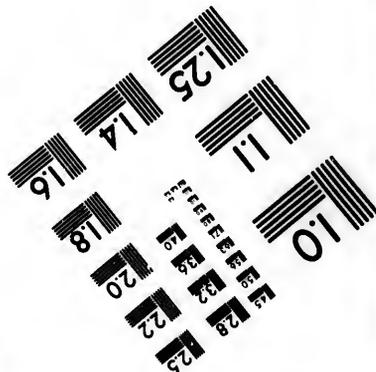
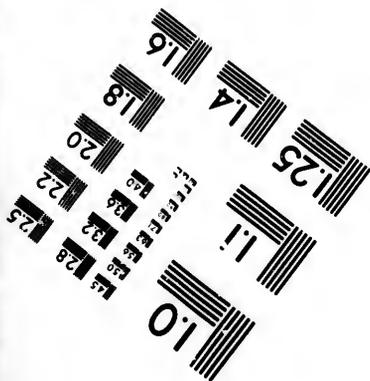
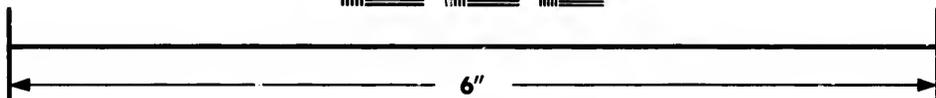
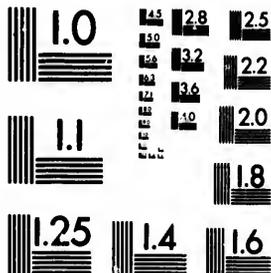


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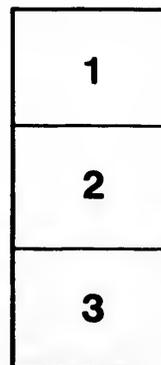
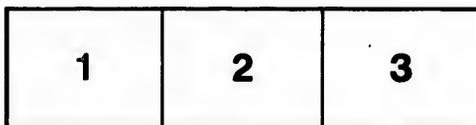
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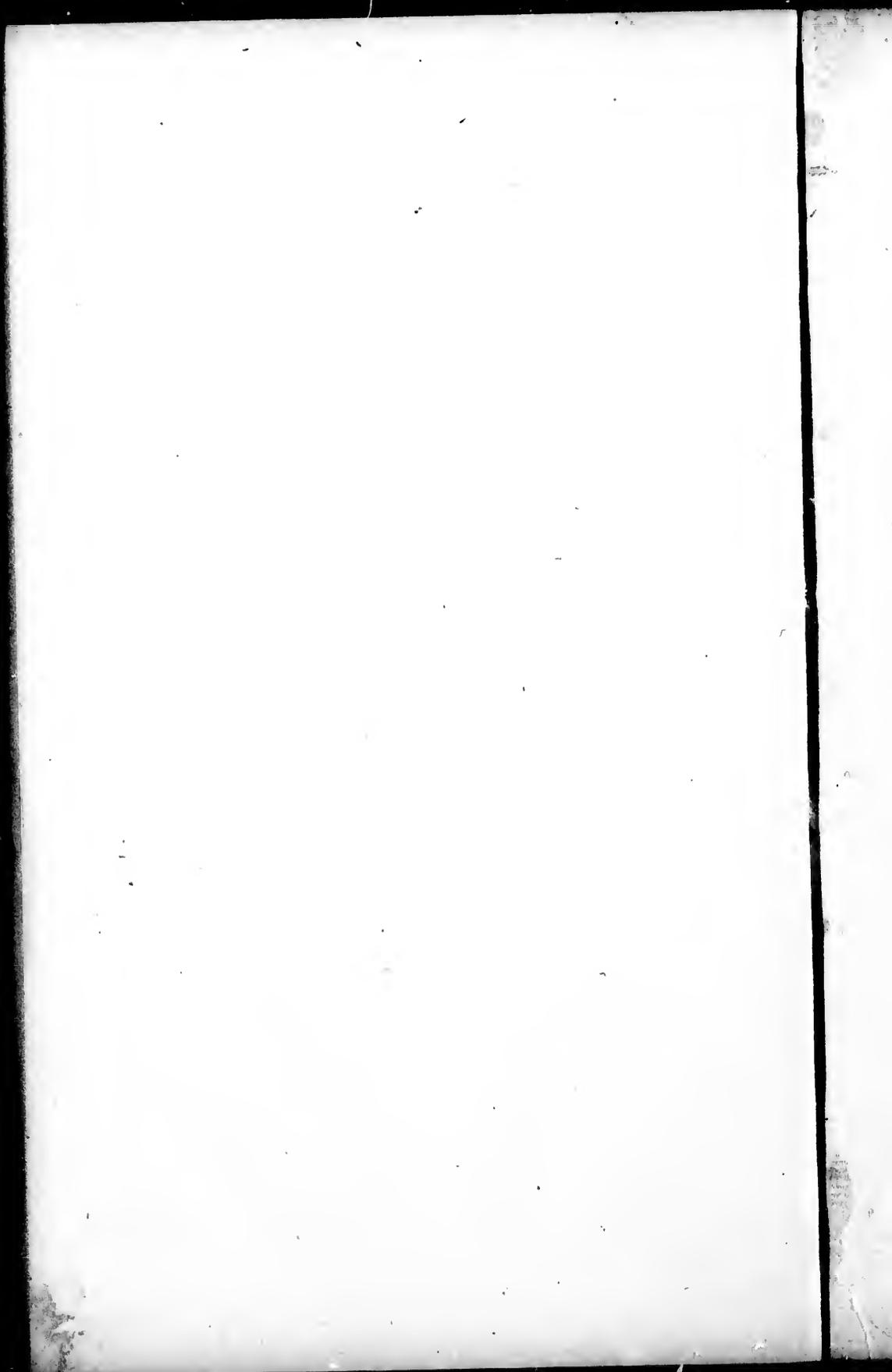
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THE EARL OF SHELBURNE.

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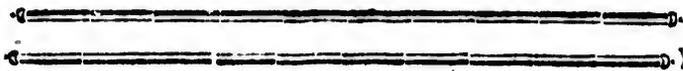
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THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF SHELBURNE,
FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

ILLE DOLIS INSTRUCTUS ET ARTE PELASGA.
VIRGIL.

L O N D O N:
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L E T T E R
T O
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE EARL OF SHELBURNE.



MY LORD,

AT a time when the affairs of this country were in the highest degree critical, when the nation had been brought almost to the brink of ruin by an administration, whose conduct had rendered them the just objects of public execration, and of public punishment, your lordship was called to take a share in the councils of your sovereign, and placed in an elevated and
B important

important station. Other noblemen and gentlemen, distinguished for their abilities, and their steady opposition to the measures of the late ministry, were called into office at the same time; and from your united efforts considerable expectations were formed, that the national calamities might at least be in some degree alleviated, that a plan of public œconomy might be adopted, and that some stop might be put to a war, which had been commenced in wickedness and in folly, which had been carried on with the most wanton profusion of blood and of treasure, and by which Great Britain had been injured and disgraced beyond the example of any former period.

BUT though men flattered themselves, when your lordship came into office, that you would co-operate with others
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in promoting the interests of the nation, yet it was not in the Earl of Shelburne that the public chiefly reposed their confidence. In the speeches of your lordship in parliament, in opposition to the measures of the late administration, you had manifested a just sense of the dangerous situation into which the nation had been brought by the American war, and of the necessity of public œconomy; you had pointed out, in very energetic language, the pernicious tendency of the influence of the crown; and you had displayed a considerable knowledge of the political connexions, interests, and transactions of foreign nations. But though you had thereby rendered yourself conspicuous in the house of peers, yet, from whatever cause it proceeded, the public appear not to have had that confidence in the rectitude of your intentions, and the up-

rightness of your views, which they had in some others who engaged in the opposition. Your conduct, since your entrance into power, has unhappily afforded too much evidence, that the suspicion and distrust of your lordship which had been entertained, were not without foundation.

THE removal of the last iniquitous and most corrupt ministry, and the appointment of men in their stead who professed principles totally opposite, and who had avowed an ardent attachment to the rights and liberties of the people, was a most important political revolution. It was an event which the spirit of the nation ought long before to have effected, but which a concurrence of circumstances at length brought about, when there seemed little reason to form any such expectation. It was, however,
very

very early seen, that the stability of the new ministry depended upon their union; and some apprehensions were formed of differences among them, on account of a known diversity of sentiment on certain points. But it was hoped, that a regard to their common interest, and to the welfare of the nation, which could not be essentially promoted but by their unanimity, would prevent their having any such open disagreements, as would be injurious to the public service. Nor was it expected, that the ambition of an individual, who was desirous of obtaining an ascendancy in the cabinet, would have destroyed the fairest hopes that had been formed of important national benefits from the new administration.

THE death of the late Marquis of ROCKINGHAM, an event greatly to be lamented by the real friends to the best interests

interests of this country, gave an opportunity to your lordship to aim at obtaining a more elevated station ; and of convincing every intelligent observer, that your own aggrandizement was much more the object of your attention, than the welfare of your country ; or than that union in the cabinet, among men of truly public principles, which could only effectuate the salvation of the nation, at a period of so much calamity and danger. Without the approbation of your colleagues in office, you hastily and privately obtained from his majesty a grant of the office of first lord of the treasury ; without appearing to give yourself much concern, whether this was an appointment agreeable to those with whom you had hitherto acted, or whether they would continue to act under the arrangement which would be the result of your lordship's elevation.

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This was a step naturally calculated to destroy that union, without which the great interests of the people could not be promoted, and which therefore it cannot be supposed that your lordship would have taken, if you had been actuated by a sincere attachment to the welfare of the nation, or if your own personal aggrandizement had not been the ultimate object of your aim.

It is pretended by your friends, that you had a just and reasonable claim to the office you now hold, upon the death of the late Marquis of Rockingham, from your rank, abilities, and influence. Admitting this to be your opinion, it might be very natural for you, when that unfortunate event happened, to state your pretensions to the other noblemen and gentlemen, who were associated with your lordship in
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the new administration. But if you had really been influenced by a regard to the interests of the public, you would certainly have continued in the station in which you were, when you found your removal to the treasury disagreeable to your colleagues, rather than the nation should have lost the services of Mr. Fox and Mr. BURKE, men who each of them possessed abilities much superior to your own; or rather than have been the means of breaking up an administration, from which the public had formed such flattering expectations.

BUT it has been intimated, by your lordship and your friends, that if his majesty thought proper to place you at the head of the treasury, he had an undoubted right to do it by virtue of his royal prerogative, nor had the rest of his ministers any right to oppose it.

With respect to his majesty's prerogative, that will enable him at any time to make a peer of the weakest, most contemptible, and most worthless man in his dominions, and to place him at the head of the treasury the next week. Thus far his majesty's prerogative undoubtedly extends; and the only security against such an exertion of it, excepting the royal wisdom, is, that no persons of rank or character would act with such a man, and that it is not very probable that the parliament would grant supplies to such a minister with much liberality. But the extent of the royal prerogative in this case is not a disputed point. Your lordship, therefore, could have no intention to enlighten your auditors when you introduced this topic; but it might serve to throw some obscurity over the matter in debate; and you knew it to be a subject on which

jealousy and of distrust to the rest of your colleagues. Your lordship has said in parliament of "the system of secret advisers," that it is "a baleful and accursed system*." In this opinion, my lord, you have the concurrence of the wisest and best men in this country; and their ardent wish is, that it may not be revived under your lordship.

It appears, that before the decease of the Marquis of Rockingham, your lordship had differed so much in opinion from other members of the cabinet, that Mr. Fox had expressed the greatest unwillingness to act in concert with you; and had declared his intentions of resigning. The principal point in contest was, the acknowledgment of the independence of America. Your lordship

* Almon's Parliamentary Debates, vol. XV. p. 47.

declared, as a reason for not acceding to this measure, that the fun of Britain would be set for ever, when that event should have taken place. This, my lord, was a very proper subject of consideration for the government of this country some years since: but it is now much too late. Whatever degradation Great Britain may have sustained by her separation from America, the event has already taken place. America is independent. We may as well debate whether the city of Calais, or the province of Normandy, shall now be considered as part of the British empire, as whether the United colonies of America are now to come under that description. The only point that can at present be debated is, whether the parliament of Great Britain shall formally acknowledge that independence; whether they shall acknowledge a fact notorious to all the world.

This

This acknowledgment appears necessary to our obtaining peace; but is in no respect necessary to ascertain the fact. Those weak, arbitrary, and violent measures, which have been adopted during the course of the present reign against the colonies of America, have established their independence beyond any possibility of prevention. Of this your lordship has too much understanding not to be convinced; though you may affect a contrary opinion, from an idea that a compliance with royal prejudices is the best method of obtaining the royal favour.

To suppose that the inhabitants of America, after the blood, and slaughter, and devastation, which have marked the progress of the royal arms in that country; after they have successfully resisted the most vigorous efforts, and the greatest armaments,

armaments, that we have been able to employ against them; after they have captured two British generals, and two British armies; after the royal troops have been nearly driven from the continent; and after the independence of the United States has been acknowledged by some of the first powers in Europe; to suppose, that after all this the Americans will again acknowledge the authority of the king of Great Britain, and give up their independence, is one of the weakest and most absurd imaginations that can enter into any human understanding. I cannot, therefore, conceive your lordship to be capable of it; or that you could advance such a sentiment for any other purpose, than that of promoting those temporary views which were suggested by your ambition.

AT a period big with public danger,
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and public calamity, the dissolution of a political confederacy, whose united efforts might have saved the nation, cannot be too much lamented. It was very natural for Mr. Fox, who will be allowed even by his enemies to possess no ordinary degree of penetration, to refuse to continue in the administration, if a man were placed at the head of it, whose principles he had discovered to be in opposition to his own, and hostile to the interests of the nation. But those who have formed a just estimate of the great and comprehensive talents of Mr. Fox, of his energetic eloquence, of his weight and influence in parliament, and of the rectitude of those principles which he avows, and by which he appears to be actuated, must consider his removal from office as a great national evil. That your efforts in the cause of the public, that your parliamentary exertions were in any degree
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to be compared with those of Mr. Fox, will hardly be pretended by the most partial of your lordship's friends. But there was an openness, a manliness in Mr. Fox's character, which rendered him no favourite in the closet. He could not stoop to the mean arts of flattery; he was no adept in courtly adulation. In these qualities your lordship had manifestly and greatly the advantage.

THE avidity with which your lordship grasped at the first office of power and of influence, regardless of the sentiments of your colleagues; the sedulous industry with which you courted royal favour, and the zeal which you displayed in support of royal prerogative, notwithstanding your recent declamations against the pernicious and ruinous influence of the crown; the cool indifference with which
 you

you saw yourself deserted by men of the most splendid talents, and in whom the public had placed the greatest confidence; these were circumstances strikingly characteristic of dispositions, totally repugnant to those of genuine patriotism. It might be supposed, that the resignation of Mr. Fox was too precipitate; but this measure might arise from views of the most laudable nature, untinged by personal animosity, or by any interested or ambitious motives. He might be induced to take this step from a full conviction, that a new system of secret influence was commencing, under the auspices of your lordship, and that you were engaged in the support of measures pernicious to the best interests of your country. His conduct might be the result of virtue, and of a real and ardent attachment to the public welfare; but who can assign any other motives for

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your eagerness to gain possession of the treasury, but those of selfishness and of ambition? We may also ask, whether any but a prerogative minister, whether any but a minister who thought to maintain his ground by flattering the prince, would dare to threaten the council, or the parliament, with a revival, or exertion of the royal negative? When a conduct like this is adopted by a minister, just brought into power upon great and public principles, and who had distinguished himself by loud complaints against the influence of the crown, is there not the utmost reason for suspicion and distrust, and for apprehending a treacherous desertion of the great interests of the people?

IT has been one of the misfortunes attendant on your lordship, that your intrigues have been the means of lowering

ing the general opinion of two gentlemen, of whom the public have for some years thought very highly. Your friendship may have contributed to enrich them, but it has been with some diminution of character. I refer to the pensions which you procured for colonel Barrè and lord Ashburton ; and of which you endeavoured to make the marquis of Rockingham appear the author. But notwithstanding your lordship's dexterity, the public have been undeceived upon that subject. As to colonel Barrè, I acknowledge the merit and parliamentary services of that gentleman ; but no man can reasonably expect to retain the character of a disinterested patriot, if he eagerly embraces the first opportunity of being repaid all that he has lost by that public spirit, by which he might formerly be distinguished. The colonel was put into possession of a lucrative

place ; and should therefore have been content without a pension, though his place might not render him quite so rich, as he might have been if he had always voted as former ministers would have directed him. The acquisition of great wealth, and of a high reputation for patriotism, are not often to be expected by the same man. He who is solicitous to obtain the former, must generally be content to relinquish the latter. As to Mr. DUNNING, it required neither Grecian, nor Roman virtue, in a man who had accumulated so large a fortune by his profession, to promote the interests of his country without a pension. If the dignity of the peerage could not be supported without a pension, that acuteness of understanding by which Mr. Dunning has always been distinguished, should have taught him, that the title of Lord Ashburton, when accompanied with a pension,

pension, would not be an accession of dignity, but a real degradation. But this is a subject on which I am not disposed to dwell; the merits of Mr. Dunning as a constitutional lawyer, and his important parliamentary services, have deservedly raised him high in the estimation of his country; and I am sorry that their lustre should in any degree have been tarnished, by his descent into a peerage.

THE concurrence in these pensions, and the defence of them, appear to me to be the most censurable part of the conduct of Mr. Fox and of Mr. Burke, during the short time that they were in administration. It was probably a sacrifice that was made to peace, and to your lordship; but it was a sacrifice that ought not to have been made. They should have had the firmness to resist
every

every measure of this kind, and not have been led to countenance any thing of so exceptionable a nature, either by complaisance to your lordship, and your friends, or by any personal esteem for the gentlemen on whom the pensions were conferred. A ministry brought in on great and public principles, should have adhered to those principles ; and not have hazarded their credit with the nation, by conferring pensions even on the most meritorious of their friends. It was of infinite importance to maintain their reputation with the people ; and this could hardly be done, by giving pensions to some of their own party, almost as soon as they came into office. The gentlemen on whom these pensions were conferred were, indeed, the more immediate friends of your lordship ; but the whole of the new administration naturally incurred some part of the public censure

on the occasion. If there were any honourable method by which pensions might have been conferred on Mr. Barrè and Mr. Dunning, as a reward for their public services, the merit of which I am in no respect inclined to lessen, it must have been by a vote of parliament, in a manner similar to that lately bestowed on Mr. Grattan by the parliament of Ireland. But grants of this kind by ministers only, and by ministers whose eloquence against pensions was so strongly in every man's memory, and to gentlemen who had themselves displayed equal eloquence on the same subject, were not likely to increase the public confidence in the new administration, or to convince mankind that their principles and conduct were perfectly suitable to their professions.

ONE circumstance which has contributed

buted to prevent the nation from wholly despairing, that some measures might be adopted beneficial to the kingdom, though your lordship presides in the administration, is, that such men as the Duke of Richmond, Lord Camden, and Lord Keppel, still remain in office. It cannot, indeed, be expected, that these noblemen will continue to act in concert with you, if they see you openly promoting measures ruinous to the nation. But they may continue in office, till they discover it absolutely necessary to quit all connexion with you, and then find too late, that they have contributed to the promotion of your designs, and to the establishment of your power; and that they have unintentionally been the means of injuring their country. As to the DUKE OF RICHMOND, the general tenor of his conduct in parliament has given him a just claim to public confidence and
and

applause. He has laboured with great zeal, with great ability, and with indefatigable industry, to promote the national interests; free from aristocratic prejudices, he has nobly supported the rights of the people at large; and has exerted himself, in a manner that must ever be remembered to his honour, to procure a more just and equal parliamentary representation.

WHEN Mr. Fox retired from administration, your lordship was naturally apprehensive of a powerful opposition in parliament; and you discovered no ordinary share of skill in political manœuvres, when you prevailed on Mr. WILLIAM PITT to take a part in the new ministry, as now formed; by which he might be induced to enter the lists with Mr. Fox, and thereby afford your lordship some assistance and support

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against

against the vigorous attacks of that very formidable orator. It can, indeed, be no wonder, that so young a man as Mr. Pitt, however splendid his talents, should have been brought over to enlist under the banners of your lordship. Admitting him to be actuated by the purest motives, he could not be supposed to be a match for that art and dexterity, of which you are known to be so great a master. Whatever your intentions might be, you doubtless gave them the most plausible appearance: and it must be flattering to young ambition, to be called to fill so important an office in the state, as that which he now holds at so early a period of life. The time may possibly arrive, when he will not consider his connexion with your lordship as a fortunate circumstance for his reputation: but, at all events, I hope that his future conduct will not disgrace his talents

lents and his descent. Should he find, that he is brought into power only to promote the ambitious designs of others, and to support that SECRET INFLUENCE of which his noble father so pathetically complained, that secret influence which has made such rapid strides towards the destruction of this country; whenever he shall have made this discovery, it may reasonably be hoped, that he will instantaneously quit such connexions, which must be so dangerous to his honour and his fame, and adopt such a line of conduct as will be worthy of the son of the illustrious CHATHAM: In one measure, of great national importance, he has already pledged himself to the public; and cannot desert the interests of the people without a total forfeiture of his reputation. I will not, therefore, suppose this possible; but shall presume that we may rest assured, that a bill for a more equal

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representation

representation of the people will receive from Mr. PITT the most unequivocal, firm, and vigorous support.

THE present parliamentary representation of this country is so extremely partial and inadequate, that it requires an immediate and substantial reform; and no object can be more worthy of the attention of the people at large, nor is there any which they ought more ardently and steadily to labour to attain, than a more equal representation. The difficulties, which are sometimes urged respecting this great business, have in them much more of imagination, than of reality. They are either started by the timid and the indolent, or by artful men who dislike the measure, but who have too strong a conviction of its rectitude, to venture to oppose it openly and explicitly. If your lordship should sincerely

cerely employ the influence you have obtained with his majesty, in the promotion of this great and important national object, it will contribute, beyond any thing else, to restore you to the confidence of your country.

As the removal of Mr. Fox from office is a public evil, in the same light must be considered the loss of Mr. EDMUND BURKE. That gentleman possesses such a splendour of genius, he has displayed such an extent of knowledge, and such uncommon powers of eloquence, as have long excited the general admiration. Nor is he entitled to less esteem for the qualities of his heart, than for those of his understanding. It is, however, to be regretted, that this amiable man, this elegant and classic orator, should not be more a friend to shortening the duration of parliament, and equalizing the representation

sentation of the people, than he has been generally supposed. He seems too much under the influence of aristocratic prejudices, though the uniform integrity of his conduct entitles him to our fullest confidence in the rectitude of his intentions. Whatever may be his defects, they are so much over-balanced by his merits, that his removal from power is greatly to be lamented; and if public services, hitherto unrewarded, are to be recompensed by pensions, no man can have a better claim than Mr. Burke. When colonel Barrè took possession of the office of paymaster of the forces, it is natural to suppose, that he must feel somewhat awkward at the recollection, that the late paymaster had neither place nor pension.

BUT if Mr. Fox and Mr. BURKE have ceased to form any part of the administration

stration of this country, your lordship has procured a very industrious and distinguished associate in the LORD-ADVOCATE OF SCOTLAND. Great as the inferiority of his talents may be to theirs, he is superior to either of them in tractability. Your lordship cares less about men, than about measures; and he will be as indifferent about measures as your lordship can be about men. You may acquire political philosophy from each other; but it is hoped, that a regard to your mutual interest will not be forgotten. We may at least answer for the Lord Advocate, that he will not forget his own. This being secured, he will not be inflexible in other points: and it may be extremely useful to your lordship to have an associate of such commodious pliability,

*Qui semper, & omni
Nocte dieque potest alienum sumere vultum.*

It is also one of the excellencies of this great lawyer, that he has not “ weak nerves * ;” and will not desert, for slight circumstances, any cause in which his employers may think proper to engage him. Should the most improvident and extravagant terms be agreed to for a public loan, he can maintain, as he did in behalf of lord North, in opposition to Sir George Savile, that the minister had not “ made a corrupt bargain for any bad purpose, but had acted with all possible integrity and industry, and to the advantage of the public †.” He can prove, that it is just, and reasonable, and proper, that a minister should be partial to his friends in the distribution of a public loan. “ A minister must be a mere lump of ice, divested of passions, of friendship

* *Vid.* Almon's Parliamentary Register, vol. II. of the present Parliament, p. 346, 347.

† *Ibid.* p. 345.

“ and

“ and feeling, could he surmount this
 “ kind of partiality *.” Should any steps
 be taken to lessen the public expenditure,
 or to regulate the expences of the crown,
 Mr. Dundas can maintain, that the ci-
 vil list revenue is “ a positive freehold,”
 and a “ personal estate;” and that we
 ought not “ to lay violent hands upon
 “ property the most sacred;” or to “ abo-
 “ lish places which had been created by
 “ the wisdom of our forefathers †.” He
 can assert, that a vote of parliament
 against the influence of the crown would
 be “ replete with danger to the con-
 “ stitution ‡.” He can oppose laying
 an account of pensions before parlia-

* *Vid.* Almon's Parliamentary Register, vol. II. of the present Parliament, p. 348.

† Speech of the Lord-advocate on the second reading of Mr. Burke's bill, Parliam. Reg. p. 48.

‡ Lord-advocate's speech in opposition to Mr. Dunning's motion, Parliam. Reg. vol. XVII. p. 466.

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ment* : and should any propofals be made for an inquiry into naval tranfactions, he can prove, that this is very unfit and improper ; becaufe there are “ many incidents and circumftances in “ the navy, which the Houfe of Com- “ mons ought not to inquire into †.” He can alfo harangue upon the dangers that attend public meetings of the people ; and can call upon parliament to fuppress county affociations §.

It was obferved by lord Maitland, in the houfe of commons, in the debate on the petition from the county-delegates, that the doctrines laid down by the lord-advocate, in his fpeech in oppofition to

* *Vid.* his fpeech in oppofition to Sir Geo. Savile's motion for laying the lift of pensions before parliament, Parliam. Reg. vol. XVII. p. 137.

† Speech of the Lord-advocate, Feb. 19, 1781. Parliam. Reg. vol. XVIII. p. 512.

§ *Ibid.* p. 283.

the reception of that petition, were such, as, he trusted, “ would never be suffered “ to pass without indignation or contempt. They were hostile to the “ foundations of British freedom, and as “ contrary to law as they were to the “ constitution*.” Yet this man your lordship has selected, as one of the defenders of your measures, and his admission into office is one of the first fruits of your administration. You have been the means of depriving the nation of the services of Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke ; but you have made ample recompence by the introduction into power of HENRY DUNDAS.

MR. FOX has sometimes drawn the character of your new associate in pretty strong colours. In one of his speeches,

* Speech of the Lord-advocate, Feb. 19, 1781. *Parliam. Reg.* vol. XVIII. p. 241.

he said of him, that he was one of those men “ whose inflammatory harangues
 “ had led the nation, step by step, from
 “ violence to violence, in that inhuman
 “ unfeeling system of blood and massacre,
 “ which every honest man must detest,
 “ which every good man must abhor,
 “ and every wise man condemn †.” In truth, my lord, your bringing this gentleman into office, so soon after your elevation to the treasury, and the avowal which that appointment implied of your want of such a defender, and such an assistant, or of your being under some secret influence not favourable to the interests of your country, afford an evidence of your own principles not very equivocal. No honest minister could have any occasion for such an advocate. If it were necessary for the sake of national impar-

† Parliam. Reg. vol. XVI. p. 123.

tiality,

tiality, that some natives of Scotland should be brought into office, on the formation of a new administration, such men as lord Stair, or lord Maitland, ought to have been introduced, men who had evinced some attachment to the common interests of the country, and not one of the most zealous and active defenders of the worst measures of the last ministry.

HOWEVER your lordship may flatter yourself on the address and dexterity which have characterized your political intrigues, it is not probable that they will be finally successful. It is not easy, my lord, for the most artful man to deceive long. It may be insinuated by your friends, and favourites, and flatterers, that Mr. Fox's resignation, because he would not act in concert with you, originated in ambition. But no sophistry
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can make it even plausible, that your conduct was the result of patriotism. It might be necessary for Mr. Fox to resign, in order to give a signal to the nation, that the old system was reviving. But no motives of a public nature could have induced your lordship to divide the cabinet, that you might obtain the first seat at the board of treasury. If Mr. Fox found, that the principles upon which you acted in the cabinet, whilst secretary of state, were so inconsistent with the real interests of the nation, as to induce him repeatedly to declare his intentions of resigning, his unwillingness to continue in administration with you must be naturally increased, when he saw you placed at the head of the treasury, by which you would necessarily gain a great accession of weight and of influence; and by which you might be enabled to defeat those measures, which he

considered as essential to the salvation of the nation. I am far from supposing Mr. Fox to be destitute of ambition ; he makes no such pretensions ; but I hope, that his ambition is perfectly consistent with the welfare of his country ; and that he has a just sense of the value of that fame which he has already obtained, and of that affection and regard with which he is viewed by his countrymen ; for the loss of which, nothing in the power of kings to bestow can be a compensation.

You, my Lord, had an opportunity of acquiring that fair fame which is the reward of virtue, and which vice, however decorated by titles or by ribbands, never can obtain. That opportunity, I fear, you have lost for ever. You may have gained the favour of the King ; but you have made an ill bargain,

gain, if you have purchased it by deserting the cause of your country, and by the sacrifice of your honour, and your conscience. If your lordship has become the prime instrument in the revival and support of that SECRET INFLUENCE, to which this country owes so many of its calamities, it is not easy to state a greater degree of moral or political criminality.

BUT I leave you, my Lord, to your own reflections. Your own heart will best inform you, whether you have been influenced by any principles of virtue, or of public spirit, or merely by motives of private interest or ambition. If you have been actuated only by the latter, if you have abandoned the cause of the public, if you have sacrificed the welfare of your country, to obtain a greater portion of royal favour,

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no situation can confer dignity upon you. You may be flattered by the vain, the venal, and the interested ; but you will for ever forfeit the esteem and regard of men of virtue, of the friends of freedom and their country ; you will be execrated by the present age, and by posterity.

I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's, &c;

F I N I S.

