on the other. (A laugh.) But with regard to the proposition of the Committee to which the petitioners referred, he was one of those who strongly deprecated any such attempt to interfere with the system of the immortal Pitt.—That system, through which this great statesman was enabled to maintain a war of unprecedented expense and difficulty, while the country advanced in a most extraordinary manner in commerce, manufactures, and agriculture, should not in his opinion be disturbed without the utmost caution. Yet it appeared the intention of Ministers, and of others, to abandon that system altogether. But he hoped the House would pause before it acceded to such a project. It was his fate, in this case, to appear in that House in the extraordinary character of differing totally and decidedly from a near and dear relation. But both himself and his relation had duties to perform, to which the House and the country would expect them to attend, without any undue influence from family connection or personal attachment. (Hear, hear.) For himself, he would say, that he had an old and immovable predilection for the principles and character of Mr. Pitt. Other men might have other partialities, and they had a right to indulge them, but he had always thought Mr. Pitt the greatest man this country had ever known. He remembered that when his relation, yet a child, was in his arms, he had often expressed a wish to his friends that he would take that great man as his model—that he would endeavour to discharge his public duty as Mr. Pitt had done; declaring at the same time, that he would present him to his country. (General cries of "Hear, hear, hear.") But although he still differed from his relation upon this very important occasion, he could have no doubt that he as well as himself was anxious to perform his duty to his country; and knowing his relation's heart and head to be in the right place, he was positive that whatever little deviation might take place in his conduct, he would soon return to the right course. (Hear, hear; and a laugh.) The honourable Baronet concluded with stating that he did not feel it necessary to make any farther observations at present, as other occasions would offer for discussing this important question.

"Sir J SEBRIGHT said, that there were some observations from the honourable Baronet which he could not allow to pass unnoticed. The honourable Baronet had stated that the Committee had not examined persons best informed and most competent to give evidence upon this subject. From this statement he rather thought that the honourable Baronet had not read the evidence adduced before the Committee, as among that evidence were to be found the names of some of the most intelligent and respectable individuals connected with the trade of the country. But he differed from the honourable Baronet's opinion, that merchants and manufacturers alone were qualified to give information or form a judgment upon this subject, as landed proprietors, who were equally, if not more interested, were at least as competent judges. There was another part of the speech of the honourable Baronet to which he thought it necessary to advert. He need hardly say that he was not among the followers of Mr. Hunt, but measures, not men, being always the object of his consideration, he had no hesitation in expressing his approval of the conduct pursued by Messrs. Hunt, Wooler, Pearson, and Watson, at the meeting from which this petition emanated (a laugh): because he agreed in their resolution that the Directors of the Bank had, through the restriction upon cash-payments, become possessed of a power which ought not to belong to any set of men in a free country, and so long as the authors of that resolution followed the same course, he should be always ready to advocate their proceedings. With regard to the honourable Baronet's allusion to the disposition and purpose of his relation, he (Sir J. S.) should be most ready, if in his power, to add to the praise which attached to the conduct of that distinguished individual. The course which the right honourable Gentleman was pursuing upon the present important occasion, entitled him to universal and

unqualified praise, for that course was decidedly conducive to the public good. That right honourable Gentleman had indeed evinced a degree of decision and magnanimity upon this question which could not be too much applauded. It was obvious that some inconvenience must be felt at any time, through the resumption of cash-payments, and the abandonment of a system so long acted upon as the restriction. But the dread of that inconvenience should not prevent Parliament from adopting a line of necessary policy. Ministers, indeed, in adopting that policy were eminently entitled to the support of that House. Although a very humble individual, therefore, he felt it his duty to present Ministers his best thanks for the course which they had resolved to pursue; and although a laugh was excited by his allusion to Messrs. Hunt and Wooler, he thanked them also for their proceedings and declarations upon this occasion, because, he repeated, measures, not men, were always the object of his consideration."

I have here inserted the speech of Sir JOHN SEBRIGHT, because it is so perfect a *novelty* in Parliamentary speaking: it contains some like matter of common sense.

As to your *cant* about your son, let it pass. Let your praises of Pitt pass also, with this single remark; that you ought, one of these days, to be made to *answer* for this audacious insult offered to the suffering nation.

Your observations on the alliance, as you call it, between Mr. HUNT and CASTLEREAGH, savour of that species of malignity, which is said to be in the heart of the devil when he *laughs*. Oh, no! There was no alliance between Mr. Hunt and Castlereagh. Mr. HUNT saw Castlereagh at work in taking previous steps for the blowing-up of the paper-system; and Mr. HUNT, with perfect consistency, endeavoured to hold the hands of those, who wished to prevent the hole-digger from taking those steps. If I were to see the whole band of Boroughmongers, with all their tribes of pensioned relations and dependents, just about to tumble into a fiery furnace; and, at the same time, were to see a man running to warn them of their danger, would it not be my *duty* to stop the busy, officious vagabond, if I could? You and Mr. HUNT were *both right* in your efforts. You wish to see the system upheld: he wishes to see it tumbled down. The Ministers, though they do not intend it, are pulling it down; and, therefore, Mr. HUNT was right in endeavouring to prevent you from checking those wise persons in their career.

The thing was so sudden, that *time* appears to have been wanting to Mr. HUNT and his associates. Else, what a famous petition *they* might have sent to the House of Commons! How the Boroughmongers might have been lashed! How clearly might it have been shown, that the bank-notes were *theirs* and not the Bank Company's! What blows might have been dealt them upon this occasion! But, other occasions will offer; for the "*great shocks*," as PAINÉ called them, are all now coming on fast upon the heels of each other. *Next winter!* Next winter will try the soul of the system. Whether the Bank-fellows pay in bullion, or not, the consequences will be nearly the same; and then we will treat the wise Houses; PERRY'S "*collective wisdom of the nation*;" then we will treat them to petitions in grand style: that is to say, if the whole thing be not puffed away to its native hell before that time.

Let me stop here to observe a little on the impudence of those persons, who, even now, talk of the "*wisdom*" of the Boroughmongers. Formerly such an expression might be tolerated; but, *now*, when all the world sees the proofs of their profound ignorance; when they themselves are acknowledging, that they have been fools up to this hour; and when,

at the very moment that they confess their past errors, they refuse to follow the light that they say sad experience is holding up before them; when all this is as notorious as the trafficking in seats, what impudence must that man have, who can talk of their "*wisdom*" in any way except in that of derision!

Here we see a set of men, who, in 1792, had titles and estates which they might not only call their own, but who enjoyed them *unenvied* and *unhated*. These men, because they would not grant the people the enjoyment of rights, which might have been enjoyed without any harm to the Boroughmongers themselves, contracted engagements, by which their estates became *pawned* for ever. This pawn, and a pawn, concurrently made, as to the labour of the people, are now at work upon the nation, plunging it in misery and driving it to distraction. There is a plain and easy remedy for the evil; but, this remedy (the only one) these men reject, and, while they reject it, punish the proposers of it; while they adopt remedies of their own, which all the rest of mankind see *must* fail of success.

The sun in the sky, the nose on one's face, the earth we walk on, nay, even trafficking in seats; neither of these is more clearly visible, than that it is a *lessening* of the quantity of the circulating medium, that has now produced the miseries of the country; and, yet, in the face of this ocular demonstration, these men are now taking measures for making the quantity of that medium *less* than it now is, and these measures they adopt with the avowed intention, not of adding to, but of wholly doing away those unparalleled miseries! I defy any man to produce a proof of want of intellect equal to this.

There are persons to say to us, "How is it likely that *you* should be able to rescue the country from its difficulties, seeing that all these "*great men* cannot do it?" This has not only great force with the mass of mankind; but, with the far greater part of men, it is *conclusive* as to the point. How monstrous, however, is such a conclusion? These *great men* have been *proved* to be ignorant; they themselves *acknowledge* their ignorance; and yet it is presumed, that, because *they* cannot find a remedy for evils which have been produced from their ignorance, *nobody else can find a remedy*. This is never the case in the common concerns of life. There, when one man is found unable to do a certain thing, *another man* is sought after, and especially if the first has caused the affair to be placed in great hazard.

At this moment, in order to make the nation believe that the whole mass of Boroughmongers have not been ignorant as to the effects of the paper system, the BULLION REPORT of 1811 is referred to, and dead lawyer HORNER praised to the skies. But, that Report was a most complete proof of the ignorance of him who drew it up, as well as of all those who supported it. That Report, together with the resolutions founded on it, asserted, that *the Bank was able to pay in specie* (whether in peace or war) within *two years* of 1811. Eight years have passed already, and five of those *in peace*; and these same wise persons have now resolved, and even *enacted*, I believe, that it is not prudent to attempt to cause the Bank to pay in specie *for four years yet to come!* And yet the nation is to be told of the *wisdom* of Lawyer HORNER and the Bullion Committee!

Let us hope, that the nation is, however, no longer to be deceived into a belief in the *wisdom* of these men. Let us hope, that many of those,

who, from whatever motive, have been opposed to a Reform, will now, or very soon, be for that sort of change; for, I am thoroughly convinced, that nothing short of that will afford us a chance of escaping such a convulsion as, perhaps, the world has never yet beheld. The Borough-mongers are *wholly unable to adopt an efficacious remedy*. The real and only remedy they are incapable of putting into practice. They may yield the point of Reform; and then there will be men able to apply a remedy; but, *as long as they retain their usurped power, there can be no remedy applied*. They are fools, or they would make a Reform instantly. They might then escape the danger that threatens them: but, as I have frequently said, conscious guilt makes them cling to power; and cling to it they will, till events *force* it from their hands.

Reverting now to your speech: what do you mean by *complaining*, that the system of 1797, that is to say, the non-payment system, seems to be intended to be *abandoned* altogether? What a foolish man you must be; or, what a strange perversion your mind must have laboured under for a long time past! The stoppage of 1797 was, in fact, a declaration of bankruptcy. It was a thing *lamented* on all hands. It was an evil, it was said, not to be avoided. It was a temporary expedient to prevent a total blowing-up. And, now, behold, you call it *a system*; an excellent system; a system, the *loss* of which will be *fatal* to the country. So that, if a man be compelled to wear crutches for twenty years, he is to look with sorrow to the hour when he is to leave the crutches off. A white-swelling in the knee, or a wen in the neck, may, at this rate, become dear and valuable to the possessor; and to get cured of a fistula or a cancer may so afflict the party as to prey upon his mind for ever after. You have, Sir Robert, a singular taste. The humming of the spinning-jenny has, surely, added your brains.

It is, however, wholly useless to argue with *you*. You must be left to follow your own course; and I have great satisfaction in being *quite sure*, that you can do nothing that will tend to save the system, even for an hour.

Sir JOHN SEBRIGHT was a little touched, to hear it said, that merchants, bankers, and traders, were the only persons who understood this question. He thought the land-proprietors were *equally competent to judge on it*. Poor Sir John! Your competence comes into life rather *late* in the day. You should have *prevented* Pitt, Addington, Perceval and Jenkinson, from pledging your estate and the earnings of your tenants and servants. These are now *pledged*; they are pawned to Baring, Goldsmidt, Ricardo, Ellice (or Elias, most likely), the *patriot* sent from Coventry; and to the fundholders in general. Lord Grenville has now, at this late hour, discovered, that "*no man has any thing that he can call his own*;" and this is what I have been saying for the last *sixteen years*. You have nothing, that you can call your own. Indeed, Sir John, you have *no estate*. It is *pawned* to the fundholders, sinecure placemen, and place-women, and to the whole race of pensioners. You hunt on the land that you call yours; you shoot over it; you ride about it; you think it is *yours*; but it is not. You are no more than a trustee or steward for the fundholders, the placemen and pensioners. Your business in life is to make the most of the property, and to pay over the proceeds to those who have the pawn on it.

This is but a sorry state for you to be in; but in it you must remain,

until such men as Mr. HUNT have the power to take off the pawn; and, then, unfortunately for you, you are *afraid* of such men as Mr. HUNT. You have suffered your estate to be pawned; and I assure you, that *competent* as your judgment may be, your power is not adequate to vacate the pawn. If your brother land-proprietor, Lord Folkestone, had presented my petition in 1818, you might have seen, on your own journals, the way to get rid of the pawn. He thought that petition "*too long*." To be sure it would have required nearly *twenty minutes* to read it. This would certainly have been a large draught on the time of the hole-digging assembly. Better employ that time in listening to the profound political philosophy of Castlereagh, or to the jesting of Canning, the beautiful alliterations of whom the nation had a specimen in his description of "*the revered and ruptured Ogden*." It would have been a pity, indeed, to attempt to take up a moment of the time of a set of Corn-bill-mongers; a set of hole-diggers; a set of new church-builders; a set of Malthus poor-law grinders; a set of brown-bread philosophers; a set of Bank-restriction economists. This would have been a pity; and, besides, the petition might, if it had been on the journals, have prevented some of your bright and profound associates from putting forth their *discoveries*, during the last session, seeing that all those discoveries would have been already on record on their journals; and what is more, the king's printer might have been cheated of a famous job of printing; and the world might have been deprived of reports and debates, amounting to about ten octavo volumes of *nonsense* without a parallel in the whole history of letters.

Sir JOHN SEBRIGHT thought it necessary to *apologize* in some sort, for his applause of the conduct of Mr. HUNT, upon this occasion. He said, that "he need hardly say that *he* was not *amongst* the followers of Mr. HUNT." But he was amongst them now. He did *follow* him. He did applaud him. He did adopt his opinions upon this all-important subject. Why, then, apologize? Was Sir John *afraid* to be thought right after all? If, however, he follows Mr. HUNT here, he must follow him *all through* the piece; for *this* is the point as to which Sir John will soon find the people are at open issue with the Boroughmongers. Sir John is wrong in his views, if he supposes, that it is a question *between the people and the Bank*. It is no such a thing. The fundholders, the sinecure-place crew, and the pensioned crew, have a pawn on Sir John's estate; and, the simple question is, will he continue to render an account and pay the proceeds to the persons who have the pawn, or will he accept of *our* aid in order to get rid of the pawn? If he will yield us our rights, he may get rid of the pawn; if he will not, his estate must soon go to *discharge* the pawn altogether; for things are now come to a pass that will not suffer him much longer to shoot and hunt over the land, in quality of trustee or steward. If the thing go to pieces *before* there be any *change* as to the representation in Parliament, the pawn will be *most rigorously enforced*; for, I, for my part, will join with the fundholders against the Boroughmongers, if these latter should still deny us our rights. Let them yield up those rights, which they withhold from us, and all will be right and safe.

Sir JOHN SEBRIGHT thanked Mr. PEEL and the MINISTERS for their intended measures. Poor man! Little did he dream, that those measures, if they were carried into effect, would not, in four years, leave him a single acre of land; and that, in far less than four years, they would not suffer

him either to ride or shoot. To pay the interest of the debt in *specie* would require the *whole* of the rents of the whole kingdom! Sir John would be reduced to bread and cheese and a smock-frock; and he would in a very short time, be duly qualified to join the "*lower orders*," and to be a *follower* of Mr. HUNT.

Now, Sir ROBERT PEEL, I care little whether you reflect on these things or not. I know well *what is coming*; and, if I have put your name at the head of this letter, it has not been to reason with you, but merely *to point you out*.

And, in this sort of way, I am,

Your humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

TO THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL,

ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE COUNTRY, AND ON THE MEASURES PROPOSED TO BE ADOPTED AT THE PRESENT TIME.

(*Political Register, December, 1819.*)

London, 8th December, 1819.

MY LORD,

Some years ago I had the honour to address a pretty long series of letters to His Royal Highness the Regent and to yourself, first beseeching you not to begin a war with the United States of America, and, when you had begun it, to make peace with that country as soon as possible. If my advice had been followed upon that occasion, it would, as is now notorious, have spared this country an immeasurable quantity of disgrace, and would have made the Debt, called national, fifty millions, at the very least, less than it now is. This is a fact notorious and acknowledged: known to every one conversant with politics, and denied by no one, who is conversant in that way, and who has the smallest regard for truth. Imagine not, my Lord, that I suppose, that the recollection of these things will have produced in the minds of you and your colleagues a disposition to listen to me and to attend to my reasoning and advice upon the present occasion. I know too well the workings of passion combined with power; I know too well the workings of that false pride which shuts our ears and blinds our eyes to that which at once produces conviction in minds where that pride does not exist: I know too well that you and your colleagues and the two Houses of Parliament have long seen that it is a plain question before the nation, whether my principles and my proposed measures shall be adopted or whether yours shall be adhered to: shun the avowal as long as you will, sheer off from the point of contact with what art you may, use allusions in place of names with what perseverance you like: still, after all, every man who

has turned his attention to these matters, not only in this kingdom but in America and in France, also, knows well that the grand question now at issue in this great country is, whether your system shall be persevered in, or Cobbett's system adopted in its stead. I know too well how far false pride will carry men; I have witnessed too many of the fatal effects of that false pride, to entertain the smallest expectation that passed experience will induce you to listen to, much less to adopt, any propositions coming from me. But, this I know, that the impression which has been made upon your system is chiefly to be attributed to my perseverance, to which the nation owes, that it understands, at any rate, the causes of its sufferings.

I shall, therefore, not be discouraged from going on in the same path that I have hitherto travelled in; and shall, upon the present occasion, take the liberty to address to you some remarks upon what I find in the Courier newspaper of the 1st instant, purporting to be a report of speeches, delivered by your Lordship, Lord Grenville and Lord Castlereagh.

On the state of the country, Lord Grenville is reported to have said that that state appeared to him to be more perilous than he had ever known it before. His Lordship, referring to the writings of Burke, which he called *immortal*, said that he agreed in opinion with Burke, that the causes of the discontents of the country existed *before* the epoch of the French Revolution. Now, my Lord, I fully agree as to this point in opinion with Lord Grenville. But, before I make further remark upon the real origin of the present troubles of this kingdom, let me observe that the very name of Burke; the very name of that man, whose main object was to crush all hope of Parliamentary Reform, by urging the country into a war against the then limited monarchy of France, which had adopted a system of free elections; that the very mention of the name of that man was calculated to awaken a train of ideas, which would naturally have terminated in a conviction that all his views were false. Because, the very sentence, into which his name is introduced, told their assembled Lordships that the man who was uttering that sentence, had found by experience, that a twenty-six years war and a Debt of eight hundred millions, together with rivers of blood and suffering such as the world never before beheld, had not at all tended to produce the effect which Burke had proposed to effect; for that the country was now more discontented and the people were more hostile to the existing system, than they were previous to the commencement of the war against France. It is said, that there is no mind able to resist the dictates of a *life of experience*. This, however, appears to admit of exceptions; for, we have had a life of experience. The last sixty years have been employed in endeavours on the part of the seat-patrons in England to uphold a system of taxation without representation. This is still the ground of struggle. And, as my Lord Grenville truly says, the parties are certainly more irritated and more determined than at any former period.

His Lordship, with a view, as I suppose, to show that peace or that plenty or prosperity had little to do with the matter, observed, in the words of Burke, that the causes of discontent had arisen *before* the French Revolution. True; but Lord Grenville omitted to say *what those causes were, and when they had arisen*. I will, therefore, take the liberty to do this, and when I have done it I think it will be as clear

as day-light that there are only two ways of producing content and tranquillity in England; namely, first a *Reform of the Commons' House of Parliament*; second, an *absolute destruction of a considerable portion of the people, or a holding of them in a state of the most abject slavery by the means of an armed force*; and, as this last makes one's blood curdle in one's veins but to think of it, I shall not suppose that any man has yet screwed up his nerves to a contemplation of the enterprise, and shall, therefore, still hope that the first-mentioned course will be adopted.

The ground of complaint, with the people of England has existed from the date of the *Septennial Bill* to this day. But, before taxes were severely felt, the effects of non-representation were not perceived. It was not till the burthen became heavy; till it began to make the back ache and to ring the shoulders that men troubled themselves much about the causes which had led to the creation of the burden. It was not till the excise system was introduced that the people of England seemed to care so much about who were the members of their Commons' House. When wars on account of Dutch and German quarrels had rendered the burden heavy, the people began to look about for the causes. In order to shift the burden in part from their own shoulders, the English nobility and gentry, who were all-powerful in the Parliament, conceived the project of bringing the American colonies under the grasp of taxation; and, a very large portion of the people of this kingdom, were, at the outset, deluded into an approbation of this project. Many attempts were made to introduce as it were, by stealth, the hand of taxation into the American pocket. But, a sagacious people were not to be deceived and cheated, and a brave people were not to be bullied or beaten, out of their rights, their liberty, and their property.

Divested of all its minor circumstances, the great question was, whether the colonists would submit to taxation without representation; whether they would submit to be taxed, either directly or indirectly, by a Parliament to which they sent no Members, or whether they would not. The Parliament said they should; the Americans said they would not. This was the question at issue; a question that at last came to be decided by the sword; and that decision, to the everlasting praise of the people of America, was decided in behalf of the proposition, of *no taxation without representation*.

As my Lord Grenville introduced the name of Burke, suffer me, my Lord, to introduce that of the man who put this Burke to shame, who drove him off the public stage to seek shelter in the pension-list, and who is now named fifty million times where the name of the pensioned Burke is mentioned once. The cause of the American colonies was the cause of the English Constitution, which says that no man shall be taxed without his own consent, given by himself, or given by some one in the choosing of whom he has had a free voice. But, it was an English exciseman; a petty officer in the Excise in Sussex, who, having gone to America, gave life, activity, vigour and final success to this cause. It is not improbable that Mr. Paine might have received insolent treatment from some ignorant, conceited, unjust and brutal superior in office. It is not improbable that in contemplating the characters and the actions of persons in power, he might have swelled with indignation against a system that could place and keep power in such hands. A little thing sometimes produces a great effect; an insult offered to a man of great

talent and unconquerable perseverance has, in many instances, produced, in the long run, most tremendous effects; and, it appears to me very clear that some beastly insults, offered to Mr. Paine, while he was in the Excise in England, was the real cause of the Revolution in America; for, though the nature of the cause of America was such as I have before described it; though the principles were firm in the minds of the people of that country; still, it was Mr. Paine, and Mr. Paine alone, who brought those principles into action.

The American war was a war, on the part of the Parliament, for taxation without representation. It failed, and in this failure was established in the minds of the people of this kingdom their right to pursue the proper means of obtaining a representation for themselves in Parliament. The burden of the taxes became also now enormously increased. This led to more numerous and more eager inquiries with regard to the cause of the burden. This cause was soon found in the want of a representation of the people in Parliament; or, at least, so said Mr. Fox, so said Mr. Pitt, so said Mr. Wilberforce, so said many others. Mr. Pitt himself having distinctly declared in his place in Parliament that, without a Reform of the Commons' House, it was impossible for the King's Ministers to be honest men. The Duke of Richmond co-operated with Mr. Pitt, and he actually went so far as to bring a Bill into the House of Lords for making the Parliaments Annual and the Suffrage Universal. In the year 1793, and during the previous two years, the subject came to be more and more a subject of importance and of interest. The movements of the Reformers became more frequent and more determined; and it was at this time that war, at the suggestion of Burke, was urged on against France with a view of totally preventing free government, or any thing like free government, being held up by the French as an example wherewith to provoke and tantalize the great mass, the unrepresented mass, of the people of England.

Therefore, my Lord, I perfectly agree with my Lord Grenville that the great cause of the present discontents of the people, and of his Lordship's great alarm, existed anterior and long anterior to the French revolution; and, let this be an answer to all those who call the Reformers imitators and followers of the French Revolutionists. The cause has always been the same: it was at work in America fifty years ago; it was at work in England at the same time; it had Wilberforce, Pitt and the Duke of Richmond, carrying it on from the year 1780 to the year 1785; it had the Duke of Bedford, Mr. Grey, Mr. Tierney and hundreds of others, then thought to be men of great talent and wisdom, carrying it on in the year 1793; during the war against France, its operation was suspended in a great measure; but the moment that war had ceased the cause resumed its former character, and it has gone on from that time to this, in spite of more numerous and more powerful obstacles than ever was before opposed to any cause in the world; it has gone on gathering strength as well with regard to the talents as to the numbers of its advocates.

Let us hear no more, then, about Parliamentary Reform being a spawn of the French Revolution; which Revolution (in its *first form*), on the contrary, sprang out of the principles of Parliamentary Reform, which principles had been so gloriously acted upon in America. I perceive that there are Members of Parliament to say that the Reformers wish for a destruction of the Constitution and for the establishment of a

new sort of government. It is easy to say this, but it is, I am persuaded, quite impossible to prove it. Nevertheless, the Reformers must amount to some millions in number; and if they do entertain any such notions as these, is it likely that they will be induced to abandon these notions in consequence of a further and most terrible abridgment of their rights and liberties. Nothing short of a most extensive and almost universal feeling of discontent against the existing system could possibly justify even the talking about such measures as those that have been proposed; and, if discontent to this extent do exist, would not the rational course be, *first of all* to inquire patiently into the causes of that discontent, and to see whether, by the means of conciliation, the people would be restored to content, and to confidence in the Government?

It has, for a long while, been alleged, that the demagogues, as they are called, take advantage of the distresses of the people to spur them on to expressions of discontent. But this allegation is wholly incompatible with the acknowledgment now made, that is to say, that the cause of the discontent existed anterior to the French Revolution. However, supposing the distresses of the country to be great, as, indeed, we know they are, and supposing them to be the cause of a large part of the present discontent, does it not become those who have the power in their hands, to think about the means of lessening those distresses? There is a new doctrine which appears to have been invented for the present critical season; namely, that the Ministers and the Parliament, having had nothing to do in causing the distress, cannot, of course, do any thing to diminish it! The major of this proposition is, in my opinion, wholly false, but, if it were true, the conclusion would be ridiculous in the extreme; for though I had no hand in the granting of Burke's posthumous pensions, I would, if I were a minister or a member of Parliament, very quickly do something in order to put an end to those pensions. This new doctrine would lead to the adoption of the notion, that no one can undo any thing which he has not done or assisted in doing; and, of course, that a man could not kill a sheep unless he had reared it, or eat a pie unless he had made it.

The humility; the humbleness; the lowliness of this new doctrine is truly amiable, especially in a body, which has been called, and which has called itself *omnipotent*, and which, indeed, is now doing things, which, if done, will argue very little want of *force*. The Parliament has been able to make a *Debt* amounting to three times as much as all the real money in the whole world: it has been able to contract a Debt of about a *thousand millions*, to be paid by a country, the whole of the property of which Mr. Curwen (one of its members) states at *three hundred millions*: it has been able to keep up an enormous standing army in time of peace: it has been able to protect the Bank of England, and, through it, all other Banks, from paying in specie: it has been able to pass laws to empower a Secretary of State to put men into dungeons at his discretion: it has been able to do a great many other things, which the people will remember; but, it seems, that it has *no power to diminish the distresses* of the country! It can lay taxes on; but, it would seem, that it cannot take taxes off!

I am clear in the conviction, that the evils, manifold and great as they are, and which this country has now to endure, are the consequence of measures adopted by the Parliament, during the last twenty-seven years. But before I proceed further I will insert a passage from the report of

your Lordship's speech; a passage too striking, not to call forth particular notice. It was as follows :

" He did not then mean to enter into the cause of those disturbances, but he would ask how the distresses of the country could be made ground of inquiry into those proceedings? If the noble Marquis or the noble Earl meant to say that those distresses arose out of the measures adopted by Government or Parliament, then he would admit that inquiry was necessary—if they meant, further, to urge, that though Parliament had not caused those distresses, yet that they had the power to alleviate them, that he should admit as a ground of inquiry. But he could not understand how Parliament either caused or could remedy the existing distresses of the country. If an issue of the Exchequer-bills were expedient at this moment, he could easily prove to the House that they were not necessary. He knew no remedy which could, at present, be effectually applied to the commercial regulations of the country, or any material advantage which could be derived from any such. Parliament had not, in any way, been instrumental to those distresses; they grew out of circumstances over which it had no control. They grew out of the former wealth and prosperity of the country. He had received a statement from a great number of respectable manufacturers, in which they pointed out their distresses as not arising out of the conduct of Government, but from the state of their trade with foreign nations. America was *similarly situated*, so were all parts of Europe. It was impossible that after the twenty years war in which this country had been engaged, and which had convulsed the whole of Europe, a great change would not be produced. This was felt more or less in different countries, as the noble Marquis would find, if he took the trouble to inform himself on the subject; but in *no country was this distress so severely felt as in the United States of America*; he was sorry for this, as this country was a great sufferer by it. This was a circumstance which ought to be fully made known both in and out of doors. In America were to be found principles of Reform similar to those attempted to be introduced into this country. There they had *no King—no Nobles—no Established Church—no Tithes*. They had too—what was called *equal representation*—and we were told that they had no taxes; yet that country was more distressed than this, in which all those establishments existed. He did not urge this as a matter of blame against the American government—it arose from a cause simple, plain, and intelligible. During the last twenty years of war that country was the only neutral power. She had therefore a monopoly of the whole of the carrying trade of Europe. In consequence of this she made a greater progress in twenty years than she could in sixty under ordinary circumstances. But now that Europe was at peace America was deprived of the greater portion of that trade; it was impossible that a country so circumstanced should not go back, and suffer for a time. He hoped that suffering would be short, as it affected this country considerably. This country had also, within the same period, increased in wealth and commerce; it had also, within the last sixty years, increased its population more than it had done for the last six centuries before. What was the consequence? Having all the advantages of trade, machinery was introduced, by which ten times the quantity of work was done with an infinitely less number of hands. This had a tendency to create *sometimes* a glut of our manufacturers, and at *others* a want of employment.—The noble Lord, after some observations on the late reduction in the army, and after having pointed out the evil of creating a distrust of Parliament in the minds of the people, asked whether the spirit of disaffection which was known to exist had any reference to these subjects?"

To this I will add an extract from the report of the speech of Lord Castlereagh on the same subject:—

" Into the causes of the discontent and dissatisfaction which prevailed among its inhabitants, he did not feel inclined to enter at present; on a future occasion, he should not shrink from discussing them; but all that he should now say was, that as far as his inquiries went (and they had not been scanty), the market for industry had not been narrowed either at home or abroad. At home, indeed, every man who was at all acquainted with the march of our affairs, the increase of our population, and consequently the increase of its wants, must be aware that it had considerably increased: abroad it had suffered no diminution, except in a country which these wiseacres held up as an object of imitation to

their own, which, they maintained, had a government all perfect and complete—which, though it had recently been suffering under as great commercial embarrassment as their own, they represented as a perfect paradise—*he meant America*. There, indeed, the market had been narrowed, though nowhere in Europe, if he might trust the information which he had received. The causes of the distress which now existed were not by any means such as these infatuated people supposed them to be: time was the only cure for them; and no sensible man would tell them (for no sensible man could himself believe) that Parliament could remove them by its interference, much less such a Parliament as they themselves would appoint."

Now, my Lord, before I come to the observations which I intend to make as to the causes of the distresses of the country, give me leave to answer what is said in these extracts with regard to the distresses, or, rather, the supposed distresses, in the United States of America. Your Lordship is made to say, that in "no country was the distress so severely felt as in the United States of America." The same is said, in substance, in the report of the speech of your colleague. I do not accuse your Lordship of wilful falsehood; but I can assure you that this report will do great discredit to your Lordship in that country. In the United States of America, there is nothing of that description; nothing of that sort of thing, which, in England, is called distress. The city of New York contains, they say, a population of about a hundred and thirty thousand souls. And I take upon me to say that it does not contain one single creature, black or white, so much in distress as the average of our common-labourers and working manufacturers are at this day. I have heard persons say, that they have, during a course of years, seen a beggar or two in the city of New York. I never saw one there in my life; but, during the latter part of the last summer, I have seen a considerable quantity of offal meat left upon the shambles, after the market was over, for any body to take away that chose to take it away. I, myself, bought there as fat lamb as I ever saw, giving a dollar and a half for a whole lamb, weighing six-and-thirty pounds. The price of mutton, wether mutton, was less than twopence sterling a-pound. Hog-meat (fatted upon Indian corn) was seven cents, or, about threepence three farthings a-pound English money. Beef (as fine you will observe as what is killed in London) was, the best joints, the same. Bread, a little more than half the London price, and greatly superior in point of quality. At this time, and at the same place, no labourer was to be had, not even a newly-arrived Irish emigrant, under three quarters of a dollar a-day. Thus, then, the labourer at New York could obtain the price of more than ten pounds of pork for every day that he chose to work. Does your Lordship call this *distress*? Would to God that once happy England exhibited to the world such marks of misery and wretchedness!

But, we are to'd, that many of the English emigrants have returned back. I took the pains to ascertain the facts relative to this measure before my departure for England; and I state upon authority of the best kind, that, out of seven and twenty thousand who, during the last twelve months, have arrived at the port of New York from the King's European dominions, *eleven hundred* only have returned; and, which is a thing wholly overlooked, great numbers of these are men who, after having examined the country, have returned back in order to take out their wives, children and relations, two men of which description were on board the ship in which I came home. However, it is not so very surprising that there should be one out of thirty, who, happening to arrive

in the heat of the summer, should take fright and return. There are the caprices and the hankerings of women to be attended to. There are divers circumstances which would cause a return of one out of thirty without leaving room for any sensible man to draw, from such return, any conclusion unfavourable to the general state of that country.

The advantages which America presents to persons who are wholly out of trade or business, and who wish to live at their ease, and still to preserve their fortunes for their children, are so great, that a person who has not actually witnessed them, can hardly believe in their reality. In a neat country-house, at the distance of from three to ten miles of the city of New York, a family, of moderate size, may be maintained in the style becoming a gentleman, for a less sum annually than the assessed taxes and the poor-rates paid by such a family in England. The manner of living, too, is so widely different. From seven hundred to nine hundred dollars, that is to say, about two hundred pounds, will give a man a good country-house, garden, pasture, orchard, plenty of space for horses and cows, with coach-house, stables, and all sorts of conveniences, not forgetting dogs and sports of the field; not less than a pair of horses with one or two convenient carriages; with a great variety of meat, fowl and fish, with wines of all sorts, and, if he chooses, London porter, if he does not like the beer that is made in the country, and which is better than the London porter. Claret at an English sevenpence a bottle; Port-wine at an English shilling; Madeira wine in the same proportion; French brandy at about a dollar and a half a gallon; and the common spirits of the country are actually to be bought at about twenty English pence a gallon, that is to say, four English quarts or eight English pints. While every article of dress, common to England is (all except the labour bestowed in the making it) cheaper than in England, and while the silks and lace from France, and the silks and beautiful dresses that come from India and China are sold at a rate so cheap as to make the fine main-street at New York surpass, as to the brilliancy of female dresses, any of the ball-rooms that are ever to be seen in England, with the exception of those where aristocracy brings forth its family trinkets into play. The finest streets in London; the malls, the parks, the gardens are, as to female dresses, a scene of meanness and shabbiness compared to Broadway in New York.

This, my Lord, is the real state of a commercial town in America; and which commercial town, too, had, at the very time that I am speaking of, experienced a monstrous deal of that sort of distress which had put the discounting and accommodation gentlemen to flight, and had, thanks be to God, shut many of their shops up for ever. But, as to the *country*, as to the farmers of which America is wholly almost composed; as to the working people all through the country, what distress had they felt? They knew nothing, either of poor-rates or of paupers. All that I paid for a farm of three hundred acres, in taxes of every sort, were fifteen dollars and a half for myself and the like sum for my landlord; a part of this went to the maintenance of the government; a part of it to keep the roads in excellent repair; a part to maintain the schools in the township; and, I suppose, out of the whole, four or five dollars might be required towards the maintenance of the free negroes who are unable or unwilling to work; for, during the whole of my residence in Long Island I never set my eyes on a white pauper, except one Englishman, a native of Hull, as he told me, who seemed to have drunk himself half to death and to

whom I gave half a dollar to take him to the overseers of Flushing. It is curious enough that this man had straggled down from Canada, and was, as he told me, formerly the Editor of a ministerial newspaper at Hull. In all probability the whiskey would soon put an end to him; and at any rate, this was the only white pauper I ever saw in Long Island; and the only one I ever heard of.

Now then, my Lord, if your Lordship has been told that there is great distress in America, the persons who have given you that information must have willfully deceived you. Nevertheless, for about two months ending with the middle or latter end of August, there was a great derangement of the affairs of trade and of labour in the State of New York, and in almost every part of the United States; but particularly near the great cities and towns which are affected by commercial relationships. This arose from a cause which I am now about to endeavour to describe, and to which your Lordship will do well to attend; because the elucidation of this matter will enable you to get at clear notions as to one branch, at least, of those inextricable difficulties in which you and your colleagues have twisted yourselves up.

There has existed, since the peace, no law in America to protect any bank against the payment of its notes in specie. No, my Lord, it would have been a pity to see this noble system rivalled by any other in the famous work of making Bank Restriction Acts. The American Governments, State Governments as well as General Government, had seen the consequences which this had produced in England; and, therefore, in spite of all the intrigues and all the ingenious contrivances of that race of robbers called bankers, they wisely resolved not to restrict the rogues, but to leave them to their creditors and to the law; or, at least, to expose none but their dupes to suffer from their villainies. Nevertheless, such is the greediness of commercial men; such is their everlasting desire to be trading, whether they have any thing to trade on or not, and such is the facility of lending any thing which is called money, that numerous banks still exist all over the United States. An immense quantity of worthless paper got on float; or, rather, was kept on float after the termination of the war. Worthless as it was, it composed a part of the circulating medium; and tended to keep up prices to the standard of the late war in Europe. But, in the month of May the bubble began to burst, and before the middle of July a very considerable portion of this paper was totally annihilated. This caused an instant reduction in prices; and spread great ruin amongst those who had been so indiscreet as to borrow paper-money, and who had now to pay real money in its stead, at the rate of nearly two bushels of wheat for one. The building of new houses instantly came to a stand in the cities and towns; goods of all sorts were driven rattling to the hammer; and numerous persons in the vicinity of the haunts of commerce were, for the moment, thrown out of employment. But (and I beg your Lordship to mark it well) the embarrassment, as far as affected labour, did not last two months. Wages came down, though not at the same rate as provisions had come down; great numbers of labourers and working tradesmen went forth into the country in all directions; and all the apprehensions that had been entertained in the month of July, had totally vanished long before the last day of October. House-rent at New York had fallen in price one-half; food had fallen in price in the same proportion; and it was impossible to perceive, in the state of the people, any alteration as to dress or content. But, the cause

of this sudden adjustment of the affairs of the community; or, rather, the cause of the derangement of the paper-money affair not having produced any lasting distress, was, that there was no tax-gatherer to come and demand great sums from the people. There was no sinecure place-man to come and take two hundred bushels of wheat where he had before taken but one hundred bushels of wheat. There were no persons, like the executors of Burke, to come and still to demand the twenty-five hundred pounds sterling a year, when that would have been really twice as much in October as it would have been in the previous month of March. This is the cause, my Lord, of the happiness of America; this is the reason why even the bursting of a paper-bubble affects not the prosperity of the great mass of her citizens. And the paper bubble of England, with all its frippery, all its Babylonish jargon, all its plates, steel as well as copper, might be swept away without producing more than a few weeks of inconsiderable inconvenience, and without producing any political consequences at all, any discontent on the part of the people, any alarm on the part of the Government, were it not for that enormous taxation, which, with steady step and iron grasp, thrusts onward in its progress, whether prices be high or low, whether money be plenty or scarce, whether the payer be rich or poor.

Thus, then, my Lord, though a great doctor in politics, and of very long experience, you have clearly misunderstood the case of your Trans-Atlantic patient, whom you have supposed to be in a consumption, while she really has been troubled only with a fit of the colic. I dare not say that your Lordship is ignorant as to a science with regard to which you ought to be so profoundly skilled; but, I venture to say, that the apothecaries who have reported the case to you are poor ignorant quacks, or have wilfully furnished you with falsehoods. Lord Castlereagh seems to have come to the same decision as your Lordship upon this illness of America; and he thinking, doubtless, that, as neither of you had any remedy to propose for the distress of your own country, it would be impertinent in the extreme to pretend to prescribe for America, very piously offers up his prayers for the speedy restoration of the last-mentioned country; and I can assure his Lordship, that, as far as I am able to judge of the matter, the people of America would much rather have the benefit of his prayers than that of any measures which he would be likely to propose for adoption by their rulers.

So much, my Lord, as to the fact of America being in a state of distress; let me now examine the reasoning of your Lordship and of your noble and worthy colleague upon the subject; and here we shall come to the application of the fable, and see, before we have done, how extremely clear are your notions of this matter; how consistent your present views are with your views of a recent date; and what a lively hope we have reason to entertain from the measures likely to proceed from the "statesman-like" glimpse you now take through the gloom.

My Lord, you now tell us that the cause of our distress is such that it cannot be removed even by a Parliament which has been able to perform, amongst other feats, the mighty ones which I have above mentioned. This cause of distress, you say, is, that the nation had monstrously increased in population, commerce, and manufactures, during the late war. That, peace having come, the nation must, in those respects, go back; and that, by its thus going back, distress must be created. It is in illustration of this argument; or, rather, in proof of the truth of it,

that you and your noble colleague produce what you call the distress of America ; which I contend to be no distress at all ; and which, if it were distress, would be no proof of the truth of your argument with regard to England.

At the beginning of the distress, that is to say, soon after the peace had been concluded, I said, over and over again in my Register, what you have now said with regard to a necessary retrograde movement as to manufactures and commerce. I have not the book by me, but I pledge myself to produce the extract and insert it in another Register ; and in that extract will be found precisely what you and your noble colleague have now uttered with regard to this retrograde movement. This nation was at that time drunk with joy ; there were hundreds of thousands of rabble following the heels of old Blucher and the Kings ; shouting and bellowing like brutes ; while the malignant enemies of our freedom were spitting forth their triumphant sarcasms upon my predictions as to the evil consequences which would arise from the hundreds of millions expended for the restoration of the Bourbons. Then it was, my Lord, in that moment of gloom to me that I told the drunken rout to shout and huzza and halloo and bellow forth the last breath in their lungs ; for, that those were the last days of their rejoicing. I then told them that commerce, that manufactures, that trade, that traffic, that the use of money, that gain of all sorts would begin instantly to revert to their former channels ; that the war had been a peculiar war ; that the peace would be a peculiar peace ; that it would bring poverty in place of riches ; hunger in place of plenty ; and, that either the Income-tax must be kept on ; that loans must be made in time of peace, or that there must be no standing army or the debt must be nearly annihilated. Who was right and who wrong as to those matters, time has already decided.

But, my Lord, it is your *conclusion*, drawn from this argument taken from my Register, that I object to. You say (and so says your noble colleague) that *time* only ; that time can and will cure the evils arising from this cause ; this retrograde movement of commerce and manufactures. Lord Castlereagh is reported to have jeered a little, the "*wiseacres*" who have cited America as an instance of the happiness arising from equal representation ! No person that I ever heard of has ever ascribed the happiness of America to the form of her government ; to her having, as your Lordship triumphantly observes, "*no King, no Lords, no Established Church.*" So far from my ever having ascribed the happiness of America, to have arisen from this cause, I have expressly asserted over and over again that her happiness arises from no such cause ; that it arises from an absence of grinding taxation, and that the same absence of grinding taxation in England would render England happier than America, without any alteration at all in the form of her government or in the law of the land. So that your Lordship and your noble colleague have, as far as I am concerned, either misunderstood or misrepresented me. You have proceeded upon a principle put forward by a detected embezzler whom I once knew, namely, the "*principle of mistake* ;" and yet, your noble colleague ought to have been careful to make an exception, at the least, with regard to me, seeing that he has thought proper to describe me as the person whose writings have had the greatest share in what he calls the deluding of the people of this country.

It is to time ; good old Time with his wings and his scythe ; the "*healing hand of time,*" as the late Speaker told us, and as you and your colleague

now tell us, that we are to look for a cure for the dreadful malady that now afflicts us. First, my Lord, let me observe, the change of tone which your language and that of your colleague has gradually assumed, since the memorable session when three millions (I think it was) were voted, amidst cheering and shouting, to build triumphal arches and monuments of *glorious success*; and when Mr. Tierney, his eye, as I once before observed, "*in a fine fit of phrenzy rolling*," proposed the building (in addition I believe to the arches and the columns) three "*Solemn Temples*," in everlasting commemoration of the stabbings and shootings and blowings-up and tearings to pieces of three most bloody battles. It was during that most memorable Session, when that other bright star of the ministerial constellation, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, averred that the way to ensure for ever the prosperity of the country, was to continue to collect fourteen millions a year as a sinking fund, which fourteen millions were to shed a blessing upon the people and monstrously to increase the wealth of the nation, by being first raised in taxes upon the people, then *lent* back to the people by the fundholders, and which fourteen millions, in order to restore the nation to prosperity, have now been reduced to two millions; it was in that memorable session, so full of projects of all sorts; commutation of tithes, taxing of seeds and butter and eggs coming from abroad, setting up public granaries, taking the farmer's corn in pawn, not to mention one quarter part of the endless progeny that came from the fertile brains of Messrs. Western and Gurwen: it was in that memorable Session of the right honourable and honourable Houses, when there was prevalent that delightful diversification and confusion of ideas that inhabit the minds of men when they see the lights dance before them: it was during that memorable Session that your noble colleague dined in our ears, from January to June, the assertion that the *only cause* of the distress (which had then begun to appear) was, that there had been a *sudden transition from war to peace*; that there was an overflow of money which had been stopped in its passage through the usual channels; that, not having yet found new channels, embarrassment had arisen as to the manner of employing it; that new channels would very soon be found out, and that then there would be an end of the distress! This was uttered, too, with so much self-compacency: in this sort of way, "*every one at all acquainted with science*." As much as to say that *he* was well acquainted with this science, and that few others were. But, my Lord Liverpool, what is become of this doctrine now! Where is *now* the proof of the sagacity and profundity of this noble colleague of yours? Now, it seems, the thing is not so very temporary! The *sudden transition from war to peace* has, it seems, been producing distress for five years; and, at the end of the five years, it is discovered that the cause of the distress is a retrograde movement in commerce and manufactures; it is discovered that the nation during the war had got so very far, that it must now *go back*. It is now discovered, at the end of five years, that that is true, which I said at the beginning of the five years. And, my Lord, I do assure you that if I had been a member of Parliament five years ago, the world should have cried shame upon this nation if the Parliament had not even then begun to adopt measures to meet the effects of this retrograde movement and to prevent the possibility of the existence of the present calamities.

It is very curious, that, even at the time that I now am referring to, and before that time; so early as 1814 and 1815, I, upon several occasions,

addressing myself to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, told him that the evils which were then approaching him were such as were not to be cured by dungeon-bills and dragoons ! It is very singular, my Lord ; but this is really the fact, which I will show, another time, by quoting the very words. Over and over again, in the most serious and earnest manner, I besought him to believe me that the distresses, which would arise out of his neglect to adopt, immediately, efficient measures as to the burdens of the country, would never be cured, would never be put an end to, by restrictions on the press, or by bills about sedition and about treason. I saw, even so far back as that time, that, if efficient measures were not adopted, with regard to the debt and the paper-money, the nation would be plunged into suffering indescribable. I knew it to be impossible to go on in time of peace with that monster of a debt which had been created during the war. I knew that it would be impossible to attempt to pay in specie, unless the interest of the debt, the expenses of the standing army, the out-goings on account of sinecures, pensions, grants and places, were all greatly reduced previous to such attempt. I knew that it would be impossible, unless these previous steps were taken, to attempt to pay in specie, without plunging the nation into that very state in which we now behold it ; and therefore, I used every argument that my mind could suggest in order to induce the Government to adopt such steps. Nothing was done : the omnipotent Parliament did nothing : the Parliament which could raise a thousand millions in taxes and create eight hundred millions of debt during one single war, was unable or unwilling to take one single step in the way of guarding against calamities, which I, at any rate, proclaimed as being inevitable.

The distress went pressing onwards through the years 1815 and 1816. The Bank was to pay in specie at the termination of the war. The war had terminated. The Bank did not pay. Yet it was obvious that unless it was enabled to pay within a few years, there must be a blowing-up of some sort or other. It was obvious that this nation never could go on for any great length of time with a paper-money notoriously irredeemable in specie : with a paper-money which had become a legal tender, and which, in the end, must, if left to itself, produce universal confusion. During the years 1815 and 1816, an attempt was therefore made to come up to the mark of payments in specie. That attempt produced the miseries of 1816, and those miseries produced the memorable Bills of 1817. Yet those Bills produced no alleviation of the burden : not one atom of security to the Government ; and now it is openly acknowledged, that the minds of the people are far more alienated from the present system than they ever were.

Now, then, my Lord, why are we to expect any thing from *time* ? If the great cause of the distress be the retrograde movement of commerce and manufactures ; if the nation has to *go back*, it has to remain at the point to which it will go back. And if it has to remain at that point of backwardness, where do you and your noble colleague find grounds of hope from the workings of time ? All that time can do is to bring us quite back to the point from which we started ; and therefore it is impossible to suppose that time will add to the means of recovery from distress.

But how clear does this become, when we take into view a particular part of the grounds of this reliance upon time ? It is said, both by you and your colleagues, that this country suffers in part, because America is suffering ; and that when time has restored America to prosperity, our

prosperity will, in part, at least, return. I have shown that America is now in a state of real prosperity; but what you mean is, that she will, with the assistance of time, possess a greater quantity of means of purchasing goods from us than she now possesses. It would be very curious, my Lord, to behold a strict comparison between what I have recently said in my Registers upon this subject, and what you and your colleague have now said. During the three Registers, which I sent last from America, I treated of this matter, and I observed that the great change which had taken place there would certainly add to the embarrassment of the non-reforming system in England. All the information which I communicated upon this subject *thus far*, you and your colleague have very freely made use of. But, you have chosen to add a corollary of your own, and with this corollary the blunder begins. You add, after having made use of my facts, that what you call the prosperity of America will be restored, and that then (oh, day of hope!) the distress will in great part, be removed from England.

If there were any foundation for this hope; if there were anything but childish delusion in it; if it were suited to any place but the regions of the 'Change and the Alley; if it were becoming the lips of men having the smallest pretensions to political knowledge, should not we, the people of England, have a right to say that this great and famous country ought not to have been brought into such a state as to make its prosperity depend upon the prosperity of any other country in the world, or of all other countries put together? Should we not have a right to say to those who have had our purses and our persons at their absolute command; to those who have done with us and with our country just what they pleased; to those who have passed Dungeon-Bills, Bank-Restriction Acts and Acts of Indemnity; should we not have a right to say to them, how comes it that you have made our happiness depend upon the happiness of any other country; how comes it that you have put us in the power of the rulers of other states; and subjected us to the evil consequences of their want of wisdom or want of virtue? But, the fact is wholly unfounded. That which you call prosperity in America, and which you think will be restored to our advantage, *will never be restored*. America has gone back only a part of the way yet. She has much further back to go.* Her prices are not yet come down to the lowest mark.

* Mr. S. T. COLERIDGE, the poet, in a letter to a friend, dated Dec. 13, 1819, speaks of this *Register* in the following strain:—"Have you seen COBBETT's last number? It is the most *plausible* and the best written of anything I have seen from *his pen*, and *apparently* written in a less fiendish spirit than the average of his weekly effusions. The self-complacency with which he assumes to himself exclusively, truths which he can call his own only as a horse-stealer can appropriate a stolen horse, by adding mutilation and deformities to robbery, is as *artful* as it is amusing. Still, however, he has given great additional publicity to weighty truths, as *ex. gr.* the hollowness of *commercial* wealth; and, from whatever dirty corner or straw moppet the ventriloquist Truth causes her words to proceed, I not only listen, but must bear witness that it is Truth talking. His conclusions, however, are palpably absurd—give to an overpeopled island the countless back settlements of America, and countless balloons to carry thither man and maid, wife and brat, beast and baggage—and then we might rationally expect that a general crash of trade, manufactures, and credit, might be as mere a summer thunderstorm in Great Britain as he represents it to be in America. One deep, most deep, impression of melancholy, did COBBETT's letter to Lord Liverpool leave on my mind,—the conviction that, wretch as he is, he is

Her commercial haunts are not yet depopulated so much as they will be. She has yet (thanks be to that God who has given us hearts to love freedom and virtue!) to see hundreds of her ships converted into fire-wood, and thousands upon thousands of her discounting and accommodation tribes, together with their clerks, porters and footmen, driven back to the fields to hoe corn and tend upon the cattle.* She is not come down yet

an overmatch in intellect for those, in whose hands Providence, in its retributive justice, seems to place the destinies of our country; and who yet rise into respectability, when we compare them with their parliamentary opponents."—*ALLSOP'S Letters, Conversations and Recollections of Coleridge*, vol. i. p. 20. (1836.)—See our next following note, for an illustration of how far Mr. COBBETT'S conclusions, in this *Register*, were "palpably absurd." Mr. COLERIDGE does injustice when he calls this the best written of Mr. COBBETT'S numbers, and shows that he could not have been a very attentive reader of the *Register*. But he is more unjust in attributing plagiarism (robbery) to Mr. COBBETT, who always took as much pains as any man to quote the works of those to whom he was really indebted for information.—ED.

* In our last note, p. 466, we quoted one of those who have ventured to call Mr. COBBETT'S views "palpably absurd." Hundreds, we might say thousands, perhaps, have done the same as Mr. COLERIDGE; not the poetasters merely, but Ministers, experienced politicians, and merchants and bankers, have done this. When he predicted that the famous measure called "*Peel's Bill*" would be either impracticable or ruinous, he was laughed at; and for years since that prediction was published, it has been a subject of sneers and exulting taunts against its author. But the sneers and taunts have been too hasty. The famous scheme has already caused a monstrous deal of the predicted ruin. The ruin, however, is not yet complete. The struggle of *Paper against Gold* is still going on, and grows more and more desperate as it continues. The above remarks (Dec. 1819) respecting the "going back" of the Americans, are of a piece with the prediction as to *Peel's Bill*. Both the English and American dealers in promises to pay may often have laughed at this, seeing that, between 1819 and 1836, there has been a revival of "prosperity" in America, by the means of fresh issues of the false medium. The affair in America took a new lease of its life, in the efforts of her bankers and greedy merchants. But how stands the system, in England as well as in America, at this date (May, 1837)? Our Bank of England, having been drained of her gold by the policy of the American Government, has been obliged, for some time past, to *draw in*, and refuse "accommodation" to our traders. Some of our bankers and merchants, thought to be the most solvent, have suddenly become bankrupt. As to the condition of America, let the newspapers of that country, deeply interested in the success of paper-money, speak for themselves. The following is from the *New York Herald* of the 8th of April, showing the extent of failures since the crisis began, two-thirds of which took place the week previous to this publication being made. "Millions" here, means, millions of *dollars*. "The number of failures that have taken place since the present crisis began is estimated as follows:—

" 5 Foreign and Exchange brokers.....	15,000,000
" 30 Dry Goods Jobbers.....	15,000,000
" 16 Commission Shoe and Clothing Houses.....	7,000,000
" 28 Real Estate Speculators.....	20,000,000
" 8 Stock Brokers.....	1,000,000
" 6 Miscellaneous.....	2,500,000

" 93 Aggregate for New York..... 60,500,000

" This estimate is taken from full lists of every failure by name, which are kept in almost every private office in Wall-street, and almost by every private individual. It shows in a remarkable degree the extent of the calamity, and the progress of the disorder only for New York. We have not enumerated the cases in New Orleans, in Philadelphia, in Richmond, in Mobile, in Buffalo, or elsewhere, the accounts of which are coming to us by every mail." The same paper of the same date has this:—"Men are beginning to think that either the whole commercial interest must fail and suspend business—or the whole bank-

to the point at which she is in this respect to remain. As to real prosperity; as to real happiness; as to everything truly valuable, she goes on increasing; but as to everything connected with foreign commerce; as to all the grounds of your hope and that of your colleague, she goes on regularly decreasing. "Let any man at all acquainted with political science," judge from a fact or two, which I will here state. At New

"ing interest stop specie payments. During the last two days the propriety of a general suspension of specie payments is actually argued, and gravely argued too, in the street. On this point we dread to speak out what we hear. It is certain that since 1812, such a hurricane has not swept over the commerce of the United States. We shall wait for the events of to-day before enlarging on a new and important view of the present crisis." "The above calculation," says the *London Sun*, May 1, 1837, "has been made by Mr. BENNETT, editor of the *Herald*, celebrated for the vigour and accuracy of its Wall-street (New York Change Alley) reports." Then, again, the *London Times*, May 12, tells us, that "the *New York Journal of Commerce* says, that the whole number of failures in that city within the last two months exceeded 100, without including sundry small dealers, whose misfortunes attracted no marked public attention." Further, we have some reflections on the moral effects of that cause which has produced such ruin in America. The same *New York Herald* (April 13, 1837), ends one of its party tirades by exclaiming:—"The day of retribution is at hand. The atrocious morals bred by speculators will be whelmed into detestation and contempt. The laxity of manners, and want of moral principle, will have bounds set to them. The day of prudence, sobriety, honour, good faith, justice, will yet take place. But first, all speculators in commerce, in banks, in politics, in stocks, in lands, must be prostrated in the dust. Legitimate, honest business men must now set to work, and bring back steadiness in trade and morals in social life." And in the same number of the same paper we have, in a pithy paragraph, the following exact repetition of what Mr. COBBETT wrote, as above, in 1819:—"About two thousand clerks and ten thousand mechanics, now in this city (New York), ought to go west and turn farmers. The only course." One more quotation from the same paper; for these particulars are truly worthy of being recorded. "THROWN OUT OF EMPLOYMENT. The revulsion now sweeping over the country (America), has probably already thrown out of employment and business the following number of persons and things:—

"Merchants and traders	1,500
"Mechanics	5,000
"Dandy stock-speculators	100
"Fashionable <i>soi-à-à</i> givers	500
"Private carriages	75
"Fine blood and carriage horses	675
"Pairs of hounds	100
"Piano-fortes (fashionable)	500
"Harps (not Jews' harps)	110
"Sets of silver plate	250
"Seamstresses	1,250
"Houses and stores (shops)	2,500

"The hotels are not half so crowded as they were last year (1836), and many private as well as boarding houses will be entirely broken up. All who can are emigrating to the country—to the west—to the far west—to the far, far west. Agriculture will receive this summer a vast accession of new hands. Probably 500,000 fresh hands from the walks of speculation and trade, consisting of presidents, cashiers, clerks, merchants, directors, and what not, will have to turn farmers and till the earth. An excellent change! The approaching general suspension of business will probably drive 50,000 persons from the Atlantic cities to till the soil, cut down the trees, and plough the prairies of the west." This, too, it should be observed, is not from one of Mr. COBBETT's way of thinking; not from an admirer of a pure metallic currency; but from an editor who is now contending, in spite of all these his confessions of ruin by paper-money, that the "rapidly increasing population" of America "requires an extra increase of circulating medium."—ED.

York there was, before I came away, an *Emigration Society* formed; that is to say, a Society for promoting emigration from the City of New York and its neighbourhood to the State of Ohio! A considerable sum had been collected; agents had been appointed to go and survey the country and purchase lands to an immense extent; and a gentleman who took great interest in the matter, told me, in the month of September, and with great exultation, that he hoped soon to see the whole race of discounters and accommodators, and retailers of British goods, sent back to the woods, to lead honest lives and to be animated by the glorious sun that never stopped payment. My Lord, what I state here *must be true*; I well know that this will be read at New York, where I have numerous friends, and where, rather than pass for a liar, I would lose my life. I do assure your Lordship that this work of quitting the haunts of commerce is going on all over the country. Prices will not revive in America. Provisions having become extremely low in price will render wages low in price. There will be less money moving about, or less of what passes for money; and, in whatever degree that quantity is diminished, the demand for English goods will be diminished, and permanently diminished. Taking America as a whole; considering her as one merchant, she has been trading, in her affairs with England, upon *tick*; she has been trading with accommodation paper: that sort of trade will almost wholly cease, and a great part of her custom will cease accordingly. How, then, is *time* to do any thing for us in that quarter of the world? What probability is there that she will be a better customer next year than she has been this? On the contrary, is there not good reason to suppose that the demand of next year will fall greatly short of that of the present year? In short, it is notorious that the ships now lying at Liverpool, bound to New York, have scarcely a bale of goods to carry, and are going out with coals in their hulls to keep them from being blown over and swamped in their passage.

Thus, then, away flies, like the morning mists before the sun, all your delusive hopes of assistance from old father Time, who, so far from being at work for your system, is at work against your system, as he has been during the last five years, and as he necessarily must be, until a great alteration be made in that system. In the Hampshire Petition, agreed to at a public meeting, held on Portsdown Hill, on the 15th of February, 1817, and which Petition I had the honour to be appointed to draw up, the whole case of the people of England was stated to the House of Commons. That Petition stands now upon record in the votes of that House; and, if the prayer of that Petition were now to be acted upon, tranquillity, harmony, respect for all the branches of the Government, would be instantly restored. All alarms would be instantly dissipated, and, in less than one year, public prosperity, individual happiness and almost total abolition of pauperism would take place, and England would once more make, in the world, the figure which she heretofore has made. But, it appears to me to be clear as the sun at noon-day, that unless something very much unlike the prayer of that Petition be acted upon, the miseries of this once happy England, are, as yet, but merely beginning, though my Lord Grenville has said that the country is now in a more alarming state than he has ever known it to be in before.

My Lord, your noble colleague has said, that the Parliament can do nothing to remove the distress, and that *particularly such a Parliament as the Reformers call for* could do nothing to remove it. Now,

let me first observe, that the distress is by no means the primary cause of the discontents of the people; and this, indeed, has been acknowledged most distinctly by my Lord Grenville, who has said that the discontents have their origin in a cause which existed before the French Revolution. It is not I; it is not Mr. Hunt; it is not any other person now living, with whom the putting forward of this cause of Reform originated. The great mass of the Reformers were not born at the time of the origin of that cause, which has descended to them from father to son. This, therefore, and not the distresses of the country, is the great standing ground of discontent; and so firmly am I convinced that the mere bodily sufferings of the people are a nothing compared to this ground of discontent, that, I verily believe, that if his Royal Highness had been advised to say in his speech to the Parliament that he wished them to take into their consideration the question of Reform, the whole country would now have been as tranquil as ever it was at any one period of its history. I mean a mere simple recommendation that the Parliament would entertain the question and give it a calm and dispassionate discussion. This is the opinion of every man that I spoke with upon the subject, from the Docks at Liverpool to the Crown-and-Anchor Tavern in the Strand. We will suppose, for argument's sake, that a Reform would do no good. My opinion is directly the contrary (I beg you to observe that); but, for argument's sake, allow that it would do no good, still, would it not have been right to take into consideration a thing prayed for, most earnestly prayed for, by three-fourths, at least, of the active persons in the kingdom? How fully persuaded the people are that a Reform would be productive of happiness to the country is clearly demonstrated in the reception which the people have given to me. What has entitled me to their notice? Without riches; with the reputation of extreme poverty; notoriously without the power of conferring the smallest pecuniary favour upon any creature; totally unknown to any part of the people in any of the counties through which I have come, except through the means of my writings: and yet I have received written addresses with a greater number of names to them than, perhaps, were ever signed to all the addresses put together that any man in England ever before received. Nearly fifty thousand names were subscribed to addresses in Lancashire; and I have this day received from Yorkshire, dated from Leeds, an Address with many many thousand names subscribed to it. These Yorkshiremen tell me that they owe to me the enlightening of their minds; that they have admired my perseverance in the cause of Reform: that their hopes of final success are strengthened by my return; and that they have the greatest confidence in the exertions which I shall be able to make to restore them to happiness and to preserve the Constitution of this Kingdom, of this their country, which they ardently love, and for my unalterable attachment to which, they are unalterably attached to me.

I say, my Lord, that you have here in these facts alone, a proof of the ardent desire which the people have to see a Reform in the Parliament, and how fully they are persuaded that such Reform would restore them to happiness. The Dinner at the Crown-and-Anchor, upon my arrival, is another proof. What should induce four hundred persons to give five shillings and sixpence each merely to meet me, to eat a little bit of meat and bread, and to drink water? What should induce as many more to offer their money upon the occasion, and to go away regretting that there was not room for them. It has been hinted by several persons that I,

amongst others, am actuated by ambitious motives; but, while I deny the right of any one to exclude me from the right of entertaining such motives as well as other men, what further can I want to gratify feelings of ambition?

It is very clear, then, first, that even the recommendation, on the part of the Prince to the Parliament, to take into consideration the question of Reform, would, at once, allay the ferment which has created so much alarm; second, it is clear that time can do nothing, of itself, in the way of diminishing the distress; and, it is equally clear to me, that a Reformed Parliament would have it completely in its power, not only to induce the people patiently to wait for the removal of the distress, but also, to remove it completely, and to settle the affairs of the country in such a way as to make the people happy and the Constitution, in King, Lords and Commons, secure. In another Letter I shall endeavour to show your Lordship that the opinion of your colleague with regard to the effect of taxation upon the people is erroneous, and to convince you, that, until a very large part of that taxation be removed, there cannot be the smallest hope of a restoration of that tranquillity and prosperity, which, in spite of all anger and all prejudice, I am well persuaded your Lordship firmly believes me sincerely to wish to see my country enjoy.

I cannot conclude, my Lord, without once more adverting to that part of your speech and the speech of Lord Castlereagh, wherein you, in strains of great triumph, observe that there is distress in America, notwithstanding there is no King, no Lords, and no Established Church. I have exposed most fully your error as to the fact of distress; but, my Lord, have I ever said that the distress in England arose from the existence of the King, the Lords, and the Church? Have I not repeatedly, in my appeals to these very Reformers who are now addressing me, told them not to be amused with names; not to conclude that a people was free and happy merely because the Government was called a Republic? Have I not repeatedly told them to recollect, that if their country was the most famous and the most powerful in the world, it had acquired that fame and power under a Government of King, Lords and Commons; has not this always been my language, whether I was writing from abroad or writing from at home; and have I not, since my arrival in the country, told the people of Lancashire in answer to an Address overflowing with the kindest feelings towards myself, that that part of their Address which expresses their firm attachment to the present form of government has given me more pleasure than any other part of that affectionate document, telling them at the same time that to introduce a republican government into England would be the surest way of rendering ruin and degradation permanent? Your Lordship can deny the truth of none of this. Your colleague can deny the truth of none of it. Upon what ground, then, is it pretended to be believed that the Reformers ascribe the present distress to the existing form of government? Upon what ground is it pretended to be believed, that those who seek a Reform in words have a Revolution at the bottom of their hearts? Whence proceeds the unmanly hints that my publication is seditious and blasphemous: that I am the principal author of the evils which are to be provided against; that I am the great propagator of discontent, disobedience to the laws, disaffection to the Constitution and disloyalty to the King? No, no, my Lord; not a man in the kingdom believes this or any part of it; but most men believe that I possess great influence over

the minds of the people, that I am firmly convinced that a Reform of the Parliament ought to take place, and that, unless, by some means or other, I can be silenced, that Reform will take place.

I perceive, that the word Reform does not excite quite so much apparent horror in certain minds as it heretofore excited. I am not without hope that those who have the power of conciliation completely in their hands, will yet be disposed to conciliate. I most earnestly pray God that they may, and that this, our once free and happy country, may be rendered as firm and united in mind as it has been made safe and strong by the hand of nature. Leading a life of sobriety and industry, I have had a great deal of time to bestow upon reflecting on the means by which the country is to be saved. The wish nearest my heart is, to see England happy, free, powerful and dreaded by all other nations. I can see her substance fast wasting away; I can see the fruits of past industry itself passing into other States; I can see the industry passing away into those States; and I am firmly persuaded, that unless efficient remedies be speedily applied, this country, hitherto so famed in the world, will become one of the most despicable and feeble of nations. To prevent this I shall not fail to do all that shall lie in my power; and if my endeavours should be wholly unavailing, I will take care that it shall be said of me that I had no hand in the ruin and degradation of England.

I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

TO THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL

ON THE POWER OF TAXATION TO PRODUCE MISERY; AND ON
THE SPEECH OF MR. BARING RELATIVE TO THE TAXES, THE
PAPER-MONEY, AND THE FUNDS.

(*Political Register*, December, 1819.)

LETTER II.

London, December 14, 1819.

MY LORD,

The speech of Mr. Baring, as reported in the Morning Chronicle, made me jump out of my chair. My tongue and fingers itched for the want of power to give him an instant answer. This speech was cheered as something extraordinarily fine: it was "wise;" it was "profound;" it was "*philosophical!*" One Member wished that the deluded Reformers could all have been present to hear it. I wish so, too, with all my heart; provided, however, that the Reformers could have heard me answer that famous speech. Nay, I wish the Reformers could have heard it even without the answer; for, however ignorant and deluded you may think them, there is scarcely man or woman amongst them, who would not have been able to give it an answer themselves. They have not read

about a hundred and fifty twopenny Registers without being fully qualified to judge correctly with regard to any speech that any body can make upon the subject of taxes, paper-money and the funds. My tongue itched, however, for the power of answering this speech upon the spot; and I felt great mortification, that it must be a week before I could put forth even a limited answer. The next best thing to being able to answer upon the spot, is, to be able to answer the *next day*, through the channel of what your noble colleague, Lord Castlereagh, calls the *respectable part of the press*; and, therefore, a part of that respectable part I shall, think, very speedily have at my command. I will have a *little corner* in it by some means or other.

Before I proceed to notice more particularly, the report of the speech of Mr. Baring, let me notice what has been said by Lord Castlereagh and others during the late debates, with regard to the *causes of the national distress*. In the year 1818, and in the month of February, a petition was delivered to Lord Folkestone, with a written request from me, very respectfully worded, that he would be pleased to present that petition. His Lordship refused to do this; not upon the ground of its containing any improper matter, but merely because it was *too long*. He stated that the House usually rejected petitions, when running through several sheets of paper, and that this was his only reason for declining to present the present petition, which was written on about two and a half sheets of common foolscap paper; which will be readily believed by any one who looks at it, as it now stands, in Number six of volume thirty-three of the Register. [See it in page 331 of this Volume.] I have complained of this conduct on the part of my Lord Folkestone; and, I revive my complaint upon this particular occasion; because in that petition are clearly set forth the cause of the nation's miseries, and also the means of putting an end to those miseries.

In that petition is contained the answer to all those who believe, or who affect to believe, that the taxes have nothing to do in producing the present distress. The reported debates say, that *if nineteen twentieths of the taxes were taken off, the people would not be thereby benefitted*. The people are firmly convinced of the contrary; they believe that the taxes (co-operating with the paper-money) are the sole cause of their suffering: they believe that the taxes would be greatly reduced if the people at large had the choosing of the Members of the House of Commons: and they believe that therefore it is their duty, their duty towards their sovereign as well as themselves, to endeavour to bring about such a Reform as would cause the members to be elected by the people at large.

With regard to their belief as to the two latter propositions, I shall say nothing at present, except that I most heartily concur in it. It is with regard to the first proposition, that I mean to address your Lordship upon this occasion.

Surely, there is something monstrous in the assertion that taxes do not take the means, or, at least, part of the means, of good living from those who pay the taxes! There surely must be something monstrous in such a proposition; full as monstrous, I pledge myself to prove, as it would be to say, that a man who has just had one-half of his property taken from him is as rich as he was before any part of it was taken away; as rich as he was when he possessed the whole. When an assertion is made which is in direct contradiction to the settled opinion of all mankind; when it at once oversets, or, rather, attempts to upset, opinions universally

agreed in ; in such a case we generally treat it with silent contempt. But, when circumstances are menacing ; when such assertions come from the source of power ; when they are put forward as grounds of action ; when dreadful affliction may possibly be prolonged by the want of refutation ; in such a case ; such an extreme case, we may be justified, in the eyes of the world, for calling upon men to listen while the refutation is produced.

The word tax itself, is synonymous with *burden* or *charge*. Taxes have always been looked upon as burdensome ; as producing privations ; as lessening the property and the comforts and enjoyments of those who had to pay them. The King's speeches have from time immemorial spoken of taxes as burdensome, as a species of suffering imposed. When new taxes are laid on we always hear the King lamenting the necessity of them, and observing that he trusts that they will be laid on in a way the least burdensome to his people. When taxes are taken off we hear him expressing his satisfaction, that his people have been relieved from a part of their burdens. In the Houses of Parliament what endless debates have we heard about which tax would weigh heaviest and which lightest upon the people ? What long, long disputes about the injury to the farmer when a tax was to be laid upon him ; about the injury to this trade or that trade, when taxes were to be laid upon them ! Particular stress has always been laid upon any circumstance which would enable the proposers of a tax to urge that it did not press heavily upon this class or upon that class, and especially that it did not press upon the lower or labouring classes of the community. The horse-tax, the dog-tax, the window-tax, the carriage-tax, the hair-powder-tax, the game-license tax, the armorial-bearings-tax, and many others, have received eulogies of hours in length ; because, as it was said, they did not press upon the labouring classes. Upon this same principle, houses having less than five windows or six windows, have been exempted from the window-tax ; cottagers have been allowed to keep a dog each without paying any tax ; small horses kept by poor people, and asses have not been taxed. So that a great parade has been continually making, upon every occasion, when the case could at all justify it, about not burdening the labouring classes with taxes. On the other hand, when a sweeping and most dreadful load has, at any time, been laid upon any of the necessaries of life, deep sorrow has been expressed that such tax would affect the labouring classes.

Now, my Lord, are we, upon the assertion of my Lord Castlereagh, to allow that all these notions are wholly false ; that taxes are no burden at all, and that all mankind have, up to the moment that he chose to make that assertion, been totally in error ? Are we to say that we have been listening to folly from the beginning of the world to the present time, and that wisdom, in the person of your noble colleague, has at last chosen to open her mouth ?

I am aware, that the assertion of one of those who have the distribution of fifty millions of taxes annually, will, by the hirelings and sycophants of the day, be regarded as superior in point of proof, to all the conclusions drawn from experience or from reasoning. Nevertheless, let us see a little of what both these say upon the subject, beginning with the former. We see, that, in England, pauperism has increased in an exact proportion to the increase of the taxes. In the reign of Charles the Second, the Poor-rates amounted to not more than two hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year. They now amount, I suppose, to about

ten millions a year. This is enough, of itself; for, in the reign of Charles the Second, the taxes did not amount to a twentieth part of the sum that they now amount to. There is the difference in the value of money, to be sure, as shown in the difference of the price of labour and provisions; but with every allowance on this account, there now exist twenty paupers for one that existed at that time. Within the memory of all of us who are now fifty years of age, the paupers have increased ten-fold; and so have the taxes. The labouring people of the present day bear no resemblance in point of living, of dress, and of household furniture, to the labouring people when I was a boy. Their dwellings are now scenes of beggary compared to what they were then. Who, in those days, ever heard of such a thing as *rounds-men*? Who ever dreamed that wages would be paid in the shape of poor-rates? If our fathers had been told that the time would come when labourers would be sent to the overseers of the poor to receive part of their wages, would those fathers have believed it? Would they have believed that the people of England, would ever have been brought into such a state of misery and degradation?

Thus, then, does not the experience of our own country show clearly that taxation produces pauperism? I shall be told, perhaps, that so much misery as now exists, did not exist during the late war when the taxes raised were greater in amount than the taxes which are raised now. True: but no answer to my argument; for the taxes which are raised now, are, by the workings of the paper-money, made to be greater than the taxes which were raised during the war; seeing that, during the war, wheat was sold upon an average at *fifteen* shillings a bushel; and that since the peace it has been sold at an average of about *eight* shillings a bushel, with which reduction wages have kept pace: so that, in fact, the *fifty-three* millions which are said to have been raised in taxes last year, were equal in real value and in the burden they imposed upon the people, to about *ninety* millions of taxes collected during the war. This is the main cause why peace has produced misery, greater than that which existed during the war.

Let us look at the United States of America, where there is almost a total absence of taxation. There is no misery in that country, arising from what is called pauperism. There is no such being in that country as the being called a pauper in England, unless in the few instances of aged, infirm, and totally helpless persons. There is no such being as a man able and willing to work, and demanding assistance from a parish or township. The very idea never yet entered the American mind. Wages are sometimes higher and sometimes lower. But they are always much more than sufficient to keep an able man and his family well. The difficulty there is, not to find the means to maintain a man's children, but to induce him to suffer his children, when they are young, to go and do any sort of work for any body at all. It is the custom, when children are left orphans, or when a widow is left with a number of children, especially girls, to dispose of them in this way. The child, at from six to ten years old, perhaps, is bound out, with the mother's consent or with the consent of the relations of the children, to persons of considerable wealth. In this situation they remain till they are from thirteen to sixteen; and they serve their employers in their houses, but never in the fields (speaking of girls); and, during the term, the employers are compelled to furnish them amply with good and decent clothing; to teach them or

have them taught to read and to write; and at the end of the term to discharge them with two suits of good clothing, with a sufficiency of linen, shoes, and so forth, together with a certain sum of money. With all these advantages, it is with great difficulty that parents, widows or relations, can be brought to consent to bind out children; though they are treated, during the term, with every species of kindness, and more like members of the family (however rich the family may be) than like servants. The name of servant is never given to them, and they themselves call their employers by their *name*, and never call them master or mistress.

Now, my Lord, what can there be in a country like this, to which one can affix the term of pauperism? I repeat what I said in my last letter, that I never saw and never heard of a white pauper on Long Island, except an Englishman that came down from Canada. What the hirelings of this country say about the *poor* at New York and Philadelphia is, in fact, all false. The people that they call poor there, would think themselves extremely cruelly treated, if they had not meat three times a day, with as much bread as they can eat, and that of the finest and whitest in the world. Besides, in these great cities, the mass of what are called poor, consist of recently-arrived emigrants, and by no means of the natives of the country either black or white.

In America a man, and especially a farmer (and nine-tenths of the people are farmers) takes his share of keeping his own poor relations, whether the poverty has arisen from misfortune or from fault. These relations go, without any ceremony, and ask for what they want. Or, they go and take up their quarters with a mere "how d'ye do" as an introduction. It is very seldom that any questions are asked. They generally stay as long as they please, and generally without giving rise even to black looks. I appeal to any man who knows any thing of the real people of America, whether this be not the case; and I appeal to the human heart, whether such ought not to be the case in every country in the world! But, can we act thus in England? Can we thus be kind to our relations? Can we thus obey the injunction of St. Paul, and avoid subjecting ourselves to his denunciation, when he tells us, that he who does not perform these offices towards his own kindred, is worse than a heathen? We would perform them as the Americans do; but we cannot. That which we would bestow on our unfortunate or less opulent relations; that which we would give to prop them up when they are falling; to save them from ruin; or to sustain them when they have no means left: the means which we would employ for these purposes, pointed out to us by nature herself, we are compelled to surrender to the tax-gatherer.

If the American farmer had twenty English shillings to pay for a bushel of English salt, in place of two and a half English shillings, which he now pays for that very salt: if he had tax on his windows, tax on his horses, tax on his leather, tax on every thing that goes to the composition of the implements he uses upon his farm; if he was forbidden under heavy penalty to turn the fat of his own oxen and sheep into soap and candles, and compelled to pay a heavy tax upon the soap and candles which he purchases: if the hops which he grows in his garden made him a criminal, unless he first went and entered the spot at an Excise-office and engaged to pay duty upon the hops: if it were criminal for him to convert his barley into beer without a similar process of restraint and exaction:

if his dogs were taxed : if he could not take his family to Church in his light waggon without paying an enormous duty : if he could not read a newspaper without paying of about twenty dollars a year : if his spirits, his wine, his tea, his coffee, his sugar, his molasses, his spices and all other articles but those of his own produce paid a tax equal to the present price of them in his country : if this were the situation of the American farmer, where could he find the means of acting towards his unfortunate or poor relations as he now acts ? If this were his situation, is it not clear that he must drive these unfortunate persons from his table ; from his plentiful table, his hospitable board, and from beneath that roof which now is always ready to afford shelter to every creature that is in want whether relation or stranger ? Driven from beneath his roof whither is the unhappy wretch to wander ? Where is he to find shelter from the inclemency of the weather ? Where is he to find the means of satisfying the calls of hunger ? Why, he is to go to the overseers of the poor. He is to go to the township to ask for shelter and for food. The Poor-laws are the same in Long Island as they are in England ; or, at least, with some trifling variations ; but all these variations are on the side of humanity. And yet nobody goes to the township. For three hundred acres of land, with a very fine country-house, which had always been the habitation of a gentleman of fortune until I became its inhabitant ; first built by a governor of Barbadoes, and afterwards passing through the hands of men who lived in a state of considerable splendour. For this whole place including every species of property not excepting my own presumed personal property ; I paid, annually, in all taxes put together, fifteen dollars and a half ; that is to say, about three pounds ten shillings ; and, as nearly as I can remember, less than a pound of this went to my share of the poor-rates of the township ; and this pound, your Lordship will please to observe, contained the amount of *four days and a half wages for a labouring man*. In addition to this, take the fact, that all the neighbours told me that I was greatly overcharged. Nay, the collector of the taxes himself told me so ; but he observed, that it was down in his book, and he told me that I had nothing to do but to go to a meeting of the county assessors and get it altered. I always told him that my time must be worth very little if it was not worth more in a day than the whole of the tax put together, and therefore I should give myself no trouble about it. Only think, too, my Lord, of my neighbours, who, of course, would derive benefit from my paying too much, taking pains to induce me to reduce the sum ! How long would it be before a man's neighbours would act thus towards him in England ! The truth is, that the absence of penury ; that the absence of all dread of want, left the minds of my American neighbours free to follow their own natural dictates ; that is to say, to follow the dictates of justice and liberality. The apprehension of want ; the constant apprehension of want absolutely destroys all the feelings, all the kind feelings, natural to the heart of man ; and in time every sentiment of justice and liberality.

I think, then, that it will require my Lord Castlereagh and others to say a great deal more than they have yet said, to make the people of England believe that taxation is not the great parent of pauperism. But, the wonder to me is, how any one, "*at all acquainted with political science,*" can possibly for one moment entertain the notion that taxation does not produce want, in a greater or less degree, in all that part of

the community which pays the taxes without receiving any part of the taxes. Will it be contended that the American farmer, who, probably, uses ten bushels of salt in a year, would be as well off if he had to pay forty-five dollars for that salt instead of paying five dollars for it as he now does? Will it be contended that the forty dollars, which he retains in this sort of way, do him no good? Will it be contended that he could give his labourers as high wages without having this forty dollars as he now gives them with having the forty dollars? Will it be contended, that the labourer in America, who uses, perhaps, a bushel of salt in a year, would be full as well off if he gave four dollars and a half for that bushel of salt as he now is when he gives only half a dollar for it? There is a monstrosity, my Lord, if I may so express myself; there is a monstrosity in the very sound of such propositions.

To take a larger view of the matter, it is manifest, it must be obvious to common sense, that the welfare of every community; that its happiness, its harmony, its good-fellowship, its power, must depend on productive labour receiving just remuneration; that to take from those who labour and to give to those who do not labour is to put a band round the arms and to prevent the blood from flowing into the hands, while the hands thus benumbed are called upon to produce food for the belly; that in whatever degree a man *pays* without receiving to his own use the *worth in return*, he is *the poorer*; that what a man pays in taxes has no channel whereby to return to him other than the channels by which he may expect the return of money lost by him at the gaming-table or on the highway. From these premises, which I think will not be denied by "any one at all acquainted with political science," it inevitably follows, that, in whatever degree the great mass of the people pay without receiving to their own use the worth in return, they must be the poorer; and that taxes, in proportion to their amount, produce, when they are heavy, straitened means in some of the classes of the society, poverty in other classes, actual want of a sufficiency of food and raiment in a third, and extreme misery, bordering on starvation, and accompanied with numerous crimes, and with occasional madness and death in the most numerous class of all. And have we not, my Lord, too abundant and too terrible proofs, now before our eyes, of the truth of this doctrine?

It is said that taxes return again to the people who pay them. This is a strange notion; a notion that never found place in a solid head; a head capable of carrying reasoning to any depth. If there were a community of twenty families, all employed in labours useful to each other; all exchanging the products of their labour with one another; and if there were no standard of value in existence amongst them, and the exchange were in articles in kind. In such a state of things the ease and the abundance of good things, would be in proportion to the industry of the community, varied by the different circumstances of soil and climate. But, suppose all at once, one portion of the community, three of the families, for instance, to acquire, by some means or other, the power of taking from the other seventeen a portion, say a fourth part, of their products, while the three families themselves produce nothing to give to the seventeen in exchange. Now, will it be contended, that the seventeen families could enjoy as much ease, as much abundance, as much happiness, as they enjoyed before! Yes, say the advocates of taxation; for the taxes would come back to them again. Back to them, my Lord, how? What! would they come back to them after the wheat

and the meat had been eaten? After the clothes had been worn, and after the drink had been drunk by the three families? This mode of elucidation by leaving money out of the question and by speaking of the products themselves, strips the sophistry of its power of puzzling. The three families would give nothing back to the other seventeen families, except the ordure and the rags arising from the consumption of the fruits of the labour of the seventeen families, which seventeen families must, as matter of necessity, have less to eat, less to drink, less wherewithal to clothe themselves, and must enjoy less of ease, abundance and happiness, than they before enjoyed.

To bring money into view makes, with a clear head, no alteration at all in the result of the argument. For money is merely a standard of value; it is merely the representative of the products of utility conveyed from hand to hand; it is merely a thing giving a man a right to take so much or so much of such or such an article: and, the seventeen families would be operated upon in exactly the same way, if they were to give to the three families money in place of products; for, a guinea given to the three families by the seventeen, would be neither more nor less than giving the three families a power to come and take from them a certain quantity of meat, drink or clothing; and, upon the supposition that the seventeen families were to give to the three families a thousand guineas a year, they would be giving to the three families the power of coming and taking from them the fourth part of the fruits of their labour. So that the guineas, that is to say, the taxes, would certainly return to the seventeen families, *but in consequence of their return*, the seventeen families would have to give up a fourth part of the whole of the fruits of their industry. And, *thus and thus only*, my Lord, it is, that taxes come back again to the people!

It is not contended by me; it never has been contended by me; and never has been contended by any man of sense; and if I were to contend that a government could be carried on, and that men could live safely in civil society without any taxes at all: if I were to hold forth an opinion like this I should deserve to be branded as a base deluder of the people; or, rather, the enlightened people, and especially the Reformers, would so brand me, and instead of sending me addresses of praise, would send me, if they thought me worth any notice at all, marks of their contempt. On the contrary, I have always contended that one part of the happiness of every man ought to be to see his country not only famous in the world, but powerful; and I am well assured that this accords with the feelings of ninety nine out of every hundred Englishmen. For a country to maintain great power and authority in the world, it must have great contributions to be deposited in the hands of the sovereign, checked and controlled by the virtue and wisdom of the nation. But, when I talk of great contributions, can I mean one-half of the fruit of men's labour; and can I mean that a country, the whole of the real property of which is estimated on the floor of Parliament not to exceed three hundred millions, ought to have its real property, and its property in labour, mortgaged to the amount of eight or nine hundred millions, and burdened to the amount of the annual interest of that mortgage?

While this state of things lasts, the distresses of the people can, in my opinion, receive no alleviation; and, therefore, I am of opinion, that means ought to be speedily taken greatly to reduce the amount of taxation. I am convinced that such means may be adopted, without an act

of injustice towards any human being, and without the taking of any one measure that would endanger the existence of any branch of the Government. This being my conviction, I repeat the prayer of that petition which Lord Folkestone ought to have presented to the House, that such means may be speedily adopted.

Having now proved, and, as I hope, most clearly proved, that taxation is the great cause of the nation's distresses, I will now proceed to notice a part of what is reported to have been said by Mr. Baring, in the speech alluded to at the outset of this letter. This speech was complimented as *philosophical*. I must confess, my Lord, that I was very much surprised at this; surprised to hear a speech recommending a *minimum* with respect to wages; suggesting the measure of a reduction in the value of the metallic currency; and ascribing the depression of commerce to the political delusions, as they were called, of the political leaders: surprised to find these things in a speech called *philosophical*! Surprised to hear philosophical prefixed to an opinion that it might be productive of relief to raise money from the industry of one part of the community to give in the way of alms to another part of the community. But, with regard to the falling-off in point of commerce, the gentleman, in speaking of America, repeated a statement of mine made at the Crown-and-Anchor a few days before, and, as far as that statement went, he was perfectly correct. But, when he had said that one cause of the distress was the inability of the Americans to take the same quantity of goods that they have recently taken, and followed this up by saying that the distress could be rendered permanent only by the weavers becoming politicians; it was impossible for me not to shake my head. This may have been a misrepresentation of the reporter; but that is of no consequence; for thus the speech stands before the world; and Mr. Wilberforce is reported to have said that the publication would do a great deal of good.

The falling-off in the market as far as relates to America will be permanent, unless (not that the people here shall cease to be politicians) but unless their labour shall cease to be taxed heavily; for, goods carrying in them their proportion of the present taxes never will again be received in America to have the amount in which they were received in the year 1816 or 1817. The diminution of the quantity of paper-money has lessened the capacity of America to be a purchaser. And *what produced that diminution?* This is a very important question, I beg your Lordship to observe. There were several causes at work to produce the diminution; but the main cause was, *the diminution of the quantity of paper-money in England!* England has too much to do in the pecuniary affairs of this world not to produce, by an operation of this kind, a great effect upon the pecuniary concerns of every other nation, and particularly those of a nation very nearly as closely connected with England, in this respect, as Liverpool is connected with London. If paper-money were wholly abolished in England: if the paper-bubble, as my Lord Grenville very justly called it last year, were to burst in England; is there "any man at all acquainted with political science" who believes that a single rag would be left afloat in America? There certainly would not: and this Mr. Baring, who is called a political philosopher, *ought* to know, not only as well, but better than any other man. Mr. Baring does not seem to perceive how the thing works with regard to America. The diminution of paper in that country produces,

in fact, no diminution of wages and no hardship at all upon the farmer; because, the labourer can earn just as much pork as he earned before, and the farmer can purchase with the same quantity of pork the same quantity of labour that he purchased before. He has as much produce in quantity to give for English manufactures as he had before. But English manufactures, being still loaded with taxes and incapable of lowering their price, the American farmer has not the means of purchasing more than half the quantity that he purchased before. If a simultaneous reduction of prices of English goods could have taken place, when the reduction of the price of produce took place in America, not a dollar's worth of goods would have been sent out this year less than last year. But, while the taxing man in America leaves things to their free course, suffers prices of produce to come down as the paper-money diminishes in quantity, the taxing man in England will not suffer the price of goods to come down in like manner. Whence it comes that the American farmer, and more especially his wife and daughters are obliged to content themselves with their home-spun, or, at least, with their domestic fabrics; and Mr. Baring must know much less of the matter than I do, if he be ignorant of the fact that this present state of things in England will not only send, as he acknowledges, the manufactures to France, but to America also. I saw, in one mill, forty (I believe it was) power-looms at work, in the state of New Jersey, a few days before I came away. The fabric was of what is called Manchester shirting, and which while the persons employed were paid a dollar or at least three quarters of a dollar, for the same labour for which the Manchester people receive about a shilling, was made and sold at a price which set at defiance all possible competition on the part of the Manchester manufacturers. The young women attending these power-looms received three or four dollars a-week each, and were dressed as well as many women are dressed who make their appearance in boxes at the theatre in London. Tucked and furbelowed frocks, ruffs round their necks of muslin finely worked, with their hair curled hanging over the forehead and done up behind, being held on the top of the head with a tortoise-shell comb. I like to cite particular instances, my Lord. As I was going to this beautiful place, which is called Patterson, where there are a great many cotton-mills, the machinery of which is put in motion by water that comes tumbling down from a cleft rock, I stopped at the top of a little hill, waiting for my companion, who was Doctor Taylor, late of Bolton, whose meritorious exertions with regard to the spy-system in 1812 are well known to Mr. Brougham, Lord Holland, and Lord Grey, and who emigrated with his family and fortune to America, on the 1st of September last. Opposite the point where I stopped, there was a neat cottage a little distance from the road, and the door being open, I saw a loom, whereupon I gave a halloo, and out came a man, woman and children, who, by their clean and ruddy looks, I knew to be English. "What countryman are you, my buck?" said I. "An Englishman," said he. "Aye, I know that," said I, "but of what county?" "Lancashire." "What place?" "Bolton." "Here," said I to the Doctor, who was just coming up, "here, Taylor, is one of your townsmen." The Doctor shook hands with him, and we found that this man had already got a cottage of his own, though he had been in the country less than a year, I think it was. We saw a fatting hog in his sty, and he told us he was earning seven dollars a week, weaving the cotton which

was spun at Patterson. And, my Lord, recollect, that every article of food was to be had at less than half the price that the weaver at Manchester is obliged to give for his food.

This fact is, of itself, enough to prove that the manufactures must pass from England to America, unless taxation be speedily reduced in England. They cannot remain here. The capital will go and the weavers will go. I myself am personally acquainted with men who have conveyed, within the last two years and a half, more than four millions of capital from England to America. I speak here from mere recollection of only a few, comparatively, of the persons that I have seen and known there; and I assure your Lordship, whatever the base myrmidons of the London press may insinuate to the contrary, the learning of these facts has given me the deepest sorrow. My feelings as to these matters have been very different, indeed, from the greater part of the persons to whom I allude. I have seen that a gradual decay in the means and in the power of England had begun to take place. I saw it with great affliction, and upon making up my mind to return home, I also made up my mind to expose myself to any degree of obloquy or persecution, if I brought them upon me by my endeavours to put a stop to this dreadful national evil.

Alas! my Lord, this is an evil not to be stayed by minimums with regard to wages; by pitiful attempts to relieve a starving people by raising money upon those who are not quite starving; by making little shillings and sixpences; nor by any such devices. If laws could be passed, and put into execution, to prevent every man from seeing, from hearing, or from speaking to, another man; if it were possible instantly to put an end, not only to printing but to writing, to reading, and to speaking, it would not retard, one single hour, the progress, the inevitable progress of the evils arising from the load of taxes under which this once happy people now groans. And which, as Mr. Baring very truly observed, has been greatly added to by the diminution which has been made in the quantity of the paper-money.

Mr. Baring complains that fundholders are transferring their property to France. Strange situation of things when that which Mr. Baring stated, in this respect, is true; and that it is true there can be no doubt. But, what is this more than the fulfilment of a part of the predictions contained in the Register which I left behind me to be published upon my departure for America? It is a thing which must naturally and inevitably take place under circumstances like the present. It is very erroneous, however, to suppose, that this transfer arises from any immediate danger to be apprehended from the arms or machinations of those who are now called Radical reformers. If it did arise from that cause, there is a way of putting an end to the danger at once, and that way I have pointed out in my last letter to your Lordship. It arises, however, from a far different cause: it arises from an opinion daily gaining ground, that there will be an inability to pay the interest of the debt; from an opinion that something or other will very shortly be done or attempted, to reduce that interest; and, indeed, from an opinion that such reduction will be as just as it long has been necessary. I have, for many years, been urging the justice and necessity of such reduction; I have long said that the debt must be reduced, and greatly reduced, or the Constitution of England annihilated, in fact, though, perhaps, not all at once in words; and, that things are nearly come to this pass, no one will, I imagine, have the effrontery to deny.

In order to judge of the wisdom with which the affairs of this nation have been conducted for the last thirty years, we have nothing to do but first to look at the relative situation of England and France in the year 1789; and then to look at their relative situation at this moment! At the former epoch the French government was a bankrupt; it had had *complete success* in war; but a few years of peace had shown that it could not possibly go on longer. And then came forth all those projects of finance, which finally overturned the Government amidst the combustion of financial poverty, individual misery, and the turmoil of political strife, arising out of a desire of the people to regain their liberties! Awful warning, my Lord! Awful warning to all those who think that they are able to extricate a nation from similar difficulties, by mere expedients to put off the evil hour! At the epoch to which I am now referring, England, though defeated in war, had the main part of her resources untouched. She was not yet nearly at the end of the tether of her credit. The whole of her taxes amounted to only sixteen millions a-year. The whole of her standing army to only thirty-seven thousand men, and the whole expenses of her army and her navy to less, I believe, for I have not the book by me, than a third part of the expenses of her present standing army alone. Commerce and manufactures and agriculture and trade of all sorts were not weighed down by an intolerable load of taxation. Confidence was not shaken. England was still the place of safety for property, the home of liberty and of law; and, mark well the fact; the three per cent. stocks were, not at *sixty-five*, but at *more than a hundred*.

Such was the relative situation of England and of her great rival in power, just thirty years ago. What is their relative situation now? I cannot go into the heart-sickening detail: I cannot run through all the features of the horrid contrast: suffice it to say that their relative situation is such, that the fact is notorious that thousands of persons are at this moment, not only selling out their funded property, but selling their landed property also, in order to remove such property into the funds of France as a *place of security from danger*: and, it has been made matter of complaint in Parliament against certain noblemen in close connection with the Ministers of the King, that these noblemen have, in this manner and for this purpose, conveyed immense sums from England to France.

Has there not, then, been a want of wisdom in the management of the affairs of this nation? Have the Parliament and the Government of this country possessed no power to prevent this fatal result of thirty years' measures and events? Have they had no power to preserve to England that character for solidity of means and of credit which she has had in all former times? Are we to ascribe our present wretched state to mere fatality or to the immediate dispensation of offended Providence? When victories have been gained; when an expedition or a war has terminated in what is called success, the Government has never failed to take a large share of the merit to itself; and, when failure takes place, when the nation is acknowledged to be in a state of ruin; when it has changed the state of 1789 for that of 1819, shall the Government plead, that it has not been able to prevent such change; that it has had no control over the measures and events which have led to that state of things which, on all hands, is acknowledged to be most deplorable? I deny that the terrible measures which are now in the course of adoption, are

necessary. I am convinced that they are unnecessary; provided other measures within the power of Parliament were adopted; but, if these new measures be necessary, if they be absolutely necessary to prevent the Government from being overthrown, can we possibly applaud those who have had the conducting of the affairs of the nation, during the time that that necessity has arisen: and, can we possibly hope that, by keeping on in the same course of conduct, the nation will ever be restored to harmony and happiness?

This strain of reasoning would be perfectly just, even if no opposition had ever been offered to the measures which have been pursued for many years past. It would be perfectly just, if no one had ever tendered an opinion or advice, the object of which was to prevent the adoption of a part of the measures, and to cause the adoption of other measures which have not been adopted. But, if we find upon examination that there have not been wanting men from the very commencement of the last thirty years, constantly to warn the Government of the consequences of the measures they were adopting, and foretelling with the greatest precision, that those consequences would arise, which have since arisen; if this be the case, it surely will not be contended that the Parliament and the several Ministers have had no control over the causes which have led to the present calamities of the country.

Now, my Lord, it is the system of Burke and of Pitt which have been acted upon: Pitt's finance and Burke's coercion. These two men were met at the outset by Paine; who, with a mind as far superior to either of them as the light of a flambeau is superior to that of a rush-light, warned them, and in accents of friendship, too, of the consequences of their conjoint system. He warned them against entertaining an expectation to put down the spirit of reform in England by any war or any wars abroad, or by any penal statutes at home. He warned Mr. Pitt against a reliance upon his system of funding: he pointed out all the ultimate dangers of that system: he told him that his sinking-fund scheme was a delusion unworthy of any man, much more of a man of great and acknowledged talents: he proved to him the total inefficacy of that scheme to retard the progress of a debt, which would finally, if suffered greatly to augment, first drive the people to distraction, and next bury the Constitution in ruins. At a later epoch, he warned the nation against relying upon the solidity of the Bank. He told them that the Bank was unable to pay in specie, if the note-holders should go to demand specie in payment of the notes. In less than one year from his giving the nation that warning, the Bank was put to the test, and from that day to this day, its paper, together with all the paper of the country-banks, has been that which it is too well-known to be to need any description from my pen. Mr. Paine, upon this last occasion, again warned the country not to place any reliance on the effect of the sinking-fund, which he said never could by any possibility tend to alleviate the burthens of the country, and which he, in his emphatical language, compared to a man with a wooden leg running after a hare, because, the farther it ran the farther it was behind. How exactly this was the case; how wise the man who promulgated these opinions, time has now amply shown. The funding system does, indeed, still keep up a sort of existence. It is not totally annihilated within the space of that twenty years; which was about the extent of tether that he gave it in the year 1796; but it is not the same thing that it was when Mr. Paine

allotted it this tether. He meant, of course, that the funding-system would not last, such as it then was ; that is to say, with dividends payable in specie. It never entered into the mind of man, that England was going to expose herself to the tremendous effects of a paper-money not convertible into specie ; and, therefore, his prediction, even in point of time, has been amply fulfilled. A reduction of the interest of the debt would still leave something under the name of a funding-system ; but will any one pretend to say, that the system that existed before 1796 would not then be at an *end* ! A dead horse is still a horse, but is it the same horse, the same thing, that it was when it was alive ? It is clear that the whole thing is changed since the date of Mr. Paine's predictions ; and that those predictions were wonderfully and almost miraculously correct.

Old age having laid his hand upon this truly great man, this truly philosophical politician, at his expiring flambeau I lighted my taper ; and from the year 1803 to the present hour I have been warning the Parliament and the Government against the consequences of this fatal system, which has at last produced in this once happy country, misery such as never was witnessed before in the world, and for which misery the Ministers themselves declare that they have no hopes of discovering either cure or mitigation. I could go back and draw from the Register, beginning with the year 1803, a series of warnings ; in which series there is scarcely a lapse of five months at any one time ; and, from this review, from this retrospect it would appear clear as day-light that if the Parliament and the Ministers had listened to my suggestions, the country would, at this moment, have been in a situation to be the envy of the whole world, instead of its being in such a state as to make men flee from it as vermin escape from a house on fire.

I do not, my Lord, attribute to any of you a design to produce the present state of things. There are persons who, listening to their anger instead of their reason, say that the Government is glad to have a pretext for adopting measures such as are now about to be adopted. And this is an imputation very familiar with that son of faction, Perry of the *Morning Chronicle*. No man that reflects can believe this ; it is against nature. The wickedest tyrant that ever existed cannot be pleased at being compelled to do odious things, that is to say, things odious in themselves, in order to preserve his power. Every ruler, and every one who has any share in the ruling of a country, must wish that the state of that country should be happy ; and he must also wish, especially in a country like England, that the period of his sway should not be marked by popular discontent or by any thing tending to hold the nation forth as abridged in all its liberties. Therefore, on the score of design, I do now acquit, as I always have most decidedly acquitted the Parliament and the Government. But then it follows of necessity that things have turned out contrary to the wishes and expectation of the Parliament and the Government ; or, in other words, according to my expectation and my predictions.

With the knowledge of this in the minds of the people at large (for great indeed is the error of supposing that the millions of Reformers are misled, deluded, ignorant creatures) : with the knowledge of this in the minds of ninety-nine hundredths of the nation, what must that nation think of the insinuations, the continual insinuations, thrown out against me, and the indefatigable endeavours by all sorts of means, high and low, to prevent the people from reading what I write ? Though I cannot but

feel strongly on my own account in this case, I feel much more strongly on account of my country. I am ashamed, I blush to the very bone, when I contemplate the schemes, the devices, the tricks, the innumerable round-about artifices, put in play in order to withhold from the eyes of Englishmen the productions of that pen, which, if its former productions had been attended to, would have completely prevented all the evils of which we now deplore the existence. I can assure your Lordship that the "*poor deluded creatures,*" as they are affectedly called, want nothing but the bare reading or hearing an account of these artifices. They well know the object of them : they see in the twinkling of an eye the whole of their drift : the object is thus defeated before the scheme is in operation : and, not all that any power on earth can do will change the opinions of this faithful and enlightened people with regard to the matters upon which I have, during the last three years, had the very great honour of addressing them.

How much more manly, how much more wise would it be to suffer my writings to go forth freely to the people ! The impression could not thereby be made greater than that which is made under a system of restraint and persecution ; and, indeed, it could not be so great ; for persecution always excites an interest in behalf of the object of such persecution. This has been the case in an uncommon degree with regard to him who has now the honour to address your Lordship. I have been, I thank God, always very ardently beloved by the far greater part of those who personally knew me. Before my departure from England for America, I had a great deal of fair popularity ; unsought-for popularity ; and my writings had brought me a great portion of disinterested praise and admiration. But upon my return I can perceive no bounds to these things, so generally held in high estimation. I perceive every where the most anxious desire in persons of all sorts, to show respect towards me ; and if I have always loved my country with more ardour than ever I have witnessed in any other man, excepting, indeed, the brave and generous Reformers of the North, I have now reason to love it more than ever.

I make not these observations for the gratification of any selfish feeling : I make them in order to show how powerful is the impression upon the public mind that I have all along been right, as to the measures which ought to have been adopted. There is a conviction generally prevailing amongst the people of this kingdom at large, that the course of policy, long ago recommended by me, would have saved the country from its present unparalleled calamities. I may say that the whole of the nation whose minds are free from undue bias are of this opinion. What measures, then, can be adopted, to remove that opinion ? Measures of coercion ? Measures of restraint ? Measures for silencing ? Oh ! no ! By reasoning ; by true statement of facts ; by these, favoured with the gift of capacity to make myself clearly understood, when speaking of things in their nature intricate : by these means the popular opinion has been produced, and that opinion is to be removed by no means other than such as those which I have made use of. If I were never to write another line, it would be beyond the power of all the writers in England to remove any part of the impression which I have produced. I found the minds of my readers sheets of clean paper, unsmear'd by the precepts of selfishness. Upon those fair minds I have imprinted the thoughts of my own mind ; and, it is as impossible for my readers to unknow that which I have caused them to know, as it is for me to have a mind other than that which I have.

Monstrous, therefore, is the error to suppose that the people are to be induced to change their opinions upon the great subjects of paper-money, taxation, right of representation, right to relief in case of indigence. Monstrous is this error; and the only wise, the only rational course is that of conciliation and change of system.

I now conclude, my Lord, with assuring you, with the utmost sincerity, that all the insinuations thrown out against me, though by persons who ought to be ashamed of such insinuations; that all the persecutions I have endured and without my meriting any part of them; that all the insults which have been levelled at me, from whatever quarter proceeding; that all these, and that every feeling of a personal nature are banished from my bosom when I now come back to my native land, and when I contemplate the present dreadful calamities and the still more dreadful which appear to be impending; and that if I still persevere in my accustomed labours, my object will be entirely that of preventing my country from being involved in confusion and irretrievable ruin and disgrace.

I am, my Lord,
Your Lordship's most obedient
And most humble servant,
WM. COBBETT.

TO THE INDUSTRIOUS CLASSES,
ON THE CAUSES OF THE PRESENT POVERTY AND MISERY.

(*Political Register, February, 1820.*)

London, 9th February, 1820.

BELOVED COUNTRYMEN AND COUNTRYWOMEN,

The picture, which our country exhibits, at this moment, while it sinks our own hearts within us, fills the whole civilized world with wonder and amazement. This country has been famed, in all ages, not only for its freedom and for the security its laws gave to person and property; but for the happiness of its people; for the comfort they enjoyed; for the neatness and goodness of their dress; the good quality and the abundance of their household furniture, bedding and utensils; and for the excellence and plenty of their food. So that a LORD CHANCELLOR, who, four hundred years ago, wrote a book on our laws, observes in that book, that, owing to these good laws and the security and freedom they gave, the English people possessed, in abundance, "all things that conduce to make life easy and happy."

This was the state of our great grandfathers and great grandmothers, who little thought of what was to befall their descendants! The very name of England was pronounced throughout the world with respect. That very name was thought to mean high-spirit, impartial justice, freedom and happiness. What does it mean now? It means that which I have not the power to describe, nor the heart to describe, if I had the

power. England now contains the most miserable people that ever trod the earth. It is the seat of greater human suffering; of more pain of body and of mind, than was ever before heard of in the world. In countries, which have been deemed the most wretched, there never has existed wretchedness equal to that, which is now exhibited in this once flourishing, free and happy country.

In this country the *law* provides, that no human being shall suffer from want of food, lodging, or raiment. Our forefathers, when they gave security to property; when they made laws to give to the *rich* the safe enjoyment of their wealth, did not forget, that there must always be some *poor*, and that God wished, that the poor should not perish for want, they being entitled to an existence as well as the rich. Therefore, the *law* said, and it still says, that to make a *sure and certain provision for the poor*, is required by the first principles of civil society. He who is rich to-day may be poor to-morrow; and he is not to starve because he is become unfortunate.

Upon this principle of common humanity and of natural justice the *Poor-laws* were founded; and those laws give to every one a *right*, a *legal* as well as an equitable right, to be maintained out of the real property of the country, if, from whatever cause, *unable* to obtain a maintenance through his or her own exertions. To receive parish-relief is no *favour*! it is no gift that the relieved person receives; it is what the *law* insures him; and what he cannot be refused without a breach of the law, and without an outrageous act of injustice and oppression.

Such being the law; that is, the law having taken care, that relief shall always be at hand for the destitute, the law has forbidden *begging*. It has pointed out to every destitute person the place where he can obtain legal and effectual relief, and, therefore, it has said: "You shall not *beg*. If you *beg* you shall be punished." And, as we well know, punishment is frequently inflicted for begging.

But, what do we see before our eyes at this moment? We see, all over the kingdom, misery existing to such an extent, that the *Poor-laws* are found insufficient, and that a system of *general beggary* is introduced, under the name of subscriptions, voluntary contributions, soup-shops, and the like, and, in the Metropolis, where our eyes are dazzled with the splendour of those who live on the taxes, we see that a society has been formed for raising money to provide a receptacle for the *houseless poor* during the night; that is to say, to give a few hours shelter to wretched beings, who must otherwise lie down and die in the very streets! To-day we read of a poor man expiring on his removal from one country-parish to another. To-morrow we read of a poor woman, driven back from the door of one poor-house in London, carried back to expire in another poor-house before the morning. The next day we read of a man found dead in the street, and nearly a skeleton. While we daily see men harnessed and drawing carts loaded with grave! to repair the highways!

Is this *England*! Can this be *England*! and can these wretched and miserable and degraded objects be *Englishmen*! Yes: this is *England*; with grief, shame, and indignation we must confess it; but, still we must confess that such is now once free and happy *England*! That same country that was until of late years famed throughout the world for all that was great, good, and amiable and enviable.

This change never can have taken place without a *cause*. There must have been something, and something done *by man*, too, to produce this change, this disgraceful, this distressing, this horrible change. God has not afflicted the country with pestilence or with famine; nor has the land been invaded and ravaged by an enemy. Providence has, of late, been more than ordinarily benevolent to us. Three successive *harvests* of uncommon abundance have blessed, or would have blessed, these islands. *Peace* has been undisturbed. War appears not to have been even thought possible. The sounds of warlike glory have, even yet, hardly ceased to vibrate on our ears. And yet, in the midst of profound peace and abundant harvests, the nation seems to be convulsed with the last struggles of gnawing hunger.

It is *man*, therefore, and not a *benevolent Creator*, who has been the cause of our sufferings, present and past, and of the more horrid sufferings, which we now but reasonably anticipate. To *man*, therefore, must we look for *an account* for these evils, into the cause of which let us, without any want of charity, but, at the same time, without fear and without self-deception, freely inquire.

My good, honest, kind and industrious country-people, you have long been deceived by artful and intriguing and interested men, who have a *press* at their command, and who, out of taxes raised from your labour, have persuaded you, that your sufferings arise from nothing that *man* can cause or can *cure*. But, have only a little patience with me, and I think that I am able to convince you, that your sufferings and your degradation have arisen from the *weight of taxes imposed on you*, and from *no other cause whatever*.

When you consider, that your salt, pepper, soap, candles, sugar, tea, beer, shoes, and all other things are taxed, you must see, that you *pay taxes* yourselves; and, when you consider, that the taxes paid by your richer neighbours disable them from paying you so much in wages as they would otherwise pay you, you must perceive, that taxes are *disadvantageous* to you. In short, it is a fact, that no man can deny, that the poverty and misery of the people have gone on increasing precisely in the same degree that the taxes have gone on increasing.

The tax on *salt* is *fifteen shillings* a bushel. Its cost at the *sea-side*, where a kind Providence throws it abundantly on our shores, is *one shilling*. Owing to the delays and embarrassments arising from the tax, the price comes, at last, to *twenty shillings*! Thus, a bushel of salt, which is about as much as a middling family uses in a year (in all sorts of ways), costs to that family *eighteen shillings*, at least, *in tax*! Now, if an industrious man's family had the 18s. in pocket, instead of paying them in tax, would not that family be the *better* for the change? If, instead of paying 6d. for a pot of beer (if beer a man must have) he had to pay 2d.; would not he be 4d. the richer? And if the taxes were light instead of heavy, would not your wages and profits enable you to live better and dress better than you now do?

They who have good health, good luck and small families, make a shift to go along with this load of taxes. Others bend under it. Others come down to poverty. And a great part of these are pressed to the very earth, some ending their days in poor-houses, and others perishing from actual want. The farmers are daily falling into ruin; the little farmers fall first; the big ones become little, and the little ones become paupers, unless they escape from the country, while they have money enough to

carry them away. Thousands of men of some property are, at this moment, preparing to quit the country. The *poor* cannot go; so that things, without a great change, will be worse and worse for all that remain, except for those who live upon the taxes.

And how are these taxes *disposed of*? We are told by impudent men, who live on these taxes, that *we*, the payers of the taxes, are become *too learned*; that we have been brought *too near* to the Government; that is to say, that we have got a *peep behind the curtain*. It is well known that a great deal has been said about *educating* the poor. At one time, even the *poverty* was ascribed to a *want of education* amongst the labouring classes.—They were *so ignorant*! and that was the cause of their misery.—And poor Mr. WHITBREAD said that the *Scotch* were better than the English, only because they were *better educated*. But, *now*, behold, we are *too well educated*: we are *too knowing*; we have approached *too near* to the Government; and, therefore, *new laws* have been passed to keep us at a greater distance; a *more respectful* distance.

This precaution comes, however, too late. We have had our look behind the curtain. We cannot be again deluded. We cannot be made to *unknow* that which we know. We know, that the fruit of our labour is *mortgaged* to those who have lent money to the Government. We know, that to pay the interest of this mortgage; to pay a standing army in time of peace; to pay the tax-gatherers; and to pay placemen and pensioners, we are so heavily taxed, that we can no longer live in comfort, and that many of us are wholly destitute of food, and are brought to our deaths by hunger.

Endeavours have been made to persuade us, that *we* are not hurt by the taxes. It has been said, that taxes *come back* to us, and are a *great blessing* to us. And Mr. Justice Bailey has lately taken occasion to say from *the Bench*, that a *national debt* is a good thing, and even a *necessary* thing. England did pretty well without a debt for *seven hundred years*! How this matter came to be talked of *from the bench* I do not pretend to know; but for my part I look upon a national debt as the greatest curse that ever afflicted a people. In our country it has made a happy people miserable, and a free people slaves. And, I am convinced, that, unless that debt be *got rid of*, in some way or other, and that too, in a short time, this country will fall so low, that a century will not see it revive.

Those, who wish to make us believe, that it is not the taxes that make us poor and miserable, tell us that they *come back* to us. This being a grand source of delusion I will endeavour to explain the matter to you. I have before done it many times; but, all eyes are not opened at the first operation; and, besides, there are, every month, some young persons who are beginning to read about such things.

BURKE, of whom many of you never heard, said, that *taxes were dews*, drawn up by the *blessed sun of government*, and sent down again upon the people in refreshing and fructifying *showers*. This was a very pretty description, but very false. For taxes, though they fall in *heavy showers* upon one part of the community, never return to another part of it. To those who *live on taxes*, the taxes are, indeed, refreshing and fructifying showers; but, to those who *pay them*, they are a scorching sun, and a blighting wind.—*They draw away the riches of the soil, and they render it sterile and unproductive*. But, how came this BURKE to talk in this way? Why, he was one of those, *who lived upon the taxes!*

Very fine and refreshing and fertilizing showers fell upon *him*. He had a pension of *three thousand pounds a-year for his life*; his wife, *fifteen hundred pounds a-year for her life*; and besides these, he obtained, in 1795, grants of money to be paid yearly to his executors *after his death*! And, not a trifle neither; for he took care to get thus settled upon executors, *two thousand five hundred pounds a-year*. The following is a copy of the grant:

“To the executors of *Edmund Burke*, 2,500*l.* a-year. Granted
 “by two patents, dated 24 October, 1795.—One for 1,160*l.*
 “a-year, to be paid, during the life of Lord Royston, and the
 “Rev. and Hon. Anchild Grey. The other for 1,340*l.* to be
 “paid, during the life of the Princess Amelia, Lord Althorp,
 “and William Cavendish, Esq.”

Now, as Mr. GRAY is still alive, and as Lord Althorp and Mr. Cavendish are alive, the money is all of it still paid to the executors of BURKE; these executors have already received on this account *more than fifty thousand pounds* in principal money; and, as there is no probability of the death of the gentlemen above-named, they may yet receive double the sum. BURKE's pension, while he was alive, cost the nation about *twenty thousand pounds*; and his wife's about *four thousand pounds*. So that here are about *seventy-four thousand pounds* already paid by the public on account of this one man, and that, too, in *principal money*, without reckoning *interest*!

This, you will allow, must have been to Burke, his wife and executors, an exceedingly *refreshing* and *fructifying shower*! But, not so to those, who have had to *pay* this money. It has not tended to *refresh* us. In the space of twenty-seven years, *seventy-four thousand pounds* have been taken from us, who pay the taxes, on account of this *one man*. Now, suppose a different mode from the present were used in making us pay taxes. The pensions have, for the last 27 years, amounted to 2,740*l.* a-year. Suppose the amount of them to have been raised upon *fifty tradesmen*, at 54*l.* a-year each. Would not each of these tradesmen be *now* 2,700*l.* poorer than they would have been, if they had not had these “*refreshing showers*” to send off in dews? Suppose them to be raised upon 400 labourers at about 10*l.* each. Must not these 400 labourers be made poor and miserable, must they not be prevented from *saving* a penny; and must they not, at last, be brought to the poor-house by these “*refreshing showers*?” Is not this as plain as the nose upon your face? Is it not plain that this pension to the executors of this man now takes away the means of comfortable living from nearly *four hundred labourers' families*? Has not this been going on for twenty-seven years; and has one single man, in Parliament, made even an effort to put a stop to it? Has one single man moved even for an *inquiry* into the matter? And yet, the facts are all before the Parliament in their own printed reports!

And what *services* did this BURKE render the country? For, to give such a man such enormous sums, there must have been *some reason*. His services were these: He *deserted his party in the Opposition*; and he *wrote three pamphlets to urge the nation on to war, and to cause it to persevere in the war, against the republicans of France*! Which war raised the annual taxes from *sixteen millions a-year* in time of peace, to *fifty-three millions a-year* in time of peace, and the poor-rates from *two millions a year* to about *twelve millions a year*? These were the *services* which were so great, that it was not sufficient to give him *three thousand*

pounds a year for them during his *life-time*, but we must still pay his executors *two thousand five hundred pounds* a year; and *may* have to pay them this *for fifty years yet to come!*

Need we wonder that we are poor? Need we wonder, that we are miserable? Need we wonder, that we have, at last, come to see Englishmen *harnessed* and drawing carts, loaded with gravel? And, if we complain of these things, are we to be told, that we are seditious? Are we to be told that we wish to *destroy* the Constitution? Are we to be *imprisoned, fined, and banished?*

When we take a view of the effects of *taxation*, our wonder at all we see instantly ceases. We look no further for the cause of our misery. And, is there any one, who proposes to *lighten the load?* Not a man. On the contrary, every measure has a tendency to make it heavier and heavier. The Act, passed last session, respecting the payment in gold bars has produced double the quantity of misery that before existed. It has diminished the quantity of *paper-money*, and, in the same proportion, has added to the weight of the taxes and to the want of employment for artizans, manufacturers and labourers. Let me explain to you how this effect is produced; for, it is fit that you all clearly understand what is the cause of your misery.

When money, whether it be *paper or gold*, is abundant, every thing is *high in price*. Now suppose there to be a community of only ten men, who have a given number of dealings amongst them in a year; and who move from hand to hand a certain quantity of valuable things. Suppose one of them to be a farmer, and that he has to sell wheat to the rest, and suppose his wheat to sell for 10s. a bushel. We will suppose, next, that the quantity of money, possessed by the *whole* community to be six hundred pounds. Every one has his due proportion according to his property. Now, suppose, that, by some accident or other, every man, just at the same moment, loses one-half of his money. The effect of this would be, that every one could give for the things that he would want of every other one, only just *half as much* as he gave before; and, of course, the farmer must sell his wheat for 5s. a bushel. The shoemaker must sell his shoes at 5s. a pair instead of 10s. and so on.

This change would produce injury to no one; because a pair of shoes would still bring a bushel of wheat. There would be less money; but money is merely a thing to be used as a measure of the value of useful things. This little community would still have a just measure of value; and, though prices would fall one-half, no soul would suffer from the change. But, suppose the shoemaker to have *owed* the farmer *fifty shillings* before the change took place. The shoemaker would lose greatly by the change; but the farmer would (if he were a yeomanry-man, at least) call upon poor Crispin to pay him; and Crispin must give him *ten* pair of shoes (or the price of ten pair) instead of *five*. So that, in fact, Crispin's debt, though still only *fifty shillings* in name, would, by the diminution in the whole quantity of money, be *doubled*.

This is *our* case precisely! The fundholders, the army, the navy, the placemen, the pensioners, lent their money to the Government, took places and pensions under the Government, and, in fact, made the nation their *debtor* for *so much a year*. But, now that the quantity of the money is reduced in such a way as to bring down prices nearly one-half, the nation has to pay them all to the full nominal amount; which, though it be still called by the same name, is, in fact, nearly *double* what it was

before the quantity of money was reduced. Each of you has *fifteen shillings* tax to pay on a bushel of salt; and, so you had before: but, as fifteen shillings will now purchase *twice* as much of your labour as they would purchase before, your salt-tax is in fact *doubled*.

Thus it is as to the whole nation. It has about *thirty millions a year* to pay to fundholders; but *now*, the thirty are equal to what *sixty* would have been when the money was borrowed. Suppose a fundholder to have lent the Government a *hundred pounds* twelve years ago; and suppose, that he was to receive five per cent. for it. Suppose a farmer had been to pay the interest in wheat. *Six bushels and two-thirds* would have paid the five pounds. But, *now* it would require *thirteen bushels and a third* to pay the five pounds. Thus it is that the fundholders, and all who are paid out of the taxes *gain*, and those who pay the taxes *lose*, by a diminution in the quantity of money. And this adds greatly to the evils, which naturally arise out of heavy taxes. And thus it is, that a nation is *scourged*, not by God, but by those works of man, a national debt and a paper-money.

But, you will say, *how* can the Bank lessen the quantity of money, and ruin the people thus, by doubling the real amount of debts and salaries and pensions and other incomes of those who live on taxes? I will tell you how. The Bank can make as much paper-money as it pleases. The cost of it is merely the paper and the print. There are always *borrowers* enough. Now, I want to borrow. I go to the Bank and give them a note for a hundred pounds, which I promise to pay them again in two months. They take my note, and give me the hundred pounds in their *paper-money*, taking the two months' interest out. This interest is called *discount*; and this is called *discounting* a note. The Bank can discount as much or as little as it pleases. When I bring my hundred pounds, and take the note out of pawn, I may get another note discounted if the Bank choose; and, in this way, the paper-money gets about. But, if the Bank have a mind to cause the quantity of money in the country to *grow less*, it *refuses to discount*, or, it discounts *less* than it did. Suppose the Bank have ten hundred notes and have lent out paper-money upon them; and, suppose, when the paper-money is brought in to pay off the notes with, the Bank will lend out paper again for only five hundred of the notes. In this case the paper-money in circulation is diminished *one-half*; and, of course, *prices fall*, and, as we have seen, *taxes rise* in real amount.

This is what has been now done; and what is more, it has been done with a professed desire to *remove the evils* that afflict the country! The pay of the placemen, pensioners, fundholders, soldiers, and of all those who live on the taxes, has thus been augmented; and by the same means, those who pay the taxes have been ruined. The labouring classes, in all such cases, suffer most severely; but, when they are quite down, they can fall no lower. They fall into the ranks of the paupers, and there they remain. There is another class, however, who will endeavour to save themselves: I mean those who have, as yet, *some property left*. They will flee from the dismal and desolating plague. They will carry their creative industry and their capital with them. And will thus leave the burden greater for those whose timidity makes them remain behind. Thousands are preparing to go to America. And, unless something be *speedily* done to relieve us, they act wisely. It is, on an average, only *a month at sea*. The danger is nothing. And, when a man reflects, that he has left the tax-gatherer behind him, and can now set him at defiance,

what are dangers of the sea, or any other dangers? One would escape out of England, and even out of the world to avoid the sight of men *harnessed and drawing carts*, loaded with gravel for the repair of the highways.

No man, you will observe, proposes to do any thing that has a tendency to relieve our distress. The very measure for diminishing the quantity of paper-money is only *beginning* to operate. It has not yet produced a tenth part of the evils that it is calculated to produce, and that it will produce, if persevered in. The labouring classes, I mean, those who have no property in anything but their labour, cannot fall much lower. Hundreds die for want of a sufficiency of food; but *hundreds of thousands will not*. And, as they have not the means of going to America, they will remain, and will *live* somehow or other; for, as to being transported to Canada or the Cape of Good-Hope, they neither will nor can.

The means of restoration are, however, *easy*. The affairs of the nation *might* be retrieved, and that, too, in a short space of time; and, if I am asked, *why I do not suggest those easy means*, my answer is, that I have done all that a private individual could do to *prevent the evils*; for all my efforts, I have, except by the people, been repaid in abuse and persecution; and that, therefore, in the capacity of a *writer*, I will suggest nothing in the way of remedy. My former efforts have been treated with scorn, and now let the scorners extricate themselves. If I were in *Parliament*, I would point out the means. Not being there I will point out none. Those who have property at stake, have, *even now*, the means of putting me there. If they do, my opinion is, that measures of salvation will be adopted; if they do not, I am of opinion that no such measures will even be *proposed*. In either case I shall have the satisfaction to reflect, that I have done my duty; and whether the country be doomed to anarchy or despotism, I am as able to bear the scourge as another.

Amongst our duties are the duties which we owe ourselves; and amongst those duties is that of not suffering ourselves to be degraded. And, for my part, I should deem it degradation to the last degree to be an *under-worker* of such men as those, who have brought this once free and happy nation into its present state. An endeavour to serve the country in this way would, too, be wholly unavailing. It would only tend to amuse and deceive. And, therefore, I will never attempt it. I will hear the schemes of others. If they adopt anything that I have already laid down, I will claim it as my own. If they broach anything new, I will offer my opinions on it; but, *unless in Parliament*, the thing, for me, shall take its course. I, at present, owe nothing to the country, except to the labouring classes. If I am placed in Parliament, it will be my duty to do much, and much I shall do: if I am not placed there, the country will have no demand upon me. Even in the utter ruin and abasement of the country I shall be neither ruined nor abased. Not to possess wealth is nothing to him who does not desire it; and, as to reputation, the world would have the justice to say, that I have lost none by events which I had foreseen and foretold, and which I had endeavoured to prevent, and for which endeavours I had been most furiously persecuted.

My beloved countrymen and countrywomen, think of these things; and, be assured that, under all circumstances, I shall bear about me and carry with me to the grave the kindest feelings towards you and the most anxious wishes for your happiness.—I am, your friend and obedient servant,

WM. COBBETT.

TO THE EARL OF LIVERPOOL,

ON MR. HEATHFIELD'S PLAN FOR PAYING OFF THE NATIONAL DEBT.

(*Political Register*, April, 1820.)

London, 18th April, 1820.

MY LORD,

Rather more than sixteen years ago, I, in a letter addressed to Mr. ADDINGTON, who then filled the office which you now fill, observed, that the "Fund-Monster would, if not arrested in his course in time, *totally destroy the liberties of this country, and, in the end, level all ranks in society.*" Whether any part of this prediction has been fulfilled already, I shall leave others to say, that being, "under existing circumstances," the safest course to pursue. Nor shall I say, whether the other part is in a fair way of fulfilment. But a plan having been *published for paying off the debt*, and this plan being very popular, and being likely to be acted upon, I beg leave to offer to your Lordship some remarks upon that plan.

The principle upon which Mr. HEATHFIELD proceeds is this: that the fundholder is to be viewed, in all respects, as a creditor in private life is viewed; that he has lent his money on *mortgage*; that he has a real lien, or tie, or hold, in the nature of a mortgage, which runs over all the property, real and personal, that is to be found in any and every part of the king's European dominions; and that, consequently, when a gentleman of this class rides from London to York, on the top of a stage-coach, he, in looking over parks, manors and chases, consistently and truly says, "I am part owner of all these, and my title is as good, and, perhaps, more clear, than the title of those who call these estates their own." And, further, that the mortgage of the fundholder is better than that of any other person; that it has a claim prior to all other mortgages upon the same estate; that it is good against life-holds, as well as against possession in fee-simple; and that, in short, no man can, in strict propriety of language, call any thing *his own*, not even the shirt on his back, until this mortgage be paid off. Some have doubted whether "*public faith*" would compel the people to give up their wearing apparel; but as to house and land, and stock in trade, and household furniture, and cattle of all sorts, there appears to be no doubt at all; and, by common consent, the fundholder seems to have a real mortgage on all these.

As to the *correctness* of these principles, I must confess, that I have always doubted, and my doubts still remain. But, this has nothing to do with the matter. It does not signify what I *think*, or *wish*. It is what is *likely to be done* that is now the interesting question; and, in order to come at something like a correct opinion as to what is likely to be done, it seems to me necessary to inquire a little into what *can* be done in the way of paying off the debt.

Mr. Heathfield, not appearing to doubt of the ready admission of the

fundholders' claim, proceeds to inquire, whether it be proper and convenient to pay it off, and, having settled the question in the affirmative, he next looks into the nature, extent, and *value of things mortgaged*. And, with the greatest fairness, and with a coolness which is quite admirable, he settles the rate or portion at which men's estates are to be taken from them, and sold *for the benefit of the mortgagees*.

I beg leave, here, to observe, that I am far from disapproving of this "*general contribution*," as Mr. Heathfield calls it. For, how does the case stand? It is well known that the late wars were undertaken and carried on for the preservation of *rank, property, and religion*. We are the most cheated nation on earth, if that was not the case. We know that the wars never could have been carried on but by the means of *borrowed money*. Therefore, those who lent that money have a right to say, that if was *they* who, in fact, preserved the *rank, property, and religion* of the country. Certainly, then, it would be injustice in the extreme, for the nobility, gentry, and clergy, and other people of property, to refuse to pay those who thus lent their money. This is *so clear*, that there can, I think, be no doubt upon the subject. I am aware that I may be told, that I formerly held opinions different from this. But, my lord, if time have not taught me wisdom, it has (as to this matter, at least) taught me something else, quite as useful, "*in existing circumstances*," as any wisdom in the world. I, therefore, admit the freeholders' claim on the *lands*, at least; because, whatever else might be said about the matter, I do not see that the *people* would receive any injury at all from a part (and a large part it must be) of the land being placed in the hands of the fundholders.

But, though I agree with Mr. Heathfield in the justice of the claim, and though I wish him success, with all my heart, in obtaining full satisfaction of the Debt due to the fundholders, I must be allowed to say, that I think him greatly deceived as to the *amount of the means*. And yet this is a capital point; for, if the nation's property be *mortgaged for more than the worth*, what is then to become of a part of the claim? Indeed the fundholders may take *all* the lands, houses, mines and canals, and that ought to satisfy them; but I am not sure that it would. However, imprisonment on the mortgage lands would be out of the question. The mortgagees must take the estates, and there would be an end of the matter.

Mr. Heathfield, in his estimate of the means, or *assets*, follows, or rather takes, that of 'Mr. (now Doctor) COLQUHOUN. How this great and able Thief-detecting Justice came at his grounds of estimate, your Lordship may possibly know. But whether he found them in the Bow-street Police-office, or in that of the Thames, I am quite sure that his estimate is as *false* as any of the thieves he ever had to deal with. His *thief-estimate*, which represented every *third* soul met in the streets of London as a *criminal* in the eye of the law, was a bold adventure enough; but, nothing compared with his estimate of the property of the kingdom. If the writing of two such books did not make a man worthy of having the title of *Doctor*, I do not know what would.

Upon the authority of this Police-Doctor, Mr. Heathfield supposes the *property* of the kingdom to be *worth* 2500 millions! The Doctor, indeed, says 2740 millions; but Mr. Heathfield likes *round numbers*, and very liberally throws off 240 millions. In this estimate *all* property is included, and the estimate was *made* in 1812, when, as every one well

knows, property was worth nearly, if not quite, twice as much, nominally, as it is now. Wheat was almost double its present price, and almost all other things were in the same proportion. So that, in this respect, Mr. Heathfield has not dealt fairly either by the Police-Doctor or by the public. When the Doctor made his estimate the pound-note was worth about 15s., and it is now (as long as people will take it) worth nearly 20s. Rents have greatly fallen since the Doctor's estimate was made. So that, on this view of the matter, we cannot, even if we look upon the Doctor as having been correct, look upon the value of the things mortgaged as exceeding 1800 millions.

But, I dispute and disclaim and reject the Doctor's estimate altogether, while I thank him for getting made a Doctor, as it spares me the trouble of writing his long and ugly name. He has *no grounds* for his estimate even of the value of the *houses* and the *lands*; and how is any man in his senses to believe it *possible* for any human being to make any thing like a correct estimate of the value of *stock in trade*, *household goods*, *cattle*, *sheep*, *pigs*, *rabbits*, and all other manifold things which constitute the property of a whole people? I shall offer no such whimsical estimate; but shall produce some rational grounds for the estimate that I have to present upon the subject.

In 1804 an *account of the annual rental of England and Wales* was printed by order of the House of Commons. That rental, including all real property, houses, buildings of all kinds, lands of all kinds, mines and canals, amounted to *thirty-eight millions*. Taking Scotland and Ireland, according to the sum total of taxes that they yielded, the whole kingdom, at that time, would have yielded a *rental of forty-nine millions*. Now, looking at the average price of wheat for *seven years* previous to 1803, when the facts for making out this account were collected, and, comparing that average with the average of the seven years which have just now passed, we shall be able to form something like a *judgment* of what the real property of the whole kingdom is *now worth*.

The *rental*, as all the world knows, is the true criterion of value. It is not what an owner *fancies* a farm to be worth; nor what *he* thinks it worth; nor what value *he* puts upon it, but what it will *bring*. *Tithes*, of course, are included in the rental of the nation; that is to say, their annual worth. So that, when we know the real annual rack-rent of all the houses, buildings, lands, mines, canals, and tithes, we can easily say what they are worth in the fee-simple.

The rental of all these, in the whole kingdom, in 1804, or, rather, in 1803, amounted to *forty-nine millions*. But, in order to know what that rental is *now*, we must see what had, for seven years previous to 1803, been the *average price of wheat*, and what that average has been for the *last seven years*. During the seven years previous to 1803, the average price of wheat had been *fourteen shillings a bushel*. During the seven years which have just now passed, the average price of wheat has been *nine shillings*. So that, if the rental amounted to *forty-nine millions* in 1803, it now amounts to *thirty-one millions*. And, indeed, can any one believe, that it amounts to more, when we hear it declared, from various parts of England, that the *poor-rates exceed in amount the rack-rent of the property assessed*? The fact is notorious, that the rents have, in reality, fallen nearly *one-half* in many parts; and we estimate, therefore, very highly, if we take the whole rental at *thirty-one millions*.

Now, then, as to the *worth* of this property, that yields such a rental, what can it be? Houses and buildings are not worth *twelve years purchase*. Mines and canals may be worth as many years purchase as the houses. The land may be worth 26 years, supposing *perfect confidence to exist*; but it is not worth that at present. And, taking the whole together, it cannot be worth more than about *seventeen or eighteen years purchase*. However, allow it to be worth 18 years purchase, then the *capital*, or *fee-simple*, is worth *five hundred and fifty-eight millions*.

This is a result very different indeed from that on which Mr. Heathfield proceeds. He supposes the *real property* to be worth 1,250 millions, and he does not include the *tithes* that I can perceive! But, he really has no foundation on which to go; his is mere *guess-work*; and the *roughest* guess it is, that ever was made by mortal man. As to the other property; I mean property other than *real property*, how is it possible to come at it? We shall, by-and-by see, what would be the difficulties in getting at the real property; but, as to the *personals*, who can invent a scheme of seizing hold of them, or even of *ascertaining* their value, were it only in one single parish?

Mr. Heathfield proposes first to make his *assessment*; then to tell each man how much he has to *give up*; then to take the amount from him by instalments; and, with the *money*, pay off the fundholders. However, is it, my Lord, worth while to proceed? We will; but first let us take a large view of the thing. Here is a nation with *all its property mortgaged*. No matter who are the mortgagees, though we are constantly told, that the mortgage is *no inconvenience* to us, because *some of us* are the mortgagees; that we owe the debt to *each other*, and that, therefore, the nation, upon the whole, is *neither richer nor poorer on account of the debt*. These were very pretty notions for about *ten years ago*; but, they are now grown out of vogue. We do now find, that somehow, or other, the debt is a *great inconvenience*; and that, unless it can be lessened, we cannot get on.

Here, then, we are inventing schemes to *pay off a mortgage*. And, why are we so eager to pay off this mortgage *now*? We went on contracting the mortgage; adding to its weight; increasing it, in all sorts of ways; and, what is more, those who expressed their alarm at this, were either laughed at as *fools*, or punished (in some way or other) as *disaffected and disloyal persons*. But, *now*, all of a sudden, we are frightened at the amount of the mortgage, and wish to *pay it off*? And *why*? Because we are *reduced to misery by the payment of the interest*! We cannot pay the interest any longer, without *total ruin*, and without *real starvation* to millions. And, *therefore*, we propose to *pay off the principal*! What makes us unable to pay the interest? Why, our want of a sufficient income; our want of a sufficiency of means; our *poverty*, in short. And yet it is presumed, that we are *rich enough to pay off the principal*!

Suppose me (I wish it were nothing other than supposition) to have a mortgage upon my estate, which, owing to the diminution of the quantity of paper-money, and the consequent fall in prices, will not let for enough to pay the interest in full, and that the mortgagee wants his interest duly paid up. What would any man think of me, if I were to talk of getting rid of my incumbrance by *paying off the principal* of the mortgage? He would think me *mad*, to be sure. He would seize the estate, and let me get on as I could.

Now, it is very certain, that, upon the principle of Mr. Heathfield; namely, that the fundholders have a mortgage upon all the land and houses, and from which principle I by no means venture to dissent; upon this principle, my above supposed situation, is the situation of every owner (or supposed owner) of real property in this kingdom; seeing that the whole of the real property is worth only about *five or six hundred millions*, and that the amount of the mortgage which the fundholders have on that property, is about *nine hundred millions*.

Your Lordship may possibly, and Mr. Heathfield will certainly, say: "How can this be: how can the real property be worth so little, when we see, that the interest of the nine hundred millions is *now duly paid*, though with *difficulty*; and we see, that the *landholders live very well besides?*" Aye, but this interest is not now paid by them, who pay indeed, but a very, very small part of it. It is paid chiefly, *now*, out of the *earnings of labour!* But, if we come to *pay off*, the assessors will find, that they have, in labour, *nothing to seize*. Labour lies in the bones, muscles, blood, and flesh and brains; and they cannot take part of these *away*. They cannot put these up to sale. They cannot exchange these for stock, either *threes or fives or threes and a half*. Labour is the golden eggs, *not yet laid*. We know very well, that the present revenue, saved for eighteen years, would pay off the whole of the Debt; but this revenue is *wanted yearly*; and besides, it comes out of the earnings of labour, which are the true riches of a nation, and the sum of which is daily diminishing in this country.

Your Lordship will, therefore, dismiss, at once, all that tribe of projectors, who calculate the worth of the nation's real property upon the basis of the revenue, which has nothing at all to do with the worth of that property; or, at least, it is no basis, whereon to found a valuation of that property.

The case of a man, whose estate is mortgaged for more than it will now sell for, is little different from that of a man, in trade, who stands upon borrowed capital, and who cannot any longer pay the interest on the money that he has borrowed. The lender complains that the interest is not duly paid. And what would be thought of the borrower, if he were to talk of getting *rid of this difficulty by paying off the principal?* It may be said, that he may sell off his stock in trade to pay the money-lender with. But, what nonsense is this? He has no stock in hand. His stock does not belong *to him*. He must *owe some one for it*. He may, indeed, *give up his stock*; and the landholder may give up his land; but this is the only way in which they can possibly pay off any part of their debts.

With this general view in our recollection, we will proceed to ask Mr. Heathfield how he would go to work to *get at the personal property*. In this is included every thing moveable. Household goods, stock in trade, ships, tools, machines, plate, jewels, books, and all other things inanimate; horses, mules, asses, cattle, sheep, hogs, dogs, poultry, rabbits, and, perhaps, hares, pheasants, and partridges. All these are included in the Police-doctor's estimate, and this estimate is the basis of Mr. Heathfield's plan. Now, in the first place, who is to make the *assessment?* Who is to put a value on the various things in a *chandler's shop?* Who is to go and value the rags and kettles in the labourer's cottage? And yet, all these come into the estimate of the nation's property? Who is to go to a haberdasher's shop, or an ironmonger's, or any other shop,

and *take stock* preparatory to an assessment? And yet, unless the stock be actually taken, how is an assessment to be made?

However, suppose this difficulty to be got over, what is next to be done? Why, to tell the haberdasher, for instance, that he is to pay the amount of a *sixth part* of his stock in trade. What! whether it be his own or not? Whether he, in fact, be *solvent* or not? He owes for the stock, or for a great part of it, or, at least, for some of it. His property may, possibly, consist in part of money in his pocket; part of his savings may be in book-debts. He himself can hardly say what he has, and what he has not. How, then, will you assess him? And yet assess this man you must, or you must give up all this species of property. Merchants have no *tangible* property; or, at least, very seldom. They *owe* and are *owed to*. They live on the little that remains on the gridiron after tossing immense sums through it. They can pay, yearly, taxes out of this; but, who is to ascertain what their *capital* is? They have it not in their hands. It is *always afloat*, and in a state not to be *grasped* even by themselves.

As to household goods, they, for the greater part, are necessaries of life, nearly as much as the man's dinner is. There is, in this respect, very little difference between the leg of mutton and the pot that it is boiled in. And, observe, that the scheme is founded, not on the supposition of opulence and luxury being in fashion; but on the supposition of general ruin and want, from which the scheme is to relieve us.

It is said, that the proprietors of personal property may pay in *five years*; but five years' time can be no benefit; because to pay at all, they *must*, as a whole, *begin by selling*! Before they can *pay* a farthing to the fundholder from their capital, they *must sell*; and if the whole be sellers, who are to be the *buyers*? It is nonsense to say, that they may *raise the money* in some other way. A *whole*, therefore, cannot raise it any other way; and who is to *buy*? Nobody can, in the end, buy, except the fundholders. So that, if such a scheme were practicable at all, the only possible mode of proceeding would be to take the goods from the owners, and compel the fund-people to take them at the assessed value, and to give up stock to a like amount in exchange.

Thus, then, it is very clear, that, after all, the assessment must be confined to *real property*, to the *Funds themselves*, and to another sort of *property* that I shall take the liberty to mention by-and-by.

As to the *Funds*, it would be merely a *lopping-off*. It would be a paying of *one-sixth less* to the fundholders than was paid to them before. But, as to the *real property*, if the scheme really be to *pay off the debt*, the whole of it must be taken and conveyed to the fundholders. However, let us suppose that *one-sixth is to be taken first*. What way will Mr. Heathfield go to work? Here is a Yeomanry-Cavalry-man, Mr. JOLT, who was formerly called Farmer Jolt; he has a snug farm, with some white pales opposite his house. He cannot do more, though the farm be his own, than barely make both ends meet. He has not a farthing to spare. For, if this be not the *general* situation of the country, then there can be no necessity for any desperate measure of *relief*. His farm is worth six thousand pounds, and you call upon him for a *thousand*. He is to have *ten years* to pay it in; but he is to pay a *hundred down*, and to pay interest for the other *nine hundred*, giving, of course, a mortgage to the Government on his lands for the nine hundred.

Here is the Yeomanry Cavalry gentleman in a pretty state! He is as

"*firmly held and bounden* to our Sovereign Lord the King, his heirs and successors," as any printer or publisher in the realm, and has as good reason to rejoice at living under "a Constitution that is the envy of surrounding nations, and the admiration of the world." But how is he to get the hundred pounds? He *has them not*; mind that, my Lord. He must borrow them: and of whom? Of some fundholder, to a certainty; and the mortgage for the nine hundred will go into the same hands. This *must* be the case; for, on any *other* supposition, the scheme is without a pretext to proceed upon.

Now, if this take place, and this is possible, it is certain, that, merely as a *farmer*, JOLT will go on; but he must work harder, and must work harder and live worse than he did before, and the fundholder will own a part of his land. He will own more than a *sixth* part; for the interest will run on, and every year JOLT must borrow the interest he will have to pay.

When this operation has been completed, the debt will stand thus: 150 millions will have been paid off by the deduction made from the fundholders themselves. And, supposing the assessments on real property to be rigorously made, and the collections duly enforced, nearly another 100 millions will have been liquidated by the payments to the fundholders out of the real property. This will leave the part of real property, which will *belong to the present proprietors*, worth 448 millions, and will leave the debt 660 millions.

This will have been doing very little, and another and larger dip must be taken. This time, a *third* may, possibly, be taken. A third taken from the fundholders, will reduce their claim to 420 millions, and the paying to them of 149 millions, to be this time taken from the land, will leave their claim to be 211 millions, and it will leave of real property, belonging to the present owners of real property, 300 millions.

One dip more will *clear off the Debt*! Make the fundholders give up the half of their remaining funds, and the landowners give them the half of their remaining lands, and then the fundholders will own about *four-fifths of the land*, and the present landowners about *one-fifth*! And this, if this scheme were practicable, and were put into execution, would be the inevitable result.

But we have overlooked one capital circumstance, and that is, that the land would not sell for the half of what we have supposed. The *assessment* would be made upon the basis of *present rents and present prices*; but the moment the fundholders' sixth of the debt should cease to be paid interest for, the quantity of paper-money would be greatly diminished, and, of course, rents and prices would instantly *fall*. So that the real property, instead of being worth 548 millions, would not be worth, perhaps, 300 millions; and, of course, the fundholders would *take it all*. Let any one, who thinks himself able, attempt to prove the contrary of this, and we shall soon see the truth of my reasoning completely confirmed.

It is, then, impossible to *pay off the Debt with money*. That is impossible. Indeed, upon the face of the thing it is impossible; for, whether you proceed by *instalments*, or in whatever other way, the money must come *first or last*. And to pay off a debt of 900 millions, there must be possessed by the debtors 900 millions; and this, in real money, is more than there exists *in the whole world*! If the fundholders *give up* half their claim, there is not a fiftieth part enough to pay them the

other half with. And, besides, what, in the meanwhile, is to pay the Civil List, the sinecures, pensions, grants, army and navy? Have not all these a claim on the real property as well as the fundholders? The sinecures, pensions, and grants, are always considered as *property*. Is this sort of property to remain *snug*; to lie *perdu*, while the land is taken away and given to the fundholders? Is there to be no *pluck* at this kind of property? As for me, I am one of those, who do not think it of any consequence to the people at large, whether the sinecures be given up to the fundholders or not. I only mention them as *property* very much resembling that of the Funds.

The short view of the whole matter is this: the *interest* of the Debt, if there were no other expenses, *might*, perhaps, be continued to be paid, for a few years, out of peoples' *incomes*, and out of the *fruits of labour*, which is neither more nor less than a *participation* between the rest of the nation and the fundholders. The fundholders receive and live upon part of the rents, profits, and earnings of the rest of the nation; and they, together with the army, navy, Civil List, sinecures, pensions, and grants, receive so *large* a part of the rents, profits, and earnings, that there does not remain enough amongst the mass of the nation to encourage enterprize and industry, and to keep up a sufficient creation of valuable things. *Therefore*, it is desirable to *get rid of the Debt*; but, as I have shown, this Debt *cannot be paid off* at all; and especially in the manner that Mr. Heathfield supposes it can. I think it is evident, that nothing short of a *compromise*, which will take a part of the real property and give it to the fundholders, will do. In this way, it certainly might be settled; but this, or a *sponge*, is, in my opinion, the only way; and, if men be not yet prepared for one or other of these, they will do well to hold their tongues about a *relieving* the country from the load of taxation.

I, for several years, urged the necessity of a *sponge* for getting rid of the Debt. But, I have never found any body to agree with me. I, therefore, give way, and now confine myself to the offering of opinions upon other peoples' projects. Men will, in spite of themselves, reason according to their interests. This is the universal practice of the world. Upon the present subject, the landholders reason very differently from the fundholders; and, before I speak of a *compromise*, which it is now become very fashionable to talk of, it will not be amiss to state, shortly, the reasoning on both sides.

The LANDHOLDERS say to the fundholders: it is very true, Gentlemen, that you have lent your money to the nation, and that, if there be the means, you ought to be paid. God forbid, that we should entertain the design of paying you off with a *sponge*, which would be a most horrid "breach of national faith." But, with due submission, you have *no mortgage upon our lands!* The Acts of Parliament, passed by those who virtually represent every soul in the kingdom, which acts are binding on us all, as long as they are unrepealed, are, nevertheless, *repealable*: mind that! And, mind, that you knew it, too, when you lent your money. And if (which we neither expect nor *wish*) the Acts, which insure the payment of your interest, were to be *repealed*, no more interest would be due to you! And, bear in mind, that we have seen Acts passed for setting aside the claim which the creditors of the Bank had upon it for specie, and also for putting a stop to, and, finally, wholly abrogating numerous actions, which were actually in court, against the

non-resident Clergy. We allow, that to resort to a *sponge*, would be a most shocking "*breach of national faith*;" but if the nation be in Debt *beyond its means of payment*, you cannot, upon any principle known amongst men, justly demand *more than its all*. Now, as to the *mortgage*, which you appear to suppose you have upon our *estates*, it will not, we hope, take much to convince you, that this is a *great mistake* into which you have fallen. For, if you look into the several Acts of Parliament, upon the faith of which you have lent your money; if you look into those Acts, which are, in fact, your mortgage deeds, you will clearly perceive, that the mortgage is granted, *not upon our estates*, but upon the *Consolidated Fund*; that is to say, upon the *taxes annually raised*, and which are called a *Fund* for some good and sufficient reason, we dare say, but which reason we have been wholly unable to discover. This *Fund*, or these *taxes*, is the thing on which you have a mortgage; and, not at all upon our estates. As long as this *Fund* yields enough to pay your interest, you will, of course, receive it duly; but, if the *Fund* fail, the Acts of Parliament, which are your only mortgage deeds, do not authorize you to make a demand on our estates. It must be considered, too, with regard to the *amount* of your demand; that you lent your money in *paper-coin*, and at a time, when the pound note was not worth more than about sixteen shillings upon an average; and that, if we were to pay you in gold, or in paper nearly on a par with gold, we should be great losers by the transaction. You have been duly receiving *five pounds* in the hundred interest, while we think ourselves well off if we get *three pounds*. However, there is one consideration, which outweighs all others. If we admit that you have a *real mortgage upon our estates*, we see no means of settling the matter, other than that of *giving up the estates to you!* And, then, what a change, what a *revolution* will ensue!

FUNDHOLDERS.—We do not see any very *great danger* that would arise from this. But, proceed.

LANDHOLDERS.—Not see any *great danger!* Why, then, what is there any danger in? What have we been fighting and subscribing and prosecuting for, during so many years? Has it not been to *preserve the constitution*? Has it not been to prevent all *levelling* with regard to *property and rank*? Has it not, as Mr. CANNING has so ably shown, been to prevent the pulling down of a venerable nobility and a holy church? And how are these to stand without *their property*? Without their lands and manors and domains? If these be given up into the possession of the Fundholders: if a parcel of brokers and jobbers from *Change Alley* and a parcel of upstart traders from *Philpot-lane* are to come and take our lands and mansions; what is to become of the *Throne*, to uphold which you as well as we have so frequently pledged your last shilling and the last drop of your blood? If you remove us, the "*Corinthian pillars of the State*," as BURKE so properly called us, what is to become of the State? Why, it must fall of course; and, then follows the whole destruction of "*Social Order and Religion*;" atheism will stalk unimpeded over the unhappy land, with fire, sword, and famine in its rear. Once begin to *level*, and universal confusion and destruction must inevitably follow. We beg you, therefore, to *reflect seriously*, on what you are about. We conjure you, as you love your country, as you love our happy constitution, as you love your king, and as you abhor the idea of seeing "*morals and religion rooted out of the hearts of man-*

kind," not to say one word more of the imaginary mortgage that you have upon our estates, manors, and mansions.

FUNDHOLDERS.—We are aware, Gentlemen, that few persons in the world, when in possession of things which they dislike to part with, are destitute of arguments in favour of their keeping of those things. Whatever ingenuity men may have in their minds, they fail not to employ it upon such an occasion.—We have listened to you with great attention; and, when you consider the nature of the insinuations, contained in the latter part of your argument, you will, we are persuaded, give us no small credit for our forbearance.—We have the misfortune to differ from you in opinion, not only as to your general conclusion, but as to every particular point in your argument, and for this difference we will now tender you such reasons as suggest themselves to our minds.—You tell us, that the Loan-Acts give us no mortgage upon your lands! You step aside here, and remind us, that any Acts may be repealed, of which you give us some striking and memorable instances. We cannot help looking upon this hint as a sort of menace; but, we pay little attention to this, seeing that you have been compelled to allow, that such repeal, which is, in fact, a sponge, would be a most atrocious breach of national faith. Yet we wish, that you had sense of dignity enough to refrain from throwing out such a threat. As to the mortgage, you say, that it is not a mortgage on your lands, but on the Consolidated Fund, that is, on the taxes; and, if the Fund fail, the Acts of Parliament, by which the laws were made, do not authorize us to make any demand on the land.—It is you, and not we, that make the mistake. You merely play upon terms; and lose sight of the substance. We know very well, that the Acts, which are our mortgage deeds, give us no security other than that on the Consolidated Fund; but, then, they pledge the nation to make that Fund sufficient to pay us our interest, without any deduction whatever; and, moreover, to raise a sinking fund to create a constant market for our stock. Whether this pledge have been strictly adhered to up to this time, we will not now inquire; but, we are sure that you will not deny, that we have correctly described the nature and extent of the pledge, on the faith of which we lent our money.—Now, Sirs, the nation being, by these several Acts, pledged to make the Consolidated Fund, that is, the Taxes, sufficient to pay us our interest, who is the nation? Why, as Mr. CANNING truly says, not the rabble, not those who have nothing, not the Radicals, not the itinerant patriots; no, but the "Nobility, Gentry, Clergy, and Freeholders;" and that, when these are met, in any county, there is a "real County Meeting." All the rest of the people, as Mr. CANNING says, are virtually represented in these; and that, therefore, those who represent these represent the nation. It follows, then, necessarily, that the nation is pledged to make the taxes sufficient to pay us our interest; do we ask, or have we ever asked, for any thing more than this? We propose no project for paying off, mind that, Sirs! No such proposition has ever come from us! We only want our interest duly paid; and, if you do not choose to continue to pay, or, if you cannot pay it; you mean, of course, to give us something in lieu of it; or, else, what becomes of all your affected horror at the idea of a "breach of national faith?"—Our case, Sirs, is plainly and shortly this: we have a mortgage on the property of the nation for as much as will pay us our interest in full; and, if we do not get our interest, we have an undoubted right to go to the property, and take as much as will make good the deficiency. From

the capacity to labour we can get nothing; we can get little from personal effects; and, therefore, we come to the real property, from which we will take no more than is necessary to make good that deficiency. You appear to be conscious of the weakness of your ground, when you deny this our right; for, you immediately follow up that denial by observing, that our demand ought to be *lowered in amount*, because, as you say, we lent our money, when the pound-note was not worth nearly so much as it is now. It is surprising to what a point men are blinded by their interests! We thought, though we do, some of us, come "from Philpot-lane," that you would have the generosity to remember, that many of the fundholders lent their money years and years *before gold ceased to circulate*; and that, in fact, *three hundred and fifty*, out of the *nine hundred millions* that are now due to us, were lent to the nation in *hard coin*! And as to the rest, does it not stand recorded in the Journals of both Houses of Parliament, in the form of solemn resolutions, passed in 1811, that the paper-money *had never depreciated* in value, and that a pound-note then was, and always had been, *fully equal in value to twenty shillings in silver coin, fresh from the Mint*? With these facts before us, we really wonder, Sirs, at your attempting, by such a pretence, to shuffle from your shoulders a part of the debt, which you so truly owe us. You say, that we have been receiving an interest of *five per centum*, while you have been receiving an interest of *three* at most from your lands. But, Gentlemen, have you been receiving *nothing* in lieu of this difference? Have you not been riding about in the sweet country air, while we have been penned up to breathe and rebreath the smoke of "the 'Change and of Philpot-lane?" Have not your ears been regaled with the singing of birds and the cry of the hounds, while ours have been dinned with the rattling of coaches and drays, and the gabble of the Alley? Have not you had the clowns to pull their hats off to you, and the red-cheeked girls to curtesy to you, while we have been squeezing along amongst chimney-sweeps and fish-women, who paid no more regard to us than if we had not been worth a groat? Recollect, Gentlemen, that we cannot *come "from the 'Change and Philpot-lane,"* without first *living* in the 'Change and Philpot-lane; and surely, to have lived so long in places that you seem to think confers a sort of disgrace on the inhabitants of them, gives those inhabitants a claim to some little preference in point of gains. The great object of all our toils has been to be able, at last, to go and live like gentlemen in the country; and, as the times of loaning appear now to be over, we are anxious to get to our estates. Having, as we think, clearly established our *right*, we would fain have foreborne to say any thing in answer to your closing observations. But when we consider that our claims are attempted to be weakened in our minds, by an appeal to our attachment to our happy constitution in church and state, we cannot remain silent. We are, we confess, attached to our country; but, we are not afraid to defy the world to prove, that our king and our church do not possess a superior place in our affections. But, Sirs, it is impossible for us to perceive the smallest grounds for your alarm, even supposing the *whole* of your estates to be transferred to us. BURKE, we know, got a pretty good pension for himself, another for his widow, and a third for his executors, after he had written so prettily about *Corinthian pillars*; but there must be *new pillars* sometimes. We have very good Corinthian pillars come from the 'Change, Philpot-lane, and even

from Spitalfields; and why should not more come from the same places? *Levelling*, indeed! What, you think, perhaps, that *we* do not know how to live in large mansions, and to keep the Radicals at a distance? We might not, perhaps, be such able fox-hunters as some of you; and yet, if we are to judge from the ability in this way, shown by a brother of ours, who was, not many years ago, actually *cross legged*, we may suppose that we should not be far behind you, in a short time, even in that prime quality. And as to all matters connected with the preservation of "*social order*," we are well-known to have given such proof of indefatigable zeal and ardent devotion, that the cause must improve, rather than suffer, in our hands. We cannot, therefore, for our lives, perceive any *danger* to church or state, that could possibly arise from the complete transfer of all your estates to us. But, we repeat, that we want nothing but our *interest in full*. Continue to pay us that, and we are satisfied; but, if you do not pay it us, or pay us the principal, we shall accuse you, according to your own confession, of "*an atrocious breach of national faith*."

Now, my Lord, whatever they may pretend in public, this is the language in private, of the two descriptions of persons. They have an interest directly opposed to each other, and, let who will have *reason*, the fundholders have *popular opinion* on their side. Nine men out of every ten think, that they are generous in the extreme if they *give up* one-half to be *paid the other half*; and this is what they do when they yield a part of their interest equal to a tax upon other property or income. Their bargain is to be *paid without any deduction*; and, if a deduction be made, no matter under what name, they have not their bargain. Yet, such is the state of things, and such the effect of a gradually diminishing paper-money, that, if this bargain be acted up to, they must have all the real property in the kingdom; and this is a fact, the truth of which you will perceive the moment that any scheme of *paying off* begins to be put into execution. And yet, it is very certain that things cannot go on in the present way. Your Lordship's printed speech, on the last year's Bullion Bill, contained a passage, which struck me very forcibly. It amounted to this; that the fundholders were to receive, and ought to receive, *their interest in full, even when specie payments should take place!* The *impossibility* of this was so manifest, that I could not believe that you had ever uttered the words; and I am very much deceived if the proof of the impossibility be not demonstrated to the nation before the month of July next; and that, too, in some legislative act. To *tax* the Funds is the old way, and it will probably be resorted to. But if the tax, to an equal amount, run over other property, the Funds will still be the *gainer*. Whatever is raised upon the land in this way will cause the worth of it in land to be transferred to the fundholders, who will gain more by the *Bullion Bill* than they will lose by the tax. Let that Bill continue in force for its intended term, and then let it be still *law*, and there will be no need of any project like that of Mr. Heathfield.

The voice of the country decidedly is, that the fundholders should be "*honestly paid*." And, I think, that this voice is not likely to grow weaker. Men of any discernment know well *who the payers must be*. And it is become a very fashionable opinion, that the *transfer and division of property* is a good instead of an evil. The SPENCEAN PLAN was looked upon as nearly high treason; and yet we now see projectors

boldly proposing to seize on the land, divide and sell it ! There is no knowing what we may live to see ; but, of one thing we may be satisfied, that *the thing itself*, without any impulse from without, will produce a *greater change* than, perhaps, was ever yet seen in the affairs of any country.

Now, I think, that wise men in power, would be *sure* to have the *mass of the people* in *good humour* before this change, which must come, shall come. To yield upon the question of *Reform* is the only way, in my opinion, of insuring this good humour ; for, though the *COURIER* incessantly calls Radicals rebels and rebels Radicals, still they are men, and men, too, who must continue, for the main part, to *live* in the country. The very substitution of the word *Radical* for *Reformer* is a proof of weakness in our opponents. Indeed they discover their weakness and their fears at every turn ; while we, in every circumstance connected with public affairs, see grounds of hope and of encouragement.

I am, my Lord, your most obedient

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

END OF VOLUME V.

