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PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

SOCIETY

OF

FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE;

ASSOCIATED FOR THE PURPOSE

OF OBTAINING A

Parliamentary Reform,

IN THE YEAR 1792.

London

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1793.

[Price One Shilling.]

DECLARATION

Agreed to on the 11th of April, 1792, by the SOCIETY

ENTITLED

THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE,

ASSOCIATED FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING

A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

“ A NUMBER of Persons having fer-
“ ously reviewed and considered the
“ actual situation of public affairs, and
“ state of the kingdom, and having
“ communicated to each other their opini-
“ ons on these subjects, have agreed and
“ determined to institute a Society for the
“ purpose of proposing to Parliament and
“ to the Country, and of promoting, to the
“ utmost of their power, the following Con-
“ stitutional Objects, making the prefer-
“ vation of the Constitution, on its true
“ principles, the foundation of all their
“ proceedings.

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First.

First.—" To restore the Freedom of Election, and a more equal Representation of the People in Parliament.

Secondly.—" To secure to the People a more frequent Exercise of their Right of electing their Representatives.

" The Persons who have signed their names to this agreement, think that these two fundamental measures will furnish the power and the means of correcting the abuses, which appear to them to have arisen from a neglect of the acknowledged Principles of the Constitution, and of accomplishing those subordinate Objects of Reform, which they deem to be essential to the Liberties of the People, and to the good Government of the Kingdom."

Signed by

Charles Grey, Esq. M. P.	John Hurford Stone, Esq.
+ Hon. Thos. Maitland, M. P.	+ W. H. Lambton, Esq. M. P.
George Rous, Esq.	John Godfrey, Esq.
William Cuninghame, Esq.	George Tierney, Esq.
John Tweddell, Esq.	+ Arthur Piggott, Esq.
+ Earl of Lauderdale.	+ J. B. Church, Esq. M. P.
Nicolls Raynsford, Esq.	Gilbert Ironside, Esq.
James Mackintosh, Esq.	T. B. Hollis, Esq.
Thomas Christie, Esq.	S. Whitbread, jun. Esq. M. P.
Malcolm Laing, Esq.	+ Sir J. Throckmorton, Bart.
+ Right Hon. Lord Kinnaird	+ M. A. Taylor, Esq. M. P.
James Archdekin, Esq.	+ William Breton, Esq.
William Harwood, Esq.	Thomas Rogers, Esq.
David Godfrey, Esq.	Hon. Thomas Erskine, M. P.
Higgins Eden, Esq.	R. Knight, Esq.
+ Philip Francis, Esq. M. P.	Thos. Thompson, Esq. M. P.
Charles Goring, Esq.	+ Colonel Tazleton, M. P.

Mr. Ser-

Mr. Serjeant Bond	James West, Esq.
+ William Lushington, Esq.	Rich. Carpenter Smith, Esq.
Samuel Rogers, Esq.	W. Powlett Powlett, Esq. M. P.
Peregrine Dealtry, Esq.	George Livius, Esq.
R. B. Sheridan, Esq. M. P.	Right Hon. Lord Daer
+ William Fullarton, Esq.	Hon. John Douglas
+ Norman Macleod, Esq. M. P.	Rev. Dr. Kippis
James Losh, Esq.	+ James Jacque, Esq.
Mr. Aldm. Sawbridge, M. P.	Francis Love Beckford, Esq.
+ Richard Weld, Esq.	Adam Walker, Esq.
+ John Claridge, Esq.	Richard Sharp, Esq.
John Wharton, Esq. M. P.	Rev. Dr. Joseph Towers
James Martin, Esq. M. P.	John Furnell Tuffen, Esq.
William Smith, Esq. M. P.	John Clerk, Esq.
+ John Scott, Esq. M. P.	Thomas Bell, Esq.
Sir Bellingham Graham, Bart.	John Wilson, Esq.
+ George Byng, Esq. M. P.	Andrew Stirling, Esq.
John Cartwright, Esq.	Richard Heavyside, Esq.
Jer. Batley, Esq.	+ Mr. Alderman Combe
Ralph Carr, jun. Esq.	Robert Merry, Esq.
+ Ralph Milbanke, Esq. M. P.	George Shum, Esq.
+ Henry Howard, Esq.	J. G. Lemaître, Esq.
+ B. E. Howard, Esq.	+ James Perry, Esq.
E. B. Clive, Esq.	Henry Clifford, Esq.
+ Henry Howard, Esq. M. P.	John Crookshanks, Esq.
John Leach, Esq.	John Pratt, Esq.
John Nicholls, Esq.	W. Maxwell, Esq.
+ Joseph Richardson, Esq.	T. Hill, Esq.
John Towgood, Esq.	J. C. Bentley, Esq.
William Chisholm, Esq.	Thomas Bell, jun. Esq.
John Fazakerley, Esq.	Richard Wilson, Esq.
Richard S. Milnes, Esq. M. P.	Mr. J. Jarvis
Samuel Shore, Esq.	C. F. Ward, Esq.
Samuel Shore, jun. Esq.	Rev. C. Powlett
Charles Warren, Esq.	William White, Esq.
+ Long Kingman, Esq.	T. Holt White, Esq.
+ Edward Jer. Curteis, Esq.	W. Stone, Esq.
+ Samuel Long, Esq. M. P.	Joshua Grigby, Esq.
John Bourdieu, Esq.	Robert Aitken, Esq.
T. B. Rous, Esq.	Joseph Spurrell, Esq.
+ D. O'Bryen, Esq.	+ Thomas Nevill, Esq.
J. Lodge Bailey, Esq.	T. Rutt, Esq.

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Rob.

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|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Rob. Slade, Esq. | J. Philipps, Esq. |
| Fran. Kemble, Esq. | J. Porter, Esq. |
| William Sharp, Esq. | J. B. Gawler, Esq. |
| + John Barnes, Esq. | Rev. J. C. Banks |
| Joseph Ruse, Esq. | + Bertie Greatheed, Esq. |
| T. Gordon, Esq. | Thomas Crookenden, Esq. |
| Mr. J. Griffin | Ben. Bakewell, Esq. |
| Mr. Edward Hall | Col. Hastings |
| William Bosville, Esq. | D. E. Macdonnel, Esq. |
| John Redman, Esq. | |

NON-RESIDENT MEMBERS who have signed the DECLARATION.

- Right Hon. the Earl of Buchan, *Scotland.*
- Sir J. E. Swinburne, Bart. *Northumberland.*
- Professsor Millar, *Glasgow.*
- G. Lloyd, Esq. *Suffolk.*
- W. Beltham, Esq. *Bedford.*
- Capel Loft, Esq. *Suffolk.*
- W. Davy, Esq. *Devonshire.*
- James Milnes, Esq. *Yorkshire.*
- Robert Monteith, Esq. *Glasgow.*
- J. Richardson, Esq. *Glasgow.*
- J. Losh, Esq. *Cumberland.*
- J. Grigby, jun. Esq. *Suffolk.*

TREASURERS.

- Right Honourable Lord Kinnaird.
- George Tierney, Esq.

REGU-

REGULATIONS.

I. RESOLVED, That the Title of this Society be, THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform.

II. That the Declaration agreed upon at the Meeting of the 11th of April, 1792, expresses the political Objects of this Society.

III. That no person be capable of becoming a Member of this Society until he has expressed his Assent, by subscribing his Name to the above-mentioned Declaration.

IV. That every Candidate for admiffion to this Society shall be proposed and seconded by Two of its Members, and ballotted for at the succeeding Meeting.

V. That the Election of Members shall be by Ballott, and that no Candidate shall be deemed duly elected, unless it shall appear that he is chosen by Nine-tenths of the Members present.

VI. That until the Society shall consist of One Hundred and Fifty Members, no Ballot shall be taken, or other Business begun, unless a Number, not less than One Third, of the Members of the Society be present.

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VII. That

VII. That a General Meeting of this Society be held at *Freemasons Tavern*, at One o'Clock in the Forenoon, on the First *Saturday* in every Month, during the Sitting of Parliament.

VIII. That the Members of this Society be duly summoned to every General Meeting, and that for that Purpose they enter their Places of Abode in a Book, to be kept by the Committee.

IX. That a Committee, consisting of Twelve Persons, be appointed, one Fourth of which shall be replaced by Election, at each General Meeting of the Society.

X. That this Committee be empowered to conduct the ordinary Correspondence with all Individuals or Societies, desirous of promoting the Cause of Parliamentary Reform.

XI. That the Duty of this Committee shall be to prepare such Business as shall appear to them fit to be laid before the General Meetings of the Society; and that they shall be requested to draw up such Resolutions as they shall deem proper to be submitted to their Consideration.

XII. That this Committee be hereby enjoined strictly to conform in all their Correspondence, or other Communications, to the Principles contained in the Declaration of the 11th of April, 1792.

XIII. That such Committee have Power and Authority to regulate the Mode of their

own

own Proceeding, conforming to the general Rules and occasional Instructions of the Society, and also to employ any Clerks at the Expence of the Society, and to draw upon the Treasurer for any Sums which they may find necessary for their Proceedings.

XIV. That it be a general Instruction to the Committee, in their Correspondence, to advise all Friends of Parliamentary Reform, to form themselves into similar Societies, on similar Principles, in all Parts of the Kingdom; and that a Copy of the Declaration of the 11th of April, be transmitted to all such Societies.

XV. That, to defray the necessary Expences of the Society, each Member shall, on his Admission, pay to the Treasurer, *Two Guineas and a Half*, and continue the same Payment annually, computed from Lady-Day, 1792.

XVI. That two Treasurers shall be annually appointed to receive the Contributions of the Members, and that they shall be empowered to issue Money upon the Order of the Committee, or the Vote of a General Meeting.

XVII. That the Committee be empowered to call extraordinary Meetings of the Society, giving as much previous Notice to the Members as the Exigency of the Business may permit.

XVIII. That

XVII. That, in order to promote the Establishment of similar Societies in other Parts of the Kingdom, One Hundred non-resident Members shall be admitted into this Society, being proposed and chosen according to the Rules of Ballotting.

XIX. That such non-resident Members shall subscribe One Guinea annually, to the General Fund: and a written Authority, for inserting their Names in the Books of the Society, shall be lodged in the Hands of the Secretary by the proposing Member. Such Members during their occasional residence in London, and Attendance on the Society, being entitled to all the Rights of ordinary Members.

XX. That such non-resident Members shall sign the Declaration of this Society, of the 11th of April, 1792, subjoined as follows:

I agree fully to the Principles expressed in the above Declaration of the 11th of April, 1792, by the Society of the Friends of the People, and am desirous of being admitted into the Association as a non-resident Member, my residence at a distance from London preventing my attendance on the ordinary Meetings of the Society.

(Signed)

Free-

Freemasons Tavern, 26th April, 1792.

At a General Meeting of the Society established on the 11th Instant, under the Title of the FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE, associated for the purpose of obtaining a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

W. H. LAMBTON, Esq. M. P.

IN THE CHAIR.

READ the Draught of an Address to the People of Great Britain, contained in the Report of the Committee.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the said Address is approved of and adopted by this Meeting, and that it be printed.

Address to the People of Great Britain.

NO man, who is not ready to express his concurrence in our principles by signing the Declaration, can be admitted into our Society. The objects of it, as we conceive, are of a nature at all times fit to be pursued and recommended to the country. At different periods they have heretofore been avowed and supported by the highest authorities in this kingdom; by eminent individuals, and considerable bodies of men; by Mr. Locke and Judge Blackstone; by the late Earl of Chatham, and Sir George Savile; by the Duke of

of Richmond, the Marquis of Lansdown, Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Fox; by petitions from several counties, and by repeated declarations from the city of London.

In appealing to the avowed opinions of men of established reputation, or of distinguished rank in their country, we do not mean to strengthen the reason or enforce the necessity of the measure we propose, so much as to obviate all personal imputations, which the enemies of the cause will be ready to throw upon those who support it. It is not, that on our account, we dread the effect or regard the impression, which such imputations may produce. But we think it material to the credit and success of our proceedings to shew, that we are not aiming at Reforms unthought of by wise and virtuous men; that our opinions neither possess the advantage, nor are liable to the objection of novelty; and that we cannot be accused or suspected of factious purposes, or dangerous designs without extending the same accusation or suspicion to the motives of men, whose situation and property, independent of their character, principles, and abilities, have given them a most important stake in the peace and good government of the kingdom.

Convinced by our own reflections, by experience, and by authority, that the thing we propose to do, is fit to be done, we have, with equal deliberation, weighed the reasons

sons that may recommend, or be objected to the present time, as the most or least proper for bringing it forward. On this point, we have no address to make, to the determined enemies of a reform of every kind. Their objection, whether valid, or not, is to the substance of the measure, and cannot be abated by circumstances. To those who concur generally in the principle, but who may be inclined by particular reasons to defer the attempt, we seriously wish to submit the following considerations: that admitting this to be a season of general tranquillity in the country, it is, on that account, the more proper for temperate reflection, and prudent exertions to accomplish any necessary improvement;— it is the time when practical measures for that purpose, are most likely to be adopted with discretion and pursued with moderation. If we are persuaded to wait for other times, of a different complexion, for times of public complaint, or general discontent, we shall then be told, that general remedies are not fit to be proposed in the moment of particular disorder, and that it is our duty to wait for the return of quiet days, unless we mean to create or increase confusion in the country. The result of this dilemma, if it be suffered to prevail, is pure and absolute inactivity at present, and for ever. On the other hand, if it be true, as we are convinced it is, that in this general appearance of tranquillity, there

is some mixture of discontent, as well as of strong and well grounded opinion, on the subject of abuses in the Government, and corruptions of the Constitution, we wish it to be considered by men, whose judgment has been formed or enlightened by experience, and whose actions are most likely to be directed by prudence, whether in taking proper measures to remove the cause and objects of such discontent, and opinion, the choice of the time be not a material part of the measure; and whether the earliest time that can be taken for preventing the increase of an existing evil, be not the safest and the best?

The example and situation of another kingdom, are held out to deter us from innovations of any kind. We say, that the Reforms we have in view are not innovations. Our intention is not to change, but to restore; not to displace, but to re-instate the Constitution upon its true principles, and original ground. In the conduct of persons most likely to reproach us with a spirit of innovation, we see a solid ground for retorting the imputation. Their professions of admiration of the beauty, and of zeal for the security, of the Constitution, appear to us too lavish to be sincere, especially when compared with those practical violations, with which they suffer this beautiful system to be invaded, and to which they never refuse to give their concurrence.

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They will not innovate, but they are no enemies to gradual decay; as if the changes insensibly produced by time and nourished by neglect, were not in effect the most dangerous innovations. But what security have we, that the dispositions of such men are not something worse than passive? how are we assured that, in praising the Constitution, their intention is not to adorn a victim, which they wish to sacrifice, or to flatter the Beauty they are endeavouring to corrupt? Let their intention be what it may, we answer their accusation in the words of one of the wisest of mankind: “* THAT TIME IS THE GREATEST INNOVATOR; AND IF TIME OF COURSE ALTER THINGS TO THE WORSE, AND IF WISDOM AND COUNSEL SHALL NOT ALTER THEM TO THE BETTER, WHAT SHALL BE THE END?”

By the Reform proposed by Lord Chatham †, he declared in the House of Lords, that he meant *to infuse a portion of new health into the Constitution*. The Duke of Richmond has declared §, that “his reasons in favour of a Parliamentary Reform were formed on the experience of twenty-six years, which, whether in or out of Government, had equally convinced him, *that the restora-*

* Lord Bacon. † Jan. 22, 1770. § Jan. 17, 1783.

tion of a genuine House of Commons, by a renovation of the Rights of the People, was the only remedy against that system of corruption, which had brought the nation to disgrace and poverty, and threatened it with the loss of liberty."

Other authorities, in favour of a Parliamentary Reform, as direct and explicit as these, might be quoted in abundance. The public is possessed of them. We rather wish to encounter, because we are sure we can efface, in every rational mind, the impression which may have been made by a view of those events, which have attended a total change in the Constitution of France. **WE DENY THE EXISTENCE OF ANY RESEMBLANCE WHATSOEVER BETWEEN THE CASES OF THE TWO KINGDOMS; AND WE UTTERLY DISCLAIM THE NECESSITY OF RESORTING TO SIMILAR REMEDIES.** We do not believe that, at this day, an absolute avowed despotism, in the hands of the executive power, would be endured in this country. But who can say, to what conclusion the silent unresisted operation of abuses, incessantly acting and constantly increasing, may lead us hereafter; what habits it may gradually create; what power it may finally establish? The abuses in the government of France were suffered to gather and accumulate, until nothing but an eruption could put an end to them. The discontent

discontent of the people was converted into despair. Preventive remedies were either not thought of in time, or were not proposed until it was too late to apply them with effect. The subversion of the ancient government ensued. The inference from this comparison is at once so powerful and so obvious, that we know not by what argument to illustrate or enforce it. We mean to avert for ever from our country the calamities inseparable from such convulsions. If there be, as it is said, in any part of this kingdom, a disposition to promote confusion, or even to arrive at improvement by unconstitutional and irregular courses, we hold ourselves as strictly pledged to resist that disposition, wherever it may appear, as to pursue our own objects by unexceptionable methods. If, on the contrary, it be true, that the mass of the people are satisfied with the present state of things, or indifferent about it; if they approve of the representation as it stands, the form of election, and the duration of the trust; or if condemning these things, they are determined, from indolence or despair, not to attempt to correct them; then indeed the efforts of individuals may be ineffectual, but they cannot be injurious to the peace of the community. If the spirit of the Constitution be dead in the hearts of the people, no human industry can revive it. To affirm, that extensive mischief may be done by a statement

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ment of facts or arguments, which make no general impresson on the public mind, is a proposition that contradicts itself, and requires no other refutation. We trust it will be proved by experiment, that these inconsistent assertions are equally unfounded, and that the people of this country are no more disposed to submit to abuses without complaint, than to look for redress in any proceedings repugnant to the laws, or unwarranted by the constitution. Between anarchy and despotism, speaking for ourselves, we have no choice to make;—we have no preference to give. We neither admit the necessity, nor can we endure the idea of resorting to either of these extremities as a refuge from the other. The course we are determined to pursue, is equally distant from both.

Finally, we assert, that it must be blindness not to see, and treachery not to acknowledge.

That “* the instruments of power are not perhaps so open and avowed as they formerly were, and therefore are the less liable to jealous and individious reflections; but they are not the weaker upon that account. In short, our national debts and taxes have, in their natural consequences, thrown such a weight of power into the executive scale of government, as we cannot think was intended by our patriot ancestors, who gloriously struggled for the abolition of the then formi-

* Blackstone.

dable

“ dable parts of the prerogative, and by an unaccountable want of foresight, established this system in their stead.”—Our general object is to recover and preserve the true balance of the Constitution.

THESE ARE THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR ASSOCIATION, and, on our steady adherence to them, we look with a just confidence to the approbation and support of the people in the prosecution of our object. A measure, so likely to be opposed by the united strength of various interests, can never succeed, but by the declared and hearty concurrence of the nation.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That a motion be made in the House of Commons, at an early period in the next Session of Parliament, for introducing a Parliamentary Reform.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That Charles Grey, Esq. be requested to make, and the Hon. Thomas Erskine to second, the above motion.

Signed,

By the unanimous Order of the Meeting,

W. H. LAMBTON, CHAIRMAN.

Freemasons Tavern, Saturday, May 5th, 1792.

WILLIAM BAKER Esq. M. P. in the Chair.

Right Hon. Lord JOHN RUSSELL, M. P.

DEPUTY-CHAIRMAN.

MR. BAKER, from the Committee, brought up the following Resolutions, which were agreed to by the Society.

RESOLVED, That it appears to this Meeting, that a formal Notice having been given in the House of Commons, on Monday the 30th of April, by Charles Grey, Esq. of his intention to bring forward, at an early period in the next Session of Parliament, a Motion for a Parliamentary Reform, occasion has since been taken to throw out and propagate a variety of aspersions, equally groundless in substance, and opprobrious in terms, against the motives, objects and proceedings of this Association.

RESOLVED, That although we are of opinion that the true objects of our institution have been clearly defined, and distinctly expressed in our Declaration, and Address, it may nevertheless be adviseable to encounter and repel the calumnies, with which we have

have been attacked, by the following observations, which we willingly submit to the cool and impartial judgment of our country.

That, whereas it is objected generally by persons, who have not yet ventured to deny the necessity of a Reform in the actual Representation of the People, at some proper but undetermined period, that time we have taken, and the mode we have adopted, for bringing forward the measure, are likely to produce the most dangerous consequences in the country;—we say that the arguments, which determined us in the choice of the time, have been fully stated in our Address, but have been no where answered, nor at all fairly considered. This objection is urged and relied on, as if it had not been foreseen and anticipated. We must content ourselves therefore with re-asserting that a season of quiet and prosperity is the most proper for mild and temperate discussion, as well as for taking moderate and reasonable securities for the future; and that the choice of such a time is alone sufficient to clear us of any intention to promote popular discontent. But we understand it has been particularly asserted that the present time is improper, because no specific grievance exists; whereas the period, when former proposals for Reform were offered to Parliament, was perfectly proper, because a grievance did then subsist in the American war; the origin, the continuance,

tinuance, and the calamities of which were attributed to, or supposed to be connected with the imperfect and corrupted state of the Representation of the People in Parliament.

We do not admit that the immediate non-existence of grievances, which the acknowledged corruption of the institution is at all times equally capable of producing, is any objection against taking securities to prevent the return of such grievances. But we positively affirm, that in fact, a case has lately occurred, which, on the very principles of the objection, establishes the necessity of a Reform in the construction of the House of Commons. We mean the late Armament intended to act against Russia, which might have involved the nation in a most impolitic and ruinous war; and to which a large majority of the House of Commons gave their support, in direct contradiction to the real interests, and to the acknowledged sense of the people. With respect to the mode of our proceeding, we conceive that the objections urged against it, ought to have been as precise, as specific, as the reasons we have assigned in support of it. Instead of comparing the principles we profess with those of the Constitution; instead of canvassing the terms of our declaration, and proving a contradiction between our professions and our conduct, it is thought fit to load us with a loose, unsupported, general charge, expressed

ed in the language of reproach, not of argument; of uniting with certain bodies of men, whose principles and practice, as far as they appear to be such as they are represented, we have not only disclaimed in the strongest terms, but have declared, that we are determined to resist to the utmost of our ability. Not a single proposition, not one sentence, nor even a word in the declaration and address, which we have submitted to the public, has been pointed out as liable to an objection of any kind. We do believe, that the minds of men are every day more and more enlightened on the subject of the Constitution and Government of their country, as well as more attentive to it, than in former times. *That disposition has not been created by any efforts of ours.* We are of opinion, that it exists very generally throughout this kingdom. *Is it useful to discourage, is it possible to suppress it?* We earnestly recommend it to those, who wish well to the peace of the kingdom, to consider seriously, whether under the acknowledged existence of abuses, a declared resistance to every proposal for amendment, may not in the event, prove favourable to the views of men, whose principles are destructive of all good government, and wholly irreconcilable with the object of our Association.

Before the Motion, to which one of our Members, in compliance with the request of the Society, has pledged himself, can

be made, we hope the sense of the country, will be distinctly expressed. If, after having done every thing in our power, to obtain the Reform, which we think wanting, the country shall appear to be satisfied, with the present state of the Representation, we must and shall submit. If, on the contrary, the propriety of our measures shall appear to be generally felt and acknowledged, we shall hold ourselves bound to use every legal and constitutional means of effecting a timely and temperate Reform; the only one which we can propose, and the only one to which we will give our concurrence. Whenever that object is attained, our Association is at an end—WE GO NO FURTHER.—The people then will possess a more perfect organ to express their sentiments, and a power to correct those abuses, which we call *subordinate*, and which we believe to proceed principally from the present depraved state of the Representation of the People in Parliament.

RESOLVED, That the above Resolutions, proposed by the Committee, be agreed to, and adopted by the Society, and that the Committee be instructed to publish the same.

Signed, By Order of the Society,

WILLIAM BAKER, M. P. *Chairman.*

Free-

Freemason's Tavern, Saturday, May 12, 1792,

Right Hon. Lord JOHN RUSSELL, M. P.
CHAIRMAN.

GEORGE BYNG, Esq. M. P.
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN.

THE following Letter, received at the last Meeting, from the Society for Constitutional Information, and then ordered to be reported upon by the Committee, was again read,

“ SIR,

“ By the Society for Constitutional Information, I am commanded to express to you the satisfaction that its Members feel on the institution of your Society.

“ That the House of Commons itself, which is the very subject to be reformed, should have furnished a part of the strength of this new Institution, may ultimately afford important advantages to the public. But it must not, Sir, be disguised, that at first this circumstance will necessarily be accompanied with
“ doubts,

" doubts, with suspicions, with apprehensions. It is not, Sir, the first time that Members of that House have professed themselves Reformers. It is not the first time that they have entered into popular Associations; but, should they on this occasion prove faithfully instrumental in effecting a substantial Reform in the Representation of the People, and the duration of Parliaments, it *will* be the first time that the Nation hath not found itself in an error, when it placed confidence in associated Members of Parliament, for the recovery of the Constitutional and inestimable Rights of the People. The long lost Rights of Representation are rights, Sir, which, in truth, are not to be recovered but by the exertions and unanimity of the People themselves. Impressed with this great truth, it has been an invariable object of this Society, *to revive in the minds of the Commonalty at large a knowledge of their lost Rights, respecting the Election and duration of the Representative Body;* and we doubt not that your Society will see the wisdom of pursuing a like course. May it taste the delight of diffusing this knowledge! May it reap the honour of calling forth the energies of the Nation!

" When this Society, Sir, contemplates that flood of light and truth, which, under a benign Providence, is now sweeping
 " from

" from the earth despotism in all its forms, and infringements of rights in all its degrees; to make way for freedom, justice, peace, and human happiness; and when it sees your Society announce itself to the world, as the Friends of the People, it rests assured, that this new Institution abundantly partakes of that light, that it embraces that truth, and that it will act up to the sacredness of that friendship which it professes, by nobly casting from it with disdain all aristocratic reserves, and fairly and honestly contending, for the People's Rights in their full extent. Here, Sir, be assured, lies all your strength. You may boast of names, of wealth, of talents, and even of principles, but without the fellowship of the people, *understanding and feeling their immediate interest in the contest,* your Association, whenever it grapples with that powerful despotism to which it is opposed, and to which a constitutional cloak serves as a shield and armour, will most assuredly crumble to dust.

" Here, Sir, it is with peculiar satisfaction, that the Society for Constitutional Information can express its belief that to its own unequivocal '*Declaration of Rights, without which no Englishman can be a Freeman, nor the English Nation a free People,*' it owes that confidence on the part of all true friends to a substantial
 " Reform

" Reform of Parliament, which in all
 " periods of the Society's existence, it has in-
 " variably experienced. This short declara-
 " tion, containing no more than four distinct
 " propositions, satisfied the people that the
 " Society assumed not the Office of Re-
 " former, without knowing with precision
 " what wanted reform; nor the character
 " of friend, without manifesting that sin-
 " cerity which gave proof of its attachment.
 " It left to such Reformers as Mr. Burke
 " to talk of the People's liberties; and at
 " the same time to deny, or explain away
 " their rights.

" This Society, Sir, trusts that the purity
 " of principle, which actuated individual
 " Members of Parliament, who joined the
 " Associations that have been spoken of,
 " will in no degree be affected by the ob-
 " servations that have been made upon the
 " inefficiency of those Associations; but con-
 " vinced that a strong impression still re-
 " mains upon the minds of the people, that
 " in general, persons who have long been
 " accustomed to hold seats in the House of
 " Commons under the present abuses in the
 " representation, and whose connections
 " are all Aristocratic, must be almost more
 " than men, at once, and completely, to
 " sacrifice both prejudice and unwarranted
 " power at the Altar of Freedom. This
 " Society, convinced, I say, Sir, of the
 " existence of this impression, would not
 " suffer

" suffer its delicacy to stand in the way of
 " its duty on this important occasion; but
 " determined with the frankness, belonging
 " to sincere affection, to warn its new bre-
 " thren against a danger, to which they
 " might otherwise become exposed through
 " mere inadvertency.

" That the distinguished persons who
 " have adorned the Senate, and now adorn
 " your Society, may be found equal to the
 " sublime effort of virtue which their situa-
 " tion now demands; and may on that ac-
 " count receive the blessings of their coun-
 " try and of mankind to the latest posterity,
 " is the sincere, the ardent wish of the
 " Society for Constitutional Information, in
 " whose name I have the honour to sub-
 " scribe myself, with great regard,

" SIR,

" Your most obedient, humble servant,

(Signed)

JOHN CARTWRIGHT, CHAIRMAN.

Tooke's-court, April, 27, 1792.

" To the President of the Society, en-
 " titled, *The Friends of the People, as-
 " sociated for the purpose of obtaining
 " a Parliamentary Reform.*"

William

William Baker, Esq. M. P. Chairmain, reported from the Committee, the following answer, which they proposed to the adoption of the Society.

“ SIR,

“ Fully sensible that the Society for Constitutional Information have made no sacrifice to delicacy in their Address to us, we, on our part, shall affect no disguise. Voluntary Associations not being armed with public authority, have no force but that of truth, no hope of success, but in the strength of reason, and the concurrence of the public.

“ We profess not to entertain a wish, that the great plans of public benefit, which Mr. Paine has so powerfully recommended, will speedily be carried into effect*;” nor to amuse our fellow-citizens with the magnificent promise of obtaining for them the “ Rights † of the People in their full extent,” the indefinite language of delusion, which by opening unbounded prospects of political adventure, tends to destroy that public opinion, which is the support of all

* For these exact words, see the Resolutions of the Manchester Society, published by the Society for Constitutional Information, in the Morning Chronicle of the 16th of April, 1792.

† The words of their Letter, signed J. CARTWRIGHT.

Free

Free Governments, and to excite a spirit of innovation, of which no wisdom can foresee the effect, and no skill direct the course. We view man as he is: the creature of habit as well as of reason. We think it therefore our bounden duty to propose no extreme changes, which, however specious in theory, can never be accomplished without violence to the settled opinions of mankind, nor attempted without endangering some of the most estimable advantages which we confessedly enjoy. We are convinced that the people bear a fixed attachment to the happy form of our Government, and the genuine principles of our Constitution. These we cherish as objects of just affection, not from any implicit reverence or habitual superstition, but as institutions best calculated to produce the happiness of man in Civil Society;—and it is because we are convinced that abuses are undermining and corrupting them, that we have associated for the preservation of those principles. We wish to reform the Constitution, because we wish to preserve it.

“ Associations formed in the face of Power, in opposition to the interests of our present Legislators, evince that individual security, and personal independence, are already established by our laws. The immense accumulation of debt, the enormous taxation of seventeen millions of annual revenue, de-

demonstrate that the *collective* interests of the community have been neglected or betrayed. We believe the defective Constitution of the Assembly entrusted with the public purse to be the real source of this evil. With this view we have pledged ourselves to attempt a timely and salutary Reform; adhering in every measure, we may take to the fundamental principles of the Constitution. According to those acknowledged principles, the People have a perfect right to possess an organ by which the public mind may speak in Legislation; and to bind their Representatives to the interests of the whole community, by a frequent renovation of the trust. These objects accomplished, we believe abuses will find no protection in a genuine Representation of the People; that regulations best adapted to the public happiness will be gradually infused into our laws, through the known channels of Legislation, and that the agitated minds of men, resuming their confidence in Parliament, will subside into a calm expectation of redress, without forgetting the principles, or violating the forms of the Constitution.

“ These, as we think, are the views of men detesting anarchy, yet sincere FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE. Your letter appears to us to be written with a view to create distrust of our designs; to insinuate doubts of

of our sincerity, and to excite an early suspicion of our principles in the minds of the People. We have not, however, refused in answer, to disclaim what we condemn, and to avow our real objects, from the pursuit of which, we will not suffer ourselves to be diverted by any controversy. We must beg leave at the same time to decline all future intercourse with a Society whose views and objects, as far as we can collect them from the various resolutions and proceedings which have been published, we cannot help regarding as irreconcilable with those real interests on which you profess to inform and enlighten the People.

“ Signed in the name,

“ And by order of the Society,

“ JOHN RUSSELL, CHAIRMAN.

“ *Freemason's Tavern, May 12, 1792.*

“ To JOHN CARTWRIGHT, Esq, Chair-

“ man of the Society for Constitutional Information.”

RESOLVED,

That the Society do approve and adopt the Answer proposed by the Committee to the Letter of the Society for Constitutional Information.

RESOLVED,

That the proceedings of this day, including the Letter of the Society for Constitutional

tutional Information, and the Answer of this Society to it, be printed and published.

RESOLVED,

That, together with the Answer of this Society to the Society for Constitutional Information, there be transmitted to John Cartwright, Esq. Chairman of that Society, a Copy of the Resolution of the Friends of the People, to print and publish the Letter and Reply.

By Order of the Meeting,

(Signed)

JOHN RUSSELL, CHAIRMAN.

Free.

Freemasons Tavern, June 2, 1792.

AT a General Meeting of the Society of the Friends of the People, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform held this Day,—

Sir JOHN THROCKMORTON, Bart. *Chairman.*

JOHN WHARTON, Esq. M. P. *Dep. Chairman.*

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

THAT the Thanks of this Society be given to *Charles Grey, Esq.* for his able and manly defence of this Institution in the House of Commons, on the 25th of May, and for the just severity with which he exposed the dereliction of the Cause of the People, by those who heretofore professed themselves Advocates for Parliamentary Reform.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Thanks of this Society be given to the *Right Hon. Charles James Fox*, for his steady adherence to the cause of the People, and for his able and eloquent support of the amendment, moved by *Charles Grey, Esq.* to the Address of the House of Commons, on the 25th of May—an Amendment which teaches Magistrates to afford an equal protection to the civil Rights of Men of all denominations, and combines the Peace and Order of Society, with the Liberty and Happiness of the People.

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RESOLVED

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Thanks of this Society be given to those Members of the House of Commons, who, upon the same occasion, joined their efforts, and so ably and eloquently supported *Mr. Grey's* Amendment.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Thanks of this Society be given to the Right Honourable the *Earl of Lauderdale*, for his able and manly defence of this Institution in the House of Lords, on the 31st of May; and for the just severity with which he exposed the dereliction of the cause of the People, by those who heretofore professed themselves advocates for Parliamentary Reform.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Thanks of this Society be given to the Most Noble the *Marquis of Lansdowne*, for his consistent conduct in the Cause of Parliamentary Reform, and for the support, which, with so much ability and eloquence he gave to the Amendment proposed by the *Earl of Lauderdale*.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That a Copy of the Second Resolution be transmitted by the Chairman of this Meeting, to the Right Hon. *Charles James Fox*; and that a Copy of the Fifth

Fifth Resolution be also sent by him to the *Marquis of Lansdowne*.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That a Proclamation of the Crown, cannot restrain or impeach that freedom in the discussion of Political Subjects, which is essential to the preservation of Public Liberty, congenial to the Spirit of the British Constitution, and the Birth-right of Britons established by their Laws.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the late Proclamation appears to this Society unnecessary; because those who under pretence of exercising this right of political discussion, intentionally vilify the Government, and create disaffection in the mind of the people, are liable to prosecution, and may be punished in the Courts of Law; but that all measures which have a tendency to prejudge the cause even of these offenders before trial are highly improper.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That a Proclamation professing to be directed against the authors and publishers of such writings; but so indefinitely expressed as to leave a doubt whether other persons, whose principles and proceedings, even malice itself, cannot find a ground to attack, were the real objects; is of dangerous example in the Government of a FREE PEOPLE.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That this Society, conscious of the integrity of their motives, are determined to persevere in proposing to Parliament, and to the Country, by the same temperate and legal means which they have hitherto used, a Reform in the Representation of the People, the necessity of which, late events have only tended to confirm.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That these Resolutions be printed, and published in the Morning and Evening Newspapers.

In Name and by Order of the Meeting.

Signed

JOHN THROCKMORTON, *Chairman.*

ORDERED

That the following Letter, and the Answer of the Committee of this Society, be printed and published.

“ Committee of the Society for Constitutional Information at Sheffield, to the Committee of the Honourable Society, entitled the Friends of the People, in London.

“ GENTLEMEN,

“ It is with infinite pleasure we have read and considered your Address and Declaration from your General Meeting on the 26th of April last. The principles therein set forth by so large a body of the most respectable

respectable and worthy characters, are a sufficient testimony and confirmation to us, that so honourable a Society, by signaling themselves in support of the laudable and general cause of the community, will render themselves most truly worthy of that high and benevolent appellation, by which they are already known to us, *The Friends of the People.*

“ Your sentiments, your motives, and your plan of obtaining a reform of the abuses of government are perfectly in unison with our ideas.—It is our business (to which we have always confined our endeavours) to instruct the people in a temperate and peaceable manner in the necessity of such a reform as you point out; but have never yet attempted to adopt or point out any particular mode of obtaining it, further than you will observe by the inclosed, believing that in due time men of more respectable characters and greater abilities would step forward. To such we have always had an eye, and upon such we have ever meant to rely for our government, and the adoption of the most eligible plan of a more free and equal representation in the House of Commons, and the removal of the great abuses and impositions by measures altogether inadequate to the interest and welfare of the nation in general, and to the mechanical and laborious part of the community in particular.

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“ It is therefore with the highest degree of satisfaction, that we behold such a respectable body stepping forward in so laudable, so just, and so good a cause. You have our warmest wishes, sincerest thanks, and assured endeavours of support in it, to the best of our abilities, in a rational and peaceable way. It is our duty, and it will ever claim our attention strictly to adhere to, to maintain, and be governed by the principles laid down in your Declaration. Notwithstanding the gross and fallacious insinuations of the enemies of justice and equity, we are assured that no honest man being acquainted with our principles, would have attempted to declare in the House, that the design of these Associations is completely to overturn the Constitution, &c. and we are sorry, that Mr. Baker was under the disagreeable necessity of explaining, in answer to such gross assertions, without having it in his power to speak with precision to the principles and design of this, and the similar societies, and to have united them with yours in his explanation. For this, and similar reasons, we are induced to take the liberty of troubling you with the above, and following sketch. Our Members are now about 2400; yet we have the satisfaction with truth to affirm, that not the least disorder or confusion hath made its appearance amongst us—all is unanimity, peace, and concord. As our Mem-
bers

bers increase, the number of Meeting places are increased in proportion, so as not to exceed at most thirty Members at one place. All the circular Meetings are held once a fortnight, on the same evening. Our General Meeting is held once a month at three different houses, on the same day, generally very crowded; yet, good order and regularity are strictly attended to; and we doubt not but what has been suggested to be impossible, will be fully manifested to be not only practicable, but easy to accomplish, viz. to introduce useful knowledge, good order and regularity, into the minds and morals of the common or lower orders of people.

“ We are perfectly satisfied of the integrity and abilities of those respectable characters who constitute the Society of the Friends of the People (but if we may presume to lay before them some thoughts we have had, respecting what method would be the best to adopt for obtaining the general sense of the nation before the proposed Motion in the next Session of Parliament takes place) we beg leave, with great deference to that honourable Society, to submit the following to their superior judgment. We believe the most likely and effectual plan will be to establish a Convention in London by Deputies from each County or District, by which means the sentiments of
the

the nation may be obtained without any confusion or disorder.

" Looking up to the Friends of the People as our leaders and directors in this great and necessary business, we shall be happy, and esteem it a great favour, to receive any communication which they may vouchsafe to favour us with.

" I have the honour to be, with esteem,
" Your's very respectfully,

SAMUEL ASHTON, *Sec.*

" *By Order of the Committee,
Sheffield, May 14, 1792.*"

The Committee of the Society of the Friends of the People, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform, to the Committee of the Society for Constitutional Information in Sheffield.

*No. 52, Frith-street, London,
May 24, 1792.*

S I R,

We beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 14th instant, and to return you our thanks for a confidence which we trust our future conduct will merit from our country.

We have received sincere pleasure, not only from the firm and virtuous tone in which

which you have spoken your principles, but from the wise and temperate manner in which you have limited their application to practice. We rejoice " that our sentiments, " our motives, and our plans of reform, " are perfectly in unison with your ideas," because we believe that a conduct in the great body of the People corresponding to such " sentiments," will equally confound the two opposite classes of enemies to the public weal; that it will defeat the hopes of those who would dupe the people into tumult, and that it will silence the slanders of those advocates of corruption who have laboured to render the cause of Liberty odious and terrible to all good citizens, by confounding it with principles of anarchy, and by loading it with the obloquy of provoking civil commotion, and of endangering the destruction of a Constitution, justly renowned for the freedom and happiness which it has so long bestowed.—You are pleased to say that " you look up to the " Friends of the People as your Leaders " and Directors in this great business."—Authorized as we feel ourselves by this preferred guidance, and by that harmony of sentiment which, from the tenor of your letter, we must suppose to exist between you and ourselves, permit us to lay before you some ideas which are dictated by zeal for our common cause. The cause of liberty can never be endangered by the af-
fault

fault of its enemies, but may sometimes be exposed by the indiscretion of its friends. Its principles are founded on impregnable reason, and its enemies are therefore too dextrous *directly* to attack them. It is not against the reasonings of the champions of corruption (for they have produced none), but it is against their craft and their misrepresentation that We have found it necessary to defend ourselves by the wariness of our language and our conduct. A similar wariness, as far as the authority of our opinion can extend, we must counsel all societies associated on similar principles for the accomplishment of the same object, to observe. Accused as they are, in common with ourselves, of meditating one object and holding forth another; of seducing the people by a measure so specious and salutary as Parliamentary Reform, into other measures of desperate tendency and undefinable extent, we can only advise them to follow our example in honestly and solemnly declaring, that "they make the preservation of the Constitution, on its true principles, the foundation of all their proceedings," and the measure of all their Reforms. Language thus explicit, will effectually combat misrepresentations, to which, perhaps, ardent indiscretion may have sometimes furnished pretexts. An early declaration of these opinions, which
we

we sincerely believe you to entertain, will conciliate many to the cause of a Reform, who are now held in honest neutrality by their fears. The friends of order, after such a declaration, justified by consistent conduct, will be no longer driven to seek refuge from anarchy in the bosom of corruption. The interested supporters of the present abuses will thus be disarmed; for it is only by confounding Reform with commotion, and corruption with the British Constitution, that they are enabled to prolong and to defend their usurpations. All our language, as you will perceive from the proceedings, which we transmit to you, has been cautious, because all our views are moderate. We are persuaded that you have a similar moderation of views, and we earnestly exhort you to a similar caution in language.

It is only indeed with Societies who express the same moderation of principles, and adopt the same wariness of language, that this Society can entertain any correspondence, or promise any co-operation. We have publicly disclaimed what we condemn, as well as avowed our real object; and on an occasion unfought for by us, in conformity with this principle, we have been compelled to decline all intercourse with the Society for Constitutional Information in London, for though we neither wish to attack, nor pretend to dictate, we
are

are certainly entitled to decline all intercourse with men whose views and principles appear to us irreconcilable with ours.

On the particular measure which you suggest for collecting the opinion of the people on the subject of Reform, we do not feel ourselves yet prepared to decide. In a more advanced stage of the business, it may become very fit matter for deliberation.

Permit us, Sir, to conclude with congratulating you, and congratulating our country, on the admirable principles which your letter contains, and on the intrepid moderation which it entitles us to expect from you. You will deprive our enemies of every pretext for counterfeiting alarms which they do not feel, and of every opportunity to defeat our measures by calumniating our intentions.

In Name, and by Order of the Committee,
(Signed)

C. GREY, *Chairman.*

To Samuel Astton, Esq. Secretary to the Society for Constitutional Information in Sheffield.

Free-

Freemason's Tavern, Saturday, June 9, 1792.

JOHN WHARTON, Esq. M. P.

CHAIRMAN,

SAMUEL WHITBREAD, Jun. Esq. M. P.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN,

MR. BYNG, from the Committee, read the following Letter, addressed to the Chairman of this Society.

Monday Noon, June 4, 1792.

“ SIR,

“ After the strong declaration and protest, which some of us thought it our duty to make at the Meeting on the 19th of May, and in which we all heartily concurred, we might perhaps have been justified in adopting that line of conduct which we now find ourselves bound to pursue, immediately on the appearance of the Paper from the Society for Constitutional Information on the 25th of that month, if we had not been anxious, in that moment of critical expectation, to check every symptom of disunion among

among ourselves, in the sanguine hope that at the Meeting on Saturday last, the most decisive measures might have been taken to obviate the fatal effects of that Publication.

" You, Sir, will recollect the weighty objections which were made to Mr. Cooper's admission as a Member of the Association, the specific ground of those objections, and the declared Resolution of some of us to renounce our connection with the Association on that very account: and, as we cannot distinguish between the appointment of that Gentleman to correspond with the Jacobins at Paris, and the express avowal of a similar correspondence actually carried on under the hand and signature of Mr. Cartwright, we are at a loss to conceive, upon what principle, the one should have ceased to belong to the Association, which did not equally demand the exclusion of the other.

" No step of this sort appears to have been taken.—Retaining the same opinion of the propriety of a Parliamentary Reform, agreeably to those principles which alone induced us to engage in the Association, and which we have repeatedly declared to the Public, we feel what is due to our own consistency of conduct; and, under this impression, we think it incumbent on us to withdraw our names from a Society, which, by continuing such connections, will, in our opinion, frustrate the attainment of those
very

very objects for which alone the Association was instituted, and to which alone its attention ought to be directed.

" We have the honour to be

" SIR,

" Your most obedient

" And humble Servants,

(Signed)

JOHN RUSSELL,
WM. BAKER,
J. C. CURWEN,
DUDLEY NORTH,
J. COURTENAY.

" *To the Chairman of the Association
for obtaining a Parliamentary
Reform.*"

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That if it had occurred to any Member of this Association, that Major Cartwright ought to have been excluded on Saturday last, it would have been an act of public duty in such Member to have brought forward a motion for that purpose.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That no one of the five Gentlemen, who have assigned the continuance of Major Cartwright in the Society as their sole reason for quitting it, did attend at the General Meeting on Saturday last.

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RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That it does not appear upon what reasonable ground the five Gentlemen, who have now quitted the Association, could have entertained a sanguine hope, that measures, which even they did not think fit to recommend, should have been proposed by others in their absence.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That at the Meeting on the 19th of May, the name of Mr. Cooper was voluntarily withdrawn by the Gentleman who had originally proposed him, before any objection had been publicly made, or any thing whatever had been said in the Society upon the subject.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That this Society have entered into no connections whatsoever inconsistent with their declared principles; but, on the contrary, have publicly declined all intercourse with another Society, whose views and objects appeared to them irreconcilable with the real interests of the People, and the genuine principles of the Constitution.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That if this Society had, in any instance, contradicted or departed from the declared principles and objects of their Institution, or deviated from the mode, which was originally adopted for obtaining them, individuals

dividuals might then be justified in withdrawing from it.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That no act, proceeding, or resolution of the Association, has been, or can be pointed out, in which they have contradicted or departed from the declared principles and objects of their Institution, or deviated from the mode which was originally adopted for obtaining them.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Secretary be directed to expunge the name of Lord John Russell from the Books of the Society.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Secretary be directed to expunge the name of William Baker, Esq. from the Books of the Society.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Secretary be directed to expunge the name of John Christian Curwen, Esq. from the Books of the Society.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Secretary be directed to expunge the name of Dudley North, Esq. from the Books of the Society.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the Secretary be directed to expunge the name of J. Courtenay, Esq. from the Books of the Society.

The names of those five Gentlemen being expunged agreeably to the Resolutions of the Society.

Ordered, That the proceedings of the Society on this day be printed and published.

In Name and by Order of the Society,

(Signed)

JOHN WHARTON, *Chairman.*

FRIENDS

FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE.

Committee Rooms, No. 52, Frith-street, Soho.

December 10, 1792.

“ The Committee appointed by the Society of the *Friends of the People*, associated for the purpose of obtaining a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, having already summoned a General Meeting of the Society, to be held at the Free-Mason’s Tavern, on Saturday next, the 15th instant, will not anticipate the objects to be then submitted to their consideration; at the same time, viewing with anxiety the measures that have been lately taken, they think it incumbent on them to warn those with whom they are engaged in the great cause of PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, against the effects of an alarm which has been raised by circumstances so extraordinary and unexpected. They, therefore, earnestly express their wish that the Meeting may be attended by as many Members of this Association as possible, confident that they will come to it with that disposition of temper and firmness becoming men interested in the preservation of the peace and liberty of their country, which can alone be secured by a steady adherence to the acknowledged principles of the constitution.

“ By Order of the Committee,

“ G. BYNG, *Chairman.*”

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Free-

Free-Mason's-Tavern, Saturday, December 15, 1792.

At a General Meeting of the *Society of the Friends of the People*, associated for the Purpose of obtaining a *Parliamentary Reform*, held this Day,

SAMUEL WHITBREAD, JUN. Esq. M.P.

In the Chair.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the following Address be adopted by this Society and published in the Town and Country Newspapers.

“THE Society of the Friends of the People, associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform, after a careful revision of all their Declarations, Resolutions, and Proceedings, since their institution, as well as of the events which have taken place since their last Meeting; and after an attentive consideration of the present state of public affairs—the apparent dispositions of the people at this time—the acknowledged conviction of almost all men, of all parties, of the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform, and with no other difference of opinion, but concerning the extent of the measure, or the time for proposing it;

it; and finally, the situation in which this Society is placed by their own engagements, and by the expectations formed of their future conduct, have this day,

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED,

“ That they hold themselves bound by every tie of honour and of duty, to persevere in their endeavours to accomplish, through the known channels of the Constitution, the object of their Association; namely, an effectual Reformation in the construction of the House of Commons, until the object is obtained, or shall be found to be evidently unattainable by their efforts, or by any of those means in which they can participate.

“ That considering the pains incessantly taken to traduce the character and principles of this Society, first by endeavouring to confound the idea of a Reform in Parliament, with that of disaffection to the established Constitution of this kingdom, as if a real Representation of the Commons were incompatible with the security of a limited monarchy, as if the Crown were not safe with an honest unbiassed House of Commons, or as if the idea of such Reform had been at all times reprobated, as it now is, by those who occupy the highest stations of profit and confidence under the Crown; and then by uniting us in the same description and obloquy with persons whom they call
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Repulicans and Levellers, and with whom, if such doctrines and persons exist, we have no connexion; we think it incumbent on us to declare once more, that we disclaim the views and principles so basely and falsely attributed to us; and that detesting, as we do, the corruptions and abuses notoriously prevailing and encreasing in every branch and department of government, our sole wish and object is to provide a constitutional instrument and power, by which they may be removed or corrected in a regular Parliamentary way.

“ That, calling, as we have done, for the support of the country in their own cause, and for the purposes which we have repeatedly declared, and soliciting the assistance of every man, who approves of our design, and may be desirous to promote it; we at the same time most earnestly exhort and conjure the true friends of the cause of Reform, to discourage, and resist, to the utmost of their ability, every attempt to support it by any other means than those which the laws permit, and the Constitution warrants. Mistaken zeal is always at the mercy, and too often under the guidance of real treachery. They who affect most to abhor sedition, are sometimes found at the bottom of it themselves; and instances are not wanting to prove, that, under the specious pretence of strengthening the hands of Government, a design may be formed of

of destroying the liberty of the press, of calling in the military power, and finally annihilating the Civil Government of the country.

“ That whereas we have received assurances from numerous and respectable Associations in different parts of this united kingdom, of their entire concurrence in our declared views and principles, of their confidence in our integrity and prudence, and of their determination to support us, we earnestly hope, that those Associations, as well as all others, who are friends of the same cause, will confine themselves to the same distinct object that we do, and cooperate with us on the principles stated in this and our former Declarations. In return, we promise them, that we will exert, and devote our faculties, and our labours faithfully, honourably, and steadily, to the the great cause of Reform, in which we are engaged and united with them.

In Name and by the Order of the Society,

Signed

SAMUEL WHITBREAD, JUN. *Chairman.*

RE-

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

That the following Letter, addressed to the President of this Society, and the Answer of the Committee, be printed and published.

“ UNITED IRISHMEN OF DUBLIN.

“ Hon. SIMON BUTLER *in the Chair.*

“ The Society of United Irishmen of Dublin address the Friends of the People at London, impressed with the resemblance in the title, nature, and destination of their respective institutions; and acting under that fraternity of feeling which such a coincidence naturally inspires. The title which you bear is a glorious one: and we too are Friends of the People. If we be asked, ‘ Who are the People?’ We turn not our eyes here and there, to this party, or to that persuasion, and cry, ‘ Lo! the People;’ but we look around us without partiality or predilection, and we answer, ‘ The multitude of human beings, the living mass of humanity associated to exist, to subsist, and to be happy. In them, and them only, we find the original of social authority, the measure of political value, and the pedestal of legitimate power.’

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“ As Friends of the People, upholding their rights and deploring their sufferings, the great object of this Society is a real representation of the Irish nation in an Irish parliament; and as friends of the *whole* people, we support the necessity of Catholic emancipation, as a means of making representation what it ought to be, free, equal, and entire. If the people of one country be not obliged to obey the laws of another, on the same principle when the people resident in a country have no sort of influence over the legislature, that legislature will receive rather a discretionary acquiescence than legitimate obedience; and as this discretionary state is dangerous, because precarious, a change becomes necessary for the peace and happiness of the nation, violence being the last measure to which rational beings will resort.

“ The present state of Ireland, with regard to population, is upwards of four millions, three of which are of the Catholic religion; and with regard to political freedom,

“ 1. The state of *Protestant* representation is as follows: 17 boroughs have no resident elector; 16 have but one: 16 have from two to five; 90 have 13 electors each; 90 persons return for 106 venal boroughs, that is 212 members out of 300, the whole number. Fifty-four members are returned by five noble-

noblemen and four bishops; and borough influence has given landlords such power in the counties, as makes them boroughs also.—In short, representation, which in its nature is only a deposit, has been converted into a property; and that constitution which is founded on equal liberty, and which declares that no tax shall be levied without the 'good will' of the people, is totally perverted in its principles, and corrupted in its practice; yet the Majesty of the People is still quoted with affected veneration; and if the crown be ostensibly placed in a part of the Protestant portion, it is placed in mockery, for it is encircled with thorns.

" 2. With regard to the *Catholics*, the following is the simple and sorrowful fact: Three millions, every one of whom has an interest in the state, and collectively give it its value, are taxed without being represented, and bound by laws to which they have not given consent. They now require a share of political liberty, in the participation of the elective franchise, and of civil liberty in the privilege of serving on Grand Juries. There can be no civil without political liberty; and in requiring the right of suffrage, they, in reality, demand only a safe-guard for their religion, their property, and their lives.

" The code of penal laws against the
Catho-

Catholics, reduced oppression into a system; the action and pressure of this system continually accumulating without any re-action on the part of the sufferers sunk in the lethargy of servitude, has confirmed the governing portion of the people in a habit of domination. This *habit*, mixing with the antipathies of past times, and the irritations of the moment, has impressed a strange persuasion, that the rights of the plurality are Protestant *property*, and that the birth-right of millions, born and to be born, continue the spoils of war, and booty of conquest. The perversion of the understanding perverts the heart; and this Protestant ascendancy, as it calls itself, uniting power with passion, and hating the Catholics because it has injured them, on a bare inquisitorial suspicion insufficient to criminate an individual, would erase a whole people from the roll of citizenship, and for the sins (if they were sins) of remote ancestors, would attain their remotest posterity. We have read, and read with horror, that Louis XI. ordered the children to be placed under the scaffold, where the father was beheaded, that they might be sprinkled with his blood.

" It is, we think, by this unequal distribution of popular privilege, that its very nature, has in this kingdom, been corrupted; and from the moment that equality of
rights

rights was overturned, and general liberty became particular power, the public mind has been split into a conflict of factions. General distribution of the elective franchise would make corruption impracticable; but when common right becomes the property of person, party, or persuasion, it acquires a value equally unnatural and unconstitutional; is bought and sold; rises or falls, like any marketable commodity. The deprivation of the elective franchise, on the one hand, robs a great majority of the nation of an invaluable blessing; and its accumulation in the hands of the Protestant portion, operates on that very portion as a curse. The right of *all* heaped up and hoarded by the *few*, becomes a public pest, and the nutriment of the Constitution is changed into its poison.—The iniquitous monopoly rots in boroughs, spreads its contagion through counties, taints morals and manners, makes elections mere fairs for the traffic of franchise and the sale of men; in place of that nationality of mind, which spreads its parental embrace around a whole People, substitutes the envious excluding spirit of selfish corporations, and swelling at length into monstrous and gigantic ascendancy, holds forth an hundred thousand hands to bribe and betray, and tramples with an hundred thousand feet on those miserable millions

millions, who have lost their only guarantee against injustice and oppression.

“ Instructed by the genius of the Constitution, and the genuine spirit of the laws; instructed of late, by all that has been spoken, or written, or acted, or suffered in the cause of Freedom; instructed by the late revolution in America; by the late revolution in Ireland; by the late revolution in France; hearing of all that has been done over the face of the globe for Liberty, and feeling all that can be suffered from the want of it; reading the Charter of Independence to Ireland, and listening to the spirit-stirring voice of her great deliverer; actuated, in fine, by that imperishable spark in the bosom of man, which the servitude of a century may smother, but cannot extinguish, the Catholics of this country have been lessoned into liberty; have learned to know their rights; to be sensible of their wrongs, and to detail, by peaceable delegation, their grievances, rather than endure without obedience. You!—in either kingdom, who reproach the Catholics of Ireland for asserting the rights of nature, burn your books, tear your charters, break down your free press, and crumble to pieces those moulds which have cast Liberty in so fair a form, as to make Catholics feel what Protestants have felt, and join their admiration and love with those of a worshipping world.”

“ This

“ This Society and many other Societies have associated to create that union of power, and that brotherhood of affection, among all the inhabitants of this Island, which is the interest as well as duty of all. We are all Irishmen ; and our object is to unite the different descriptions of religion in the cause of our common country. From the most opposite points in the wide circumference of religion we tend, with increasing velocity, to the same centre of political union. A Reform in Parliament, preceding Catholic enfranchisement, would be in its nature partial and exclusive ; and unless a Reform immediately follows that emancipation (which it will certainly do), the extension of elective franchise, would only add to the mass of corruption. The centre of our union is fixed and immovable. The Presbyterian wishes for National Freedom. The Catholic aspires to nothing more ; nor can either of them be brought to believe that those varieties of religious faith, which may be deemed the pleasure of the Creator, should be made the engines of political torture to any of his creatures. Too long have our people been set in array of battle against each other ; too long have the rancor and revenge of our ancestors been left as a legacy of blood to their posterity ; too long has one limb of the social body been tied down, until it had nearly lost all feeling, life, and energy. It is our wish, it is our hope

hope, to give Ireland the full and free possession of both her arms, her Catholic arm as well as her Protestant arm, that she may the better embrace her friends, or grapple with her foes.

Such are the principles and practice of our Institution, which, having neither power nor patronage, but merely the energy of honesty, has not only been distinguished by the calumnies of those, who are born only to bite the heel, and be crushed under foot, but has been honoured by the obloquy of men, who fill the first offices in the State. From them we appeal to natural right and eternal justice, which ought ever to be established without compromise or reservation. From them we appeal to those, who call themselves Friends of the People. Look not upon Ireland with an eye of indifference. The period of Irish insignificance is passing fast away. If the Nation ever appeared contemptible, it was because the Nation did not act : but no sooner in the late war was it abandoned by Government, than it rose to distinction as a People. As to any union between the Islands, believe us when we assert, that our union rests upon our mutual independence. We shall love each other, *if we be left to ourselves*. It is the union of minds which ought to bind these Nations together. Reciprocal interests and mutual wants will ever secure mutual affection ; but, were any other union to be forced, and force

only could effect it, you would endanger your Liberties, and we should lose our Rights; you would feel the influence of the Crown increased beyond all sufferance, and we should lose the name and energies of a People, with every hope of raising to its merited station in the map of mankind, this noble and neglected Island, "for which God has done so much, and man so little."

"Signed by Order,

"THOMAS WRIGHT, *Secretary.*"

Dublin, October 26, 1792.

A N S W E R

Of the Committee of the Society of the FRIENDS of the PEOPLE, associated for the Purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform.

Committee-Rooms, No. 52, Frith-street, Soho.

SIR,

WE have received by the hands of Mr. Archdekin, the favour of your Address, and shall take the earliest opportunity of laying it before the Society of the Friends of the People, at their first Meeting, which
is

is appointed to be held on the 15th of next month. We cannot, however, delay expressing the pleasure we feel in finding so large a portion of our fellow-citizens entertaining sentiments so just, and expressing these sentiments with an energy that commands assent. Our endeavours must necessarily be confined to this Island, and can have no immediate relation to Ireland, which ever must possess a right to legislate for herself. Whether we shall give or take the example, our wishes will ever be earnest for your success.

In name and by Order

Of the Committee,

(Signed) GEORGE ROUS, *Chairman.*

November, 27, 1792.

To the President of the Society of United Irishmen, in Dublin.

AT a Meeting of the Committee on the 24th of May, it was ordered that the following Resolutions be printed and circulated by this Society.

Thatched-House-Tavern, 16th May, 1782.

“ AT a numerous and respectable Meeting of Members of Parliament friendly to a Constitutional Reformation, and of Members of several Committees of counties and cities.

P R E S E N T,

The Duke of Richmond,	The Hon. William Pitt,
Lord Surrey,	The Rev. Mr. Wyvill,
Lord Mahon,	Major Cartwright,
The Lord-Mayor,	Mr. John Horne Tooke,
Sir Watkin Lewes,	Alderman Wilkes,
Mr. Duncombe,	Doctor Jebb
Sir C. Wray,	Mr. Churchill,
Mr. B. Hollis,	Mr. Frost,
Mr. Withers,	&c. &c. &c.

“ RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

“ That the Motion of the Hon. William Pitt, on the 7th instant, for the Appointment of a Committee of the House of Commons to enquire into the state of the Representation of the people of Great Britain, and to report the same to the House, and also what steps it might be necessary to take, having been defeated by a Motion for the Order of the Day, it is become indispensably necessary, that ap-

“ application should be made to Parliament by petitions from the collective Body of the People, in their respective districts, requesting a substantial Reformation of the Commons House of Parliament.

“ RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

“ That this Meeting, considering that a general Application by the collective Body of the people to the House of Commons cannot be made before the close of the present Session, is of opinion that the sense of the People should be taken at such times as may be convenient during this summer, in order to lay their several petitions before Parliament early in the next Session, when their proposals for a Parliamentary Reformation (without which neither the liberty of the Nation can be preserved, nor the permanence of a wise and virtuous administration can be secure) may receive that ample and mature discussion, which so momentous a question demands.”

T H E E N D.

This Day is Published, Price 6d.

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To which is added,

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