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TO
EARL GREY,
*On the talked-of change of
Ministry.*

London, Nov. 22, 1820.

MY LORD,

This is the *fourth time*, within my political life, that an opportunity has been offered your Lordship for totally destroying the power of the Pitt-faction and system; that accursed system, under which the country has, at last, arrived at a state of misery, such as no country on earth ever before was placed in. Petitions are now again preparing, in some parts of the kingdom, praying the king to *dismiss his present ministers*. My opinion is, that those petitions will be unavailing. Nay, my opinion is, that, *as things now stand*, it is the duty of the people to *abstain from presenting*, or encouraging such petitions; the reasons for which opinion it is my intention now to lay before the public, under the form of

a Letter, addressed to your Lordship, whom, I am convinced, the public voice places at the head of these who could possibly be thought of as fit to manage the nation's affairs, and to save the country from a turbulent revolution.

It is a curious spectacle to behold a ministry, defeated, despised, abhorred, by the great body of the people, sitting—as quietly and as securely in their places, as if they were completely triumphant and were universally respected and beloved. Yet, this spectacle is not more curious, than the thing is natural, when we come to consider the *causes* that have been, and are, at work, to produce it. Those who wish to supplant the ministers, and, at the same time, wish to walk in their steps, allege the *enormous power of the Crown as the cause*. That these persons are foolish or insincere, must be evident now at any rate, when that power has been *stretched to its utmost*, and yet has been insufficient to accomplish an ob-

ject, as dear, if not dearer, to the *Crown*, than any one ever aimed at since the kingly office was known in England. With such striking proof of the contrary before their eyes, such persons must be *insincere*, when they ascribe the present security of the ministers to the *power of the Crown*. Indeed, they know better: they know the real causes; but, they try to disguise them from themselves, thinking that they thereby disguise them from others.

In order to come at a fair view of those causes, we must go back to the state of things at the time of the Queen's arrival in June last. The case of her Majesty has been, and is, a matter of great importance. It must be considered as a great incident; but, still, it is no more than an incident, in the grand drama, the close of which will infallibly be the total destruction of the Pitt-system, either by gentle or violent means.

The Queen's arrival, while it did indeed create an embarrassment to the ministers, relieved them from sundry other embarrassments. It drowned the howlings of the farmers, merchants and manufacturers; and, it put a stop, for a while, to the schem-

ing of those loan-jobbers and stock-holders, whose projects aimed directly at a *division of the lands*. That blister, Mr. PEEL'S BILL, which, by the by, seems to have condemned its author to *eternal silence*; that blister upon the back of the country, had produced the commencement of its natural effects. The *Six Acts* had only tended to make the bitterness of the people more bitter; and, though the scaffold was yet streaming with blood, and the open and impudent avowal of the Spy-system yet sounded in our ears, the people of this whole kingdom beheld that system with abhorrence. Never was there a greater error than to suppose, that those feelings were confined to a *few*, and those few nothing but *rabble*. They were the feelings of *the people in general*.

But, the great circumstance of all, was, that state of the *currency* which was produced by Mr. *Peel's Bill*. This measure was, and is, proceeding, with regular and unrelenting step, to produce the total ruin of all farmers and traders, and to reduce their workmen to starvation. "*Loyalty*" has been a very current coin. No-

thing has had a more glib circulation. It has been a passport to an immense mass of knavery and cruelty. But, the effects of this measure were too much even for "loyalty" to endure. Accordingly we have now heard crying out for "*a change of system*," the very ruffians who exulted at the slaughtering of the people at Manchester!

When I received, on the other side of the Atlantic, the newspapers, containing an account of the passing of that Bill, I hastily ran my eye over the columns to discover what you had said upon the subject; and, I was happy to perceive, that, if the *vote* was unanimous, there was, at least, *your opinion* standing on record against it. I have not the debates now before me; but, I well remember the *doubts* you expressed, and the opinion you gave.—Whether *Lord King* spoke upon the subject I do not recollect; but, I am sure he must have joined you in sentiment. From that moment I was satisfied, that, if it were yet possible to save the country from confusion by a change in the ministry, your Lordship must be at the head of the new cabinet.

Great, therefore, as are the recently-acquired claims of your Lordship on our confidence; grateful as the nation feels for your exertions in the cause of the Queen, to which exertions next after those of the whole of the people, her Majesty certainly owes her triumph; still, in the minds of all those, who reflect on the real causes of the nation's miseries, your conduct with regard to Mr. Peel's Bill, constitutes a stronger claim.

It is in the matters connected with this Bill that we see the great difficulties of the country. How vain have proved all the hopes and expectations of the two Houses, who *unanimously* voted for that Bill! Could it be any thing short of ideocy, which anticipated nothing more than *temporary* distress from that measure? From a measure which must *necessarily* go on producing more and more misery for four years, and must then fix the misery for ever! This necessity was so obvious, that the dullest eyes of the most illiterate and inexperienced could perceive it; and yet, at the instance of the *saucy son of froth*; at the instance, and almost at the command, of an upstart punster, the aristo-

cracy of England unanimously voted their estates into the hands of loan-jobbers, stockholders, and the other vermin of 'Change-Alley; while, by the same vote, they awarded ruin and starvation to the farmer, the tradesman, the journeyman and the labourer!

Your Lordship will not have forgotten the hopes held out by *Lords Liverpool and Castlereagh* at the commencement of the *Banishment-Act Session*. The evil was to be but *temporary*, and one reason was, that there was *distress in America*, and that our distress arose partly out of that, and, as that would be *only temporary*, ours would be *only temporary*! I took occasion instantly to show how fallacious this was; and *now* we find, or, at least, I know, that this American *distress*, as they called it, has been regularly increasing, and must become *permanent*. The fact is, and who, except those wise ministers, did not foresee it, the paper-money in America was *reduced in quantity by Mr. Peel's Bill*! *Lords Liverpool and Castlereagh*, and their profound colleague, *Mr. Canning*, will not be able to perceive *how*, perhaps; but this was the fact.

Prices fell, of course; and, of course, there was less money to lay out on English goods.— Whether the Americans will resort to a *reduction of expense*, to *loans in time of peace*, to *internal direct taxes*, or to a *reduction of the interest of their debt*, I cannot say. To one of these they must resort; and, as I love the people of America, God preserve them from the *third*; for, that it would, in a few years, *break up the Union*, I am as certain as that I am in existence. The *first* is hardly practicable; the *second* would only put off the evil day, and tend to enslave the people; and the *fourth*, while it is perfectly *just* in itself, is the only remedy free from danger. In 1816, when the "National Bank" was established with a view of giving what was called *solidity* to the paper-system, I, in an essay addressed to them, warned the Americans of their danger. I never met with a well-informed man in that country, who did not lament that my advice had been rejected; and who did not anticipate the consequences that have now arrived.

This is no digression, my Lord. These matters, though

they exist on the other side of the ocean, are closely connected with our most important concerns. They shew how visionary were all those hopes which our Ministers built upon what they called "the returning prosperity of America;" and they form an admirable illustration of the futility of all the notions that produced the measure, which is now grinding the landholder and all the industrious classes in this kingdom to dust.

Here, then, my Lord, is the first obstacle to the turning out of the Ministers! What successor, who is worthy of public confidence, will undertake to carry Mr. Peel's Bill into effect? That is to say, will undertake to cause the total ruin of all farmers and people in trade, and to reduce the labouring part of the people to banditti, prowling about for food? And yet, who is bold enough to propose to reduce the interest of the Debt? That this must be done, at last, I know; but, the shuffling, the evasion, the false pretences, the feigned candour, the miserable cowardice that would prevail, even amongst those who wished the measure to be adopted, are quite enough to make the

boldest man living shrink from making the proposition with no other than such support.

Therefore, before any one blame you, my Lord, for not doing what some have called your "duty;" that is, standing forward to oust these Ministers, let that man declare explicitly, that he, at any rate, is ready to support you in reducing the interest of the Debt; and not, that he is ready to support you in carrying on the Pitt-System, which is, in fact, only promising to assist in dragging you through every species of mortification and disgrace. It would be pretty support, indeed, that your Lordship would receive from Alexander Baring, John Maberly, Pascoe Grenfell, and David Ricardo! Some author asks: "what must the priest be, where a monkey is the God?" And I ask: what must the minister be, where a stock-jobber is "the Oracle?" Pretty support, indeed, would that be which would be given by a set of Lords and country gentlemen, who could call in Baring and Gladstones and Rothschild and Ricardo and Goldsmidt to instruct them as to the conditions, upon which they were, in future, to hold their estates,

and who, upon the recommendation of such men, could actually pass a law, which, if it were carried into full effect, would completely disinherit their children! The bare thought of having to encounter *support* like this, is enough to make a statesman, who has character left, flee from Whitehall, not only to Northumberland, but, if necessary, to the ends of the earth.

Here, then, in this one circumstance, there is sufficient to deter any man, who has a character to lose, from becoming either the head, or a member, of a new ministry. It is not now, as it was forty years ago, a change of *men* and of some *particular* measures, that are wanted, leaving the *main principles* of governing the same. It is a change of *system* that is wanted; and, for such a change those who call themselves *opposition* people are by no means prepared. On the contrary, they have hitherto appeared as anxious to uphold the present system as the Ministers themselves; and the point they labour at, is, to convince us, that *they* (wise gentlemen) would carry the system on in a *better manner*.—

They labour in vain. They will never produce this conviction. They will never make us believe, that a *spy-system* under another man would be any thing better than a spy-system under Sidmouth; or that starvation under Mr. Maberly would be any better than starvation under Mr. Vansittart; two gentlemen who appear to have been formed by nature to be rivals in every thing. Your lordship would make a very pretty figure with Mr. Maberly for your Chancellor of the Exchequer. And yet, without a change of system, he would do for the office as well as any one else.

It is a great deal worse than useless to attempt any change of Ministry without a resolution to encounter and overcome this monster of paper-money, which is devouring the nation piece by piece, and which must, if not encountered and overcome, plunge it into utter confusion. There is besides, and of much about equal magnitude, the great question of *Parliamentary Reform*. There are numerous minor matters which must be attended to, and with regard to which the system must be totally reversed; but there

is this great question of Parliamentary Reform, without a decision of which, and, indeed, without the making of Reform in some shape or other, any new Ministry would be a thousand times more odious than the present.

And here let me beg your lordship not to take upon trust those who represent the Reformers to be a mere disaffected *few*; a low and deluded crew. It may very well suit the purposes of such men as Lord Liverpool, Lord Sidmouth, Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning thus to represent them; and, without any extraordinary degree of penetration, one may discover reasons for Mr. Scarlett, Sir James Mackintosh, Mr. Baring, Mr. Ricardo, Mr. Pascoe Grenfell and others who are ranged on what is called the opposition side, representing us in the same light. One can easily discover very good reasons for this; but it would now be wilful blindness to affect to believe such representations; seeing that the question relating to her Majesty the Queen, has in its progress so clearly demonstrated the contrary.

The Reformers have so long been called a despicable rabble,

or, at best, a deluded herd, that some men really seem to have believed the representation to be true. His Majesty, for instance, does, I dare say, look upon them in this light; and the borough-holders have, from their desire not to believe the truth, entertained with regard to them the same opinion. It has been imagined that the nick-name of *Radical* has represented nothing more than a pitiful faction, partly knaves, and partly visionary fools. To be sure the lie direct was given to this idea by the assertion of the absolute necessity of augmenting the military force in the amount of ten thousand men; by the erection of new barracks; by the passing of the dungeon law in 1817; by the issuing of Sidmouth's circular; by the passing of the *Six Acts*; and by all the prosecutions and sentences against persons denominated Radicals. It was no trifling matter to adopt measures like these; and their adoption clearly proved the stupid folly of every one that could be made to believe that the Reformers were a *contemptible* faction.

It is very true, indeed, that, as to outward appearances, the

cause of Reform was heartily espoused by few persons, comparatively speaking, other than those of the labouring classes. But, when was it otherwise? When were not those, who had least to lose, the foremost in *openly* espousing a public cause? How strikingly was this exemplified on the arrival of her Majesty! But of this I will speak hereafter. There is a reason, my lord, in the nature of things, why the labouring classes should stand *foremost* in every such struggle. There is a beautiful passage, applicable to this subject, in Rousseau's *Social Compact*, the precise words of which I do not recollect, but I dare say your lordship does; and they are really worth turning to at this time. He is speaking of the degrees of *dependence* in society. He shews that there is no class so independent as that, which relies for its well-being on the sweat of it's brow; and even as to this class he prefers the artizan before the labourer in the fields. His reasons are so solid, so incontrovertible, and so true, that they have always been present in my mind, whenever it has been drawn to subjects of this nature. The ob-

servation of my whole life, which has afforded, by the bye, no small scope for observation of this kind, has fully confirmed this doctrine of that celebrated writer. It is with the common, the labouring artizan that all great revolutions have begun, and that all great and salutary reforms have originated; that is to say, that the *overt acts* have originated, by which those reforms have been finally accomplished.

Therefore, it is to deceive one's-self to suppose that a cause is bad or weak, merely because it be not *openly* espoused by the great and the rich, and even not by the middling classes of the community. Until a country arrives at actual military despotism these latter are the classes which finally decide all great questions; but we are not to conclude, that, because we do not see these classes in *open activity*, they are unconcerned spectators; and much less are we to conclude that they are *hostile* to a cause openly espoused by none but the labouring classes. The farmer is generally a *tenant*; the tradesman has his opulent *customers*, and he is known to those customers. He is also a *tenant*

ninety-nine times out of a hundred. The waggon master and coach master are known to those who have money to hire waggons and to ride in coaches. The inn-keeper is known to those who have money to ride in chaises and to eat and sleep at his house. Every ale-house keeper is dependent on the absolute will of the Magistrates for his *licence*. In our miserable state of things there are the *discounts* by the Bank and by Bankers. While every man who has a farm in his possession; or who rents a house of any thing of value, is in some degree under the beck of the tax-gatherer. Think, my lord, of the dependence created by the raising and the expending of fifty millions of taxes every year; and of more than four millions more of taxes actually divided amongst the tax-gatherers themselves! Think of the workings of this immense mass of influence; and you will find that it is next to impossible that any man in the middle classes of society can think himself wholly safe in openly espousing any cause to which the government is hostile.

Therefore it is that the Reformers have, to *outward appearance*, consisted of few per-

sons not of the labouring classes. But, foolish indeed, are those who suppose that the middle classes do not wish for a Reform of the Parliament.—

These are millions, indeed, who have been afraid to *act* with the Radicals; but these millions have not acted against them. Their fears have made them stand aloof, and content themselves with *wishing* us success. They have not acted as Radicals; but they will not act to turn out the Ministers *for any thing short of Reform!* They have been made afraid openly to join *us*; but nothing will induce them openly to join any body of men who persist in refusing us Reform altogether. Lord Liverpool said (at the beginning of the present session, I think it was), that there was a great mass of disaffection existing in the country; but that the middle classes were perfectly *sound*. Does he think them *sound now*? Perhaps he may have changed his opinion, but, then, what becomes of that security which he acknowledged rested solely upon that soundness?

It is truly curious, my lord, to observe the progress of the development of public opinion with

regard to the case of her Majesty the Queen ; and the gradual and regular increase of that popular countenance and support, which (though I never leave out of sight the able speech of your lordship) was the rock of her Majesty's salvation. I witnessed her arrival in London in a miserable half broken down carriage covered with dust, followed by a post chaise and a calash ; the whole exhibiting all the marks of poverty, out-cast misery and wretchedness. I saw the members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, who were walking up Parliament-street and Whitehall, as she scrambled along amidst the mud carts and drays, over that very bed of gravel, which had that morning been laid to render the motion of her husband's state carriage to the House of Lords, soft and easy ; I saw the faces of those noblemen and gentlemen at that moment ; and I endeavoured in vain to read in their features inward feelings such as I thought ought to have existed in their bosoms. I was close behind her, too, when she passed the house in St. James's-street, the rendezvous of those who are called the opposition. Many of them were

assembled on the balcony. They did, indeed, slowly take off their hats ; but they hung down their heads at the same time, and seemed ashamed that they yielded this ordinary mark of respect at the command of those who are denominated the rabble, and whom Castlereagh has called the basest populace. At Shooter's Hill one, and only one private carriage, and that a tradesman's, attended to meet her Majesty. Before she reached London, there were many post chaises and hackney coaches, and a considerable body of tradesmen on horseback ; but the far greater part of the carriages consisted of carts, of one description and another ; while the persons assembled at various places to greet her, consisted almost entirely of labourers and artizans and their wives and children. This was the description of the body that surrounded her when she alighted in South Audley-street ; and this was the description of that immense multitude that surrounded her in Portman-street, while the deputation from the House of Commons were presenting to her a paper intending to get her out of the country ; this was the description of that multi-

tude, who, while the deputation was in the house, made the air ring with the cry of, "*turn them out! turn them out!*" This was the description of that multitude, from whose indignation the deputation escaped by leaping all four into the same carriage, into the doors of which the *spittle* actually flew like the balls of an extensive battery all directed to one single point.

From that moment, when "*Castlereagh's basest populace*" gave the wisest advice that ever was given to human being, her Majesty has been rising in the love and admiration of the whole nation; and every day has added to the opulence as well as to the number of her friends. At the moment of her arriving in London, she had no *open* and *active* friends except the mere labouring classes. In time the friendship towards her went on gaining upwards, till, at last, it brought every thing under its power, except the base, the servile, and the notoriously wicked.

This is the true history of the progress of her Majesty's cause; and can your lordship discover no reason here for supposing, that the cause of Parliamentary Reform must not finally triumph

at the termination of a similar progress. The cause of her Majesty was of a nature to produce a more instantaneous effect than the cause of Reform. It appealed more immediately to the heart; and, what was of infinite importance, every *woman* and especially every married woman, clearly understood the merits of the case, while every really virtuous woman made the cause her own. These were great advantages, which her Majesty's cause possessed over that of Reform; but, still, the progress of the two have a great similarity between them; and that man must be blind indeed, who does not perceive that the latter has derived very great assistance from the former.

The causes of this are evident enough. There was, in the first place, a striking similarity in many respects between the mode of persecution in the two cases, besides the very powerful circumstance that the persecutors were the same identical persons. It was impossible to hear of the Milan Commission; it was impossible to hear of the works of Cooke, Powell, Browne, Baron d'Ompèda and the rest of that tribe, without looking back to Oliver,

Castles and Edwards. It was impossible to hear of Italian witnesses coming, without shuddering at the thought of the exhibitions in Derbyshire and more recently in London. It was impossible to hear of Green Bags and Secret Committees without sending the memory back to 1817 to re-visit the dungeons of numerous men, shut up in prison upon the warrant of a Secretary of State, without being confronted with their accusers and without ever being brought to trial from the first to the last. The Bill of Pains and Penalties, slanderous, odious and detestable as it was, and evident as were its intentions, could not fail to carry our recollection back to the time when the dungeon bill was passed, while evidence was tendered, and refused to be received, in proof of the falsehood of the facts upon which it was professed that that Bill was founded.

All these circumstances of similarity tended to identify the cause of her Majesty with the cause of Reform; and, now the identification seems to be sought to be established by our enemies themselves, by their pertinacious hostility to the whole body of

the people. They have now actually compelled hundreds of thousands of those, who are either neutral, or who are in a state of hostility with regard to us, to join themselves to us, as the only means of obtaining protection. Thousands upon thousands of men, who were altogether hostile to Reform, have now been so ill-treated, so persecuted, and are now under such a state of persecution on account of their activity in the cause of her Majesty, that they are driven to seek for a Reform, as the only means of delivering them from the hands of their enemies.

But, that which has most contributed to the strengthening of our cause upon this occasion, is, that there has been, during this struggle for her Majesty, gradually sinking into the public mind a conviction, that there is something radically wrong in the conducting of the government. In all cases where great evils arise, and command a great portion of public attention and interest, the people are set to the work of reflection. They do not content themselves with a mere contemplation of the evil. They enquire into its causes; and, in the end, they trace

it back to those causes. The people saw, indeed, that Cooke, Powell and Browne were sent out by the Ministers. They saw that it was the Ministers who brought in the Green Bags. They were angry with the Ministers; and they wished the Ministers to be punished; or, at least, to be stopped from proceeding against the Queen. But how were the people to stop the Ministers? When they came to reflect they found that they had no power to stop the Ministers. They then looked about them for the way to go to work to check the Ministers in a proceeding, which the Queen as well as themselves regarded as the most unjust, insulting, cruel and cowardly that ever was heard of in the world. But, in thus looking about them for assistance against the Ministers, they could find none. In their haste they first looked to the Parliament. But, they found the House of Lords prosecutors, judges and jurors in the case. They then turned short round to the other house, containing the "*representatives of the people*;" but, alas! they there found that the Ministers had an enormous majority on their side!

There needed nothing further! The mind of the people; the mind of those who were not Reformers before, rushed to the proper conclusion at once. And thus, while the cause of Reform has scarcely been mentioned, during the last four months, it has gained more proselytes than it ever gained before in ten years; and, at this moment, if the middle classes of the people were polled, there would be found a hundred to one in favour of a Parliamentary Reform.

The mind, when it takes a turn, travels at a great rate. Every one can now see that if there had been a Reformed Parliament, the Queen never would have been persecuted or oppressed; and every one can now see that all the miseries of the nation would have been prevented by such Reform. When the passions are deeply engaged, when strong feeling exists, when men are looking about them for the cause of what gives them offence, their eyes and ears are open to statements relating to that cause. Infinite are the number and uncommonly great is the interest of the facts, which have been brought to light by this transaction. The people have

caught at these facts, and they have all tended to the same great and useful conclusion; namely, that nothing but a Reformed Parliament can give security to her Majesty, or a chance of prosperity and happiness to the nation.

Therefore, it is now something little short of madness to talk of a change of Ministry without a change of system that would include a Reform of the House of Commons. It was always, within these twenty years, *folly* to talk of it; but it is now something a great deal worse than folly. It is impossible, my lord, for any man to form an idea of any possible benefit to be derived by the people from any such change; that is to say, a new Ministry, without a pledge to Reform the Parliament. This measure takes precedence even of the reduction of the debt; for without this the debt cannot be reduced. The people dislike the Ministers; *but, for what?* Not because they bear certain names and titles, but because they do certain things which we wish not to be done; and leave undone certain things which we wish to be done. *Sidmouth* and *Grey* (pray forgive me for coup-

ling the words together!) sound equally well to the ear; abstracted from all cognizance of the acts of the man, I have no quarrel with the letters that compose the name of *Sidmouth*. It is the acts of the man that I dislike; and, of course, I should dislike the same acts in the same degree if they proceeded from yourself.

Why, therefore, should any body wish for a change of Ministry, unless the new Ministry were to act upon a new system. If my throat be to be cut, or my pocket picked, what is it to me, whether the operator be a wise man, or a fool? And what is it to the people, whom they suffer under, so that they suffer? If we are to have no tax taken off; no Six Acts repealed; no men let out of dungeons; no diminution of *Sinecures* and *Pensions*; if we are to have none of these things under a new Ministry; why, in God's name, should we call upon the King to change his Ministers? If nothing is to be done to those who have persecuted the Queen; if there is to be no redress, no indemnification for any body, what fools must those be that would waste one single aspira-

tion in order to remove these Ministers from their places!

I know that some pretend that the government might be carried on in a milder manner *without a Reform of the Parliament*. These persons pretend that the Spy System, the Manchester System, and all the other things that we most loudly complain of, are unnecessary. These persons are deluded themselves, or they would delude others. The government, with an unreformed parliament, cannot be maintained without all the means that these Ministers make use of. The employment of Spies is openly avowed. The expenditure of eighty thousand pounds a-year in Secret Service money, we have, boldly stated in the accounts. New Barracks are continually rising up, and we know that the Army has recently been augmented by ten thousand men. And, after all, it is but *touch and go*. After all, it is necessary to have guards and barricadoes, and a species of gens d'armes, to defend the House of Lords. How then could the thing be carried on without Spies, Secret Service Money, and a large Army? Reform the Parliament, and these

are all unnecessary; but, until it be reformed, not a farthing of reduction can take place in the annual expence, not a spy, not a soldier can be disbanded.

I have always regarded it as a mark of the grossest folly, or the grossest hypocrisy to talk of what is called an *economical Reform*. It is mere delusion to talk of such reforms. And, it is something worse than hypocrisy to affect to complain of the Dungeon Bill, the Banishment Act, or any other of the measures of that description, while the complainant in the same breath calls the Reformers a set of wretches guilty of sedition and blasphemy. This is being baser than the hypocrite himself; for it is assisting him in his views by pretending to disapprove of them. There has been a sort of circular paragraph running through the papers, saying that Viscount Folkestone is *just come to town*, and brings word that the people in the country are "*indignant*" at the intention of the Ministers to prorogue the parliament! The writer of this paragraph does not tell us who those *people in the country* are; whether they be the free and independent electors of *Downton*, who

sent his Lordship to Parliament last spring, and whom he surrendered to the care of Sir Thomas Pechell; or whether those *people in the country* be the corporation of New Sarum, who also sent his Lordship to Parliament at the same time, and who have just sent an address to the King; most loyally pledging themselves in support of his Majesty and his Ministers!

Now, my Lord, is it not a farce: is it not a despicable sham, for men to pretend to disapprove of the conduct of these Ministers when the very means they make use of to get their own seats in parliament, are the cause, and the only cause of the Ministers pursuing that conduct. There may be men; there may be such devils in human shape, as to delight in persecution and cruelty, for the mere pleasure of executing them. It is barely possible, too, that there may be men so depraved as to take pleasure in being detested; while the cause of the detestation produces them no other advantage whatever. Though this be next to impossible; though it be against reason and experience; though it be in defiance of a love of self

preservation, which is the first law of nature; we must not only believe the thing possible, but we must recognise the notoriety of the fact, before we can believe that the present Ministers have pursued that conduct which we detest in them, from mere *choice*; from a mere love of being detested. No such a thing. They have a certain system of government to carry on. They would, if they could, carry it on without being hated; but, they must carry it on or quit their places; and those places they do not like to quit.

The conclusion, therefore, is, that a change of men merely can be of no use whatever; and that, as to make any other change, of any benefit to the nation, without a Reform of the Parliament, is utterly impossible, so it would be folly for any one to petition for a dismissal of the Ministers, unless upon the express condition of obtaining such reform.

This, therefore, is the great obstacle to a change of the Ministry, which obstacle will in all probability exist, until these men have brought the nation into a state, little calculated for discussing this or any other subject. As to the sort of Reform that is

wanted, I do not know that I am justified in wasting an inch of my paper in describing it. Our wishes have long been before the nation and before the Parliament. The state of the representation is upon the records of the House of Commons with your name attached to it; and the alterations which we now want are upon the records of the same House, in a petition amongst the many signatures to which mine is one, that petition being presented in February, 1817. We, as well as our adversaries, understand the matter well. But, there is one point, one on which, though it has been often dwelt on, I will here say a few words.

The nick name of *Radical* has been invented and used for the base purpose of exciting a prejudice against *all Reform*, at the same time that it is intended to convey an idea that the Radicals want something *more* than a Reform of the Commons House of Parliament. Those who have been guilty of this miserable attempt at misrepresentation, know very well, that, what we contend for is, a House of Commons annually chosen, and in the choosing of which, a vote might be given by every

man liable to bear arms in defence of the country, including those who are actually soldiers and sailors. This is what we have prayed for. This is what many of us have been ruined, many of us imprisoned and many of us killed for seeking. This is what we say we have a right to. We have produced authorities and arguments to prove our right, as well as to prove the expediency and safety of the thing itself; and we have been answered by abuse, by reproach, by calumnies, by the dungeon and by stripes. No answer of any other kind have we received; except by some stupid attempts at ridicule, by saucy fellows fatted and decked out by the fruit of our labour, and by the impudent observation that we ask too much, and shall therefore have nothing. Those who make this observation do, however, pretend sometimes, that they are for a *moderate* reform. But these gentlemen take care never to tell us *what they mean*. And they take still more effectual care never to propose to exercise even this moderation. The people have never said that they would *refuse* any thing. Let these moderate Reformers

then make us a distinct proposition. I, for my part, should be for a change of the Ministry, if the new Ministers would pledge themselves to a reform in almost any shape; and especially if they would break up fifty rotten boroughs, and give the representatives amongst fifteen, twenty, or thirty of the great northern towns and villages; but I cannot insult my own understanding by calling it a Reform in Parliament to disfranchise one villainously rotten borough in seven years, and by calling those *Reformers*, who, while so many worthy public spirited men are pining in dungeons for their laudable endeavours to put an end to bribery and corruption, can find not one single prisoner, whose prison doors they will exert themselves to open, except Sir Menassah Lopez, who was justly suffering the punishment due to bribery and corruption the most notorious and most flagrant! In answer to this, Lord John Russell may say: "Well, then! let Castlereagh and Sidmouth and Canning still continue to rule you!" With all my heart, Lord John! I would rather they than you: unless you will first pledge yourself to

change that system by which they rule. And besides, Lord John, it is yourself you spite, and not us. Our lot they cannot make worse than it is: yours they not only may, but certainly will. Rescued all together we may be; but they cannot continue to grind us, without reducing you to very dust. The people they can never wholly destroy; but there are those whom their measures may finally totally annihilate.

It appears to me, my lord, that, independent of the cause of the Queen, there are ample materials in play to produce a Reform of the Parliament. The distresses of the nation will of themselves produce this Reform. Whether they will produce it without convulsion is more than I can say. I think it likely that the Reform will take place in the midst of confusion, if it be now put off for any length of time. This fatal catastrophe might be prevented at this time; but if this occasion be suffered to pass, no other will probably be offered. At any rate, it is very certain that the people will not stir for a change of the Ministry without a distinct pledge upon this subject. Let that pledge be given,

and the Ministers will not be in power many days from the time of giving it.

To expect that the people will effect the change of Ministry *first*, in expectation of receiving the *pledge afterwards*, is out of the question. If there be an intention to perform, to give the pledge costs nothing. But, the obstacle is, that there is no ground for any man's giving the pledge. He who gives it must, I am afraid, expect to be disavowed by those borough-holders who belong to his own party; and I frankly acknowledge, that I believe, that, before your Lordship gave such a pledge you must make up your mind to be deserted and disowned by every borough-holder in the kingdom. I acknowledge that this is too much for us to expect your Lordship to encounter. The people, the people *alone*, would carry you through; would bear you triumphant through every difficulty to the salvation of the country. They would enable you to compel the borough-holders to yield; but, as this must cost you the loss of all friendship and connexion with those amongst whom you have lived all your life, it is, I freely

confess, too much to be expected. All would be easy; hideous as are the perils of the country, every thing would be speedily put to rights, all dangers would be quickly removed; but, as the borough-mongers have been the great cause of these perils, so I am afraid, they will be the cause of preventing their removal. On their own heads be the consequences. The labouring classes of people in particular cannot experience much addition to their sufferings. The opulent and the great now begin to taste of the danger; and if destruction come upon them, let them acknowledge that it is the work of their own hands.

As to any *intrigues* that may be carried on for getting the Queen out of the country; and for patching up a Ministry upon that or any such basis, they are too contemptible to be worthy of notice. The difficulties of the government are so great, and are increasing so fast upon its hands, that, as an object of ambition, a man must be little short of mad to aim at the Ministry. As to the emoluments of office, or the patronage of office, they could be but of very short duration. So that there

appears to be no rational object offered in the post of Minister to any man who takes a just view of our present situation. The commission of First Lord of the Treasury would scarcely be worth the cost of the parchment and the wax; but it is very well worth while for the borough-holders to consider the wide difference that there may be, in the consequences, between a voluntary and a compulsory surrender. There is *yet* time for the former; but time flies swiftly; and, they should recollect that *yesterday* never returns. It is yet in their power to conciliate the people; but a time may come when it will be too late for conciliation; and when transactions, which might now be buried for ever in oblivion, may be revived and made the ground of proceedings that would otherwise never have been thought of. However, it is really their affair much more than the affair of *the people*, who will have a *Reform*, at no distant day, let the borough-holders do whatever they may.

The Borough of Southwark has, I perceived, *petitioned* the King to *dismiss his Ministers*; and the petition is worded in a way, which is worthy of parti-

cular notice. The petition does, indeed, express an opinion, that a Reform in the House of Commons *ought* to take place; but, it has this *saving*, or, rather, *dampning*, observation, subjoined: "That, *sooner* or *later*, such Reform is inevitable, but whether such Reform be *immediately* effected, or *not*, it is *indispensable*, to the welfare, the security and the honour of the country, that the government should *no longer remain in the hands of the present Ministers*." This is the view, which *Sir Robert Wilson* takes of the matter. This, I suppose, the view of it taken at *BROOKES'S*. But, *Sir Robert* is a very *keen* man; that is to say, he is keen upon the scent. *Sir Robert* is *active* as well as ambitious. He is not a lazy fellow, who lies snorting out his commands to others, and who thinks all the world made to administer to his pomposity. *Sir Robert* is willing to *bestir himself*, and I like him for that. He does not want to cut across, and thus, without toil, come in at the death, and participate unworthily in the spoil. But, the worst of it is, that *Sir Robert*, in his keenness, over-runs his game. A little less *haste* would

have enabled Sir Robert to perceive, that the *converse* of this passage of the Borough Petition would have been much nearer the truth: that is to say: "Whether the Ministers *retain their places*, or *not*, a reform is *indispensable* to the welfare, the security and honour of the country." If we, the people of *the Borough* were asked: "Will you have a change of Ministry and no reform; or, a reform and no change of Ministry?" would they hesitate a single moment? Would they not instantly say, *give us the latter?*

There is something very ugly in this *saving* observation of this petition. The petition must be considered as the work of Sir R. Wilson; or, at least, as having his entire approbation; and I should not wonder if this particular part was rather a *favourite* with him. It is, on this account, importantly suspicious. It seems to indicate, that there are men, who think of coming into power without a pledge to give us a Reform; who think of leaving that matter for *future consideration*. And, if this be the case, it only shows, that there still are in the world men too blind

to be enlightened even though one rose from the dead to teach them.

Petitions of this stamp may be drawn up, put neatly upon paper or parchment, and sent to the King; but, while the Ministers will pay no attention to them, they will be almost immediately forgotten even by those who live in the places from which they have been sent. To talk of a change of ministry without a Reform is, in short, nonsense. Events will *bring* the Reform, if it be not assented to before the arrival of those events. At *this time*, the aristocracy might make it: at a *future time* it will be made without them. If men always pursued their real, permanent interests, we should be certain which of these the aristocracy will now prefer; but, as this is far from being always the case, we *must* patiently await their decision, and, in the meanwhile we shall, I trust, take care to give not the smallest countenance to *any* change of ministry, not including a Reform in the Commons' House of Parliament, to the want of which Reform, and to that alone, are to be ascribed all the calamities that afflict, and

all the dangers that menace, the country.

I am,

Your Lordship's most obedient

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

THE QUEEN

AND

HONOURABLE HOUSE.

The following account of the transactions in this famous and *unreformed* Assembly will need no comment. I take it from the *COURIER*. It is a *complete* thing, exhibiting in a single view, "the envy of surrounding nations and admiration of the world." Mind, this Assembly is not composed of *Radicals* and "*Lower Orders*." Pray mind that!

"At a quarter before two o'clock the Speaker entered the House. Many members were present, particularly on the Opposition Benches. Prayers having been read, and the Speaker having ascertained that 40 Members were present, he took the Chair.

"A new writ was moved in the room of Mr. St. Paul for Berwick-upon-Tweed.

"Two Members then appeared at the table to be sworn, and such ceremony takes precedence of other business. When the oaths had been administered to them,

"Mr. Denman then rose, and was hailed with loud cheering by the Opposition. He was proceeding to address the Chair, holding in his hand a paper, when the Deputy Usher of the Black Rod appeared to summon the House to the House of Peers. Immense uproar and confusion then ensued. The Opposition exclaimed, "Withdraw, withdraw! Shame, shame!" and the noise was such, that what he said could not be heard. As soon as the Deputy Usher withdrew—

"The Speaker prepared to leave the Chair, when

"Mr. Tierney rose and observed, that not one word of what had fallen from the Deputy Usher had been heard; and how then did the Speaker know what was the message, or whether he was wanted at all in the other House. (Loud cheering.)

"The Speaker left the House amidst great uproar, loud calls of "shame, shame!" and several of the Opposition Members hissed very loudly *as the Speaker was quitting the House*. But few Members accompanied the Speaker.

"Many Members remained in the House, but the Speaker did not re-enter it. On his return, *he went along the side gallery to his own dwelling; and the Sergeant at Arms took the mace to his room up stairs*.

"The Members then gradually separated."

Mr. Denman had, it seems, a Message to deliver *from the Queen*, in which her Majesty