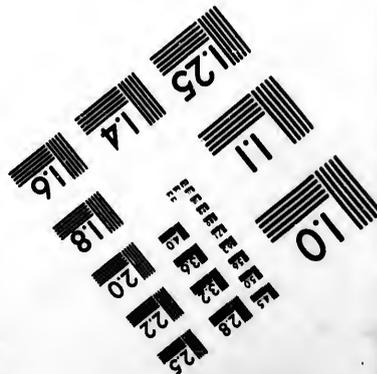
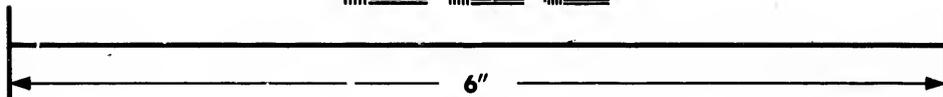
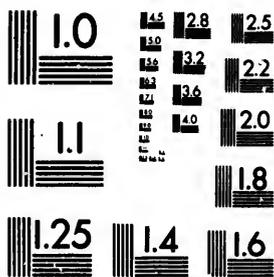


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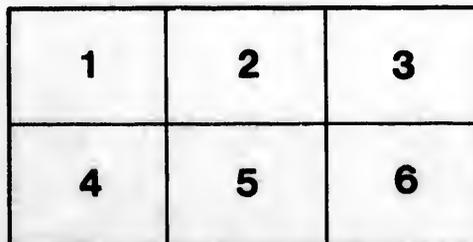
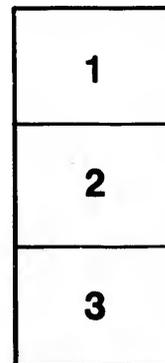
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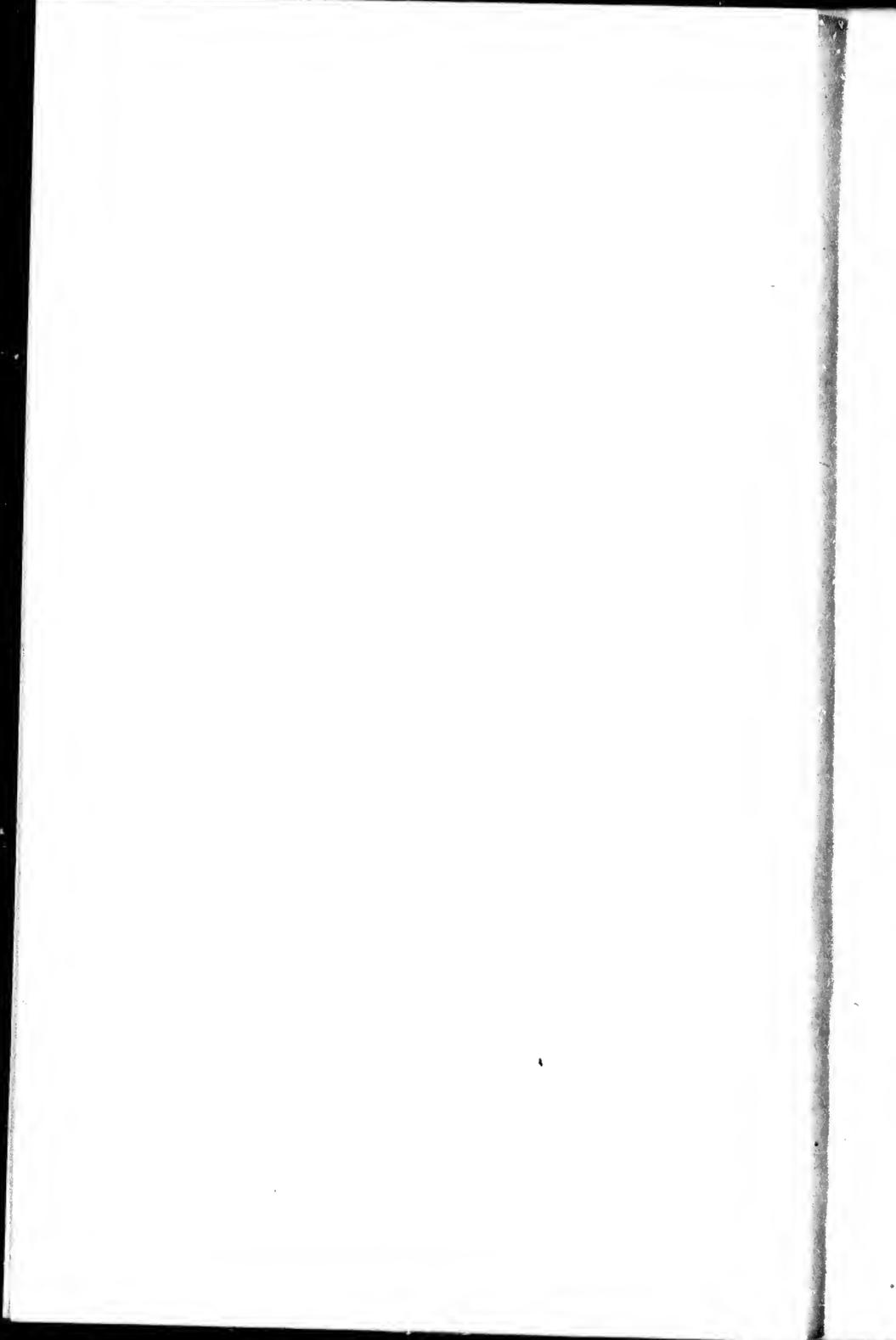
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16
REFORM IN PARLIAMENT.

PROCEEDINGS

OF

*THE ELECTORS OF THE CITY AND
LIBERTIES OF WESTMINSTER:*

INCLUDING

CORRECT REPORTS OF THE SPEECHES DELIVERED

AT A

Public Meeting

HELD IN NEW PALACE-YARD, ON FRIDAY,
9th FEBRUARY, 1810,

FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING

A REFORM

IN THE

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

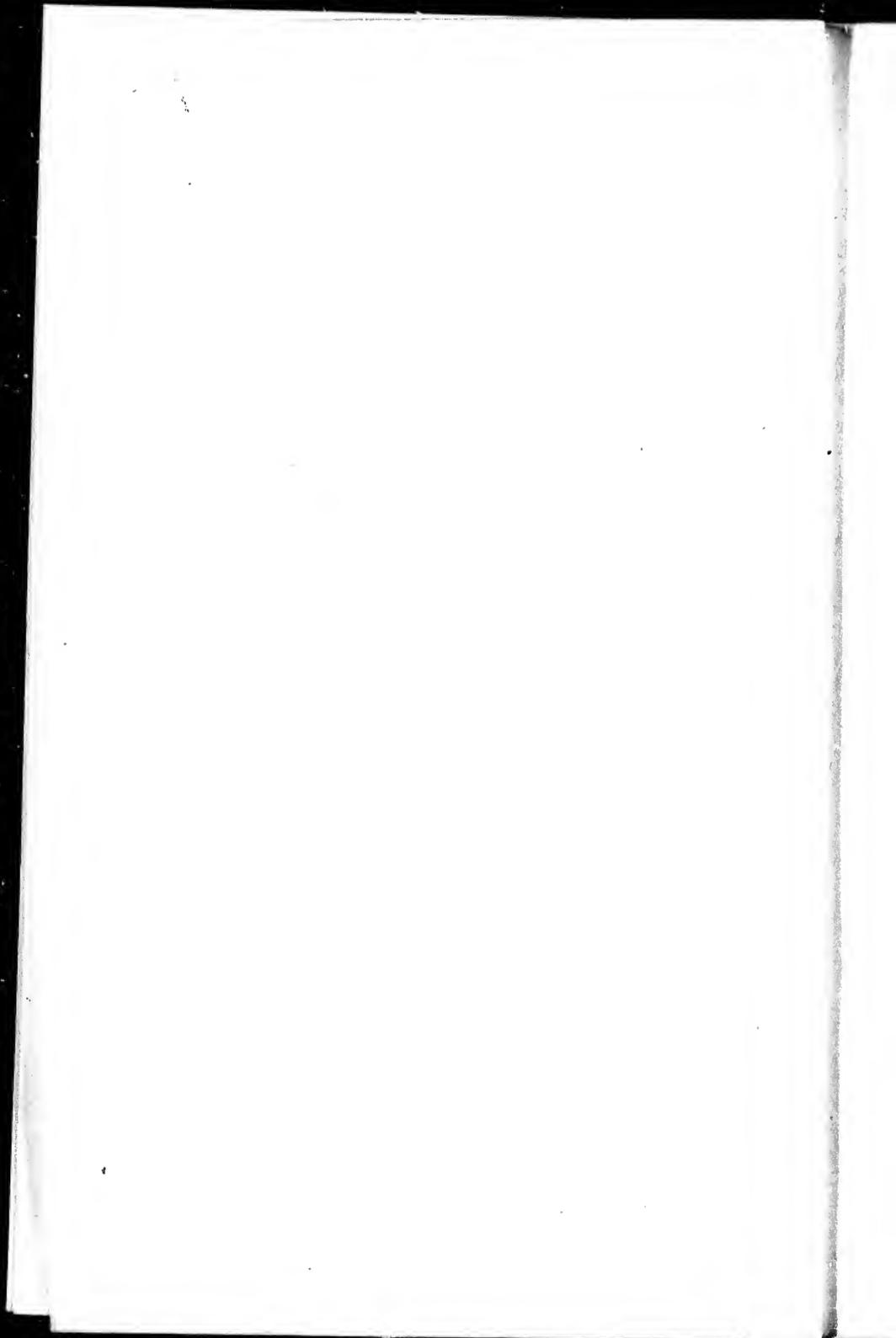
IN

PARLIAMENT.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. M'CREERY, BLACK-HORSE-COURT.

1810.



As a complete and radical Reform of the REPRESENTATION in the COMMONS HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT is the only constitutional remedy for the numerous grievances we now labour under, and as meetings for that purpose ought to be held throughout the kingdom, it has been thought that an exact detail of the following proceedings would be acceptable to the public, particularly when it is considered how essential it is for the furtherance of so desirable an object that there should be in the several petitions an agreement in sentiment and principle.

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PROCEEDINGS

AT

A PUBLIC MEETING,

&c.

THE High Bailiff of the City and Liberties of Westminster having by public advertisement appointed a meeting of the electors for Friday, Feb. 26, 1810, a very large body assembled in Palace-yard. At one o'clock the High Bailiff took the chair and opened the business of the day; by informing the assembly, that he had called them together in consequence of a requisition, signed by a number of electors, having been delivered to him, which he read as follows :

*To ARTHUR MORRIS, Esq. High Bailiff of the City and
Liberties of Westminster.*

WE, the undersigned inhabitant householders, electors of the city and liberties of Westminster, request you to call an early meeting of the inhabitant householders, electors of this city and liberties, to take into consideration the propriety of presenting a petition to the King, and another to the House of Commons on the subject of a reform in the state of the representation of the people in parliament:—to express their sentiments on other grievances deeply involving the honour and safety of the country:—and to instruct their representatives accordingly.

(Signed by) 25 Inhabitant Householdors.

Mr. STURCH then came forward and said—

That while he requested the attention of the meeting for a few minutes, he was perfectly aware that it might be considered as a high degree of presumption in an obscure individual to address himself to so large and respectable a body as the electors of Westminster, and to expect them to attend patiently to any thing he might have to offer. And he should certainly have thought it his duty to preface what he intended to submit to their consideration, with something like an apology for that presumption, if he did not recollect that they were already well acquainted with the occasion of their meeting, and that they knew it to be a subject which belonged to one class of men as well as to another, on which the welfare of the whole community depended, in which the poor, the humble, and the illiterate, were equally interested with the learned, the powerful, and the wealthy; it therefore never could be impertinent or obtrusive, in any man of any class to take it up, and to endeavour to enforce it upon the minds of his fellow-citizens. If he had thought that it required superior abilities or extensive learning, or that great opulence or high rank were necessary to qualify a man to lay before them the business of this day, he should certainly have resisted the invitation of his friends and declined the task that had been assigned him, since he had no pretension whatever to any of these. But, happily for him, no such qualification was necessary for the part that he had undertaken. For what was it that he had undertaken. It was surely this: to remind his fellow-citizens of one of the plainest and simplest of all obvious truths, namely, that whenever men were so inattentive to their best interests as to suffer their affairs to be taken out of their own hands, and the management of them to be usurped by persons who have not only a different, but an opposite interest from theirs, and over whom they have no controul, those affairs were likely to be very badly managed.—In addition to this he had to *excite them, and to call upon them to excite their fellow-subjects in every part of the British islands, to endeavour by every peaceable and legal means to recover that controul over their own affairs which they had lost, and to exert themselves with one heart and one soul to obtain what was always their undoubted right, a FREE, FAIR, AND ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT, without which there can be no chance of preventing the rapid increase of the enormous burthen of taxation; neither security for that portion of liberty which we enjoy; nor the least ray of*

hope that public affairs will be conducted with an honest view to the public welfare.

The subject of parliamentary reform, had been so frequently and so fully discussed, and was besides so plain and simple in itself, that there could scarcely be a doubt that it was fully understood, and there was as little doubt that it was at this moment generally desired. He believed it was thirty years ago this very year, and this very month, for, if he mistook not, it was in the month of Feb. 1780, that the attention of the citizens of Westminster was called to this great subject in that hall opposite (pointing to Westminster Hall) by a dear friend of his, a truly enlightened patriot and most excellent man, the late Dr. John Jebb. He had stated in his own clear and forcible language, to the body of electors of that day, the absurdity, the inequality, the utter inadequacy of what was called representation—and he had clearly pointed out the evils which were then resulting from the imperfect constitution of the House of Commons, and the still more alarming evils which were likely to result from it at no great distance of time. Various proceedings afterwards took place, many meetings were held, and committees were appointed for the promotion of this great object; at length a young man of very considerable ability, and to whose patriotic spirit the country at that time looked with high expectation, appeared to take up the cause with great zeal, and publicly declared, that without a PARLIAMENTARY REFORMATION *neither the liberties of the people could be preserved, nor could any honest administration remain long in office.* Yet this young man afterwards became himself Prime Minister, and to the misfortune of this country held that situation, without any reform of parliament, more than sixteen years. Whether he held it honestly or not, he (Mr. S.) would leave it to the meeting to judge.

In the year 1780, when the subject was so ably brought forward by that worthy man Dr. Jebb, we found ourselves in the midst of an unjust, impolitic, and disastrous war. In the course of that war, the permanent taxes were doubled, his Majesty's armies defeated, and his counsels disgraced, and after more than one hundred millions had been added to the national debt, and one hundred thousand brave men lost to the country, the contest was given up, and the object of the war totally abandoned. Now he would ask this plain question—Could that disastrous war have been so long persisted in, after

the object of it was known to be hopeless, unless the Tory Ministry of that day had been supported by a majority in the house, who were paid for their support by the emoluments which they and their friends derived from the places and pensions, the loans, jobs, and contracts created by the war? He would ask again—Was there any man who believed that they would have been suffered to receive those emoluments as the price of their support, if the nation had at that time been in the enjoyment of what was always their undoubted right, A REAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT? He was confident that there was not one man of good common sense and independent mind in the kingdom, who believed it.

Since the year 1780 we had had various political changes, and a variety of ministries—or, as he believed they were now called, governments. And having mentioned the word government, he would take leave, by the way, to offer a remark on the artful change in the signification of some words, and the strange use, or rather abuse of that word which had taken place in his time. When he was a young man, the persons who held high official situations under the crown, who conducted the business of the executive branch of our constitution, were called the MINISTRY—a word that means *servants*. Nobody ever thought of calling them any thing else. But how stands the case now? These gentlemen now call themselves, and have taught almost every body else, to call them the government—a word that certainly suggests the idea of *masters*. The government! He had been used to think that the government of the country was by the constitution vested in the three estates, king, lords, and commons. But, no, say the nine or ten gentlemen who possess seats in the cabinet, you are mistaken; we are the government, and the means by which we govern, are, the good things which we have at our disposal. He was sensible that the mere substitution of one word for another might seem a matter of little consequence, but, in this case, a dangerous ambiguity was artfully introduced into common language. For instance, a man was said to be no friend to government. It might be pretended that nothing more was meant, than that he was not favourable to the ministry; whereas, by mixing and confounding the old sense with the new sense of the word government, an insinuation was conveyed that he was an enemy to our constitution; to King, lords, and commons, a jacobin, a leveller, and every thing that was bad. He could not help thinking, therefore, that this mo-

dern substitution of the word government for ministry, was a most unfortunate and dangerous innovation.

He was afraid he had trespassed upon their time, and said too much upon one word; and if so he was ready to beg pardon. (*Loud cries of no! no! no!*) He was aware they did not assemble there to hear criticisms upon words, they had a much nobler object in view.

He had said, that since the year 1780 we had had political changes, and various ministries. We had had Tory Ministries, and we had had Whig Ministries. But had these changes produced any substantial alteration for the better? Had there been any radical change of system? Had the national debt been at all reduced since the year 1780? Did we feel the burthen of taxation to be lighter than it was at that period? Was the number of sinecure places and pensions diminished since that year? Were those who fatten on the public spoil less numerous than formerly? Were corrupt and iniquitous jobs less frequent? Were the people of England treated with more respect and consideration by his Majesty's servants, or by the holders of seats in the house over the way, than they were in the year 1780? Had not the former very lately poured contempt and insult upon that large and respectable body of electors—the Livery of London, and refused them access to the royal ear? And had not the members of a certain assembly, after endeavouring in vain to stifle all inquiry into one of the most disgraceful failures that ever marked the course of a weak and contemptible ministry, had they not within a few days shut up the doors of the gallery, in order to prevent their constituents, whom they are pleased to call strangers, from acquainting themselves with proceedings which ought to be as public as possible. Did we enjoy more freedom at home, or was the nation more honoured and beloved abroad than it was in the year 1780? Were we not now in the sixteenth year of a war, as unjust in its origin, and more destructive, burthen-some, and disastrous in its progress than that with America? (*Hear! hear! hear!*) with this aggravation, that whereas that war might at any time be put an end to, as it actually was put an end to by the abandonment of its object, but the present is a war to which no man living can see any probable termination! Were our affairs at all mended, or our prospects more encouraging, than in the year 1780? Quite the reverse. He was sure they would agree with him, that if it were reasonable

to call for reform in the year 1780, there were many additional reasons for it in the year 1810.

Plain and simple as this proposition might appear to him and to those whom he addressed, there were a number of persons whose interest it was, and ever would be, to contrive objections, and who would fain persuade the people not only that no reform was necessary, but even that it was a subject too dangerous to be meddled with, and that it could not be attempted without great risque. Have we not already, say they, a House of Commons in which there are a great many members of considerable ability? This is not denied. Well! then, they say, what does it signify by whom they are elected? What would you have? or what could you have more, if they were elected in your own way. He would tell them. There was a quality no less necessary than ability to the composition of a good senator, of which, if he had not been misinformed, there was a most lamentable deficiency in that assembly, he meant—Honesty. That could only be secured through the medium of a free and unbiassed popular representation. Let them only be our real representatives, and we would take care to keep them honest. It was very far from his intention to deny that there were *individuals* of great integrity in that house; but if they would have an honest *house*, they must have free and frequent elections.

But the enemies of reform, who never would have done with objections as long as they could find one to which they could cling, say farther, What occasion is there for *legislative* reform? All the reform that is necessary is already within the power of the people. Let them only follow the example set them by the electors of Westminster, and you will have not only an able, but an honest parliament. It must be confessed there was, at first view, something plausible in this; but it was a mere trick; for bitter would be their sorrow, if all the electors of England were to follow the example of those of the city of Westminster. They, indeed, had set a noble example to the country by electing, as their representative in parliament, an able, honest, and enlightened man. [*Two! two! two! from numerous voices.*] He was happy to hear those expressions of attachment. They were both present, and he trusted of equal integrity; but in speaking only of one, he had particularly alluded to that glorious struggle when the electors of Westminster had brought in Sir Francis Burdett, without expense, against powerful opposition, (*Loud*

applause); he would therefore say, that it was their pride, and he hoped it would ever be so, that they had elected an able, honest, and enlightened man, *who was not even a candidate*, for no other reason than because they knew him to be able, honest, and enlightened. But alas! the situation of a great part of the electors in the three kingdoms was very different from theirs. In many boroughs the number of voters did not exceed twenty, and in some it was not more than five or six; every one of whom was dependant, almost for existence, upon some great man. To expect patriotic exertions from such persons was ridiculous. Those who affected to call upon the poor abject voters of a close borough to act independently, might as well advise the prisoners in Newgate to take an airing on Hampstead Heath! They can't get out. They have no means of freeing themselves from their fetters. To look for manly independence of mind, under those circumstances; to suppose that men could be excited to serve their country to their own ruin, was to betray the grossest ignorance of human nature. No, it is impossible; if we would have a real representation of the people in parliament, we must look back to the principles of our constitution—ELECTIONS MUST BE FREE AND FREQUENT.

He would now beg leave shortly to advert to what he had before stated to the meeting, and in which they had appeared to agree with him, namely, that though we had had alternately Tories and Whigs in power, we had had no radical change of system. He was anxious to be understood. It was by no means his intention to assert that there was no difference in men. That, certainly, was not his opinion. But this he would venture to say, that were the administration of affairs committed to the wisest and best men upon earth, all their attempts to reduce to practice a wise, economical, and just scheme of government would be utterly vain, so long as the present constitution of that house should remain. The system of the borough-mongers would overturn all. They would not even be able to keep their places for six months, unless they resorted to the only infallible means of securing a majority. What those means were, they all knew. The men themselves who hold the boroughs as their property, their families, friends, and dependants, must be provided for; otherwise they would turn round upon their employers, dismiss the ministry, and set up another better suited to their corrupt and selfish views.

He would ask, could these things be, if the people were fairly and freely represented in parliament? He was sure they would say no. In these calamitous circumstances, then, what was to be done? Was it not the duty of every independent and upright mind to look at the awful situation of the country, and to consider what yet might be attempted for its salvation? Most certainly it was. What ought they as electors of Westminster to do? Ought they not to make a full and public declaration of their sentiments and feelings, and to call upon their fellow-subjects in every part of the united kingdom to do the same? Ought they not to assert the undoubted right of the people to a FULL, FREE, AND EQUAL REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT? Ought they not to approach the throne with their complaints? Ought they not to make one effort more for a redress of their grievances? To these questions he was sure there could be but one reply. It was impossible to suppose a dissenting voice. He would therefore take the liberty to read some resolutions, which he should submit to the consideration of the meeting through the medium of the High Bailiff, by whom they would be separately put to the vote.

After the applause which followed this speech, Mr. Sturch read the seven following resolutions, which he proposed to the meeting for their adoption; these being seconded by Mr. Wimpory, and severally put to the vote by the High Bailiff, were carried unanimously:—

Resolved—

1. That in a Petition presented to the House of Commons, on the 6th day of May, 1793, and entered on its Journals, it was averred and offered to be proved at the Bar, that 154 individuals (peers and others) did, by their own authority, appoint, or procure the return of 307 members of that House (independent of those from Scotland), who were thus enabled to decide all questions in the name of the whole people of Great Britain.

2. That in a Report presented to the said House during the last session, it appears that a large portion of the members thereof are placemen and pensioners, dependent on the crown.

3. That in a Petition presented to the said House on the 9th day of December, 1790, and entered on its Journals, it was averred, that “seats therein were as notoriously rented and

bought as standings for cattle in a fair," which assertion was then resented as "scandalous and libellous." But when, on the 11th day of May last, two of his Majesty's ministers were accused of being concerned in the negotiation for the sale of a seat, they were screened from punishment, on a plea of the extreme notoriety of the practice, a practice which many of its members unblushingly justified.

4. That to this defective state of the representation is to be attributed long, unfortunate, and destructive wars; the immense debt and taxes with which the country is burthened; and those pernicious councils which have deprived our fellow-subjects, the citizens of London, of their ancient and constitutional right of petition to the King.

5. That by these corruptions, the people are deprived of their lawful share in the government, by representation in the Commons House of Parliament, which share has been usurped by an unlawful oligarchy of borough-mongers.

6. That a complete reform in the representation would destroy the corrupt influence of the borough faction, secure to the crown its just prerogatives, and restore to the people those rights of which they are unlawfully deprived.

7. That when the principles of our constitution shall be reduced to practice, the expenses, disorders, and tumults, attending elections, will be avoided; the rights and liberties of the people secured; taxes lessened; the unequal and grievous imposition of the property-tax removed; and future burthens prevented. Corruption will then be no longer necessary, much less avowed to be necessary, for the administration of public affairs.

Mr. STURCH then proposed a petition to the King, which Mr. GEORGE PULLER read as follows, from a fair copy on parchment.

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TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY,

The humble Petition of the Inhabitant Householders, Electors of the City and Liberties of Westminster, assembled in New Palace-yard, the 9th Day of February, 1810, by the Appointment of Arthur Morris, Esq. High Bailiff, in pursuance of a Requisition for that Purpose, signed by several Inhabitant Householders.

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the inhabitant householders, Electors of the City and Liberties of Westminster, respectfully approach your Majesty's throne, to declare our anxious solicitude for the honour of your crown, and the safety of your dominions; and, notwithstanding the unconstitutional and odious barriers which, by evil-minded counsellors, have recently been placed between your Majesty and our fellow-subjects, the Citizens of London, we, bearing in mind that the same Acts of Parliament which, and which alone, made the Crown of England your Majesty's birth-right, declared, as having always existed, the right of Petition to be our birth-right.

We humbly state to your Majesty, that it is with the deepest affliction we have observed the rapid tendency of this our beloved country, to that state of things which prepares nations for foreign subjugation, the cause of which, we humbly submit, is to be found in one of the three estates, of which the government of these realms is composed, having lost its independence.

We will neither detail to your Majesty the proofs offered to be produced at the Bar of the House of Commons, on the 6th day of May, 1798; nor those of the generally received opinion of your Majesty's faithful and loyal subjects, that a majority of the Members are not returned to that House by the people, but are placed there by a corrupt oligarchy of borough-mongers: but, with sorrow of heart, we find ourselves compelled to declare to your Majesty, our firm conviction, that corruption has been established and avowed in that House, and our belief, that to this cause ought to be attributed the unfortunate circumstances which have afflicted your people, and brought your Majesty's dominions into such imminent peril, that, to preserve them from subjugation, by a foe which

England for ages despised, will, as your Majesty has been graciously pleased to tell us, "require the utmost efforts of vigilance, fortitude, and perseverance."

We humbly represent to your Majesty, that the evils we so feelingly deplore, have caused the destruction of almost all the kingdoms and states on the continent of Europe; the corruptions of their governments, by alienating the affections of the people, having rendered them an easy conquest to the armies of France.

With unfeigned regret we state these lamentable circumstances to your Majesty; but we are not without hope we have a resource in the Constitution of our Country, and need only recur to its principles, to be again the great and glorious nation we were in former times: and we are fully convinced that all our dangers may be averted, your Majesty's throne secured, the rights and liberties of your people restored, and this nation once more become the admiration of the world,— simply, but only, by an efficient reform in the Commons' House of Parliament.

We, therefore, humbly pray, that your Majesty will be pleased to adopt such measures, as, in your Majesty's wisdom shall seem meet, for effecting a constitutional Reform in the Commons' House of Parliament, and for securing to your People the reality and uses of Representation.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

Mr. STURCH then moved, "That this be the Petition," which being seconded by Mr. Wimpory, and put by the High Bailiff, was carried unanimously.

Mr. STURCH then moved, "That the High Bailiff do sign this Petition," which being seconded by Mr. Wimpory, and put by the High Bailiff, was likewise carried unanimously, which was done as follows:

On the behalf and in the name of the meeting of the Petitioners, this 9th day of February, 1810,

(Signed) ARTHUR MORRIS, High Bailiff.

Mr. STURCH then moved, "That the High Bailiff, accompanied by the Right Hon. Lord Cochrane and Sir Francis

Burdett, Bart. our Representatives, be requested to present the same to his Majesty."

This was also seconded by Mr. Wimpory, and being put by the High Bailiff, was carried unanimously.

Mr. STURCH then proposed a Petition to the House of Commons, which was likewise read by Mr. George Puller, from a fair copy on parchment, as follows:—

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the Inhabitant Householders, Electors of the City and Liberties of Westminster, assembled in New Palace Yard, the 9th Day of February, 1810, by the appointment of Arthur Morris, Esq. the High Bailiff in pursuance of a Requisition for that Purpose, signed by several Inhabitant Householders,

Sheweth,

That in a Petition presented to your Honourable House, by Charles Grey, Esq. (now Earl Grey,) on Monday, the 6th day of May, 1793, and which Petition was entered on the Journals of your Honourable House, it was averred, and offered to be proved—

“ That the House of Commons did not fully and fairly represent the people of England.

“ That the elective franchise was so partially and unequally distributed, that a majority of your Honourable House was elected by less than a two-hundredth part of the male population.

“ That the right of voting was regulated by no uniform or rational principle.

“ That Rutland,” the smallest, “ and Yorkshire,” the largest county, “ returned the same number of Representatives.

“ That Cornwall,” which, by the census taken by order of Parliament, appears to contain a population of 188,269 “ returns as many members to your Honourable House as the counties of York, Rutland, and Middlesex,” which, by the

same census, contain 1,693,377.—And “that Cornwall and Wilts,” containing 373,376 persons, “send more Borough Members to Parliament than Yorkshire, Lancashire, Warwickshire, Middlesex, Worcestershire, and Somersetshire, united,” which contain 2,971,026.

“That 70 of your Honourable Members are returned by 35 places, where the elections are notoriously mere matters of form.

“That, in addition to the 70 so chosen, 90 more of your Honourable Members are elected by 46 places, in none of which the number of electors exceeds 50.

“That, in addition to the 160 so elected, 37 more of your Honourable Members are elected by 19 places, in none of which the number of electors exceeds 100.

“That, in addition to the 197 Honourable Members so chosen, 52 more are returned by 26 places, in none of which the number of voters exceeds 200.

“That, in addition to the 249 so elected, 20 more are returned for counties in Scotland, by less than 100 electors each, and 10 for counties in Scotland, by less than 250 each.

“That, in addition to the 279 so elected, 13 districts of burghs in Scotland, not containing 100 voters each, and two districts of burghs, not containing 125 each, return 15 more of your Honourable Members.

“That in this manner 294 of your Honourable Members are chosen, which, being a decided majority of the entire House of Commons, are enabled to decide all questions in the name of the whole people of Great Britain.

“That 84 individuals do, by their own immediate authority, send 157 of your Honourable Members to Parliament.

“That, in addition to these 157 Honourable Members, 150 more, making, in the whole, 307, are returned to your Honourable House, not by the collective voice of those whom they appear to represent, but by the recommendation of 70 powerful individuals, added to the 84 before mentioned, and making the total number of patrons altogether only 154, who return a decided majority of your Honourable House.

“ That no less than 150 of your Honourable Members owe their elections entirely to the interference of Peers : and that 40 Peers, in defiance to the Resolutions of your Honourable House, have possessed themselves of so many Burgage Tenures, and obtained such an absolute and uncontroled command, in many very small Boroughs in the kingdom, as to be enabled, by their own positive authority, to return 81 of your Honourable Members.

“ That seats in your Honourable House are sought for at a most extravagant and increasing rate of expense.

“ That the means tak by candidates to obtain, and by electors to bestow, the honour of a seat in your Honourable House, evidently appear to have been increasing in a progressive degree of fraud and corruption.”

Your petitioners are of opinion, that if the representation of the people in your Honourable House had not been very defective and unequal, they should not now have to complain of the sad effects produced by several unfortunate and destructive wars, or of the immense debt and taxes with which the country is burthened. They lament, that your Honourable House have not thought fit to take the petition, containing the above allegations, into your serious consideration ; the more so, as, since the time it was entered on the Journals of your Honourable House, the above causes cannot but have increased the number of corrupt persons who barter for seats. And it is with grief we state, that when a direct and distinct charge was made in your Honourable House, on the 11th day of May last, against Lord Castle-reagh and Mr. Perceval, members thereof, and who, at the same time, were two of His Majesty's Ministers, of having sold a seat therein, that your Honourable House refused to institute any inquiry—we are therefore compelled to conclude, that the only alternative which is left our country is a radical Reform in the Representation, or a final Extinction of its Liberties.

We cannot conceal from your Honourable House our apprehensions, that the prayer of this our petition will not be attended to until it be too late ; but your petitioners will, in any event, have the satisfaction arising from a conscientious discharge of the duty they owe their country.

Your petitioners most earnestly request, that your Honourable House will, at an early day, cause inquiry to be made into the present defective state of the Representation, and adopt such other means as shall prevent the choice of Representatives from being "committed to select bodies of men, of such limited numbers as render them an easy prey to the artful, or a ready purchase to the wealthy;" and to shorten the duration of Parliaments; and by removing the causes of that confusion, litigation, and expense, with which they are at this day conducted, to render frequent and new elections, what our ancestors at the Revolution asserted them to be, the means of a happy union and good agreement between the King and the People,

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

Mr. STURCH then moved, "That this be the Petition," which being seconded by Mr. Wimpory, and put by the High Bailiff, was carried unanimously.

Mr. STURCH then moved, "That the High Bailiff and twenty-five Electors do sign the Petition," which being seconded by Mr. Wimpory, and put by the chairman, was carried unanimously; as was likewise the next motion. "That it be delivered to our Representatives, the Right Hon. Lord Cochrane and Sir Francis Burdett, Bart. to be presented to the House of Commons, and they are hereby instructed to support the same."

This Petition was accordingly signed as follows:

By order of the meeting, this 9th day of February, 1810.

(Signed) ARTHUR MORRIS, High Bailiff.

And the names of twenty-five gentlemen followed.

Mr. WISHART then addressed the assembly in the following words:

Gentlemen,

A CELEBRATED writer of great abilities and political discernment asserts, "that the most probable way that the constitution of this country will be destroyed, is, through the corruption of our representatives in parliament:" unfortunately

occurrences that have, and are daily taking place, go strongly to establish the fearful fulfilment of this opinion. Is it not, then, the bounden duty of every subject faithful to the best interests of his country, and the succession of the family now on the throne, to endeavor by every legal means to avert so fatal a misfortune? and surely no measures more constitutional can be resorted to than these now adopted, of addressing the King, stating our opinions of the causes of the failures we have experienced, the evils we labor under from the incompetency of the administration to whom is intrusted the conduct of public affairs; petitioning the House of Commons for a redress of those abuses we experience in our parliamentary representation, and instructing our representatives to promote and assist in those inquiries which may lead to the discovery of who are the authors of those disasters we deplore, and that disgrace we lament, that so they may receive the reward due to their demerits. The enemies of parliamentary reform endeavor to brand those who maintain the right of the people to that reform with the name of jacobins and innovators:—we repel the charges on them; it is the innovations, the abuses, the corruptions, that have crept into our house of representatives, and paralysed its usefulness, that we wish to see removed. If they can shew us that grooms of the king's bed-chamber, or clerks of the irons of the mint, had seats in the House of Commons, when that assembly first began to exercise their functions; if they can prove that our representatives, instead of being paid for their attendance by their constituents, had doled out to them by the minister of the day, places, pensions, and sinecures, we will confess that very limited indeed is our knowledge of the constitution of our country. The next assertion the enemies of reform rest on is, "that it will be time enough to argue the necessity of reform, when those who are friendly thereto have agreed on all the points they wish that measure to embrace." Now the true friends of reform have long since agreed on the great objects they have in view: they wish to render the House of Commons independent of the executive power; they wish to see corruption extirpated, and the representatives of the people honored and respected. The most enlightened and best intentioned men may differ as to minute parts connected with parliamentary reform, but their principles will be the same; they are immutable, and can only have in view the accomplishment of the grand and leading objects of that desirable measure; they may differ whether annual or triennial parliaments are best, but they will all agree that

either are preferable to septennial ones, they may differ in whether it is best to prevent any placemen from sitting in the House, or permit a limited number of the ministry to be eligible for election. These are shades of difference that discussion might easily concede, while all agree that it is highly improper that surveyors of the meltings, storekeepers of the ordnance, or any servant of the public of a similar description, should have a seat in that assembly, part of whose duty it is to scrutinize their conduct, and investigate their accounts. There may also be a difference in opinion whether members should have any remuneration for their services; but if it is thought proper they should be paid, all must agree that it is more honorable for themselves, as well as more beneficial to the community, that they should receive it openly from their constituents, than from those ministers whose conduct they are to superintend, or whose prodigality they are to controul; indeed important benefits would be the consequence of members being paid by their constituents. I do not mean by giving them that small pittance they are at present entitled to receive, but a sum equal to the depreciation in the value of money since that was established, as that would be the death blow to those worn-out corporations and boroughs, about the sacredness of whose birth-rights we have lately had so much special pleading; we should soon have the corporation of Bath and Malbro', the voters of Hastings, Rye, Winchelsea, &c. &c. petitioning to be eased altogether of the burden of sending members to parliament, or else desiring that their townsmen might participate in those franchises they are now, from interested motives, so tenacious of withholding from them. Any decrease in the number of representatives hereby might be made up by giving, as is due, the elective franchise to the inhabitants of large towns and populous districts. This, however, it must be confessed, would occasion a terrible depreciation in the value of seats in the House of Commons, the sale of which first commenced in the reign of James the first, when a simple knight giving the returning officer a bribe of 20*l.* to send him to the House of Commons, was, on the discovery of the transaction, expelled. Seats have risen greatly in value since that time, being at present from three to five thousand pounds. Palliatives may be applied to stifle present complaint, but no palliatives can avail, even should our present imbecile and prodigal ministry be replaced by one combining all the ability and patriotism of our most enlightened states-

men. That change, without a thorough constitutional reform, bringing back the original purity of the British constitution, would not save us from the impending ruin; nothing but constitutional reform can invigorate every virtuous energy, and enable us to meet with determined endurance the difficulty and pressure of the times; nothing but a constitutional reform in the Commons House of Parliament, and bringing forward honest and enlightened men to conduct good and sufficient measures, can give confidence to every part of our public defence, and enable our country to contend successfully against a hostile world.

MR. PULLER then proposed, "That the thanks of this meeting be given to our worthy representatives, the Rt. Hon. Lord Cochrane and Sir Francis Burdett, Bart. for their general conduct in parliament." This being seconded by Mr. Wishart, and put by the High Bailiff, was carried unanimously.

LORD COCHRANE then stepped forward and expressed his high satisfaction at the unanimity which prevailed in the very respectable meeting he had the honour of addressing, on a subject in which every Briton must feel the most lively interest, and he confidently trusted that the noble example set by the Electors of Westminster, in their persevering exertions to obtain a parliamentary reform, would be imitated in every part of the United Kingdom. The whole system of government, as it now stood, was founded upon and upheld by one widely diffused system of corruption, an assertion, he presumed, that no man would venture to contradict. If in an assembly of any other nation, whose acts we view dispassionately, and appreciate justly, we found it contended that members chosen for committees, on whose determination often the most weighty interests of the state depend, should, to balance blind and party spirit, be selected in equal numbers from opposite sides of the house, what would we think of such an assembly? guided by the decision of a few leading members, whose power has been exemplified by lines descriptive of that illusion, which

Could make a lady seem a knight;
The cobwebs on a dungeon wall
Seem tap'stry, on a lordly hall;

A nut-shell seem a gilded barge ;
 A cottage seem a palace large ;
 And youth seem age, and age seem youth.
 All is DELUSION—nought is TRUTH.

If these lines were applicable to any public assembly, then was the time come when that assembly ought to be reformed. If such a view had been given of that House by a person (Mr. Stephens) adverse to the system, the justice of the imputation might have been doubted; but when such sentiments are avowed by those who endeavour to uphold corruption, it cannot be a question of doubt. He should not detain gentlemen by entering on subjects so ably set forth in the petition and address unanimously carried, but should confine himself to state some circumstances with which he was more acquainted than most persons present—that the system of corruption which so universally pervaded the kingdom, pervaded that service also on which the existence of the country materially depends. Are 120 sail of the line necessarily kept in commission, in order to blockade 40 sail of the line of the enemy, a fact which at once excites suspicion, that the naval service, paralyzed in its exertion, has become an appendage to the Borough system.

Ability and zeal are qualifications not now put in competition with claims arising from Borough interest; and thus appointments, which ought ever to be the reward of gallant services, have become, in the navy, similar to those in the Customs and Excise. A baneful system, which first began to be severely felt about the year ninety-six! when the power to reward conspicuous merit was, under various pretences, withdrawn from the naval commanders in chief. Now no independent mind can, for a period of years, contend with the difficulties thrown in the way. An officer, to serve his country, as a great nation ought to be served, must possess independence of mind: no cringing sycophant ever did a daring, a magnanimous act; yet such is the path that leads to promotion. What will be our situation? What hope is left, if such conduct be pursued? If Buonaparte, with all the resources of continental Europe, and all its ports at his command, adds only 60 sail of the line to his present number of 43, we should neither be able to find seamen to man, nor money to maintain our relative proportions. Buonaparte, however, will experience no difficulty in procuring sailors for his fleet: thanks to our present ministers, who afford a far better pro-

tection to his commerce, than his navy; the batteries on the shore and the shoals united, by upholding the organized system of abuse and fraud practised in the Courts of Admiralty, which in extent, combination, and effect, far exceed all the scandalous abuses which you have yet heard of, or imagined—abuses which have notoriously thrown our immense navy idle: not only by depriving exertion of its reward, but by compelling the captors actually to pay the courts for the trouble they take in dividing, among themselves, the proceeds arising from captured privateers, either out of the captors' own pockets or, gentlemen, out of yours! as you now pay five pounds for each man taken in enemy's privateers, for no other reason than to enable the navy to pay the expenses attending these captures, which are necessarily proceeded against in Doctors' Commons. The navy want no such reward: they are not desirous to rifle the pockets of their countrymen; they would rather, if permitted, draw their support from the purses of the enemies of their country—a fertile source, if the scandalous plunder committed on them, by the abuses, arising from the system pursued in the courts of Admiralty, did not close the prospect, which exertion could once open to the view. The seamen have long felt, and suffered under this load, this drawback on enterprise; and his Majesty's present government once underlook their relief; but in what way? No doubt one might suppose it was by reforming the Admiralty courts, or by abolishing the sinecures, arising out of the captures made by the exertions of the navy. No, gentlemen! this would have cut deep into the revenue of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has a reversion out of these of 33,000 pounds a year! What measure, then, do you think our wise ministers adopted, rather than touch the sacred system of abuse? Why they seized $38\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. of the share which the admirals and captains have possessed since the reign of Queen Anne—as if, gentlemen, that would increase the seamen's quota; as if the interests of the sailors were at variance with those of their commanding officer, whose will leads to active enterprise or detains them at a distance, in quiet inactivity; scrubbing decks and scouring stancheons, to the neglect of their country's service. Whatever ministers, judging by the success of their own practice, may imagine, our seamen are too intelligent, too well acquainted with the old proverb not to know, that killing the goose is not the way to get the golden eggs. Experience has taught them, that their commanders may sleep all night if they like, which

they certainly do when they can get nothing by sitting up ; and thus the enemy's vessels are left to sail along the shore, whilst for the safety, no doubt, of his Majesty's ships, they are all in the offing. No man can in this, conscientiously say, that in this his captain does wrong, though he certainly might act otherwise, and that, too, greatly to the benefit of the proctors and others of the Admiralty court. It may be asked, Why does not our navy destroy these vessels? My answer is, that no honour is to be got, and nothing gained, by fatigue, hardship, nightly watchings, and constant anxiety, which people will not undergo, for a period of years, night after night, without some object, beside the mere destruction of these vessels, or sending them to fatten the proctors in Doctors' Commons. This will be sufficiently intelligible to those who understand the feelings of the human heart. Were I to detain you, gentlemen, by reading a bill which I have in my pocket, you would see that when the captain got five shillings and seven-pence halfpenny! the proctor and the Admiralty court seized on thirty-seven pounds!—and yet the case I have adverted to is one of the cheapest that ever was condemned in Doctors' Commons. Whose share, then, should ministers have attacked—that of the proctors and Admiralty court, or that of the admirals and commanding officers in the navy? Here, then, is the cause why the trade of France is at this hour equal, at least in the number of vessels, to the trade of England. Look, gentlemen, at the river Thames; open your eyes, though others shut theirs, and you will see it full of licensed traders, belonging to the enemy, which arrive in crowds, from eighty to an hundred in a day, in defiance of our navigation act, and of every principle by which the naval superiority of this country has hitherto been maintained. Is there no reason to suspect, that this ruinous system of carrying on British commerce in foreign bottoms, in vessels of our enemies, has other effects, too, which are injurious to our country? Are we sure that our merchants may not be held in base subservience to the will of ministers, who may grant these licences to their friends, and refuse them to their political enemies? May not these licences be sold here, as well as in Holland and at Hamburg, where, as I am credibly informed, they are bought like other articles in the market, to serve as passports to the French and Dutch trade, and in their more distant voyages protect their vessels against the navy of England? For instance, from Holland to Norway—they they clear out for Leith; and from Norway to Holland then

clear out for London. Such is the effect of the policy pursued by his Majesty's present ministers; and such the extent to which the licence system prevails, that one officer with whom I am acquainted, examined by the boats of his ship alone 163 vessels, which, protected by these licences, were entering a port of the enemy. Will people continue this useless task day after day for years together? I mean the task of examining: No, they will let them pass to the right and to the left undisturbed, in security fully equal to our own commerce, which is as much exposed by the abuses of the Admiralty courts and injured by licences, as the enemy's is secured and encouraged by the operation of both. Ministers, indeed, tell us that our revenue is increased. Do they imagine that Buonaparte has no custom-house, at which he too receives his dues? He has one, and I doubt not better regulated than our own. I fear, gentlemen, that I have detained you too long on these subjects; but they are interesting to the country, and not generally known or even suspected: and were I to tell you that convoys crowd the coasts of France from Italy to the Elbe, sometimes of 150 sail, often from 60 to 70 vessels, you would scarce believe me; yet the fact is so, and it is susceptible of positive proof: I have a list of 220, which at one time were waiting at the point of Verdune for a fair wind to carry them to the northward. Such is the commerce on the coasts of France, that the ports of Bouc and Cette, which were sufficient to accommodate the trade of Louis XIV. and his successors, have lately been deepened and enlarged.

Shall I hear it asserted, that this traffic goes on in spite of the zealous exertions of our navy, which consists of a thousand vessels!! I think not, except by those who fatten by the system of robbery and plunder pursued—a system which has promoted the ends of Buonaparte, even more than it has injured ourselves.

I shall not detain you longer on this subject, as it is my intention to take an early opportunity to bring the matter before the honourable House of Commons; on which occasion I hope the gallery will not be shut, in order that you may know what passes there. It were to be wished that the name of each member, with the manner in which he voted, should be published every night, that his constituents might know how he executed the high trust reposed in him as a representative of the people. Permit me to express, gentlemen, the high

satisfaction I feel in having met you here on the present occasion, as well as the regularity and unanimity which prevails in this large and respectable meeting, whose efforts to obtain a Parliamentary Reform, I trust, will be seconded by every part of the kingdom.

The following Resolution was then moved by Mr. Puller.

“ That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Sir Francis Burdett, Bart. for calling upon the House of Commons, during the last Session, to take into their consideration the State of the Representation, and for his able and constitutional Speech on that occasion.”

This was seconded by Mr. Wishart, upon its being put by the High Bailiff; it was carried unanimously, accompanied by bursts of applause:—

SIR FRANCIS BURDETT then presented himself to the attention of the meeting, and was received with universal acclamations, when the worthy Baronet, after expressing the high sense he entertained of the honour they had done him, declared, that if it were possible for any thing to be wanting to induce him to exert his best abilities in the cause of liberty, and the great and important object that had been brought under their consideration, the flattering approbation they had bestowed upon his conduct, and the warm wishes they had expressed in behalf of the common interest for which they were struggling, could not fail of filling up that void. Motives, however, the most commanding and imperious, were not wanted to induce any man, who fairly considered the situation of the country, to pursue that line of political conduct which it had been his duty and all as ambition to follow. *On a complete and speedy Reform in Parliament the salvation of the country depended.* Of such a reform he had never despaired; but if he had ever done so in any degree, the conduct of that meeting, their promptitude and unanimity this day, to second those resolutions that had been submitted to them, had given him less cause than ever to entertain such a sentiment. (*Loud applause*). Several persons of their own body had already pointed out, with great ability, the grievances of which they had to complain, and the absolutely indispensable necessity of reform, for the salvation of their rights, and their property. On this subject, his honorable colleague

had also been so full and explicit, that he should not have thought it necessary farther to occupy their time, did he not consider it a duty to add his voice to the general sentiment, and to suffer no opportunity to pass unimproved of declaring his thorough conviction of those great truths, and his fixed determination on all occasions to support them. The first gentleman who had addressed them had with much ability stated, not only the grounds on which the necessity of reform rested, but had also examined the objections of its selfish and interested opponents. The general answer given to their complaints was, "What would you have?" To this reply, that had been so often repeated, that gentleman had answered in a very perspicuous and convincing manner, by shewing the evils that would accompany a perseverance in the present destructive system, and the advantages to be gained by an equal and fair representation of the people. For his own part, however, he should take a shorter way in replying to their question. They ask us, what would the people have? I answer—their rights. (*Loud applause*). The people have as much right to the full enjoyment of their part of the constitution, by representation in the House of Commons, as the King has to his crown.—(*Applause*). If I was asked what would they not have, I should answer such acts as have been recently committed by ministers. If you wish to be convinced of this truth, and of the gross violation of the rights of the people, look into Magna Charta; and if this be not sufficient, look into many Acts of Parliament that have lately been passed by the Legislature. It was impossible to compare the latter with the former, without seeing the necessity of Reform. The obstinacy and blindness of some people on this subject, reminded him of a fable he had read when a boy; the story was this, An old man had made a bargain with Death, that he should not summon him until he had given him three distinct warnings. At one time, however, his hearing failed him, he afterwards became lame, and at last blind. Soon after Death gave him the fatal summons, when the old man reminded him of his promise to give him three warnings. What! said Death, have you not had warnings enough? Are you not lame, are you not deaf, and are you not blind, and ought not these admonitions to have served you as so many warnings of your last hour? In like manner the people of this country wanted not warnings of the approaching dissolution of the Constitution. Was not the general corruption that had been introduced into the practice

and letter of the Constitution an ample and an early warning that some interposition was necessary? The erection of barracks all over the country—was not this a warning of the decay of the health and vigour of the Constitution? Was not the erection of Bastiles another warning. To which he might add, the introduction of foreign troops into the country, all of which were equally violations of the spirit of the Constitution. Corruption had been formed into a system, and amid the pillage and plunder committed by the servants of the public, were the people to be fooled and laughed at, and to be told there were no means of redress? They had had their warnings, and if they did not attend to them in time they might be surprised like the old man. The noble lord they had just heard, had shewed what abuses existed in that part of the Government with which he was best acquainted. It was the same in every part; in every part were the people pillaged and plundered, while the offenders, when detected, escaped with impunity. The gentlemen who met in that room over the way, where corruption was avowed and openly practised, and where such instances of delinquency were proved, sheltered the culprit from justice, saying no Act of Parliament existed for punishing such offenders.—They might as well talk of there being no Act of Parliament to make murder a punishable offence. The law of the land was as efficient to punish the one as the other; and the public robber, as well as the murderer and the petty felon, ought to be made amenable to those laws, and be subjected to a trial by Jury. One awful warning which they could not be a stranger to, was the attacks made on that palladium of our rights, the liberty of the press. The power the Attorney General already possessed over it was enough to constitute the warning, yet shackled as the press was, it continued to be an object of vengeance and of apprehension to the plunderers, who would never rest till they had got it completely under.

That which was unknown to our forefathers, had unblushingly been done. We had now in this country an army of Germans. What! could we not depend on those men for our defence, who, alone, have been found capable by their courage, though not by their numbers, of arresting the progress of that very enemy who has beaten these Germans, who are brought here to *defend* us out of their own country? Have we not barracks, bastiles, hired magistrates, arbitrary commissioners, by whom property is taken out of the protection of juries? He did, however, trust, that so universal a sympathy would go

through the land, that no man would be found so daring as to act as a commissioner, and continue to rob the country of the trial by jury, than which a more unconstitutional act was never committed. Our merchants were now under the thumb of the Borough Faction; unlike our forefathers, we had not now to contend for our rights in the *King's*, we had to contend with an ignominious base Borough Faction; it was not now the *lion*, but the jackall, against which we had to contend. The worthy citizen, who had so ably addressed them, had shewn that it were absurd to look for relief from the feeble palliatives of *partial* reform, *economical* reform, *temperate* reform, or, in short, any species of reform but that which goes at once to the very root of the evil. The reform which they sought was however their right, and he trusted would infallibly be recovered; had but that right been recovered, and excrised, thirty, nay twenty years ago, what would have been the consequence? Reform of parliament, say the enemies of this measure, *might* be good, but it would not alleviate taxation—let it, however, not be forgotten, that “*money is something, but liberty is more.*” A reform of parliament would prevent taxation; cruel, unjust, and scandalous wars. Had we but had a timely reform of parliament, should we have been involved in a war with America? Should we have been involved in a *late civil war*, that was attended with horrors and barbarities, which, though unquestionably committed, he felt himself ashamed to name, although unhappily there had been found those who were not unwilling to become the instruments of vengeance? Should we have been at this moment involved in a fifteen years' war, with a neighbouring nation, on the monstrous principle of a nation not having a right to change its government? The reform of parliament thirty years ago, would have prevented the accumulation of 560 millions of debt, and the incessant harassment of the collection of EIGHTY MILLIONS of annual taxation! They were not, however, content with hoggaring us, but must treat us as ideots and fools. It would be folly to attempt any thing short of that radical reform that was sought. Folly, indeed, would it be, after the sham reforms of 115 acts of parliament, under the pretence of reform, if we should be adding the 116th, instead of applying the only adequate remedy—a reform in the representation of the people. Were we contending for a mere change of administration which some called being mild and moderate, something which they think would appease the public irritation—he would say he did not desire it, unless the people were restored to the full posses-

sion of their rights. To struggle for an administration, would be like passengers contending for the most commodious situation in the cabin of a sinking ship. The number of the foreign troops in the kingdom, he supposed, he should have from a gentleman in a *neighbouring room*—but we had not only a German army, but German officers at this time commanding Englishmen—this army was Buonaparte's best advanced guard—he knew not how he could have more worthy and effectual pioneers. Were we but to put into the hands of our own countrymen arms, and to unite them all by the restoration of their political liberties, he should then feel no apprehension of the power of France, or that of all the powers of Europe combined in one universal mass. Sir Francis Burdett then concluded his eloquent address, by thanking the electors for the kind support they had ever shewn him, and earnestly recommended perseverance in the measures that had been adopted, and which he took that occasion to declare, had his full and entire concurrence.

Mr. PULLER then moved, "That the 'Thanks of the Meeting be given to Arthur Morris, Esq. High Bailiff, for the promptness with which he called the Meeting, and for his impartial conduct in the chair.;" which being seconded by Mr. Wishart, was unanimously adopted.

The High Bailiff, in a neat speech, returned his thanks, and then declared the business of the day to be at an end. Immediately after which

Mr. FINNERTY addressed the audience; he adverted to the worthy Baronet's remarks upon the liberty of the press, and took occasion to observe, that a conspiracy against that invaluable privilege seemed to exist among the bad men of the bar, and the bad men of the senate. This conspiracy, indeed, was so mischievous in its disposition, and so active in its operation, that the gentlemen connected with the press had to contend against considerable difficulty and danger. Yet that was not enough to satisfy the spirit of their foes. The aggravation or personal slander of the foulest kind had been recently added. Mr. Windham, in the wild vagaries of an imagination which seemed generally to scorn the influence of generous feeling or just reasoning, had thought proper to become their slanderer. But what opinion were the public likely to form of the candour or the manliness of that gentleman, when acquainted of a few facts. Mr. Windham professed to know nothing of the gentlemen connected with the press, although

personally intimate with many of them, and although he not long since proclaimed one of them worthy of a statue of gold, Mr. Windham imputed venality to the press, without exception or discrimination—without stating one fact to justify the imputation. For himself, and for all the gentlemen with whom he had the honour to be acquainted, he could challenge the Right Hon. Gentleman to sustain his charge. Indeed it struck his mind that the Right Hon. Gentleman and others would not be so forward to press this charge if the generality of the press were really venal. It was, he believed, the maintenance of a contrary character which provoked the ire of these gentlemen. If venal, the press would not be by any means so offensive. But with what pretensions to manliness could the Right Hon. Gentleman abuse gentlemen in a situation in which he knew they had not the opportunity of reply. There were many of these gentlemen, who, if they had had that opportunity, might perhaps have made the Right Hon. Gentleman feel something like repentance, that he had ventured upon such an attack. But upon what possible ground could the Right Hon. Gentleman think himself warranted in the extraordinary course he had taken? Among the subjects of his calumny were many gentlemen as highly gifted, as liberally educated, and as honourably disposed as the Right Hon. Gentleman himself, and he would ask, if the Right Hon. Gentleman had not been born to fortune, what might have been his fate? Most probably instead of being a distinguished member of the senate, he would have now been engaged in editing the works of some old Joker or Jesuit, Joe Miler, or Ignatius Loyola. (*A laugh.*)

The Right Hon. Gentleman when he indulged in the gross attack alluded to was, perhaps, somewhat in the state of mind which belongs to him whenever Parliamentary Reform is under discussion. If so, he is excusable. For really on such an occasion the Right Hon. Gentleman betrays symptoms which would seem to justify a verdict of lunacy. At such periods the reason of the country, the public opinion, was set at nought; it was scarcely worthy of common attention. But that language was not confined to Mr. Windham. It was made use of by others, particularly on the ministerial side, from whom one heard it with astonishment, considering the nature of their intellect, and the industry they were known to employ, in appealing to that very opinion which they affected to contemn. Like Mr. Windham, they proclaimed popularity

as of no account, and yet they omitted no sly secret expedient to seduce its favour. But the conduct of such men in presuming to speak with arrogance of the intellect and opinion of the public was quite intolerable. He really believed that there was not a town of any importance in the country where there was any spirit of political inquiry and a reading room, in which men could not be found as capable in every respect of governing the empire as the present ministers. It was notorious, indeed, that in several districts there were many persons infinitely more capable. Let then that Reform be sought for which would give to each district the opportunity of appointing men of talents and integrity as their representatives, which would afford to the people the means of employing all the mind they possessed for the public service, and which would effectually preserve the country from the disgrace and danger of an incapable administration.

Colonel Wardle, who had been called away by some business, now appeared upon the hustings, and being recognised, a cry of "*Colonel Wardle, come forward! speak! speak!*" was vociferated from every quarter. As the Meeting was over, Colonel Wardle felt some reluctance in addressing the Electors; but the desire of the people to hear him increasing, he came forward to the front of the hustings, where he no sooner made his appearance, than an universal shout was given.

COLONEL WARDLE then spoke to the following effect:—

Gentlemen, it was not my intention to have offered myself to this Meeting, feeling as I do, that I had no right to offer myself, having so little connexion with the city of Westminster, beyond that of the kind and steady support which I have received, and which has enabled me to combat and overthrow all my enemies. (*Here an universal huzza was given.*) When I first had an opportunity of giving my sentiments on the subject of a Reform of Parliament, I stated my firm conviction, that, if the people of England were fairly and honestly represented, a very important portion of the burthens with which they are so severely oppressed, might be removed with perfect safety, and without in the least reducing the means of our national defence; and I did assert my firm belief, that the whole of that detested and inquisitorial tax, called the Property Tax, might be saved, provided you had honest men to represent you—for this I was called to a severe account in "*that Room,*" and I was, at the same time, called upon to state the ground for such my assertion. I accepted the challenge without he-

situation, and certainly did hold up to view, in *that Room*, a detail of abuses which required the interposition of the legislature, and by which, as I clearly shewed, more than ELEVEN MILLIONS might be saved annually to the state. Having stated the grounds of my assertion, I followed it up by moving for the necessary documents, from which I shall be able to prove that more than what I then stated might be saved, provided the people had honest and faithful servants, provided they were fairly represented; and whenever you are fairly represented, if I should then have a seat in that House, I pledge myself to bring forward such plans of salutary retrenchment as shall save you the money. (*Colonel Wardle was frequently interrupted by applause, and was here obliged to pause a considerable time.*) It is the constant practice of Ministers, whether they be Whigs or whether they be Tories, when any abuse is pointed out, which they cannot, dare not meet, to grant what they term "Inquiry;" then they set to work and appoint a Board of Commissioners of *their own*; but saddling you with the expence. These *their* Commissioners begin their labours with great formality, and every demonstration of vigour, but year creeps after year—the Inquiry is still in progress, but the end is, an addition to the burthens of taxation. You have had secret Commissions and open Commissions, but the result is precisely the same. Gentlemen, about three years ago a Commission was established, at the expence of, I believe, seven thousand pounds a year, to examine the accounts of the late Barrack-Master-General, General De Lancy, who was held to be a defaulter to an immense amount, and who, prior to the Commission being established, had been obliged to *refund* about ninety thousand pounds. Now that Commission, Gentlemen, has been sitting ever since, but we see no Report, and from what I have heard, THIRTY years may not suffice to finish that Inquiry; so in order to make the matter *better*, you are saddled with an expence of 7000*l.* a year for the remainder of your lives at least, if not for the lives of your children, to pay Commissioners for those labours which, had you had faithful Representatives, never could have been necessary; *they* would have been the honest guardians of your purse, they would have suffered neither Barrack-Master nor Contractor to have plundered you. There is another point, Gentlemen, to which I beg leave to draw your attention; and that is, a Report which was laid on the table about two years ago, respecting the York Hospital, at Chelsea. In that Report, which was made by the *Commissioners*, it is stated, that

in the year 1800, no less a quantity than TWELVE PIPES of Red Port Wine was *consumed*, but in the year preceding a Pipe of port was for a considerable period consumed in Ten Days. That Report, Gentlemen, has been on the table of those men who call themselves your representatives for two years. Last session I endeavoured to call their attention to this Report; but the Medical Board is still the same, and the consequences have been such as were to be expected from such a set of men. Where were they when our unfortunate soldiers were hourly dying at Walcheren? Where were they then? They were no where to be found. Perhaps had they been sought for at the York Hospital they might have been found enjoying themselves over their Port! These are strong facts; but, Gentlemen, they cannot be contradicted; and I sincerely hope they will make a proper impression on your minds, and keep you alive to the absolute necessity of a Reform in Parliament. I trust that, instead of contenting yourselves with cursing the tax-gatherers, who molest you in your houses, you will come forth again and again to speak the constitutional language that has been held this day; and to tell your rulers that you must and will have your rights! I will embrace this opportunity of returning you my thanks for your conduct towards myself, and for the firm support you have afforded me, which has been my greatest solace under the difficulties against which I have had to struggle. As to meeting, by explanation, every base abusive accusation which has been cast upon me, the calumnies are so innumerable, that it were a fruitless effort to attempt it. The abuse that has been heaped on my head, has no other source or cause than that of my having dared to oppose myself to corruption, than that of having dared to aver myself a fast friend to the people of England, to their rights and to their liberties. You all know the virulence of persecution that I have suffered, in consequence of that attachment, but to enter into a minute detail of the particulars, would be disgusting—it would be beneath you to hear, or myself to relate. There is one fact arising out of my charges against the Duke of York, which I embrace this opportunity of retuing: it is one of the foulest calumnies that ever fell from the tongue of man. It has been insinuated that I brought forward the charges against the Duke of York, at the instigation of the Duke of Kent. Gentlemen, I do solemnly aver, that I never, in my life, had communication with the Duke of Kent on that or any subject whatever, either directly or indirectly, by letter, or through the intervention or communication of

any person or persons. I did not even know the person of the Duke of Kent, and never, to my knowledge, saw him until the day of the trial for the Conspiracy, when he was in the court, seated on the Bench by the Judge. In justice to His Royal Highness, to the public, and to myself, I feel it incumbent on me to make this declaration, which I have no doubt the Duke of Kent, as a man of honour and integrity, would have no hesitation in confirming, were it necessary, by his oath, so far as relates to himself. You believe me, I am persuaded, to be *honest and true*. (*We believe every word you have said! was vociferated from hundreds of voices.*) I shall only repeat my thanks for the attention with which you have honoured me, and will assure you, that my exertions in the cause of the people of England will cease only with my life.

Colonel Wardle then bowing retired, three cheers were given, to which a general exclamation of "Wardle for ever! Wardle for ever!" immediately succeeded, and continued for some time.

MR. COX addressed the electors at some length, and contended, in very strong terms, on the necessity of a Reform in our Parliamentary Representation. He called on them to arouse as Britons, and cry aloud for Reform; for that, and that alone could save the country. Corruption in the administration of public affairs unblushingly stalked abroad, and *favouritism* barricades the throne. The whole of the measures of the present Ministers proved their imbecility, especially their expeditions and campaigns. He conjured the Electors to be unanimous, and thanked them for the attention with which they had heard him. After which the immense assemblage of the people dispersed; and notwithstanding the Meeting was held in the open air, and the weather unfavourable, very few retired until Mr. Cox had finished speaking, which was near 4 o'clock.

The petitions having been signed, as desired by the Meeting, Lord Cochrane, and Sir Francis Burdett, immediately proceeded to the House of Commons; where Sir Francis Burdett presented the Petition to that House. The worthy member stated, "That it had been resolved upon, at a very numerous meeting of his constituents that day, in Palace-Yard, and that it was his intention, at a proper opportunity, to follow it up with a motion." It was then read through, and ordered to lie upon the table.

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