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A  
P R O P O S A L  
FOR THE  
LIQUIDATION  
OF THE  
NATIONAL DEBT;  
THE  
ABOLITION OF TYTHES;  
AND THE  
Reform of the Church Revenue.

THIRD EDITION.

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QUEM DEUS VULT PERDERE  
PRIUS DEMENTAT.

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L O N D O N :

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M DCC LXXXIV.



TO THE  
R E A D E R.

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**T**H E R E are more good consequences which arise from discreet proceedings, than any man is aware of when he gives them birth. This is an observation which the author has found verified; for in addition to those advantages which he expected to derive from the circumstance of concealing his name, another very material one has sprung up. It has enabled him to mix indiscriminately in all companies, and collect the sentiments of persons who might

## T O T H E R E A D E R.

otherwise have been silent at such an interview; or who would not, at any rate, have delivered an opinion with that frankness and warmth, which carries along with it this conviction at least—that it flows from the heart.

IN these conversations three principal objections had been started, the weight of which, like an impenetrable barrier, obstructing the progress of this design, drew down upon its head, the imputation of being a reverie not reducible to practice. In order, therefore, to rescue it from that oblivion to which it would otherwise most deservedly have been consigned, the author was induced, in the second edition, to attempt an answer to the several objections. Similar reasons have prompted him to undertake the removal of other obstructions which have been thrown in its way since the late publication, and

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are now to be found, in the shape of queries, immediately following the former objections.

MANY other very material additions have been made to this impression. The doctrine of prescription has been considered and explained; and the whole enriched with an appendix, containing a narrative of proceedings merely respecting the present proposal.

## P A R T I.

T H E

## L I Q U I D A T I O N

O F T H E

## N A T I O N A L D E B T.

**L**ET us suppose the debt of the nation—*two hundred and forty millions*. The interest upon this debt—*ten millions*. The rent-roll of real estates—*fifty millions*.

My enquiries, relative to these points, encourage me to say that our situation is not altogether so bad as it is here represented. However, as a greater degree of accuracy is not material to my present purpose, let us take it

for granted that the *rents, debt, and interest,* are such as I have stated them to be.

From these premises, it appears, that the income of the individuals of this country is *sixty millions a year*: and it further appears, that if the debt of the nation was transferred to individuals, every proprietor of real estates and stock would be encumbered thereby to the amount of four years income.

A proprietor of 100l. per annum would be burdened with four hundred pounds, another of 500l. per annum with two thousand pounds, and so on in proportion; which, at four per cent. would reduce the first to 84l. and the latter to 420l. per annum.

This is no such mighty sacrifice, if it was even in addition to the present burdens. But when it is considered that this payment is *in lieu of all taxes whatever*, I much question whether there is a man in the kingdom, who will not think himself a gainer by the bargain; taking along with the proposition, the comforts that attend it.

For my own part, were it in my option,

I would not hesitate a moment in the choice I would make; *and my proportion would be no inconsiderable sum.*

The national debt is here stated at two hundred and forty millions, and it is proposed that interest shall be made payable thereon, at the rate of four per cent. which will raise nine millions, six hundred thousand pounds. But as no interest must be calculated upon the sum which the stockholder contributes, the actual receipt to be paid by the proprietors of real estates will be eight millions.

No objection surely can be made to this arrangement, which, although it takes up the room of all other national demands, brings an incumbrance upon the proprietors of real estates of very little more than *three shillings in the pound.*

Besides, if it should hereafter appear that the debt has been over-rated;\* or that the

\* From what has since appeared, the public debt is somewhat undervalued at two hundred and forty millions. There does not, however, remain a doubt but the proportion of six to one between the debt and the means will still hold good.

bulk of real estates has been undervalued; which in both instances is most likely to be the case, the burden will be still lighter than that which is here placed upon the back of the public.

Notwithstanding what has been advanced in a former paragraph, respecting the payment of eight millions only, this regulation will effect a reduction of taxes and duties to the full amount of nine millions six hundred thousand pounds. The total outgoings do not exceed *twelve millions and a half*; and as the customs produce three millions, we may safely say that the whole is provided for by the present proposition.

This is the light in which I have been accustomed to consider the state of the nation; but it is more than probable that I have viewed it through a false medium: for I find it has been lately declared in a public assembly, by a very able and well informed member of that honourable house, \* that as matters now stand, the annual expence will fall very little

\* Mr Thomas Pitt, now Lord Camelford.

short of *fourteen millions*, compounded of the following parts:

	£.
Civil List	900,000
Peace Establishment	3,500,000
Interest	9,393,137
	<hr/>
	13,793,137 *

Let us now take up the business upon this ground. Even in this case, which no doubt is the worst that can be put, the deficiency not brought to account by the present plan is no more than 4,193,137l. of which the customs, as mentioned above, producing three millions, there remains something more than one million to be provided for by duties the least burdensome to the people.

Suppose the duty on salt is continued, it is

\* This is the neat sum to be paid into the hands of government, but it is not the precise sum to be taken out of the pockets of individuals; for to this you must add some millions more, to defray the expence of collecting: Which latter sum, whatever it is, will be saved to individuals; a circumstance not named before, but well deserving notice.

very productive, and is in no degree oppressive; it is indeed hardly to be felt by the meanest individual. This duty brings into the treasury upwards of half a million, and stamps no less.\* If these, which are sufficient for our purpose, are approved, all other taxes and duties are done away.

When war returns, taxes indeed must return with it. But, as we know where to lay our hands upon nine millions six hundred thousand pounds a-year, we are always provided with a sum, fully sufficient, to answer all the purposes either of attack or defence.

We may, therefore, consider these dormant taxes as a resource, certain and inexhaustible, in all possible cases; and as such, it will operate to the absolute annihilation of that monster of the age, *a national debt*, never more to rise in judgment against us.

And when this circumstance is made known to the powers of Europe, and other states, it will keep *the world in awe*; for what nation would be hardy enough to give us offence,

\* The stamps are much more productive since the late additional duties have taken place.

when it is known, of a certainty, that we can fight with them, to the end of time, without encumbering ourselves in future with a shilling of debt.

It is necessary to say something here in explanation of what was advanced respecting the non-payment of interest upon the stockholders contribution. The income of that body of people is stated at ten millions a-year; their contribution, therefore, will amount to forty millions: the interest upon which being paid by themselves to themselves, an effect is produced similar to that which would take place by reducing their capital: or, in other words, by expunging the national debt to that amount.

For instance: A proprietor holding stock which produces an income of 100l. per ann. is to contribute four hundred pounds: not, however, by actual payment of the money, but, which is the same thing in effect, by relinquishing so much of his claim upon the public. Therefore, clearly, no calculation of interest must be made upon this sum, which, as a debt, has no longer any kind of existence.



Neither is this deduction so very bitter a potion, when it is considered that the remainder will be well secured, which is far from the case at present, and at good interest; and may be transferred, by sale or otherwise, like any other property: for this further advantage will attend the regulation, that it will bring the iniquitous practice of *stock-jobbing* to a final period.

The case is so obvious, it is almost unnecessary to mention, that the proprietors of real estates, purchasing stock, at any time, to the amount of the incumbrance, have it in their power to *release their estates*: or, they may again dispose of the whole, or a part of it, to provide for younger children; or for any other purpose, whenever they please.

It may be said I have pressed hard upon real estates; in whose relief, therefore, and to make the load fall as equal as possible upon property in general, it is proposed, agreeable to the spirit of this design, that all debts, whether by mortgage, bond, or otherwise secured, (tradesmens bills excepted, not carrying interest) shall contribute in like proportion.

For instance: It is proposed that every person in possession of real estates to the amount of 100l. per ann. shall contribute four hundred pounds: or, in other words, that his property shall be subject to the payment of interest upon that sum, at the rate of four per cent. But if the proprietor of such estates is encumbered by mortgage, or otherwise, he shall only contribute in proportion to his clear income; and the residue shall be made up, in due proportion, by the creditors.

For example: Suppose a person in possession of real estates to the amount of 100l. per annum, to be indebted to one or more creditors in the capital sum of 500l. for which he pays interest at the rate of five per cent. In this case, as the estate is liable to the full payment of 400l. and interest thereon as above, the creditors shall transfer one hundred pounds of their principal to the public stock: that is to say, they shall transfer it to the proprietor of the estate, not by actual payment, but by a reduction of the private debt.

I have said that the proposed payment is *in lieu of all taxes whatever*, whereas it now ap-

pears that the duties on salt and stamps are intended to be continued.

It is true, I have proposed to continue those duties; but their pressure is very light: and even that weight, small as it is, may probably be removed, in part, by savings in the reform of the peace establishment; and, in part, by the increase of the customs; for no doubt they will encrease, by virtue of this reform, and gradually come in aid of the remainder.

If the reader is not already aware of the circumstance, it is proper to inform him, that what the author has in view is to distribute the weight of our burdens upon the individuals of this country, in exact proportion to their strength and ability to bear them. Therefore, when war returns, and with it the taxes, the land-tax, according to the present amount of it, is to be levied by an equal rate, affecting not only the landholder, as now, but, in due proportion to their clear receipts, all other persons who are entitled to payments secured upon land, or upon the proprietors of land. In consequence of this more enlarged and equal distribution, the landed interest, not-

withstanding the vast accumulation of public debt, will not, in time of war, be so much loaded as was the original express intention of the legislature in cases of that kind. That is to say—the land-tax will not amount, *flagrante bello*, to four shillings in the pound.

There is one very material point of consideration; which has hitherto escaped my notice:—the distress which must inevitably fall upon those who have no other means of support for themselves and families, but what they derive from the emolument of office. And as I fear there are some who have been quick-sighted enough to anticipate this ruin in their minds, from such I seek forgiveness, for having wounded their feelings, though but for a moment, by leaving room for the suspicion of such injustice. Without securing a retreat for these

Myself should be the first  
To hate myself, and stamp my *Plan* accurst.

Let all such be considered as annuitants, and continued in the full receipt of their salaries for life; or, if that is thought too much, let them be put upon half-pay. Were it left to my determination, the former should have the

preference. But when prudence draws one way, and pity the other, I confess myself unequal to the conflict. I think I could face death, and any danger, with the firmness of a man; but in cases like these, I am woman all over, and nothing but weakness.

There is one argument in favor of the more humane side of the question, which must not be omitted. That even by leaving them in the full possession of their salaries, you do, in effect, reduce them to half-pay; the fees of office being, in most cases, equal to the fixed salary; and, in many cases, I believe, considerably more.

And here I might enter upon a large field of benefits, which will result to the population, trade, commerce, and manufactures of this country, by the abolition of taxes; but they are not numerable within the compass of this paper: neither, indeed, can it be necessary to enter upon a detail of them, in proof of a self-evident fact.

One circumstance, however, I cannot forbear to mention, which is,—that *the Excise,*

that object of just terror to Englishmen, will no more, like *a spectre*, stand before us; but the gates of that office, like *the temple of Janus*, will be shut, never more to be unlocked, but to provide means, in time of war, for the security of the state.

\* Then, again, shall every Englishman's house be his castle; which, however great, however mean, though it were pervious to every wind, and accessible to all the elements of nature, *the King cannot, the King dare not enter,*

There is yet another circumstance, which, as it strikes me forcibly, I beg leave to name.

That the abolition of taxes, will put an effectual *stop to emigrations* † from this country, which in the present posture of our affairs, is a certain impending evil, threatening no less than the loss of our liberty, and the subjugation

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\* See Mr. Pitt's speech (late Lord Chatham) in the debate respecting the illegality of general warrants.

† More than forty thousand persons are supposed to have emigrated from this country during the last peace.

tion of these kingdoms to a foreign yoke. Nay more, that it will in all human probability occasion such an influx of people of all denominations from other states, and of course such an increase of wealth and strength, as will enable us still to hold up our heads among the mighty ones of the earth: and by restoring us to the lost dominion of the seas, make us rise, *like a giant refreshed with wine*, superior to our distresses, and greater by our fall.

### Objections answered.

IN opposition to the doctrine laid down in the preceding sheets, it has been asserted that nine millions six hundred thousand pounds a year, is not sufficient to defray the expence of a war; as is evident from the supplies of the two last wars, which very considerably exceeded that sum.

Surely this is no serious argument! It supposes us to continue in the same track, which has led us to the brink on which we stand: and if such is the determination, *actum est de republica*, there is no power in man to save us from destruction.

But with so much experience over our heads, it is to be hoped, that we have not only seen, but repented the folly and infatuation of our late proceedings; and are so tremblingly alive to the sense of what is past, as to dread a repetition of them more than death.

Therefore setting aside this argument, as embracing a proposition too palpably absurd to

stand in need of further refutation, the author seems to be warranted in the expression, That the sum proposed is fully sufficient to answer all our *future purposes*, either of attack or defence.

If it is urged in reply, that this mode of reasoning is more plausible than convincing, being the offspring of hope rather than certainty; it may be strengthened by this further declaration, That in contemplating our own altered situation, and the new interests which have arisen in the world, it seems to strike the mind as a *moral impossibility*, that this country can ever again be engaged in so general and expensive a war.

But even admitting the possibility, would it be right to forego the benefit of an institution, in all other respects efficient, because it is just barely possible that a contingency may be engendered in the womb of time, for which this proposal has made no suitable provision? As well might a man, having scarce any other means of precarious support, refuse to accept the inheritance of an estate to which honors and great advantage were annexed, merely

because it was situate in an island, and might some time or other be overwhelmed in the sea.

Besides, if such an event should take place, does it follow that we must necessarily carry on the war at the same boundless expence? can no material savings be made? Then indeed have the two last wars been conducted with the nicest attention to frugality; which if any will assert, it can be only such as those, who shutting their eyes against the light of the sun, would maintain, spite of their own better knowledge, that the earth is enveloped in midnight darkness.

As the point in dispute may receive some further illustration from a comparative view of the expence of former wars, let us examine the amount of the highest expenditure in any one year in the following reigns:—viz.

	A. D.	£.
William III.	1693 -	10565089
Ann - - -	1709 -	11890893
George I.	1722 -	9685012
George II.	1760 -	19060039
George III.	1782 -	26636579

By comparing these several sums with that which has been herein provided, the particulars of which provision are as follows :

	£.
Customs - - -	3000 000
Salt and Stamps - -	1200 000
Interest - - -	8000 000
Taxes - - -	9600 000
	21,800 000

The sum provided appears, upon the face of it, to be more than double what was expended in any one year in the reign of William III. or George I. not quite double the highest expenditure of Queen Anne's reign; almost three millions above the most expensive year of Mr Pitt's all glorious war: yet strange to tell, it falls short of the sum consumed in the unfortunate 1782 nearly five millions of money.—All these appearances, however, are delusive. We must take into the account the difference of the article of Interest at this time and the periods alluded to, before we can establish a fair comparison. Under the present regulation the interest is fixt at eight millions, in 1760 it was not more than 4409797l. the difference is 3591797l.

which being added to the expence of that year produces 22651836l. the sum which would have been expended *ceteris paribus* in the year we have named.

As to the outgoings of the year 1782, we must, in considering them, proceed in a different way; the interest of that year being more than eight millions, the excess must be deducted; and if we take the interest at 9393137l. as stated in the thirteenth page of this work, the gross sum will be reduced thereby to 25243442l.

What savings might have been made in these or any other years of extraordinary expence, the author does not pretend to determine. It is a question of very difficult solution, and as such, he begs leave to submit it to the adept in those researches; reserving in the mean time to all others, the liberty of forming their own conjectures.

But admitting that no material savings can be made; and admitting the probability of our being engaged again in wars as expensive as the last, which, of all bad lights, is the

worst in which we can place it; even in this point of view, taking one year with another, the provision which is made is a match for the disbursements. The truth of this assertion will appear by the annexed columns of expence, which contain the total revenue as paid into the exchequer in the following years:

A. D.	£.
1777 - - - -	15621763
1778 - - - -	17934009
1779 - - - -	18816109
1780 - - - -	24136200
1781 - - - -	25009712
1782 - - - -	26636579
Grand Total.	128154372

In which period of six years, the annual sum as proposed by the author, viz. 21800000l. making an accumulation of 130800000l. leaves a balance in our favor of 2645628l.

From the evidence of these facts, it is clear, that the sum in question would have been sufficient in all cases that have hitherto occurred. For even in the last war, which in the article of expence, and indeed in many other re-

spects, was a masterpiece of its kind; even in that memorable instance, had the present plan been adopted before we started, we might have terminated our mad career, with this satisfaction at least, that we had not incurred, by the experiment, a single shilling of debt.

Another objection has been made.—That in case of war, money will be wanted immediately, whereas a supply by taxes cannot be brought forward in less time than a year.

To obviate this difficulty it will be necessary to make a deposit in the treasury of a sum sufficient to defray the expence of the first year of the war. This may be done by continuing the taxes one year after the commencement of this regulation, the produce of which being deposited as above, removes the objection, by establishing a fund which may be fingered upon the shortest notice. And having thus provided means for the services of the first year of the war, the taxes of that first year will furnish a supply for the second; the taxes of the second for the third; and so on in regular succession, till we close the scene; and

with the taxes of the last year of the war; replace the deposit.

From what has been said it is manifest that as soon as war is at an end, there is an end of taxes also. We may therefore compare the distresses of war to the circumstances of a dream, which affect us no longer than we remain under the influence of sleep: Or we may liken them to the pressure of an incubus, highly perplexing for the time, and grievous to be borne, but which leaving us with strength and vigour unimpaired, only wakens us to the enjoyment of new delight.

These obstructions removed, there remains yet another in our way, which is said to be insurmountable, viz. That by disbanding the body of people employed in the department of taxes, you will not be able to muster them again of a sudden, so as to answer the immediate exigencies of the state: For however lightly it may be thought of by persons unacquainted with the nature of the business, the department of taxes is a great and wonderful machine; the knowledge, and right management of which, acquired by long and painful

application, and only made familiar by practice, would soon be lost thro' diffuse, irrecoverable within the compass of time we could spare for that purpose.

This argument, if it proves any thing, proves too much: as by parity of reasoning, we ought to continue our army upon the war establishment, and our navy also: for notwithstanding what has been said, it is surely as difficult a task to manufacture a good seaman or soldier, as it is to construct an accountant, a tax-gatherer, or even an officer of excise.

As to the *ipse dixit* declaration which the objector has added, by way of establishing his fact, candor itself must allow, it has more the appearance of trick than fair-dealing: for when any man attempts to make a mystery of those things which plain common sense can make itself master of without the aid of a miracle, most assuredly he means to deceive you. If this construction gives offence to any person, let him first explain what there is of such peculiar intricacy in the business of the taxes, to entitle it to so pompous a distinction. Might we not say, with infinitely more apparent pro-



priety, that a line of battle ship is a great and wonderful machine, that an army is the same? yet we have never been at a loss to give motion and effect to either of these when occasion required it.

It may be said, however, that the comparison does not hold, inasmuch as the navy and army are only reduced, not wholly disbanded and paid off; whereby even in time of peace numbers being trained to the use of arms, and a seafaring life, we are enabled, with the assistance of the half-pay list, and the two great seminaries for the profession of arms, the militia on one hand, and the merchant ships on the other, to go forth with such powerful armaments on the first blush of a war.

Neither is it intended that the body of men employed in the department of taxes should be wholly turned adrift: some considerable portion of them must necessarily remain, to collect and regulate the payments which are here pointed out. And when the exigencies of state require the service of a greater number, the half-pay list in this case, as well as in the other instances adduced, together with the le-

gion of quillmen which may be collected from the counting houses and desks of our traders and merchants, will enable us without any manner of doubt, *in one little month*, to give motion and regularity to this great and wonderful machine.

Having now gone through the whole of the objections, and opened a free passage for the exercise of the judgment; let the unbiassed reader determine, whether the scheme is really such as it has been represented to be, visionary and unavailing, or whether it is not rather practicable in all its parts, and effectual to the end proposed.

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## Queries answered.

QUESTION I. Whether men, whose commodity is labor, do not emigrate to get employment, and not to avoid taxes? How then would the proposed abolition of taxes put a stop to emigrations?

ANSWER. For this plain reason—because such men, as are named, would no longer have occasion to emigrate. There are not wanting those who would gladly employ them *now*, but by reason of the taxes are unable to do so. Eased of that burden, industry would soon find full employment, in all the various shapes it can assume.

QUEST. II. If there are more men in a state that can be usefully employed, whether the surplus had not better emigrate than stay at home, and live upon the bread by others earned? Then wherefore all this dread of emigrations? The wiser bees have no such fear about them. Their policy directs them to compel the drones to quit the hive; expelling them, on pain of death, from their community for ever.

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ANS. It is the blame of taxes if there are more people in this country than can be usefully employed. That obstruction removed, the tone would soon be changed, the cry would be,—*All hands at work,—make ready merchandise for all the various markets of the world.* The present surplus had, therefore, much better be kept at home to live and enrich themselves, and the state, in the manner proposed, than turned adrift, because we have not work, thro' lack of public virtue, to detain them. As to that which is said of the bees, it does not by any means apply, They drive away the drones, and not the bees of industry, however numerous. Much wiser than ourselves, it is their practice, in proportion to their numbers, to extend their works, and keep their citizens at home, as we should do from their example.

QUEST. III. Whether a petition to parliament for the adoption of this plan, would not pave the way to an equal land-tax?

ANS. The way is paved already; and we now ly at the mercy of *the first minister* who has obstinate valour enough to risk himself and

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his situation upon the success of the measure. The plan proposed is the only one that has yet been devised, which will effectually defeat a project, that has more than once been the subject of debate in cabinet-councils.

QUEST. IV. Whether emergencies would not speedily arise to demand the revival of all our present taxes, one after another, even in time of peace? And whether it is not highly probable, in the success of this plan, that many of us may live to see that fatal day return?

ANS. In the success of this plan, it is not at all likely that any of us should live to see the revival of taxes in time of peace; so little so, that there is no probability of such revival in any period of time, because it provides amply for all contingencies which human wisdom can foresee. But failing of success, it is highly probable, nay certain, that in the event of another war, which is not distant, "Mischief must and will ensue, such as the sun's all-piercing eye hath not yet looked upon in this country,"\*

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\* Vide the Appendix. Sir Francis Blake's speech at the Alnwick meeting.

QUEST. V. Whether it would be safe to change the present system of taxation, under which, the trade, manufactures, and agriculture of the kingdom have arisen to such amazing perfection? And whether taxation, considered as a stimulus to provoke our industry, is not absolutely necessary to the well-being of the state?

ANS. If there is any credit to be given to the old observation, *out of debt, out of danger*, then is it safer to adopt the plan recommended by the author, than that which is now in use. As to the circumstance of our trade, manufactures, and agriculture, they have most undoubtedly flourished under the present system of taxation. They have flourished in like manner under the present system of corruption,—under the venality of the representative and constituent bodies,—under the undue influence of the crown, and under every other mischief which has crept into the state. But have they flourished by virtue of these abuses? Will you give that merit to taxes, which is due only to labor? I have heard that industry had increased our ability to bear the increasing burdens of the state, but that taxes were a necessary spur to industry, or that the latter had sprung

out of the former, is a doctrine as new to me as it is perfectly strange. Enquire of the husbandman, to what circumstance he is indebted for a plentiful harvest. Will he not say, *To the sweat of my brow, and the favor of elements?* How would he stare if he were told, that he is obliged for the plenty which fills his garners to the invigorating principle of taxes—to that which raises the price of labor—to that which cramps him in his ability to cultivate and improve his land. If you should tell him this, in what manner would he deign to notice the absurdity? By shaking his head and walking away.

QUEST. VI. Whether there are not many thousands in this kingdom, who are neither proprietors of land, nor holders of stock, nor lenders of money, who nevertheless, are living well, consuming much, and paying cheerfully? How then in the name of common sense, would the proprietors of land be gainers by the bargain, by taking the proportion of taxes of this class of men upon themselves, in addition to their own? Would they be benefited by paying a much larger proportionable

sum under the appellation of a rent-charge, than now is paid under the name of a tax? Can this be looked upon as a consideration, to tempt, requite, and justify our acquiescence in this mighty innovation? Will any man of prudence patronise a scheme which is evidently calculated to lighten his pocket? Can any reasonable person expect it, when so far from being gainers, as he has asserted, all men of property will be losers by the bargain? In fine, what milder inference can be drawn from these premises, and from his readiness to part with his money, than to say, that the author is one of those, of whom no very honorable mention is made in a certain proverb, too apposite to be misunderstood or misapplied in the case before us?

ANS. That there are many thousands in this kingdom, who come within the description above named, is not to be controverted. And there are some few likewise, in whose degenerate minds, to the disgrace of human nature, no other idea of gain can find admittance, but that of lucre only. To such as these, who are incapable of feeling the force of an argument, which is not drawn from positive but

comparative advantage, the proposal in question will give no satisfaction. Wrapped up in the single consideration of self, these purblind mortals exclaim, "It will lighten the pocket," not considering in how much greater proportion it will lighten the heart also. Happy only in the prospect of evading the payment, they circulate a report, and would have it believed that the author has been deceiving us with false pretences,—“that so far from being gainers as he has asserted, all men of property will be losers by the bargain.” How can any person have the face to practise so grossly upon the credulity of others, as to draw conclusions from half sentences, in order to father upon me so strange an assertion? How can any man be weak enough to imagine that he will be able to avail himself of so poor an expedient, to establish a fact diametrically opposite to the doctrine which I have labor'd to inculcate, which I have taken so much pains to reconcile to the prejudices of my countrymen? To expiate our manifold political sins by a pecuniary peace-offering is that atonement which I have presumed to be not only necessary but unavoidable. Is it fair then, because it was said, “I much question whe-

ther there is a man in the kingdom who will not think himself a gainer by the bargain." Is it fair, candid or becoming, to reason from thence, as if no more had been said, suppressing that which immediately follows, to clear the sense and mark my meaning;—"taking along with the proposition, the comforts that attend it." As to the proverb, by which is clearly meant, that my wit may be gaged by my willingness to part with my money, I have only to observe, that whatever may be said or thought of me in that respect by others, believe me gentle reader, I am no more disposed than yourself to give away my property upon slender grounds, or for useless purposes. The cruel necessity by which we are required to offer up at the shrine of our country the destined sacrifice, is lamented by me as much as by any man. The difference lies in this, that I am willing to make a virtue of necessity, and if that is a mark of folly set me down I pray you as foremost on the list. I wish with all my heart a better bargain could have been made; but blame not me because it is such as it is, provided it is the best that the circumstances of the case will allow.

It is admitted on all hands, that something must be done which may prove effectual to turn aside the dreadful train of calamities expectant upon a state of public bankruptcy in a popular government. *That effectual something* has now been thrice in this manner submitted to the consideration of my countrymen; of which the distinguishing features are these,—that it is equal to what is required, *viz.* the great work of our political redemption; and that the load which it lays is distributed in such fair proportion to the relative strength of the parties, that all alike have neighbours fare. Admitting then that our present situation is an evil,—admitting that the mode of relief which is here devised, is likewise an evil, we are so far agreed, and all that remains is to exercise our judgment, as wisdom shall direct, in the choice of alternatives. For this purpose let us look back to all we have suffered already, and then we shall see that in little more than half a century, we have squandered away the sixth part of our property; and had not our own industry kept pace with the profusion of ministers, one half had been gone. Let us look forward to what we must yet undergo, if we madly pursue the beaten path to ruin.—Let us consider what we shall escape by devi-

ating therefrom in the manner proposed, and then determine which of the two is to be preferred,—that situation which never can be better, and must eventually be worse; or that which never can be worse, and may be as much better as we please. Consult with Sir Richard,\* and he will tell you, that drugs which operate powerfully in desperate cases, must not be rejected, because they are unpalatable; and more particularly, when they come recommended like the present medicine by these peculiar good properties—that it may be administered with safety—that it is certain in its operation,—that it will not only remove, but extirpate the disease; not by dint of repeated doses, and a long tedious course of pharmacy, but like the operation of a charm, like the touch of divinity, will restore us in an instant from long lost health, to strength and vigor little short of immortality. And are not these very sufficient considerations to tempt us to acquiesce in so mighty an innovation? And in this light viewed, is not the author justified in the use of that expression,—“We should be gainers by the bargain, were it even in addition to our present burdens.”

\* Sir Richard Jebb, Bart. M. D. deservedly esteemed the head of his profession.

It is my custom to enter minutes of all objections which have been made, within my hearing, to this proposal, either in promiscuous company, in private conversation, or have otherwise come to my knowledge, by the report of friends. In revising of which, previous to the final adjustment of the press, an objection has been discovered, well deserving note, tho' hitherto past by in silence.

It states, that taxes on consumption are the fairest, the most equal, the least burdensome, as well as the most favorable to liberty, and the disposition of Englishmen, of any that can be devised, because the contribution is voluntary. The consumer weighs with himself his ability to bear the tax before he purchases; he feels himself under no particular restraint, as he has it in his choice to withhold his mite, or contribute in any proportion he thinks fit, to the wants of the state.

How widely different from this is the system of taxation which the author proposes to substitute in its place. By his plan, the individual must pay, not because *he consumes*, but because *he possesses*. He is no longer left to judge of his own ability to bear the tax. The con-

tribution is no longer voluntary. The option which was in him is done away, and he must at any rate contribute, however much he may disapprove the mode, however greatly the payment may embarrass his affairs.

To which I answer—If this at any period was an objection of weight, 'tis now no longer so. The time is come when it will not only militate against the plan in question, but with tenfold additional force against that also which is now in practice. The late regulation, introduced to the house under the patronage of the minister, lays the ax to the root of voluntary payments; and much I fear the stroke will be followed up, till the forest of liberty, of which this is a principal tree, is levelled to the ground. Already too much despoiled of our rights, nothing is wanting to complete our thraldom, but compulsive payments under the present system of taxation, where ministers have the fingering of the public money. I feel it, therefore, as a duty which I owe to my country, not to leave it untold, tho' it grieves me to say,—That the minister who recommended this measure, not aware of the consequence, is unequal to his situation. If differently circumstanced in point of foresight, distinguish him, as your favorite,

by what other appellation you please; but do not heap *insult upon injury* by calling him—The friend of his country.

The present juncture, too fatally favorable to bad designs, is aided and abetted by our own demeanour. So true is the old observation, *our debt is enslaving us daily*. That exquisite and agonizing sense of liberty, which alone is equal to the labor of preserving it, and which upon all proper occasions was kindled to a flame in the breast of our ancestors, is no where now to be found amongst us. Inured to restraint by the pressure of taxes, our feelings are blunted to such an excess, we tend without perceiving it to absolute vassalage. Neither is there any other way left, that is equally safe, just, practicable and efficient, by means of which we may extricate ourselves, relieve the state, and save our liberties, independent of that which is here pointed out. The public debt transferred to individuals, will lose the sting that now annoys us. It will operate, and indeed will become to all intents and purposes a private incumbrance, from which every man of prudence may gradually relieve himself. To lay our account for any substantial good to be derived from



sinking funds and piece meal payments, is to throw away experience. Besides, the mischief which we deprecate and dread, is too close at our heels for any reasonable man to entertain the smallest expectation of relief from such proceedings. Ministers indeed, to keep up an appearance of patriotism, while they laugh in their sleeve at our credulity, do still endeavour to amuse and cajole us with distant visionary hopes of restitution. But in truth, there never was, nor is, nor ever will be a minister of this country, how fair so'er he may comport himself to outward view, possessed of a sincere intention to reduce materially, much less to annihilate the national debt, because it involves the annihilation of his own importance.

It is not, therefore, that we must look up to, or place dependance upon ministers, or on those who aspire to that painful pre-eminence, but wholly on ourselves.—It rests with us, with the good people of England, by our own act and deed, to expiate and make atonement for the sins of the nation; and *by a sacrifice, whose light and heat shall pass the confines of the earth, whose fragrancency shall mount to heaven, draw down the blessings of the God of mercy on us.*

## P A R T II.

T H E

### ABOLITION OF TYTHES,

A N D T H E

### Reform of the Church Revenue.

I N order to make these measures the more palatable, particularly to the landed interest, on whose shoulders the principal part of the burden is to rest, let these regulations be accompanied with a *Nullum Tempus bill*,\* respecting the claims of the church. And let that be followed up by another bill, effecting the abolition, *in toto*, of that hateful practice of tithing, which has done more harm

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\* A bill of this kind was past a few years since respecting the claims of the Crown.

to the cause of religion, than all the immorality of the world put together.

For this purpose, let every proprietor of land be obliged to purchase the tithes of his estate, by a fair valuation of their worth at the current price of land: not, however, by an actual payment of the principal sum, but by subjecting his property to the regular discharge of interest thereon at the rate of four per cent.

These points secured, let there be made a more righteous distribution of the property of the church: first, by grubbing up the suckers, and lopping off all useless limbs, which serve only to disfigure the tree, or deprive the extremities of their proper nourishment: and afterwards, by making a suitable provision for every necessary branch, which is left remaining, of that venerable stock.

As my meaning, which is figuratively expressed in the foregoing paragraph, may be liable to misconstruction, I will add a few words by way of explanation.

I admit that the parish priest who does his

duty, is a *necessary branch*; but when I have said this, I have said all that I meant to express: for in truth, there is neither use, beauty, nor profit, in any other. Therefore let all other branches of this wide-spreading tree; that is to say, let all other names and appointments in the church establishment, save only that which I have mentioned, and the order of prelates, be got rid of for ever.

But as large amputations are attended with danger; it behoves us to act with caution in this particular. If the measure is approved, a few years will prune them all to our hands; and it is better to wait the slow, but safe and certain operation of time; than run any risk in so material a concern.

There are some, I know, who will reprobate the exception which is made respecting the prelacy; but I have acted in this case under the influence of a strong conviction; that the order, with some little amendment, may be made useful to the state, and of service to religion.

The next point to be discussed is the main-

tenance of the inferior clergy, which under this new regulation are reduced to one single class. The duties of whose station being precisely the same, why should they not be placed upon a footing of equality in other respects? Can any reason be assigned for a distinction in this case? or can any one say, when the *whole duty* of the church is at present performed *for half a million*, that it would be doing an unhandsome thing to set aside, for the same purpose, four times as much as is now received?

This regulation is replete with innumerable good consequences; I will name some few of them, and leave the rest to the discernment of my readers.

It strikes at the root of pluralities; an abuse which calls loudly for redress. It furnishes a suitable provision for all the inferior clergy; whereas now there are some of them most shamefully destitute. It cuts off all hope and expectation of advantage from change of place; so that over whatever district a clergyman is appointed to preside, there he will set himself down, I trust, contented: and having a mind

free from the interruption of worldly concerns, it is a fair inference to suppose, that he will devote all his time and attention to the benevolent duties of his office.

And as there will remain, no doubt, after these contingencies are satisfied, a very considerable overplus;\* let it go, in further relief of the land, as a provision for the poor.

And here let no man pretend to say that I have sacrilegiously laid my hands upon the patrimony of the church. The regulation is perfectly agreeable to the original intention of the donors. For tithes were first granted, in part, for the maintenance of the clergy; and in part for the relief of the poor: so that originally the clergy were only the distributors of those alms.

But, perverting this good design, as the corruption of the order encreased, they began to appropriate more and more of them to their

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\* The revenue of the church is computed at two millions and a half, and upwards: we may therefore conclude that the overplus will not fall short of half a million.

own use; and, at length, taking advantage of the supineness of the laity, and the debasement of their minds, by religious fears, they boldly put in their claim to the whole, as their own, by *right divine*. Leaving the poor to the mercy of heaven, or the tender bowels of those, who, like the good Samaritan, and *not like the Priest*, could not pass, without looking upon their distress, and administering relief.

To proceed. The clergy of those days, wise in their own generation, as the children of Mammon, foreseeing that the time would come, when the eyes of the world would be opened, took care to secure to themselves a further title, under the plea of *common-right*.

Last of all, though it bared the face of their former impositions, and as if any thing could give additional strength to *common-right* and *right divine*, they thought fit to call in *human laws* to their assistance.

And thus armed at all points, their successors, those *ministers of peace*, and *preachers of self-denial*, have ever since been in a state of continual warfare for the good things of this world.

But to return from this digression. Let us not, in this general, reform, which is intended to administer comfort to so many individuals, let us not be inattentive to the tears of the disconsolate widow, too often left destitute; nor turn away from the cries of the helpless orphan.

As a provision for these, let the widow be entitled to her thirds: and in case of the previous death of the mother, or if she does not survive her husband ten years, let the stipend be continued for the maintenance and education of the children, during the whole of that term, or the remainder of it, as the case may happen.

And whereas I have said that the overplus of the spoils of the church shall go in aid of the land, as a provision for the poor; it may not be amiss, on further consideration, to appropriate a certain proportion of those savings, as a collateral provision for orphans left destitute, after the expiration of ten years, or the death of their mother.

For of all the poor, those, no doubt, have

the best claim to our pity and assistance, who have been brought up in ease and plenty, and are reduced, by no fault of their own, to misery and want.

Nothing now remains, to make this reformation compleat, but to secure the independence of the bench of bishops; which can in no other way be so well effected, as by putting *an end to translations.*

To whatever see a bishop is appointed, there let him remain; and in order to remove every objection at once, let them all be put upon an equality in respect of emolument, the two archbishops excepted, and let them be made equal in point of profit between themselves; but double in point of proportion to the rest. That is to say, let every bishop receive a clear payment of 3000 l. a year, and the two archbishops 6000 l. per ann. a-piece.

In order still more to smooth the way to this necessary reform, let *the ladies* be enlisted on our side, by giving them the *title and rank* of their husbands.

And here again I might enter upon a fresh

field of advantages, which will accrue to the state, to the cause of religion, and the peace of society, by the abolition of tithes and the independence of the bishops: but, as what I have said, when speaking of taxes, may be urged with equal propriety in the present case, I shall conclude with repeating, That it cannot be necessary to enter upon a detail of those advantages, in proof of a self-evident fact.

I have now only to add, that it was my first intention to have prefixed my name to this little work, but consulting with a judicious friend upon the occasion, his arguments coinciding with my own cooler thoughts, were conclusive against it.

That I should have all good men on my side would be my comfort; but as there are, no doubt, some bad men in the world, all such as sworn enemies to reform, would unite against me. And, when no good purpose can be served by it, why should I put myself in the way of danger, which is so easily avoided without disgrace?

If what I have projected is approved, and

the nation is permitted to reap the benefit of my design, I have attained to the consummation of my wishes.

Not that I mean, by standing aloof, to reject the praise of good men, or set that at nought which is at once the strongest incitement to virtue, and its best reward. No person can put that construction upon the case, as all must know, if any praise shall attend me, that it will not be more sparingly bestowed because the author lies concealed; neither shall I enjoy it the less, because it is in secret. On the contrary, it will acquire thereby a superior relish; since it will prove, beyond a possibility of contradiction, that I could have no other end to answer, by this publication, but the good of my country.

### POSTSCRIPT.

THE second edition of this essay was in the press, when the bishop of Landaff's letter to the arch-bishop of Canterbury, since deceased, was put into my hands. The pleasure which I felt, when I found that our object was the same, however we might vary in the means

of attaining it, is not to be discribed. And in full confidence of a generous people to rescue me from the suspicion of so mean an artifice as intending a side-wind compliment to myself, I shall not hesitate to give this public testimony of my admiration of a character so truly christian and praise worthy, as his lordship has displayed thro' the medium of his late publication.

There is, however, one point, in which I apprehend the worthy prelate is mistaken. It respects the present revenue of the church, to which a value is assigned one million a year short of that which it is represented to be in the foregoing sheets: the two sums being to each other in the proportion of three to five.

It is possible his lordship may have founded his opinion upon the authority of calculations not recently made; and if so, the variation is easily accounted for. The value of estates, and such, in particular, as are situate at any considerable distance from the capital, where the spirit of improvements had not then made its way, having encreased within the century, to my certain knowledge, in a much greater proportion than that which is named.

Before I lay down my pen, as it is done

with no invidious design to lessen any man's deservings, but merely to establish a fact, I hope I may be permitted to risk a comment upon the following extract.—“Some deans and chapters have, with a very laudable disinterestedness, appropriated a tenth, or a larger part of their annual fines, to the repair of the fabrick of their churches.” Upon which passage I beg leave to observe, with all due deference to better information, that the revenue which the church is in possession of, was not granted, as implied by the words I have quoted, to the sole purpose of supporting the clergy, but expressly for the four following distinct uses: *viz.* For the poor one part; another part for the maintenance of the parochial clergy; another for the use of the monasteries, and a fourth for *the repairs of church fabricks.*

From which it appears, that the deans and chapters, whose disinterestedness is made the subject of panegyric, have in this respect done no more than their duty. They have, however, this merit, which is more than many others can lay claim to; they have acted up to the intention of the donors, which assuredly no time should defeat.

T H E  
D O C T R I N E  
O F

Prescription considered.

AN outcry having been raised against the principle of a *Nullum Tempus bill* respecting the claims of the church, as an unjust attack upon private property, it is become necessary for me to investigate and explain the matter. And if in the course of my reasoning a discovery is made, which must prove fatal, not only to future claims, but even to many of those decisions, which have already been given in favor of the church, the blame of that loss is not imputable to me, but rests on the head of those who provoked the enquiry.

All that is requisite for this purpose, is to

consider the nature, force, and extent of the term, *Prescription*.

For the better illustration of which, let us place prescription before us as a familiar object of the senses. Let us compare it to an arch. Considerd in this light, that of the crown, which is the larger arch, is extended over all the real property in this kingdom: That of the church, a smaller arch, embraces but a part. Of which arch, in either case, former possession is the key-stone. And as no arch can stand without its key, so neither can prescription be supported without legal proof of former possession.

The crown, as the fountain of property, bears that proof in its bosom. But it is otherwise with the church, which is not the fountain, but the reservoir of tithes. The church possesses nothing by virtue of original right. It has no inherent title to tithes. The title which it has, is acquired, and as such waits the proof, if called in question. The possessions of the church are derived from the bounty of others, the donors are therefore, more properly, the fountain. And as that which has not regularly flowed from the crown,

is still in the crown; so in like manner, that which has regularly flowed from the crown to the laity, and has not regularly flowed from thence to the church, is still in the laity. That indeed which has regularly flowed, through these channels, to the church, though lost for a time, is still, without any manner of doubt, their tangible property. In other words, where there is proof that any incumbent was heretofore in legal possession of that which is now claim'd by his successor, that case is in point, but there are no other to which prescription is applicable, or by virtue of which the claimant is entitled to a decree in his favor.

To say that prescription will help any man to that which no one ever possessed in the same predicament with himself, is an absurd idea. Omnipotent as this magician may seem, it is not in his power to create a right; all he can do is to recover that right which has once been lost. If you join issue with us in this definition, or whether you join or not, it is the buckler of truth, and will not fail us. It remains with you, therefore, my reverend friends, to shew your right. Prove your possession. Make it appear that you have done so, and I will answer for it there is no laymen amongst



us, who has either honesty or common sense, that will resist the claim.

But do not come over us with your *jure divino's*, and your other nonsensical plea of *common right*. We are not now to be gull'd by such pretences. The insufficiency, the absurdity of which is manifest, from the evidence of those very exceptions which you admit to be good. To be consistent with yourselves, you should first set aside those exemptions, as some, indeed, have attempted to do. You should next proceed to reclaim all that part of tithe-property which is now in our possession; for doing of which you have sufficient encouragement, when you are told from good authority,—“ That it was by *strange means enough conveyed into lay-hands.*”\* If it is yours by right divine, or common right, it is not ours by any right. Then take it from us. Is this your aim, is this your drift, is this your meaning? Speak out! for if it is, I will give it the praise of a mighty daring. When you have accomplished it, nothing will remain behind, but to recover the supremacy of the church, and your empire is re-established for ever.

\* Vide the Bishop of Landoff's letter to the Arch-bishop of Canterbury.

I cannot proceed, without offering an apology to the good bishop for the application of that sentence, which as too apposite to my purpose, I have quoted from his letter. To do justice to a character, which I verily believe to be without blemish, I have no difficulty in saying that the present construction, tho' it is easy and natural, did not occur to his lordship. At a time when the seeds of dissatisfaction are shooting up rank and spontaneous in the minds of his brethren, instead of checking, to have encouraged their growth, by throwing reflections upon certain past proceedings, in the use of an expression which strikes at the root of their validity; and to have done this designedly, I can no more think of imputing to the bishop of Landaff, than I can credit that there is a settled purpose in churchmen, or in myself who abhor it, to bring about the restoration of popery. But it is certainly a very awkward expression, and I dare say his lordship will think so, when he views it in the light in which I have placed it. It is moreover an expression forming a part of a sentence which has no particular business there; for which reasons, I have no expectation of finding it in the next impression of his letter.

To return to my argument.—One thing is perfectly clear, that in all cases of transfer, nothing is conveyed which is not comprised in the grant. The conduct of laymen has kept pace with this idea. When was it known that the landholder was mounted so high on the pinnacle of presumption, as to venture to lay claim to that which is not contained in his grant? There is no instance of the kind. No, not even in the case, when that which is wanting to round his property was left out by mistake.

For the credit of the tithe-holder, would I could say the same of him. The tithe-holder on the other hand, by which I mean the church, I blush to say the reformed church, that church which is presumed to be the pattern of forbearance, the standard of tender conscience, acting in all respects up to the true spirit of the gospel, that church, I say, puts in a claim.—To what? To that which from the evidence of ages has never been in payment. To that of which there is no proof set up, no, not even the pretence or shadow of proof of former possession.—To that which in fair construction, from the long testimony of their own silent

acquiescence, confessedly, was never due.— To that of which the very name,\* in many parts where it is now claimed, was not known till of late, nor yet fully understood, but as a barefaced innovation of the clergy, subversive of religion as productive of enmity, and big with ruin to themselves, as calculated to raise a spirit, which if it chance to break forth,

Tho' now they rest on eider beds,  
 Tho' now they lift their mitred heads,  
 Tho' to their twisted strength they trust,  
 Will quickly lay their pride in dust.

From what has been said, it is obvious that the proper defence against the claims of the clergy, is to put them upon proof of former possession: for prescription having reference only to the recovery of possession, till that is made appear, prescription is altogether impotent, and of no avail.

If any one is hardy enough to deny this, let him look to the consequence. The denial involves this most dangerous proposition,— That the prescription of the church is paramount to the prescription of the crown; a doctrine too bold for any priest, or any high-

\* Agiftment.

priest in these our days to maintain in this country.

It may, therefore, very well be laid down as a general rule, that the clergy are entitled to no other tithes but such as they have been in the habit of receiving by virtue of their respective endowments, or such as the custom of the place, from long possession, has sanctified to them. All other tithes of whatever denomination, save those alone which are admitted to be legally vested in the hands of laymen, did belong to the crown, and not to the church, as dormant rights, but are now for ever secured to the several proprietors of the land, by the late *Nullum Tempus bill*.

The *Nullum Tempus* which is now proposed, is therefore of little importance to the laity, otherwise than as it will serve the cause of religion, by putting an immediate stop to the possibility of further litigation.

From this statement of the case, supported as it is on either hand by truth and reason, this inference must be drawn,—*That the present claims of the church are for the most part futile;*

*and that all such decrees as have already been given in favor of novel payments, are founded in error, and liable to reversal.*

### ABSTRACT of a Letter in answer to Objections which were started by a Friend.

You object to the following proposition:—  
“The crown is the fountain of property,” and controvert it by a case, the strongest, I believe, that can possibly be brought to bear against it, *viz.*—“That there were formerly in this kingdom certain estates and patrimonies called allodial, which owed nothing to the crown but allegiance only.”

This argument of yours is, indeed, a very powerful antagonist; I must, therefore, do my utmost to prevail upon him to desert his colors, and come over to my side. That is to say, I must endeavour to prove that there is no land in this country which was not held either mediately or immediately of the crown: not even excepting allodial land, which of all others was the most free and independent.

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For this purpose please to turn to Domesday, and there you will find the subsequent words: *Quando moritur alodarius, rex inde habet relevationem terra.* And what is this *relevatio terre*, what is this relief? It is in fair construction, a clear declaration of original right on the part of the crown;—an unreserved unequivocal acknowledgment of the same on the part of the heir. The case was this.—Upon the demise of any such person, the land so held fell into the hands of the king; and there remained, in default of an heir, *tanquam terra revertens in possessione donatori sive heredibus suis, post donum finitum.* But if an heir, conforming to the original compact, appeared, and made good his payment, he relieved his land, recovered possession, and held it, paying, as you observe, nothing more to the crown, but *allegiance only.*

If further proof is wanting, do but attend to the word *revert*, which is as much as to say *return.* Now you, or I, or any man may go to a place where we have never been before, but we cannot return to a place of that description. In like manner, land may pass from one to another, but it cannot be said to revert to you or me, except it had been previously

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yours or mine, or his from whom we claim. To bring this argument home to our own times.—Do not lands at this day, for want of lawful heirs, revert to the lord of the manor of whom those lands are held? In default of whom, do they not ultimately revert to the crown? Seeing then that all lands may by time and chance revert to the crown, and that none can possibly revert where they had not been before, it follows from these premises, that all lands did originally flow to individuals from the crown, and consequently that *the crown is the fountain of property.*

You alledge in return, that the words I have quoted from Domesday, have no reference whatever to the state and condition of property before the conquest;—that they are not what I have supposed them to be, a clear declaration of antient right, and the usage of England; but of that agreement only, which taking place between the king and the people, did then give birth to the right in question. The love of enterprise, as you observe, and martial fame, which was the character of the age, first paved the way for this great revolution in property. The barons seeming to

vie with one another who should be foremost to surrender their antient independent rights, in order to hold of the crown by military service; an example which ran like wild-fire thro' all ranks and conditions of men.

Some few, indeed, were unwilling, and others through age or infirmities were unable to conform to this new regulation. It was therefore enacted, as Domesday recites, with an eye particularly turned to these recusants—*Quando moritur alodarius, rex inde habet relevationem terre*; that is to say, upon the demise of any such person, the tenure shall be changed, and the heir for the time to come shall pay a relief like other feudal tenants.

Be this as it may, the explanation, if just, does not go to invalidate the doctrine I would enforce, but rather helps, as you observe, to strengthen and confirm the wavering mind in firm belief of these essential truths,—that *the crown is the fountain of property*,—and that *the church has no inherent title to tithes*. The first of which admits of no doubt from the date of Domesday, that is to say, from the general establishment of feudal tenures in England,

which is far enough back for our purpose. And the latter is evident from this circumstance, that the monasteries before the dissolution performed many feudal services.

You mention another instance, where lands were bound by no kind of service or rent to a superior lord, viz. "Lands which were held by the church in frank-almoigne."

This fact is not to be denied. But happily it does not at all affect the validity of that maxim on which, as on a solid rock, my colossean arch is built. For though we should admit the whole of this same land was held not only free of rent and service, but every kind of stipulation, which is supposing a case that never did exist in so much latitude, this further proof will still be wanting to the adverse side,—that the land in question was possessed as constitutionally inherent in the church, was enjoyed as part and parcel of its own peculiar essence. No other proof but this can make impression; no other efficient battery can be placed within reach of the structure. Till this engine can be brought to bear against it, 'tis unassailable. It stands and ever must remain in strength and beauty un-

diminished, unimpaired. Now, this inherent right you have not proved; this battering ram you have not brought into the field, neither indeed have you attempted to do so. But you have manfully, and upon good ground, asserted this very opposite truth, viz. That the possessions of the church either flowed to them directly from the crown, or indirectly thro' the channel of some superior lord. Your words are these:—" It appears manifest to me in  
 " the course of my reading, that the endow-  
 " ments of churches and cathedrals, be they  
 " tithes, oblations, or lands, were royal bene-  
 " ficencies, or the free gifts of well disposed  
 " and superstitious people. Some, indeed,  
 " thought proper to reserve by way of exemp-  
 " tions from taxes, &c. part of their dona-  
 " tions, and these in all likelihood, are the  
 " present tithes in dispute."

You direct your attention in the next place to the following proposition:—" One thing is perfectly clear, that in all cases of transfer, nothing is conveyed which is not comprised in the grant." You admit this to be a postulatam from which neither side can withhold its assent. But yet a question may arise, as in the

case before us, respecting the *quantum* of that property which was meant to be conveyed.

To settle this material point, which indeed is the very bone of our contention, I call upon, and do appeal to you, and all the world except themselves; nay surely to themselves I may appeal;—is it not to give every advantage which reason can expect,—is it not to do all or more than justice could require, or candor's self would recommend, to admit of that construction of the words, which those of their own body, their peculiar friends, have all along, by wilful and deliberate acts, not once, or twice, or twenty times, but evermore declared to be the true intent and meaning of the grant? And yet these pious men, oh fie upon it! spite of reason, candor, justice, and to these I may subjoin, in spite of honor, conscience, truth and common sense, have laid aside the evidence of those, whom interest, duty, inclination, prompted and impelled to do the very uttermost in their behalf. Exhibiting by this one special deed, to public view, themselves, or those that went before them, as fools or knaves, or both together,

As to that which is said respecting the prescription of the church, it is not intended, by what I have advanced, to molest the clergy in the peaceable enjoyment of their known rights; my only aim is to overthrow their title to novel claims; to put a stop to the present rage of demanding tithes of things in places where they had never before been in payment. Such, for instance, as the tithe of agistment, which in many parts where it is now claimed, was altogether unknown till the clergy of late attempted to introduce it. The pretence for which is this,—that it is paid in other parts of England; not considering that where it is paid, there it is sanctified by custom immemorial and long possession: or rather not admitting the plea; for the present doctrine of the church maintains an equal right diffused over the whole body, which tho' not exercised, is exerciseable at pleasure. But that man must have more faith than would suffice to move a mountain, who can believe that the clergy, till this time, were either so blind to their own interest as not to discern their right, or seeing it, that they had generosity enough to make us a present of their property during so long a space. This is a circumstance so highly im-

probable, so far exceeding the bounds of human belief, that any person who weighs it, will find himself inclined to class it amongst the number of physical impossibilities.

In considering the two cases, the great difficulty which we find on the part of the church, is to reason ourselves fairly into a belief of their right. On the part of the laity the greater difficulty occurs to reason ourselves out of it. The features of the laymans plea appear so strong, and carry such conviction to the mind from their likeness to truth, that they have hitherto been deemed sufficient to deter every conscientious clergyman from meddling in the business. Neither will any such be prevailed upon to quit the beaten path, from which no deviating steps of all that went before them can be found, till some satisfactory reason is assigned why their predecessors, who have discovered upon all other occasions the most tender concern for the rights of the church, whose jealous eyes were ever on the watch to guard its property, have conducted themselves in so strange a manner, have acted so weak and inconsistent a part, as to strain their attention to dues the most diminutive, to rake the very

kennels of their rights in other instances, yet leave those richer streams of which we treat to flow for ages to another use. Till such time as we receive satisfaction on this head; we are warranted, from the long and peaceable possession of the laity,—from the silent, uninterrupted approbation of those whose duty it was to disprove the right,—from the known vigilance of the parties who were to benefit by this discovery,—from that attention to their interest which never before was impeached; we are warranted, from these premises, and do well to conclude, that in the opinion of all those of their own body, who have gone before them, the clergy have no title whatever to the tithes in question.

I will now explain to you, by a very probable conjecture, the reason why the laity are not furnished with more direct evidence of their right in the case before us.

In early days, the great notoriety of the fact; and in all succeeding times the quiet possession, might well be supposed to supersede the necessity of preserving other evidence of a right, than that which was thus written as it

were in the memory, printed and engraved upon the very hearts of men. Neither could it enter into the honest imagination of human beings, much less of Christians to conceive, that at any period of time the professors of sanctity, would do a deed in face of day, so profligate and shameless, as to give us reason to lament that provision was not made for such a contingency.

If this will not suffice—If there are any who still affect to set these considerations at nought, they will answer me no doubt in the words of the Jew,

Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,  
Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud.

But loud as it may seem, if yet my voice, to serve my present purpose, is too low, I'll raise it, till it touch the sense of those that are the deafest;—such I mean as will not hear.

I have said all along, that the claims which I would reprobate are such only as are novel in respect of the place. And I have endeavoured to prove, that the laity, who have evermore been in possession of these immunities, are the rightful owners. If I have failed in



this attempt, what cause of triumph has the church. Their title turns upon the self same hinge; and if with long possession to sustain so large a portion of the weight, it is not equal to uphold the laymans plea, it never can support their greater load,—except a miracle be wrought to favor such pretensions.

The case is briefly this:—The clergy say these tithes by common-right are theirs, and as no time can rob them of their right, they do assert it now, and we must yield possession. But what is this same common-right? 'Tis neither more nor less than immemorial custom. And does this custom, or this common-right peculiar to the church, does it take upon itself to extinguish all other right of the same kind;—that right, for instance, which is equally diffused over the face of this country in common to us all? If so, 'tis common-wrong, and properly withstood. If otherwise, why then, I say, by such possession as no time can trace the origin; by custom, therefore, properly defin'd; and thus, of course, by common-rights these tithes are ours. This is the laymans plea, which churchmen would overthrow, by setting up their own, tho' nine points out of ten

the weaker of the two, as wanting the possession.

However, to indulge my reverend friends in this their strong propensity,—to gratify their humour, let us say, by way of argument, that laymen have enjoyed these tithes by usurpation, and that time, nor custom, nor consent of ages can correct and sanctify this wrong. Admitting this in all its force, it betters not a jot their vain pretensions. For this if any thing is clear, e'en as the sun's meridian and unclouded ray, that had the right been theirs, it never had been brought to such a pass, it never had been made a doubtful question by their long forbearance. This frank concession will not, therefore, go in aid of their design, but this much better purpose it will serve, 'twill bring to light this hidden truth, which only can explain if laymen have indeed usurped another's property, the silent mystery of the church's acquiescence. Which truth is this. That heretofore it was a well known fact, that every species of tithe which comes within the compass of this description; that is to say, every species of tythe which is novel in respect of the place, appertained to the crown, and

not to the church; did cleave to the first, and not to the last—an inborn, genuine, clear, unfeverd right, an undemanded, but indisputable claim. In which predicament, if not within the laymens pale, these tithes did stand, till virtually transferred by the late *Nullum Tempus bill*. From which epoch, they became annexed, rivetted, and finally secured to the several proprietors of the land.

When it is viewed in this light, resistance on our part will no longer appear to be the mere simple consideration of self defence; we shall find ourselves called upon by other duties, by gratitude to him that gave, as well as by love to the constitution, to repel an attack, to ward a blow, where the crown itself is in the line of direction. Not wittingly perhaps, I will not yet say wittingly in that direction; but all men will say so, and will be justified in what they say, after this explanation, and the caution it conveys, if they do not instantly relinquish the pursuit; if they do not from that which is now imparted, abjure *their lawless—their disloyal claim*. For then it will appear, by manifest proceeding, that they have contrived against the very life of the state.

Should it prove thus, should they still, in apt resemblance to the moth, the silly fightless moth, spite of the friendly warning hand, persist in their design,—should they still go on, and needs will rush into the flame that must consume them, there is no other way of accounting for their conduct, there is no better apology to be made, than that which is couch'd in the words of the motto to this publication. To which, as it will then be truly and awfully picturesque of their lost condition, I beg leave to refer you.

### A P P E N D I X.

TO those gentlemen who have done to much honor to me by their approbation of this proposal, and so much credit to themselves by their unwearied efforts to set on foot this desirable business, to those gentlemen, in my present invisible state, I am not in a capacity to return thanks in the way I could wish—by personal acknowledgment. But I will do all in my power to prove my gratitude; I will endeavour to make known and perpetuate the

disinterested purity of their well directed zeal, by giving the narrative of their proceedings, which appeared in the form of two letters, addressed to the Editor of the Newcastle Courant, in the County of Northumberland, a more general circulation than it could possibly experience in a provincial paper. And as the vein of reasoning which runs thro' the whole of that performance is an exact transcript of my own sentiments, exhibiting, in glowing colors, a picture which is for ever present to my mind, when I muse upon the subject, I think myself particularly happy in an opportunity, while it is yet in the press, of enriching this edition with an Appendix so much to my purpose.

And who can tell, as a worthy friend of mine, to cheer me with a ray of hope, expressed himself, — And who can tell what important consequences, and beneficial effects, may yet result from these beginnings? Providence often exalts itself by producing the most salutary benefits out of the most unpromising means. *A little fire kindled in Northumberland may extend its light and heat to the whole kingdom, so as to preserve from utter destruction this seemingly devoted country.*

The Narrative addressed to the Editor  
of the NEWCASTLE COURANT is as  
follows.

S. I. R,

October 15. 1783.

AS the question which was brought forward in the grand jury room at the last assizes, respecting the Liquidation of the National Debt, the Abolition of Tythes, and the Reform of the Church revenue, has awakened very general attention; and as the public, who are so deeply interested in the success of this measure, are well entitled to every information relative thereto, the following authentic narrative of the proceedings is laid, by means of your useful paper, with all submission before them.

As soon as the customary business was finished, and the foreman \* of the grand jury had given notice, that there was other matter of a public nature to come before them, the gentleman, who principally bestirred himself in

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\* Sir William Middleton, Baronet.

that concern, arose and addressed the company in the following words.

GENTLEMEN,

Having now gone through the whole of the business for which we were summoned upon this occasion ; before we disperse, I beg leave to call your attention to the consideration of two points—*The present most alarming state of the public debt—and the no less alarming claims which are daily set up against us by the church.* Both of these from small beginnings, in a very short space of time, have grown up into grievances, which, if not speedily and effectually removed, can hardly fail of drawing down upon our own heads, and will certainly heap upon those of our children, every possible disaster which can befall us, as a people. The application, I say, must be speedy and effectual ; for so critical is our situation, and the growth of the evils of which I complain so rapid and luxuriant, that if they are permitted to take deeper root, and extend themselves further, our case will soon become desperate, without hope of other remedy, than that which it will have in common with all mortal diseases, to work its own cure by the dissolution of the body.

For as we must suffer a diminution of strength, in proportion to the increase of these evils ; and as the means, which we now possess, are but barely sufficient to enable us to discharge the outstanding demands, and to reserve for ourselves any thing like a comfortable remainder, (to which surely in all reason and justice we are entitled) if any addition is made thereto, what must be the consequence ? Finding ourselves unequal to the discharge of them, without reducing ourselves to beggary, we shall of course resist the payment ; Government on the other hand will attempt to enforce it : a struggle will ensue ; in which both sides, as is usual in such cases, losing sight of justice, will aim only at the depression of the other. In this manner we shall proceed from bad to worse, till all respect of persons, till every distinction betwixt man and man, till all subordination to law, till liberty itself is swallowed up in the all-devouring vortex of civil dissention. This, Gentlemen, with too much probability on its side, may be said to be an abstract of the history of the times which are approaching. You will all agree with me, that it is a consummation most devoutly to be avoided. But how, and in what manner to

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avoid it, that is the question. While it remained a question, Gentlemen, I was silent upon this subject; at least in this public manner I was silent: though many a time and oft, in private conversation, and in secret, have I bewailed our impending calamities, the ingredients of that bitter cup, which as we journeyed, was preparing for us, as I thought, by the hand of fate. I am now, however, of a very different opinion. The film which had obstructed my sight is removed from before my eyes, and I can see clearly and distinctly that the dreadful potation, so far from being ours by unavoidable necessity, is only so by choice—that it is in our power to reject it—to put it away from our lips to a distance for ever; only by deviating into another path, which will lead us to the temple of our political salvation: a path, which however rough and rugged it may seem, compared with those ways which we must otherwise encounter, is as the smooth surface of a lake unruffled with winds, to the mountainous waters of the ocean, in its height of ill humour. I have said thus much, Gentlemen, to convince you of the reality of the declining state of our public health, and of the absolute necessity of having

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recourse, without loss of time, to those medicines, if any such there are, which may restore our vigor. I proceed now, with infinite satisfaction, to inform you, that a specific has been discovered, by means of which we may attain to the summit of our wishes. This book, Gentlemen, which I hold in my hand, in this little book is contained a receipt, instructing us in what manner to prepare a balsam, which being poured into our wounds, deep and dangerous as they seem, will heal them in an instant. Nothing is wanting but sufficient resolution on our part to apply it; of which I can have no doubt, when you are convinced of its efficacy: and I have either lost my judgment, or I am blinded by my partiality, if that conviction does not follow, as a matter of course, the attentive perusal of these sheets. When I speak of an attentive reading, I do not mean to insinuate, that there is any thing difficult or abstruse herein to be met with; on the contrary, it is all plain and perspicuous, insomuch, that those who run may read and understand. Yet some little time will be necessary for that purpose; I shall therefore propose, if agreeable, an adjournment of this meeting till to-morrow morning at nine o'clock,

or any other hour which may suit the convenience of the company. Gentlemen will then come prepared to give an opinion, and if it shall appear that you concur with me in approving of the plan, which otherwise I must think I have taken upon myself rashly to recommend, I will inform you what steps I have already taken to introduce it to the notice of that person, who sits at the helm of the vessel in which ourselves, our families, and all our fortunes are embarked. I have now only further to observe, that having determined to bring this matter publicly before you, and being aware that many gentlemen might be here present, who had neither seen or heard of the proposal alluded to, I took the precaution of desiring Mr Fisher, the Librarian, to be provided with copies of the pamphlet, sufficient to answer any probable demand which might be made upon him; and in order to save time and trouble, I desired that he might attend this morning for the purpose of distributing them.

And now, Gentlemen, agreeable to the intimation I have given, I beg leave humbly to move, That this meeting be adjourned till to-

morrow morning at nine o'clock, then to assemble, at this place, for the purpose of taking into consideration the contents of a pamphlet, entitled, " A Proposal for the Liquidation of the National Debt, the Abolition of Tithes, and the Reform of the Church Revenue;" and to determine how far, and in what manner, it may become us to interfere, in recommending the same to the notice of the Ruling Powers.

The motion being handed to the foreman, he read it to the jury, when it was immediately seconded, and after some desultory conversation, was agreed to without opposition.—However, at the request of some of the jury, who declared it inconvenient to give their attendance the next day, the foreman applied to the judge, and the jury were discharged.

At the hour appointed the company assembled the next morning, and the late foreman, being requested to take the chair, opened the business by reading the motion of the preceding day, when the gentleman, who had before addressed the jury, arose and spoke as follows:

GENTLEMEN,

It would very ill become me, who was indulged with so patient a hearing yesterday, to intrude further upon the time and attention of this company, if it was not necessary, in confirmation of that which I threw out yesterday by insinuation, to give you positive assurance, that the proposal before us is, at present, in contemplation of the minister. I speak this, Gentlemen, from the evidence of letters which have passed between the duke of Portland and myself, relative to this subject. The letters themselves are of considerable length, I shall not therefore obtrude them upon you: it is sufficient for our purpose to put you in possession of the fact—"That I have already secured the attention, and I hope the patronage of the minister, to any thing of this kind which you may be pleased to recommend." I must not, however, omit to caution you, to consider that which I have said respecting the patronage of the minister, as proceeding from zeal, rather than knowledge; having indeed received, as yet, no assurance of that kind.

And now, Gentlemen, the ground being cleared before us, we enter fitly upon deliber-

ation; and may proceed in it, till we are agreed upon that mode of conducting the business, which shall seem most likely to keep pace with the impatience of our own desires, to relieve ourselves, and serve our country, by carrying this design into immediate execution. What I mean by immediate execution is, that the object should be pursued unremittingly, and with as much dispatch as is consistent with the dignity and importance of the subject in hand. It must, no doubt, be referred ultimately to parliament; and, perhaps, it would be as well to make our advances at once, by a petition to that body, rather than enter into previous associations, a practice not universally approved, and therefore, in this case, to be avoided; for I could wish to have this business taken up on ground which is liable to no objection.—But having already exceeded the bounds I had prescribed myself, I give way, most readily, to any other gentleman who may be disposed to deliver his sentiments upon this interesting subject.

A profound silence ensued, which was succeeded at length by a conversation, in which by turns almost every gentleman present took

a part. From which it appearing to be the general wish that we should take longer time to deliberate, it was moved, "That the further consideration of this question be postponed to the day next succeeding the quarterly sessions first ensuing:" To which an amendment was proposed, to adjourn *sine die*, but this amendment being presently withdrawn, the original motion was again put, seconded, and carried without further opposition.

On the 9th of October, agreeable to the purport of the motion at the former meeting, a very respectable company assembled in the Town-Hall, at Alnwick, though many gentlemen, who were expected to have favored the meeting, did not appear: and even a great majority of the magistrates attendant upon the sessions, for whose accommodation, at their own particular request, a considerable delay was incurred, were yet obliged to absent themselves, on account of business, which continued to lengthen out the sessions beyond all expectation. Soon after two o'clock, Mr Collingwood of Unthank being requested to take the chair opened the business by a particular statement of that question which had stood over for

decision, and having resumed his seat, the gentleman, who had originally proposed the discussion thereof, arose and addressed the company as follows.

GENTLEMEN,

The interval of time, betwixt this and our former meeting, has taken off the force of that objection, which occasioned a temporary suspension of the judgment which now awaits the question before us, and which must, in some measure, determine its fate. It cannot now be said, as when we were last assembled upon this business, that we are taken by surprise; sufficient time has been allowed for deliberation, and I make no doubt but every gentleman here present has turned it to advantage. And though my zeal, like unto the flame which is lighted up in youthful breasts at beauty's eye, and which urges them on to the consummation of their wishes with eagerness that cannot brook delay, although my forward zeal, I say, to serve my country, made me consider this adjournment, when first proposed, as a loss to the public, and hurtful to their cause, a moment's reflection convinced me of the error of that opinion, and pointed



out to me a variety of advantages, which, till then, had escaped my notice. It occurred to me in the first place, from what I had already experienced of the matter, that we had much more reason to expect to overcome prejudices, to clear away doubts, to surmount difficulties, and of course to weaken, if not annihilate opposition, and increase the number of our friends; it occurred to me that we had much more reason to expect a plentiful return of these, and such like benefits, than the reverse of any of them, from a longer and more familiar intercourse, a closer and more scrupulous investigation of the subject. I considered further, that by means of this delay, we should be able to shelter ourselves from that reproach, which has, upon all occasions, been observed to follow close upon the heels of hasty counsels. For such is the nature and disposition of man, without any previous examination of the merits, we annex indiscriminately, to all indeliberate proceedings, an idea of rashness, or something worse; not considering our own relative situation at the time, not considering that the sentence which we pass is a condemnation of ourselves, and that the blow, which we thus aim at another's head, recoils with double force

against our own: But yet the fact is such; from whence I conclude, that had you brought this matter to a more early decision, however obvious the truths you had advanced, however fair your intention, how wisely soever you had determined the point, the world would have given you no credit in either case. Had the current of your opinions run counter to my wishes, it cannot be supposed you would have escaped from blame. If, on the other hand, by strong conviction urged; and by the best of all possible motives, the sober, chaste, and genuine love of your country; if borne along by these, you had swelled, with your approbation, the full tide of my hopes, still there would not have been wanting those who would have accused you of acting under the influence of that very spirit, which forms a principal part of our plan to keep down and extinguish. And thus, Gentlemen, from the mere circumstance of our own well meant but misguided zeal, we should in all probability have defeated the best purpose of our heart; and lost a question of such fair expectation, in which, as in a mirror, we may view reflected a scene of inexpressible happiness, prepared not only for ourselves and our immediate successors, but ex-

tended in prospect, with increasing beauty, to all succeeding generations. But if, in the first awkward moments of formal introduction, while you were yet strangers to one another, and with an eye of prejudice obliquely viewed your new acquaintance; if, in that early stage of the business, you had stood condemned in the opinion of the world, by putting a negative upon this question; what I pray you will be said of us now, if we should set our faces against this reform? What will be said of us now, when with greater shew of justice, and with more deserving, we have laid ourselves open to the censure of mankind? When our present transgression, compared with the former offence, is in that proportion which wilful and premeditated murder bears to the casualty of death by thoughtlessness occasioned, or some sudden start of passion? Will it not be said, that we are determined enemies to the welfare and prosperity of this realm? Shall we not be reprobated as men who are leagued, or at least who court an alliance with those who drink their neighbours' blood, who fatten upon the spoils of their country, and enrich themselves with the wreck of this sinking state?

If there yet remains, in the breast of any man, a doubt respecting the expediency of this measure, in recommendation of which I have exerted myself, upon this and former occasions, to the height of my poor abilities; if any doubt remains, taking it for granted that truth is our only aim, and that we are all equally intent upon the discovery, I beg leave to observe, that it is more particularly incumbent on those who doubt, if they would act a consistent part, to bestir themselves in promoting an enquiry, which alone can open their eyes to conviction, and without which they must for ever remain in the same state of perplexing uncertainty, which, of all other possible states, is that which is most painful to an ingenuous mind. Besides, Gentlemen, it should be considered, that we are not assembled upon this occasion to determine finally, whether the proposal before us shall or shall not be moulded into the constitution of this country, whether it shall or shall not be passed into a law; we are met here only, as it were, a grand jury upon the question, in whose province it is to decide, from the evidence of worth before us, how far we are justified in recommending it to the notice of parliament. When it comes

there, it will be analysed and sifted to the bottom: and if, in consequence of that fiery trial, a discovery is made, that we have been deceived by appearances,—that it contains nothing of intrinsic value,—that it is a mere composition of base unprofitable metals,—no blame will rest with us, nor will injury accrue to the public or to any individual. If, on the other hand, it shall come forth from the mouth of the furnace, pure, unimpaired, and refulgent; what joy will be our portion, when we look forward to the comforts that are in store! And when there is so promising an appearance of success, with advantages, attendant thereon, so rare and excellent, nor any risk of blame, or detriment in case of failure, can any gentleman hesitate respecting the part which he should take this day! You cannot sure demur, if love of honest fame has life within you, when you consider the praises that will be due, the thanks that will be given to those men, who, not despairing of the commonwealth, did bravely face this formidable Hydra, this all-devouring monster, which hath already swallowed up so considerable a part of your property, nor yet is satisfied, but stands prepared with multifarious jaws, extended wide, to gorge

that portion which remains. You cannot sure demur, if it were only to gratify your feelings, when you take into the scale of inducements that fountain of exquisite pleasure, which must for ever spring up in the minds of those men, who having had the firmness to bid defiance to this threatening danger, and the virtue to persevere, had likewise the good fortune to return triumphant from the charge, amidst joyful acclamations, seated gloriously in the hearts of their grateful country.

I beg leave, therefore, humbly to move, That leave be given to read a petition to parliament, praying them to take under consideration the contents of a pamphlet, entitled, “ A Proposal for the Liquidation of the National Debt, the Abolition of Tithes, and the Reform of the Church Revenue.”

This motion being read from the chair, seconded and passed without a dissentient voice, the petition alluded to was read to the company, and the business of the day concluded with the following motion:

That this petition be referred to a county

meeting, and that the high sheriff be requested to call a meeting for that purpose.

Which motion, being likewise handed to the chairman, was put, seconded, and carried, without opposition.

The following is a Copy of the Petition.

*To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain  
in Parliament assembled.*

*The humble Petition of the Persons whose names  
are hereunto subscribed.*

S H E W E T H,

That your petitioners have seen, and read, and duly considered the contents of a pamphlet, entitled, "A Proposal for the Liquidation of the National Debt, the Abolition of Tithes, and the reform of the Church Revenue."

That your Petitioners, feeling for the present distresses of the State, and dreading the certain effects of the further growth of those evils, the removal of which is the subject of that performance, are of opinion, that a design, which has for its aim the political salvation of this country, the happiness of the community at large, and of every individual, and

which proposes to work its effect by means which are, apparently, both safe and honourable, is entitled to the attention of parliament: Your Petitioners, therefore, beg leave humbly to recommend the proposal in question to the notice of this Honourable House, praying Them to deliberate thereon, and, if in Their wisdom it shall seem meet, that They would be pleased to take the necessary steps to give it the form and force of law.

*And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.*

The business having proceeded thus far, and the public at large being now put in full possession of every particular, want of information is certainly no longer an admissible plea. And as it cannot be supposed that want of attention to a subject, which is allowed on all hands to be highly interesting to individuals, and of great national importance, can be pleaded, in excuse, by any man who wishes well to his country; it is presumed, that the next meeting, of which timely notice will be given in this, and the other Newcastle papers, will be both numerous and respectable, in support of the measure. *I am, Sir,*

*Yours, &c.* (Signed) FRANCIS BLAKE.

To the Printer of the Newcastle Courant.

S I R,

I BEG the favor of you to lay before the public the conclusion of the business relative to the subject of my former letter, as follows:

Agreeable to the intimation of the printed advertisements in the Newcastle papers, the gentlemen assembled in the Town-Hall of Morpeth, at one o'clock in the afternoon, the 26th instant, when Mr Collingwood of Unthank being requested to take the chair, opened the business, by stating the particular question before them; and having resumed his seat, the gentleman who had requested the honor of their attendance, addressed the company in the following words:

G E N T L E M E N,

I think it incumbent upon me to say something in explanation of my own conduct in this business. I beg leave, however, previously to lay before you the contents of a paper, written in answer to several objections, and transmitted for the benefit of the objecting parties, to a worthy friend and correspondent of mine, who had done me the honor to name the difficulties to me. Of which paper I think it ne-

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cessary to make this public exhibition, lest other gentlemen, who are not in the circle of that communication, entertaining the same objections, and not having the like opportunity of receiving satisfaction, may be induced to withdraw their countenance from a design, which otherwise they might think entitled to their best support. This paper differs somewhat from the original in point of form,—the objections are made general, as coming from the public,—and the answers, which are severally annexed, are more distinct and full.

The several objections, with the answers, are as follow:

#### O B J E C T I O N S.

1st. We are not competent to decide upon this measure, and therefore we cannot, with any degree of propriety, take part either in favor of the question, or against it.

*Answer.* Such gentlemen as excuse themselves on this pretence, have entirely mistaken the point. *It is not required of them to decide upon the measure,* but merely to refer it to the decision of others, who are certainly competent. Besides, there is an old observation,

which says, He that is not for me is against me; but of this it is needless to take advantage, for, strictly speaking, the proposition itself being founded in error, there is not, in fact, any objection before us.

2d. We do not approve of a petition to parliament.

*Ans.* Such as do not approve of a petition to parliament, disapprove of that which is clearly the most constitutional mode of proceeding; and which, indeed, in the present case, is the only proper one, being an application, in the first instance, to that body, which is not only vested with a power that is suited to the purpose, but with an exclusive privilege to give birth to all bills which have any relation to money.

3d. The author's calculation differs widely from all others that have hitherto appeared in print, which is enough to deter us from meddling in the business.

*Ans.* This objection expresses a doubt upon a point very material to be rightly understood, and therefore operates in full recommendation of the enquiry proposed. Agreeable to former calculations, we are at this moment an undone people, the one half of our property is

already swallowed up. Can any man of feeling rest in his bed with such a vision, though but in idea, before his eyes! If no other use was to be made of it, in consideration of our own ease and happiness, it is incumbent upon us to investigate this point with nice precision. Let the discovery be what it may, there is nothing that can possibly befall us half so dreadful, as the state in which this cruel objection has placed us.

4th. We do not think it reasonable to compel every person of the same neat income, but differently circumstanced in respect of the number of children, to contribute the same sum to the service of the state.

*Ans.* This objection not only cuts up by the roots the present plan, but all other payments that have yet been imposed, and with them every idea which has hitherto been entertained of impartial distributive justice. What is said respecting the disproportion of numbers in different families, applies only to particular cases—to those persons who are blest with a numerous offspring, ill exchanged, indeed, for the better ability to bear the burdens of the state. And even this fearful disparity, which is the basis of the argument, disappears upon a general comprehensive view, by which we

find that all families in the long run, taking one generation with another, are nearly upon a level in respect of numbers.

5th. We object to that power with which, in order to ascertain the *quantum* of taxable property, an officer of the crown must be armed to examine every incumbrance that affects an estate—A power which is still more intolerable than that which is at present entrusted to an officer of excise.

*Ans.* This, indeed, would be a very serious objection, but happily, it has not even the shadow of existence. On the contrary, the landed proprietor being required to make good the full payment in proportion to his income, will himself be armed in return with a power to deduct that proportion, which is due from others who hold securities under him. All incumbrances, therefore, which affect an estate, will remain exactly upon the same footing of secrecy, as at present. However, to give perfect satisfaction upon this head, I beg leave to observe, that it is not intended to make these payments to government at all, but to individuals properly authorized to receive such payments for their own use. Government will have no concern whatever in the business, otherwise than as a trustee, to enforce payment,

if attempted to be withheld, whose interference, as salutary to individuals, is allowed in this case, but in no other.

6th. The uncertain produce upon this experiment, together with the novelty of the matter, inclines us to give the preference to the old system.

*Ans.* Provided the Author's calculation of the value of real property is a just one, which I do not take altogether upon trust, when I proclaim it a truth, nothing can be more certain than the produce upon this experiment. Respecting the mere novelty of the matter, that objection can have no weight, when we consider, that to all appearance the design is both safe and honorable, as well as efficient.

7th. We object on account of the precarious state of that revenue by which we are to provide for the defence of the kingdom, and uphold the credit of the nation.

*Ans.* It rests upon the great basis of commerce, the support of us all, the means by which we have risen, and when it fails, we fall together.

Having now gone through the whole of the objections, and furnished such answers as, I trust, will prove satisfactory, I consider this as

the last necessary effort of my exertions. You are now finally to determine whether I have hitherto been engaged in a fruitless enterprise; and in vain endeavours to do you service. That I have laboured in your vineyard is well known to you all; but with what success, and whether I have been usefully employed, remains with you to declare. The hour of retribution is at hand. Not that I ask, or expect, or indeed, were the same in my offer, would accept other reward, than that which I hope to take in common with yourselves, under favor of the present design. At a moment like this, the most awful of my life, when with the fears of a culprit, though not with his guilt, I stand trembling before you, nothing could support me under the pressure of that anxiety which I feel for the impending fate of this question, and the burden of such heavy accusations against me, but a consciousness of fair intention, of sincere and disinterested zeal in the service of the public.—Accusations not indeed openly, and manfully brought forward, but left with timid caution to the construction of others, as necessary deductions from discourse seemingly casual, but framed in reality, with infinite art and address, for that particular purpose. It is a vulgar phrase, and I will not speak so dis-

respectfully as to apply it to any man, but of these allegations I must needs take the liberty of saying, Give them but rope, they will hang themselves. I am aware, Gentlemen, of the severity of this sentence; but when I have stated to you the particulars of the case, if you think I have judged amiss, I stand here for correction.

To insinuate, as some have done, that I have proceeded thus far, without hope of success, is in my humble opinion to pronounce me senseless or insane; and that I think is not your meaning. To alledge that I have no wish to succeed, is to say that I am void of sincerity, and that, I trust, you will not say. To assert that I have put myself forward upon this occasion, in fond expectation of making a favorable display of such slender talents as have fallen to my lot, what is this but to say, that I am the weakest and most vain of mankind; and at a time of life, when the judgment of other men is only ripened to perfection, that mine has gone back, or run wholly to decay. For, surely, in the wide range of nature, there cannot be produced an instance of greater folly and presumption, than for me to imagine, that a subject, which is of itself an intellectual feast, full of flavor and poignancy, could stand in need of the insipid



seasoning of my harangues to make it relish upon your palates.

To say that I have taken advantage of the author's concealment, to share with him in the praise of his performance, or what is still worse, to engross it wholly to my use, is to exhibit me in a point of view that is truly ridiculous. It implies that I have arrayed myself in borrowed plumes, in order, self important thus to strut and stare before you. But if I have done this, if I have ever attempted by word or deed, directly or indirectly to induce a belief that I myself was he, when I was no other than a counterfeit, let my accuser stand forth, and I will give him such proof of his error, or as the poet expresses it,

Such damning proof, that henceforth he shall fear  
To tax my wrath, and own my conduct clear.

Do not mistake me, Gentlemen, it is not my meaning to lay under restraint the conjectures of any man, it is not in my power, and as little is it my wish to do so; all of which I complain is, that I have been accused of giving encouragement to their particular direction. While the matter is in doubt, the speculative mind, for its own entertainment, or that of others, may spin without offence his web or cobweb of surmise; which of the two

it may prove I will not take upon me to determine; its real value can only then be known, when in the fulness of time the author shall think fit to reveal himself. Hitherto there has been no filiation, no one yet has either owned or disavowed relationship, the child is therefore yours to-day, 'tis his to-morrow, the next it may be mine, and thus by turns the credit which it gives is shared amongst us. So let it be.—I can have no objection to this distribution, to more than this, so far as it concerns myself I do object.

It is the author's present wish to lie concealed—'tis so expressed. Does any one believe that this proceeds from whim? Can you imagine that he is either afraid, or that he need be ashamed to make himself known? Then wherefore should we grudge him this indulgence? There is but one good reason on which to found a wish that it was otherwise, which is, that the public in the mean time are deprived of the benefit of his services. Yet possibly we err in this conjecture. Because he is unknown, it does not follow, that he has hitherto been inactive, or that he is not at this time in some place, employed in forwarding

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the great work which he has set on foot, as effectually, and perhaps more so, than if he were here standing in confession before you. Far be it from me, then, to attempt to draw the veil aside; and further still, to say or do ought which might create a suspicion, that I was assuming to myself what belonged to another. Let who will, therefore, have the merit of preparing the dish, be it remembred, that I have put in my claim to no other, than that which appertains to the very humble occupation of bringing it to your table, and placing it before you. Except, indeed, that I have endeavoured, by every persuasion in my power, to prevail upon you to eat thereof; fully convinced that it is not only wholesome food, and conducive to health, but necessary to life; that without it you must die, not indeed the death of the righteous, but of the worst of parricides, of men who wilfully embrue their hands in the blood of their country.

I will now speak out, it is no time to be mealy-mouthed: Have you no feeling? Are you palsied? Are all your faculties benumbed? Have you not eyes or ears, have you not seen and heard, or does it remain with

me to acquaint you, that a confederacy is formed, that the clergy are united to a man against us, that they have entered into a general subscription in support of their cause, not the cause of religion, otherwise we should gladly have borne a part; but to do that, on which a curse has been entailed from the beginning—to *move their neighbour's land-mark*—and shall we not confederate likewise, shall we not bodily oppose this irreligious design? Or will you wait singly, wrapped up in sloth, and stupid insensibility, till it comes to your particular turn to feel the painful effects of that cruel persecution, which is raised by the church against us. If such is your determination, you are indeed deserving of the worst that can befall you in that respect.

As to public matters—you see the present state of the funds? *Bankruptcy and rebellion stare us full in the face!* and by what means is it proposed to avert these dire calamities? By oeconomy, and a sinking fund. † Oeconomy! of whom? Of ministers! And are you

† See Mr Fox's speech on the address, as printed in the London papers.—See also similar declarations from the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Pitt.

still that easy, fond, believing people? Are you still willing, to trust your salvation to the *Oeconomy*, of ministers, so often tried in vain? After the experience which you have had of so many years, of so many men, of so many broken promises, you cannot surely be such egregious dupes, as not to perceive, that those who have proposed a sinking fund for that purpose, had no other meaning but to throw dirt in your eyes, that you might not pursue and overtake them in their tract of iniquity. It is, indeed, most truly called a sinking fund; it is a fund that would sink this, or any nation; it is the fund of corruption. By doing that which I have recommended, you will relieve ministers from the trouble of looking out for resources; and if they are wise, and are upright, they will adopt the measure for their own ease, as well as the public good.

You will likewise emancipate yourselves from the influence of that power, which they must ever retain over the resolutions of men, to wind them to their purpose, while they continue to have the fingering of the public money. It is a power not fit to be trusted in the hands of any man, or set of men. All that

have yet been concerned have invariably abused it, and as all have, all will continue to do so. Till this is done away, there is no redemption for us; and when 'tis done away, you have cut up corruption by the root, that baleful plant, which sickens all our virtue. Ministers will not open their private purse in support of venal adherents, and there is none else that will be left in their reach. I do believe the present minister \* is an honest man, and as such I contemplate his situation with pleasure, and look up to him with a joyful hope of support. But whether I am founded in this opinion or not, it is our duty to unite, and enforce performance. The love of our country, and the great law of nature, the law of self-preservation, demands it of us. I have said it before, and I repeat it again, there is no other alternative. You must either do this, or something to this effect, or mischief will ensue, such as the sun's all-piercing eye hath not yet looked upon in this island. To prevent which, by rousing you from the slumbers of self security, by pointing to your danger, and to the means of escape, and not, as some would have

\* The Duke of Portland.

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you believe, to pull the nodding ruin on your heads, have I left the shades of retirement; quitting that, which to me is a paradise, that to which I shall return, having effected my purpose, not only without regret, but with rapture, like unto that which is felt, after painful separation, by hearts well tuned to one another.

What I am now saying reminds me of another circumstance more material to be discussed, and fully explained, than any which I have hitherto touched upon, as in all probability the fate of the day will hinge thereon.—It is laid to my charge that I cherish, and give entertainment to ambitious thoughts. To which I answer—I am not indeed without ambition, but it is not of that cast of which I am accused. But what if it were? while it is kept within due bounds, while the object is neither unlawful, nor unbecoming my station, by what logic can it constitute a crime? If mere ambition is a sin, which of you will throw the first stone? A seat in parliament is said to be my aim: admitting that it is, does any one object? Have I not pretensions? However deficient in ability, you perceive that I have the

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will to serve the public; and the situation in which I stand, in point of fortune, thanks to the prudent care of my parents, has placed me far above any temptation to do the thing which is wrong. And are not these the necessary ingredients of which the representatives of the people should be composed? But it is whispered that I aspire to the honor of obtaining this mark of distinction, by means of your particular favor. Ay! there is the rub! I am not singular in this. There are others, who entertain ambitious thoughts, which interfere and are incompatible with those which are attributed to me. It is therefore necessary to depreciate me in the opinion of the world, to represent me selfish and designing—that I do not appear before you in my proper character—that I am not the disinterested person I would palm upon your credulity—that I am here in disguise—that I have only taken up this question as a fit subject for popular declamation, hoping thereby to wheedle myself into favor, and turn your attention aside from others which are more deserving—that the public advantage is a mere pretence;—in a word, that I have no other meaning but to serve myself.—What! That I have blasphemed my coun-

try's sacred name, by making use of it as a cat's paw—as a stalking-horse—as a step-ladder to preferment! Perish the thought! And he that harboured it—may heaven forgive. And will you then,—to give the argument its scope, and will you then betray your country's cause to keep a wretch like me, a worthless individual down? It cannot be :—or if it can, it must not be ; a crime like this would blot the fairest fame. The commission of which having it in my power to prevent, there would indeed be good room for complaint were I not to interpose. Then hear me while I speak.—If there is honor, truth, or faith in man, believe me, Gentlemen, I have no private ends to answer—I have no aim but that which is the immediate object of the design before us—I have no views but such as are obvious and apparent to you all. And however absurd it may seem formally to reject that which has never yet been in my offer, the peculiar circumstances of the case warrant the proceeding. I do therefore, here in your presence, not only disclaim every intention of the kind, but utterly renounce and abjure it. Neither do I pretend to make a merit of this : it is an easy sacrifice when duty and inclination go hand in hand.

For in truth, all that I feel of ambition, is to have it in my power to do something in my journey through life, of essential service to my country ; and having done it, all that I would ask or court in return, is to be permitted to take back with me to my retreat the comfort it would yield me. And now, Gentlemen, that I have disburdened my mind, and cleansed myself thoroughly from all political sins, whether real or imputed; and removed that obstacle which alone could operate as a bar of separation between us, I trust there will not be found, upon the present question, two minds in this company. In full confidence of which, of your hearty and unanimous support, I shall venture without further hesitation to move,

That the petition which was produced at the meeting at Alnwick, and is now before you, be approved and adopted by this respectable meeting.

This motion being seconded by Mr John Askew, the petition was read ; and no one rising in opposition, the opinion of the company was taken from the shew of hands, which in the first instance appeared to be doubtful,

but upon a second division was clearly against the motion. And thus was this great question lost, for the present, by a *silent vote*.

TILMOUTH, }  
Nov. 27. 1783 } I am, S I R,  
Your very humble Servant,  
  
(Signed) FRANCIS BLAKE.

AFTER so much previous success, the failure in this last instance requires explanation. The fact I find is this. Agreeable to the resolution entered into at Alwick, application was made to the late high-sheriff, a gentleman of fairest fame, of unimpeached integrity, who, strange as it may seem in a person of that description, and stranger still in one that favored the design, refused, upon some mistaken opinion of informality, to call the county-together. This unforeseen, this inavertable event, disconcerted the parties, deranged their plan, and seemed to threaten danger. It was therefore proceeded against as an evil, where

as in fact it was no otherwise an evil, than as it was made to produce one. The ship now fairly launched, and waiting for a wind, securely might have rode a while at anchor. Instead of this, an expedient was thought of, which brought about the wreck of the vessel, even in the body of the harbour. A meeting was advertised in a private name, which was evidently a work of supererogation, the proposal having already received the sufficient approbation of private meetings. Gentlemen who were aware of this, absented themselves, avoiding the trouble of a fruitless jaunt. Others who were present took no part in the business. Of those who voted, the whole together did not amount to two dozen; the number in opposition must clearly then, at any rate, have been too inconsiderable to prove decisive. From which circumstance, and from the known zeal of the supporters of this measure, I am confident there can be no such idea entertained as that of acquiescence under the present determination. I shall therefore look forward with eager expectation of further and better tidings from that quarter. Hoping, wishing, praying in the mean time, to hear at some not distant period, that *the love of pre-*

sent ease and emolument, that gangrene of the heart, which alone can prevent the progress of this design, has abated its virulence, and left that noble part, from these impurities made clean, to act upon the will, for general good, as nature's God designed it.

**F I N I S**