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A  
L E T T E R  
O F  
His Grace the Duke of Richmond,  
IN ANSWER TO  
T H E Q U E R I E S  
P R O P O S E D B Y  
A Committee of Correspondence in Ireland,  
O N T H E  
Subject of a Parliamentary Reform.  
T O G E T H E R W I T H  
R E S O L U T I O N S  
O F T H E  
VOLUNTEER DELEGATES OF THE PROVINCE  
O F U L S T E R ;  
A LETTER TO THE VOLUNTEER ARMY  
O F U L S T E R ;  
And other Important Papers.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. STOCKDALE, opposite BURLINGTON  
House, Piccadilly. 1783.

[ Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]

TO THE

P U B L I C.

MUTILATED Copies having been circulated of a Letter reported to have been written by his Grace the Duke of Richmond, to a Committee of Correspondence in Ireland, in answer to some Queries proposed; relative to the Nature, Extent, and Mode, of a Parliamentary Reform; it is with infinite Satisfaction the Publisher has obtained an authentic Copy of the Duke of Richmond's Letter,

## ii DEDICATION.

ter, by the Means of an Irish Volunteer Correspondent. The Queries addressed to his Grace; his Reply to them; and other Pieces which have a connection with the Subject, are collected in one point of View, and submitted to the Reader in the following Publication.

*Piccadilly, 13th October, 1783.*

LETTER

LETTER from the Committee of Correspondence at Lisburn to the Duke of RICHMOND.

AT a Meeting of the Committee of Correspondence, appointed by the Delegates of Forty-five Volunteer Corps assembled at *Lisburn* on the 1st of July instant, held at *Belfast* the 19th of July, 1783.

Present, LIEUT. COL. SHARMAN  
in the Chair;

ORDERED, *That the following Letter, signed by the Secretary in the Name of this Committee, be forwarded to His Grace the Duke of RICHMOND, inclosing a Copy of the Resolutions of the Provincial*

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*vincial Meeting of Volunteers of Munster, and of the Proceedings of the Forty five Volunteer Delegates assembled at Lisburn on the 1st Instant, respecting a Parliamentary Reform, as also a Copy of the circular Letter written this Day by this Committee to the several Volunteer Corps of this Province,*

BELFAST, 19th July, 1783.

May it please your GRACE,

**Y**OUR GRACE'S Attachment to the Rights of the People, and the general Prosperity of the British Empire, induce us to address you on the present great and momentous Occasion.

The Spirit of Freedom which pervades all Ranks of People in Ireland with the Justice and wise Policy of the British Nation, having removed for ever all possible

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Obstacle Cause of Jealousy between the Sister Kingdoms, and united us to Britain on the Basis of equal Liberty and similar Constitution, it becomes the Duty, as it is the Interest of each Kingdom to assist the other in their Endeavours to restore to its antient Purity and Vigour a decayed, enfeebled, and sickly Constitution. In both Nations it is now generally acknowledged, that this great Object can be attained by *no* other Means but by a Reform of the Representation in Parliament. In England the Measure has for the present miscarried, though supported by so many wise, honest, great and independent Men; we trust, however, it has miscarried only for a Season, and that the next Attempt will prove successful.

Ireland has now taken up the Idea, and if we shall be so happy as to see

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Success crown our Efforts, we think considerable Weight will be thereby added to the Endeavours of the Friends of the People in England. The People of the two Nations *united* in pursuit of the same important Object, must be not only powerful, but irresistible,

The inclosed Papers, which we request your Grace may peruse, will shew how far this Country has already gone in determining to procure a more equal Representation, the unanimous Resolutions of about fifteen Thousand Volunteers, already declared in a very few Weeks, assure us that the Resolves of the Delegates of Ulster, who are to assemble at Dungannon on the 8th of September next, will be no less unanimous; and we well know that what the Volunteers, vast Numbers of whom are Freeholders, shall determine on, the other Freeholders  
and

and People in general who are not Volunteers, will adopt and support by every Means in their Power. The aged Fathers cannot differ from their Sons, respecting a Matter on which depends every thing that they either hold dear for themselves or their Posterity.

That your Grace may see the very depraved State of our Representation it is necessary to observe, that out of three Hundred Members, of which our House of Commons consists, Two Hundred and Twenty are returned by Boroughs; those One Hundred and ten Boroughs are divided into three Classes: 1st. Those where the Right of Election is vested in the Protestant Inhabitants at large. 2d. Those where the Right of Election is vested in the Chief Magistrate, Burgeses and Freemen. 3d. Those where the Right of Election is confined to the Chief  
Magistrate

Magistrate and Burgeffes, frequently not more in Number than five or fix, and feldom exceeding ten or twelve. Almost all the Boroughs are either venal and corrupt, or implicitly obedient to the arbitrary Will of their respective Landlords, who dictate to the Electors in the most absolute Manner. Those Landlords claim by Prescription a Kind of Property in those Boroughs, the Patronage of which they transfer by Sale like an Estate, and receive from eight to nine Thousand Pounds for a Borough. A Seat for a Borough is generally sold for Two Thousand Pounds; so that every seven or eight Years a Borough brings in Four Thousand Pounds to the Patron.

Unhappily for Ireland our Counties also are too much governed by our Peers and Great Men, whose Influence over many of their respective Tenants is very  
great;

great; and this Consideration has given rise here to a Doubt, in the Minds of many well-meaning Men, as to the Propriety of adding to the Number of Knights of the Shire; as generally now two great Families endeavour to divide between them the Seats for the County, the others either remain neuter or join the independent Interest, it is alledged, were there six Seats for each County, six great Families would divide them, and against such a Junction the independent Freeholders would not be able to make any effectual Opposition. May we now entreat your Grace as a most important Favour conferred not only on us but on this Kingdom, that you may be pleased to favour us with your Grace's Sentiments and Advice, as to the best, the most eligible and the most practicable Mode of destroying, restraining or counteracting this Hydra of Corruption, Bo-  
rough;

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rough Influence, that we may be enabled to lay your Grace's Opinion before the provincial Assembly of Delegates at Dunganon, and as our last Meeting for arranging Business previous thereunto is fixed to be on the 20th of August, we hope your Grace will be so obliging as to forward your Reply so as to be with us about that Time. Many Apologies are due for this long Address, and for the very great Trouble we have requested your Grace to take; but we are young in Politics, and wish for Information from Men of more Wisdom, Experience and Abilities. This, however, we may venture to assert, that if we can only be directed to the best Mode, the Mass of the Inhabitants of Ireland is at this Moment so completely alive and sensible to the Necessity of a well-digested Reform, that there cannot remain a Doubt that what it attempts in  
Conjunction

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Conjunction with the virtuous Part of England will be effectual. The several Matters on which we have requested your Grace's Opinion are thrown into one View in the following Queries.

In order to the Purity of Parliament, and to restore that constitutional Controul, which the constituent Body should have over the Representative,

1st. Is it necessary that those Boroughs in which the Right of Election is vested in a few, which in general are at the absolute Disposal of one or two Persons, should be disfranchised, and in their Place the County Representatives encreased?

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2d.

2d. The Protestant Inhabitants consist of near one Million, who return three Hundred Members—would it be wise to increase the Number of Representatives for the Kingdom at large?

3d. A plausible Objection, mentioned above, has been raised against an Increase of County Representatives. Has that Argument much Weight? and if it has, is it remediable?

4th. Should the Right of Suffrage be extended? If it should, who are the proper Objects of that Extension?

5th. In order to guard against undue Influence, would it be wise to have the Members returned by Ballot?

6th.

6th. Would not a Limitation of the Duration of Parliaments to a shorter Term than eight Years, have excellent Effects? and should it be less than triennial?

7th. If the Abolition of the *enslaved* Boroughs is necessary, would it be equitable or expedient that they should be purchased by the Nation?

8th. On the whole, what specific Mode of Reform in the Representation of Ireland best suits your own Ideas, considering the Situation of this Country? and what are the Steps which your Grace conceives best adapted to effect that Reformation?

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We request your Grace may be so good to direct your Answer to our Chairman, Lieut. Col. SHARMAN, Lifburn.

We have the Honor to be, with the most perfect Respect,

*Your Grace's most obedient and*

*most humble Servants,*

Signed by Order of Committee,

HENRY JOY, Jun<sup>r</sup>.

Sec. of the 45.

To the Duke of RICHMOND.

[ 13 ]

A more equal Representation of the People in the PARLIAMENT of IRELAND.

AT a Meeting of the Provincial Delegates of Munster held in the County Court-house of Cork, on the 1st of March, 1783, the following, among many other Resolves, were entered into:

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, That the majority of the Representatives in Parliament are returned by venal Boroughs; that such Members do not represent the sense of the People; that the Parliament cannot be virtuous until a more equal representation of the People shall be obtained. We therefore strongly recommend to Parliament, to use the most strenuous exertion to carry the above reform into effect.

AT

AT a Meeting of Delegates from Forty-five Corps of the Province of Ulster, assembled at Lisburn the 1st of July, 1783, in pursuance of a public Requisition of the Ulster Regiment,

LIEUT. COL. SHARMAN in the Chair.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, That a General Meeting of the Volunteer Delegates of the Province of Ulster, on the subject of A MORE EQUAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT, is hereby earnestly entreated; to be held at DUNGANNON, on Monday, the *eighth Day of September next.*

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, That the following Gentlemen (seven to be a quorum) be appointed a Committee of Correspondence

response for communicating with the other Corps of the Province, for taking preparatory steps to forward the intentions of this Meeting, and for collecting the best Authorities and Information on the subject of a Parliamentary Reform, viz.

Lieut. Col. SHARMAN.  
 Capt. BLACK,  
 Dr. ALEX. CRAWFORD,  
 Major BURDEN,  
 Capt. WAD. CUNNINGHAM,  
 Rev. Mr. CRAIG,  
 Dr. SAMUEL MOORE,  
 Col. ROWLEY,  
 Major JOHN CRAWFORD,  
 Lieut. Col. BANKS,  
 Mr. ROBERT THOMPSON,  
 Capt. THOMAS PRENTICE,  
 Lieut. TOMB.

RESOLVED

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY, That the following Address be published in the public Prints:

TO THE VOLUNTEER ARMY OF  
THE PROVINCE OF ULSTER.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

IN common with every class of Irishmen, you are sensible that this Kingdom for many centuries might have continued to bear its chains in ignoble and indigent Obscurity, had not an army of its Citizens, by a great effort, dared to cast them off.

That the dignified conduct of that Army lately restored to the Imperial Crown of Ireland its original splendor, to Nobility its ancient privileges, and to the  
Nation

Nation at large its inherent Rights as a sovereign independent State;—that by inculcating the glorious spirit of toleration, it has united the once distracted inhabitants of this Country into an indissoluble Mass; and promoted the most exalted reverence for the Laws,—are facts that will exhibit a splendid and interesting figure in the annals of the Age.

From a military institution so singular in its nature as to comprehend the several gradations of Nobles, Commoners, Merchants, Yeomen, and Mechanics, every substantial good will be expected by wise and virtuous men.

They will with honest pride, behold in the State an unparalleled combination of the Military with the civil Character, existing only for the general interests of the Community, and prepared, on the  
D purest

purest principles of the Constitution, to give efficacy to the wishes of Three Millions of People.

The idea of a well-digested Parliamentary Reform, has ever experienced a favourable reception in the uncorrupted breasts of Irishmen and of Britons.—It has been uniformly looked up to as the true source of public Virtue and of political Salvation, by the first Characters these Kingdoms have produced. In this Age, we have seen it warmly supported by that consummate Statesman the late EARL of CHATHAM; and revived by the Heir to his Abilities and Name, the present WILLIAM PITT. It has received the sanction of the most eminent and honest Men in both Houses of the British Parliament; of a great number of the most respectable Shires in England; of the Volunteer Delegates of the Province

Province of Munster;—and, within these few Days, of the Unanimous Vote of Thirty-eight Corps, Reviewed at Belfast.

Among the many glorious effects of which a more equal Representation of the People in Parliament would be productive, the following are obvious:—The destruction of that party-spirit, whose baneful influence has at all times been injurious to the public weal;—a revival of the native dignity of the Crown, by imparting to each branch of the Legislature its distinct and proportional weight;—and the abolition of that train of courtly mercenaries who must ever continue to prey on the vitals of public virtue, till, the balance of the Constitution being restored, the necessity for governing by regular systems of seduction, shall no longer exist.

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Then would the constituent body regain its constitutional controul over its Trustees,—and venal majorities would not be found to support the most dishonourable and pernicious measures, in opposition to the sense of the unpolluted part of the Legislature, as well as contrary to the universal wishes of the public—and to the true intent of the institution of Parliaments.

With due deference for the august body which we have presumed to Address—we therefore beg leave to express our wishes that the Volunteer Delegates of Ulster would assemble with the same spirit of loyalty, patriotism, and firmness which actuated them on the memorable 15th of February, 1782 :—to deliberate on the most constitutional means of procuring A MORE EQUAL REPRESENTATION

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TION OF THE PEOPLE IN THE PARLIAMENT OF IRELAND—as *the only measure* which can give permanency to the late renovation of our constitution, or restore that virtue to the Representative Body without which, though the mere forms of a free government may be preserved, its spirit must inevitably perish.

Signed by Order of the Meeting,

WM. SHARMAN, CHAIRMAN.

Lieut. Col. Sharman having left the Chair, and Lieut. Col. Sir Walter Sinnot taken it.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Meeting be given to our worthy Chairman, for his very proper conduct in the Chair.

BELFAST, July 19, 1783.

At a meeting of the Committee of Correspondence, appointed by the Representatives

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representatives of Forty-five Volunteer Corps that assembled at Lisburn on the 1st inst. Present, Lieut. Col. Sharman, Major Burden, Captain Cunningham, Captain Prentice, Captain Moore, Captain Crawford, Lieut. Tomb, Mr. Robert Thompson: Lieut. Col. Sharman in the Chair, Ordered, that the following Address be published in the public Prints, and a Copy of it sent to each Corps in the Province, of which our Secretary can get information.

TO THE VOLUNTEERS OF ULSTER,

*Gentlemen,*

IN compliance with the order of Forty-five Corps, which appointed us a Committee of Correspondence for the purpose of promoting a Dungannon Meeting, to be held the 8th of September next: We think it necessary to present a view of the several Volunteer Bodies

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Bodies who have already declared their determination to support a parliamentary reform, viz.

The PROVINCE of Munster, by a unanimous declaration of their Representatives—on the 1st of March last—

The Representatives of Thirty-eight Corps reviewed at Belfast,—on the 9th of June last, by a unanimous declaration.

The united Corps of True Blue and Society Volunteers of the City of Londonderry—on parade 30th of June, by a unanimous declaration.

The Londonderry Artillery Company, the Londonderry Independent Volunteers, and Liberty Volunteers—on parade the 1st of July, by a unanimous declaration.

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The Representatives of Forty-five Corps convened at Lisburn the 1st of July instant—by a unanimous declaration.

The Representatives of Thirty-four Corps reviewed at Broughshane on the 10th inst.—by a unanimous declaration.

IT appears to us, that the idea of a Parliamentary Reform has already received the sanction of Fifteen Thousand Volunteers; with a warm promise of support from the great Patron of Irish Liberty—the Earl of Charlemont—and has received, in a very short time, the general approbation of all ranks and denominations of independent Freeholders.

Having given this information, it only remains at present to assure you, that we are diligently applying ourselves to the discharge of the trust reposed in us; and earnestly to request, that every Volunteer

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teer Corps in Ulster may be represented at Dungannon on the 8th of September next, and that their Delegates may be furnished with *written* instructions to declare approbation or disapprobation of the measure of a Parliamentary Reform;—leaving it to the united wisdom of the assembled Delegates, to pursue such further measures to promote this great object, as shall appear to them most proper.

WM. SHARMAN, CHAIRMAN.

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LETTER from the Duke of RICHMOND to the Committee of Correspondence at Lisburn.

SIR,

I HAVE been honoured with a Letter from Belfast, dated the 19th of July last, written in the name of the Com-

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mittee of Correspondence appointed by the Delegates of Forty-five Volunteer Corps assembled at Lisburn on the 1st of the same Month, "for taking preparatory Steps to forward their Intentions on the subject of a more equal Representation of the People in Parliament," and signed by their Secretary, Henry Joy, junr. Esq.

In this Letter, after shewing the corrupt State of the Boroughs in Ireland, the general Opinion of the People that the Constitution can be restored to its ancient Purity and Vigor by no other Means than a Parliamentary reform, and informing me of the Steps which have been taken and are taking by the Volunteers, in determining to procure this desirable Object, the Committee is pleased "to request my sentiments and Advice as to the best, most eligible  
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"and most practicable Mode of destroying, restraining, or counteracting this Hydra of Corruption, Borough Influence, in order to lay my Opinion before the Provincial Assembly of Delegates, which is to be held at Dunganon on the 8th of September next."

This great Mark of Confidence, from Gentlemen in whom so much Trust is placed, does me great honor; for as I have not the pleasure of being personally known to any of them, I can owe it but to the favorable Opinion they are pleased to entertain of my constant and zealous Endeavours in the Public Service.

I am sensible that the only proper return I can make for this honorable Distinction, is to obey their Commands in the best Manner I am able; for although my insufficiency for so arduous a Task

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would afford me but too good an excuse for declining it, yet I feel it would be inconsistent with my Ideas of the Obligation every Man is under to serve the Public as well as he can, if I was to refuse giving my Opinions, such as they are, when thus called upon by a respectable Body of Gentlemen.

Besides my Inability, I have to regret the Want of Time to collect and arrange my Thoughts in such a Manner as to be fit to appear before you, and the necessary Limits of a Letter, which will not admit of the extensive Investigation which a Subject of this vast Importance deserves; for although I fear I must be long, I am sensible I cannot do it justice.

The Subject of a Parliamentary Reform is that, which of all others, in my Opinion, most deserves the Attention of the  
Public,

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Public, as I conceive it would include every other Advantage which a Nation can wish; and I have no Hesitation in saying, that from every Consideration which I have been able to give to this great Question that for many Years has occupied my Mind, and from every Day's Experience to the present Hour, I am more and more convinced that *the restoring the Right of voting universally to every Man, not incapacitated by Nature for want of Reason, or by Law for the Commission of Crimes, together with annual Elections*, is the only Reform that can be effectual and permanent. I am further convinced that it is the only Reform that is practicable.

All other Plans that are of a palliative Nature have been found insufficient to interest and animate the great Body of the People, from whose Earnestness alone any Reform can be expected. A long  
Exclusion

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Exclusion from any Share in the Legislature of their Country has rendered the great Mass of the People indifferent whether the Monopoly that subsists, continues in the Hands of a more or less extended Company; or whether it is divided by them into Shares of somewhat more or less just Proportions. The Public feels itself unconcerned in these Contests, except as to the Oppressions it endures, and the Exactions it suffers, which it knows must continue so long as the People remain deprived of all Controul over their Representatives. This Indifference of theirs, when the last Attempt was made for additional County Members, was used by our Opponents as an Argument against all Reform; it was asked with a triumphant Air, where are the Petitions from the Inhabitants of Birmingham, Manchester, Hallifax, and other great unrepresented Towns? And their Silence was deemed a Proof of their

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their Acquiescence and Satisfaction in the present Form of Elections! The Truth is, that the People have been so often deceived that they will now scarcely trust any Set of Men; and nothing but self-evident Conviction, that a Measure tends effectually to the Recovery of their Rights, can, or indeed ought to interest them in its Favor.

The lesser Reform has been attempted with every possible Advantage in its Favor; not only from the zealous Support of the Advocates for a more effectual one, but from the Assistance of Men of great weight both in and out of Power. But with all these Temperaments and Helps it has failed. Not one Profelyte has been gained from Corruption, nor has the least Ray of Hope been held out from any Quarter that the House of Commons was inclined to adopt any other Mode of Reform. The Weight of

of Corruption has crushed this more gentle, as it would have defeated any more efficacious Plan in the same Circumstances. From that Quarter therefore I have nothing to hope. It is from the People at large that I expect any Good. And I am convinced that the only Way to make them feel that they are really concerned in the Business, is to contend for their *full, clear and indisputable Rights of Universal Representation*. I call them such, not only from my own Conviction, but from the Admission of the Friends to the more moderate Plan, who, in the second Address of the Yorkshire Committee to the People, confess that our Claims are founded on the true Principles of the Constitution, and only object to them on Account of Impracticability. But their Plan has now had a fair Trial, and (if it is from the Inclination of Parliament that Practicability is to be expected) has been found as im-

practicable

practicable as ours. The more extensive Plan, at the same Time that its Operation is more compleat, depends on a more effectual Support, that of the People.

I am also persuaded that if the Scheme for additional County Members had proceeded any further, infinite Difficulties would have arisen in adjusting it. Neither the Yorkshire Committee nor Mr. Pitt have given the Detail of their Plan. A just Reparation would have been a most intricate Task, for where different Interests are separately represented, the Proportion is not very easy to ascertain. The Doubt you state concerning this Mode of Reform appears to me well founded; a few great Families might divide a County between them and chuse the Members by a House List, like East India Directors. Another Difficulty from the Increase of the Number of Members which might render the House more tu-

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multuous than deliberative, has its weight. But the greatest Objection, in my Opinion, to this and to every other narrow and contracted Plan of Reform, is, that it proceeds upon the same bad Principle as the Abuse it pretends to rectify; it is still partial and unequal; a vast Majority of the Community is still left unrepresented; and its most essential Concerns, Life, Liberty and Property continue in the absolute Disposal of those whom they do not chuse, and over whom they have no Controul. In the Arrangements of Plans of this Kind there is no leading Principle to determine that the Addition ought to be, one Hundred, Fifty, or Two Hundred; that the Allotment should be according to the Population, Property, or Taxes paid in each County; that any supposed Proportion between the landed and trading Interest is the just one, and that the Division of County and City Members will correspond with this Proportion.

Proportion when found. All is at Sea without any Compass to enable us to distinguish the safe from the dangerous Course.

But in the more liberal and great Plan of *universal Representation*, a clear and distinct Principle at once appears that cannot lead us wrong: Not Conveniency but Right: If it is not a Maxim of our Constitution, that a British Subject is to be governed only by Laws to which he has consented by himself or his Representative, we should instantly abandon the Error; but if it is the Essential of Freedom, founded on the eternal Principles of Justice and Wisdom, and our unalienable Birth Right, we should not hesitate in asserting it. Let us then but determine to act on this broad Principle, of *giving to every man his own*, and we shall immediately get rid of all the Perplexities to which the narrow Notions

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of Partiality and Exclusion must ever be subject.

In the digesting a Plan upon this Noble Foundation we shall not find any Difficulty, that the most common Understanding and Pains will not easily surmount. It does not require half the Ingenuity of a common Tax Bill; and as a Proof of this Assertion, I myself drew the Form of a Bill for this Purpose, which I presented to the House of Lords in 1780; not as a perfect Work, but merely to shew how easily the Objections to the Practicability of the Plan, and the Inconveniences that are suggested, might be got over.

I believe the sending you a copy of my Bill will be the best way of explaining its Operations. I have not one ready at this moment, but it shall soon follow this Letter.

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I SHALL therefore only mention at present a few of its provisions, which I think entirely remove the most plausible objections that have been urged against it.

THE present number of Members in the House of Commons is preserved, so that all apprehension from too numerous an assembly, ceases.

AN account of the whole number of males of age in the kingdom is to be taken and divided by the number of Members to be sent, which will find the quota of Electors to chuse one Member; from the best accounts I can now get, it will be about *Two Thousand Six Hundred*; these are to be formed into Districts or Boroughs from the most contiguous Parishes; and by having all the Elections throughout the kingdom in one and the same day, and taken

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in each parish, all fear of riot and tumult vanishes.

THE great expence of Elections, which arises chiefly from the cost of conveying Electors to the place of poll, and entertaining them there and on the road, will be no more when every man will vote in his own parish. Bribery must entirely cease; in a single Borough it would be difficult, on so many as to have any effect, impossible. The numbers to be bought would be infinitely too great for any purse. Besides, Annual Parliaments, by their frequency and by their shortness, would doubly operate in preventing Corruption.

THE vast expence of petitions to Parliament on account of illegal Returns, would be reduced almost to nothing. The points on which these contests generally turn, are the qualifications of the Electors  
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under the numberless restrictions the present Laws have imposed, which require the attendance of witnesses, the production of records, and are subject to infinite dispute. But when no other qualification shall be necessary but that of being a British Subject, and of age, there can be but little left to contend upon as to the Right of Electors to vote. All other questions that could afford ground for a Petition would be trifling, and might be decided in one day. Many other objections are obviated by the Bill, but it is needless here to mention them.

BUT there is another sort of objection against which no provision can be made, as it is merely imaginary. It is feared by some, that the influence of power and riches, will give to the Aristocracy so great a lead in these Elections as to place the whole Government in their hands. Others

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again dread, that when paupers and the lowest orders of the people shall have an equal vote with the first Commoner in the kingdom, we shall fall into all the confusion of a democrick Republick. The contrariety of these two apprehensions might of itself be a sufficient proof that neither extreme will take place. It is true, that the poorest man in the kingdom will have an equal vote with the first, for the choice of the person to whom he trusts his all; and I think he ought to have that equal degree of security against oppression. It is also true, that men of superior fortunes, will have a superior degree of weight and influence; and I think that as education and knowledge generally attend property, those who possess them ought to have weight and influence with the more ignorant. But the essential difference will be, that altho' the people may be led they cannot be driven. Property will have its weight,

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weight, as it ever must have, in all Governments; and I conceive that in this plan, it will precisely find its just proportion combined with talents and character. A man of great property that is beloved and esteemed, will, as he ought, have the greatest sway; but tyranny and oppression, tho' attended with riches, may be resisted, and will no longer be attended with a burgage tenure at command.

ANOTHER subject of apprehension is, that the principle of allowing to every man an equal right to vote tends to equality in other respects, and to level property. To me it seems to have a direct contrary tendency. The equal rights of men to security from oppression, and to the enjoyments of life and liberty, strike me as perfectly compatible with their unequal shares of industry, labour, and genius, which  
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are the origin of inequality of fortunes. The equality and inequality of men are both founded in Nature; and whilst we do not confound the two, and only support her establishments, we cannot err. The protection of property appears to me one of the most essential ends of society; and so far from injuring it by this plan, I conceive it to be the only means of preserving it; for the present system is hastening with great strides to a perfect equality in universal poverty.

It has been said, that this plan of extending the right of voting to every individual creates much uneasiness in the minds of quiet and well disposed persons; and that if paupers, vagabonds, and persons of no property, were left out, there would be no objection to extend it to all householders  
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and persons paying taxes, and that the same division into districts might take place. My answer is, that I know of no man, let him be ever so poor, who in his consumption of food and use of raiment, does not pay taxes; and that I would wish to encourage an enthusiasm for his country in the breast of every subject, by giving him his just share in its Government. I readily admit, that such an alteration would be a vast improvement; but I must prefer the adhering rigidly to a self-evident principle, especially when attended with no inconvenience in the execution, that I can foresee. Besides, we should again fall into the difficulties of drawing the line of separation, and into the disputes about qualification.

THE apprehensions that our Government will become too democratick, have been  
urged

urged on another ground. It has been said, that the House of Commons has usurped the whole power of Government: that the Crown in reality no longer possesses its negative, and must in all things be ruled by the House of Commons: that the House of Lords, in consequence of its exclusion (by the will of the House of Commons and not by law) from interfering in money bills, no longer in fact exercises the functions of a branch of the Legislature: that the only means by which the ballance of the Constitution is now in any degree preserved, is by the *irregular* influence of the Crown and of the Peers in the House of Commons: and that if they are totally excluded from interference there, as is supposed will be the case if this Bill passes, and are not restored to their original share of power, the equilibrium will be destroyed, and the Government become purely democrattick.

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To remedy this objection, it has been answered by others, that it is but just and reasonable, and that they mean at the same time that the Commons are restored to their rights, that the Crown and the Peers should recover theirs. This answer has been ridiculed in my opinion with more wit, than solidity of argument. It has been represented as admitting, that whilst the House of Commons continue corrupt, the King and Lords should submit to its decisions; but that when it should really speak the voice of the People, then it would be right to revive the dormant powers of resisting it.

For my part, I agree in opinion with those who are for restoring to all parts of the State their just rights at the same time; to do it generally, not partially, is what I must contend for. At the same time, I admit that I am not for restoring the negative of the

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Crown, My reason is, that it appears to me preposterous, that the will of one man should for ever obstruct every regulation which all the rest of the nation may think necessary. I object to it, as I would to any other prerogative of the Crown, or privilege of the Lords, or People, that is not founded on reason.

BUT I agree, that if the House of Commons was reduced to its natural dependence on the People alone, and the present system of making it the exclusive part of Government was continued, we should approach to a pure Democracy more than our constitution warrants, or than I wish to see. I am not for a democrattick, any more than for an aristocratick, or monarchick Government, solely; I am for that admirable mixture of the three, that our inimitable and comprehensive Constitution  
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has established: I wish to see the executive part of Government revert to where the Constitution has originally placed it, in the hands of the Crown to be carried on by its Ministers: those Ministers under the controul of Parliament: and Parliament under the controul of the People. I would not have Parliament made, as it daily is, a party concerned in every Act of State, whereby it becomes the executive, for which it is not calculated, and loses its superintending and controuling power, which is the main end of its institution. For when the two Houses are previously pledged by addresses, votes and resolutions, it becomes extremely difficult for them afterwards to censure measures in which they have been so deeply engaged by acts of their own. Another great inconvenience arises from Parliament's taking so

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much of the executive of Government on itself, which is, the excessive length of the sessions; an evil which of late has greatly increased. Now that Parliament is engaged in every detail in order to screen the Minister, it never can finish its business till the middle of the summer, when the independent country gentleman, tired of a long attendance and hot weather in town, is retired to his private business in the country, and that of the Publick left to be settled in thin Houses by a few dependents of the Minister. A short session of two or three months would be sufficient to examine the expenditure of former grants, to make new ones, to redress grievances, and pass such general laws as circumstances might require. The inconvenience and expence to a private Member of Parliament in attending his duty would then be trifling: and instead of forty Commoners  
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and three Peers to form a Quorum to decide the greatest matters of State, the attendance of two-thirds of each body, which would give respect to their proceedings, might and ought to be required. I am also free to own my opinion, that when the House of Lords shall be effectually prevented from having any influence in the House of Commons, as I think it must by this Bill, it should at the same time recover its equal rights in every respect with the House of Commons as a coordinate branch of the Legislature. These sentiments are, I think, consonant to the idea so well expressed in your Letter to the Volunteer Army of the Province of Ulster, "to restore to the Crown its original splendor, to Nobility its ancient privileges, and to the Nation at large its inherent rights."

I BELIEVE I have now troubled you with all that is necessary concerning my plan. My  
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Bill will shew the detail as far as concerns the House of Commons and the election of Scotch Peers: the regulations for restoring to the Crown its executive, and to the House of Lords its deliberative functions, should be added to and form a part of this Bill; but I have not as yet had time and leisure to prepare them.

In what I have said, I have shewn my opinion concerning the 1st, 3d, 4th, 6th and 8th questions you have proposed to me. There remain the 2d, 5th and 7th to be considered,

In respect to the second, which I presume relates to the admission of Roman Catholics to vote at elections, I can only say, that the same principles which go to civil liberty, equally lead to liberty of conscience; I admire with you the glorious spirit

spirit of toleration which you say has united the once distracted inhabitants of Ireland into one indissoluble mass: and I am sure that nothing short of evident danger to the State can warrant its interference in religious opinions. But unacquainted as I am with the state of Ireland, it is impossible for me to know the present temper and disposition of the Roman Catholics there; and those only who are on the spot can judge how far exclusions of this sort are necessary, or ought to extend.

With regard to the 5th question, if voting by ballot is adviseable? I am clearly of opinion that it is not. The idea of a ballot can have arisen but to avoid the effect of some improper influence; and I conceive it much more noble, directly to check that influence, than indirectly to evade it by concealment and deceit. I am convinced that trivial

trivial circumstances in things like this tend greatly to form the national character; and that it is most consistent with that of a British or Irish freeman, that all his actions should be open and avowed, and that he should not be ashamed of declaring in the face of his country whom he wishes to intrust with its interests. Upon the same idea that ballots may be a cover for Independence, they must also be a cloak for Bribery and a school for Lying and Deceit.

As to the 7th question, whether it would not be equitable or expedient that Boroughs now in the possession of individuals should be purchased by the nation; I think, that altho' no man can have a strict claim in equity to be refunded the loss of what neither buyer nor seller had a right to barter, yet it will be wise to purchase the good will, or at least to soften the resistance, of the present  
powerful

powerful possessors of Boroughs by a most ample compensation. The liberties of a nation cannot be bought too dear, but the whole cost of these Boroughs would not amount to the profits of one jobbing contract.

I HAVE NOW answered all the questions you have been pleased to propose; but I must mention another advantage which ought to recommend the measures you are pursuing to every friend to the internal peace and quiet of the kingdom, which is, that when the people have obtained a regular, legal, and speedy way of giving effect to their sentiments, there can no longer be any apprehension of their endeavouring to redress themselves by mobs and tumults; and even such regular and well-conducted meetings as yours will become needless. I mention this circum-

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stance with the more satisfaction, as it stamps your conduct with the most unequivocal marks of disinterested patriotism. Power, when once acquired, is generally endeavoured to be preserved by its possessors ; but you, after having taken up yours from necessity, and employed it usefully, are now endeavouring with unexampled virtue to render its continuance unnecessary. For great as your services have been, in so soon forming a compleat army, in the advantages you have procured for your country, in the good order you have preserved, and in the efficacy you have given to law, you will derive still greater credit, in my opinion, from your good sense in seeing that a great military force totally unconnected with the civil government cannot be a permanent establishment in a free country, whose first principle is,

never

never to trust absolute power in any hands whatever. Your present endeavours to restore the Constitution to its purity and vigor evidently tend to make this and every extraordinary institution unnecessary ; for when the people are fairly and equally represented in Parliament, when they have annual opportunities of changing their Deputies, and through them of controuling every abuse of Government in a safe, easy and legal way, there can be no longer any reason for recurring to those ever dangerous though sometimes necessary expedients of an armed force, which nothing but a bad Government can justify. Such a magnanimous end to your proceedings, when, after having restored Liberty, Commerce, and Free Government to your Country, you shall voluntarily retire to the noble character of private Citizens,

peaceably

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peaceably enjoying the blessings you have procured, will crown your labours with everlasting glory, and is worthy the genuine patriotick spirit which animates the Irish Volunteers,

BEFORE I conclude, I beg leave to express a wish, that the mutually essential connection between Great Britain and Ireland may soon be settled on some liberal and fair footing. That which did subsist was on such narrow and absurd principles that no friend to either kingdom can regret its loss. Founded on constraint and dependence, incompatible with the condition of freemen, Ireland had an indisputable right to dissolve it whenever she chose so to do. But surely, if we do not mean a total separation, it would be right to agree upon some new terms by which we are to continue connected,

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ned. I have always thought it for the interest of the two Islands to be incorporated and form one and the same Kingdom, with the same Legislature meeting sometimes in Ireland as well as in England: But if there are difficulties to such an Union not to be got over at present, some sort of *fæderal Union* at least between the two Kingdoms seems necessary to ascertain the many circumstances that concern their joint interests; and an Union of this sort may now be formed with much greater propriety than before, as it will be sanctified by the free consent of Independent Nations.

I do conceive that some step of this sort is absolutely necessary, because the present footing; of Separation rather than Union, is too unfair to be able long to subsist. England, besides the load of the whole debt contracted

contracted for the use of both Kingdoms, bears all the burdens of naval defence and foreign negotiations, and by far more than its proportion of the land service in time of war. But what is worse, is, that there is no certainty now left that we shall have the same enemies and the same friends: different interests, as they may appear, may lead one Kingdom to think a war necessary, and the other to remain in peace: The same King, in his different Kingdoms, may think it wise to follow the advice of his respective Parliaments: I need scarcely add, that the unavoidable consequences of such a difference are a *war* between the two Kingdoms. Unless some settlement takes place upon these and many other important subjects, I am far from being clear that it will be for the advantage of liberty in either Kingdom, that its Monarch should continue the Sovereign

reign of a neighbouring State with which it has no connection. I am sensible that there are great difficulties attending the adjustment of such an Union, and that it requires great wisdom and temper to form it, especially on the part of Ireland, which must feel that she ought to give the preponderance to Great Britain; but I am sure the business ought not to be neglected, and that every true friend to both Kingdoms ought to give it his most zealous assistance.

I BEG pardon for having gone into a subject not immediately belonging to that upon which you have desired my opinion; but I thought it so connected with it, and at the same time so important, that I trust you will excuse my having introduced it. I fear I have been very long; but it was impossible for me to compress so much matter into a less compass; and when you wished  
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to have my opinion, I thought it best to give it fully, or at least as fully as I could in a Letter. If it contains one thought that can be useful, I shall be happy. I have only to assure the Committee of the zeal I feel for the cause the Volunteers have undertaken, to the support of which I shall ever be ready to give every assistance in my power; and that it is with the highest respect and admiration for their conduct that I have the honour to be

Their most obedient

and most humble Servant,

RICHMOND, &c.

To Lieut. Colonel SHARMAN.