

passport into the Society? Will it not soon be understood that as those who are excluded are excluded by him, so those who are suffered to come in come in through his connivance? And will not this create a counter obligation, and a dependance in every new Member, that must secure voices to the President on the 30th of November, and keep him perpetually in his seat, though ever so disagreeable in his administration? It would certainly be much better, supposing that those whom we believe to be the wisest, greatest, and best men amongst us, in other instances, are, indeed, grown so weak as to set their hands to certificates they are ashamed to support, and that, consequently, all the guards and checks to improper election, such as the declaration of *personal* knowledge, &c. &c. are no checks at all; it would, surely, be much more dignified, and much safer, rather than to suffer a President to run about the room on a night of election, out of breath, it may be, with anger and impatience, seducing the ignorant, awing the timid, and deceiving the wise, to have recourse to the old method, and give the President and Council the power of negating every Candidate proposed, before his certificate is hung up. In this case, at least, some sign of deliberation would be kept up, some previous discussion would take place, and the Candidates, instead of being sacrificed to the caprice of an individual, or the caprice of the junto of an individual, (for to that the power contended for leads) would depend upon men who come forward, and are answerable for their decisions. This previous ballot, was, however, in the year 1730, given up by the Council, it should seem upon the suggestions of the late Lord Hardwicke, who being consulted on a still farther extent of power intended, cautioned them, in the true spirit of a whig lawyer, to have a care how they encroached upon the chartered rights of the Society.* But if the power was taken away from 21 persons, surely it is not fitting that it should be trusted to one, and that one, perhaps, of all others, the most improper to have it. For the President, (we do not now speak of Sir Joseph Banks) is what is commonly called, in this country, a great man; he has those who flatter him, and he has those whom he flatters; he has purposes to serve, and prejudices to attend to; he lives also much with persons who know nothing of the Society, or its pursuits, or its regulations. Shall such a one then dictate to us whom we are to chuse? Shall it be to *him* that we resign the little power that is left? or what is worse, shall it be by him that we shall suffer ourselves to be tricked out of this power? Certainly not, if we are consistent philosophers, or consistent Englishmen, if we recollect that there can be no such thing as a *small* encroachment, and that what is not very right, and very

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* See the Journals for 1730.

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