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A LETTER
TO THE
MEMBERS
OF
THE HONOURABLE
The House of Commons,
ON THE
CATHOLIC QUESTION.


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A LETTER, &c.

To the Members of the Honourable the House of Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; and more particularly to those who have espoused, and advocated, and voted for, the Question of — what is most unjustly, and improperly called — Roman Catholic EMANCIPATION—in the last two Sessions of Parliament.



February, 1823.

To you, Gentlemen, who are members of the Legislature of this great country—to whom has been confided by your constituents, the guardianship of the happy Constitution under which we live—I address myself, before it is too late for you, to correct a dangerous and fatal error; the consummation of which, has, for a time at least, been interrupted, by the wisdom and loyalty of

the Upper House. I mean, the admission of *Roman Catholics*, to a participation in the government of this *Protestant country*.—An error—which can only have arisen, from a mistaken construction, of the “*Glorious Principles of 1688*,” and of the “*Constitution of these Realms, as by Law established*.”

It has been upon the faith of your maintaining those Principles,—and of your support of that Constitution— that many of you, have been elected to your seats in Parliament.

That the admission of Roman Catholics to seats in the Legislature of these Realms, is a *violation of those principles*—and an *infracton of that Constitution*—is beyond a question. The fact is palpable—and it would well become every *candidate* for the representation, to make himself acquainted with the history and principles of the British Constitution—as well as with the tenets, religious and political, of the Romish Church—before he takes upon himself, the weighty responsibility of Legislation : no

trifling responsibility indeed—as it affects this fundamental point.

You are not to imagine, gentlemen, because this question,—*vital* as it is to the interests of our country,—has been carried by a majority of votes in your Honorable House—that the *voice of the People*, is with that majority—that your constituents are indifferent to the religion of their country, or to the *Protestant Ascendancy*—or that they are not decidedly hostile, to the introduction of any *Papal political Influence*, within these realms.

Nor are you to imagine, gentlemen, because you do not hear the cry of “*No Popery*” without doors, as in 1780—that the feeling which excited it, is lost—or that the meditated subversion of the Constitution of our ancestors, may not be productive of a renewal of that cry—with all its attendant destructive, and afflicting consequences.

I will not stop here, gentlemen, to analyze the votes on either side of your Honourable House, on those fatal days, when the very *foundation* of that happy

Constitution (the *Protestant ascendancy*) was endangered—and your constituents, by *your own legislative enactment*, (so far as that authority could effect it) were *deprived of their birthright*;—But I will take leave to remind you, gentlemen, that as the law now stands, the Constitution, which by your oaths you are bound to support, is in every branch of it *exclusively Protestant*: and so long as those laws are permitted to exist—I submit it with deference, whether it may not be *forcibly*—and even *irresistibly* argued—that you have as good a right to vote for the introduction of a *Roman Catholic King upon the Throne*—as you have to vote for the introduction of *Roman Catholic Members*, into either *House of Parliament*.

I would venture to remind you, gentlemen, with every sentiment of deference and respect—that the example of the never-to-be-forgotten George the Third, is before you!—and, that the eye of God is upon you!!—

I will repeat to you, gentlemen, the words of his late most gracious Majesty, upon the subject of this *vital* question,—

words, that are deeply engraven on the heart of every good Englishman :

“ I have resolution—to descend from my throne !

“ I have resolution—to retire to a cottage !

“ I have resolution — to lay my head upon the block !

“ But—I have not resolution—to forego my coronation oath, in presence of my God !!!”

And having done so, I would intreat you, gentlemen—collectively and individually—to call to mind your own corresponding oaths, under which you have been vested with that sacred trust, which you are now about to exercise—namely, the *Guardianship of the British Constitution*.

I am no advocate, gentlemen, for Members of Parliament, (representatives of the people) having recourse, upon every occasion, to their constituents, for instructions how to act. And will admit, that having elected you, to be our representatives in parliament, we have placed our

dearest interests at your disposal—(a *trust, too sacred to be trifled with*)—but when questions, *vital* to those interests, come to be agitated within your walls,—questions like the present—whether the *existence* of the *British Constitution* shall be *permitted to continue* :—the strength and superiority of which, over every other government in the world, is acknowledged by every country ;—and which every page of our history, since the reformation, illustrates and confirms—with the exception of the reign of *Queen Mary*—a *Popish Queen*,—from her atrocious, and fanatick cruelties towards her Protestant subjects, branded with the title of the “ *Bloody Queen Mary*,”—and her name execrated to the latest page of our annals !!—and indeed, which very exception itself, even, still farther serves — to illustrate and confirm.

When questions such as these, I say, gentlemen, are brought before you—*independently* of that mutual respect and courtesy, which ought ever to subsist between the representatives and the represented,—it surely becomes your *bounden duty*, dili-

gently and deliberately, to inform yourselves, of the sentiments and opinions of your constituents upon them,—before you make the irrevocable sacrifice,—and plunge them and your country into scenes of difficulty and dissention—from which, it will probably never be in your power to extricate them.

And, besides, gentlemen! *for what purpose is all this new system of British legislation* to be adopted?—is not the existing constitution of Britain (the inheritance of our ancestors,) good enough for us?!—Is it to *improve* the laws of Protestant Britain, that *Papal Supremacy* is to be introduced within these realms? Is the admission of men paying allegiance to a *foreign Sovereign*, necessary to *teach us* how to legislate, in this highly favoured country?—a Sovereign, too, the avowed and systematic enemy of all Protestants of every sect and denomination, and bound, as his subjects are—by the strongest ties of religion, to be intolerant—(the influence of which intolerance is interwoven with, and must ever be inseparable from the temporal af-

fairs of the state,) to persecute and subvert, or proselytize—every other religion than his own. And here, gentlemen, I would crave your permission, as one of your constituents, to ask, what I humbly conceive every constituent has a right to ask—Is not such an admission on your part, a virtual abrogation of your oath of supremacy*?—from which, not being yourselves Roman Catholics, no power on earth but an act of parliament can absolve you.

Is it possible, I say, gentlemen, that a British House of Commons can be deliberately guilty of so undisguised, so direct, and wilful a religious and political suicide, or so flagrant an ingratitude, for the distinguished marks—which this chosen country is every day receiving of God's peculiar favour?!!

Is it to conciliate the Roman Catholics of Ireland, that the subversion of the laws

* Extract from the OATH OF SUPREMACY:—

“ And I do declare, that no foreign Prince, Person, *Prelate*,
 “ State, or *Potentate* hath, or ought to have any *Power*,
 “ Jurisdiction, Pre-eminence, or *Authority*, *Ecclesiastical*
 “ or SPIRITUAL, within this Realm.”

of our ancestors, and a new principle of legislation, is preparing?!—You will widen the breach, and lacerate the sores, rather than repair and heal them; and, I verily believe, that the more moderate and thinking part of the Roman Catholic body themselves, of every rank and condition, in that country—more especially those possessing property, are contented with the constitution in its present form,—and grateful to the best of Kings for the concessions that have already been granted to them during his long and eventful reign.

But, gentlemen—if these are not sufficient, and more is wanting,—let the leading advocates state in an *open* and *intelligible* manner, what it is;— and let it be discussed in the face of the country, without *mystery* and *concealment*. Let us have something DEFINITE to work upon, that we may know what we are about! Let us bring this *non-descript* EMANCIPATION, (the very term of which is a libel upon the country) into a tangible shape,—and not beat the air in search of new projects, for perplexity and trouble. And I beseech you, gentlemen,

before you proceed further on a question of so great political magnitude, that you will inform yourselves—fully and minutely—on the nature of the subject, and its future consequences,—concerning which you are now about to determine for your constituents,—for your country,—for yourselves,—and above all—*for your posterity*. And, in order to this, gentlemen, I would most respectfully request of every member, who professes himself an advocate for what is so unfairly and so illiberally called, EMANCIPATION of the *Roman Catholics*, to put to himself this plain question :—

What is the extent of the Claims of the Roman Catholics, which I am called upon to concede? (a question, to which I believe, no Protestant can,—and, I am very sure, no Roman Catholic WILL, give an answer.) And to what extent am I prepared to go?

And here, gentlemen, I address myself more particularly to those members, who have the honour to be of his Majesty's most honourable Privy Council; and to

those, who, having been led to their seats, under the popular Banner of “the GLO-RIOUS PRINCIPLES of 1688,” decorated as they have been, with *Orange coloured* ribbands, *emblematic of those principles*, have given a pledge, (a tacit one to be sure) of their parliamentary support of them,—as sacred in the eyes of those constituents, who opened to them the way, and as *binding* in their view of the subject, *as any bond, signed, sealed, and delivered*, in the presence of them *all*, could make it. And I would ask you, gentlemen—

Are you prepared to constitute the act you are now about to perform—an act, not only of *political*, but eventually, of *religious* union, with Roman Catholics?—

Are you prepared to alter the *Protestant constitution* of the United Kingdom, of which you are the delegated guardians, into a *blended constitution* of *Protestants* and *Papists*, in matters *ecclesiastical*, as well as in the *temporal affairs* of the *State*?

I have much reason to believe, that the

want of a proper explanation upon that essential point, has already been contemplated, as affording grounds for future, and not very distant *demands* of such a nature : for you will observe, gentlemen,—that the *advocates* for EMANCIPATION—have been *very guarded* upon the subject of *religion*, throughout the whole of these dangerous discussions ; and whence it may be fairly inferred, (and the jealous eye of the friends of the establishment, without any claim to an over-abundant share of penetration, is not blind to the omission,)—that there is something remaining behind, with which the *Protestants* are not to be made acquainted, until the power of the *Roman Catholic party* shall have been sufficiently strengthened and established, to enable them to enforce it. Indeed, it may be almost said, that the subject of religion has been kept entirely out of view ; which marks a want of candour in the advocates for the measure towards their constituents ; and perhaps an equal want of candour in their clients towards themselves—but let them look to that.

Are you prepared, gentlemen, to erect a

Roman Catholic Chapel in either House of Parliament ? or—

Are you prepared to abandon altogether the devout ceremony, under which your pious ancestors have taught you ; and you yourselves have been accustomed, at the commencement of your daily parliamentary duties, to implore the Divine blessing upon your labours ? Because, you must be aware, that *Roman Catholics cannot join in prayer with Protestants, whom they ANATHEMATIZE as HERETICS.*

Are you prepared—so soon as the *Roman Catholic* members shall have taken their seats in Parliament—for the discussion of a question, whether the *religion of Rome*, shall be acknowledged as a part of the *religion of the State in England*, and her church be *represented* in the *British House of Lords* ?

Are you prepared—to argue the question, whether a legislative union with Ireland is longer necessary, or not—and whether it may not as well be repealed, and

Ireland be permitted to legislate for herself?

Are you prepared—in the latter case, to see an *exclusive Roman Catholic Parliament* in Ireland?

Are you prepared—to see *Roman Catholic ascendancy* proclaimed in that country?—and the *Roman Catholic Religion* declared, to be the *religion of the State* in Ireland?

Are you prepared—to see an act passed by that *Roman Catholic Parliament*—for the resumption of all forfeited property, by the descendants, real, or assumed, of its original possessors?—And lastly, gentlemen—

Are you prepared—to assist the advocates for *Roman Catholic Government*, in putting arms into the hands of those persons, who, if the speech of the Attorney General, on a late trial in Ireland, is not misrepresented in the public papers, are

*Mr. Keble's speech - on
return of Michael Sheehan
your speech on Great Britain -
publ. - 22 Novth - 1822*

stated by that right honorable gentleman, to “*have entered into an association, for years back more than two or three, for the purpose of overthrowing the Government of the Country,—a system, too, formed upon a model, taken from another country. A society, differing from that of 1797, 1798, and 1803,*” (years of the most sanguinary and ferocious rebellion in that devoted country) “*in as much, that none but Roman Catholics could be admitted into it.*” And winding up with a clause in the Resolutions of the Society, for “**EXTIRPATING ALL THE PROTESTANTS OF THE COUNTRY.**”

Now, gentlemen,—does not such a detail as this—coming from one of the highest legal authorities in the country—himself one of the leading advocates for what is called *Roman Catholic EMANCIPATION*,—excite in your breasts, some little—of the feelings of sympathy and consideration, for the interests of your *Protestant constituents*—and your *Protestant fellow subjects!*—and an *anxious desire* for the continuance—

inviolable—of the *Protestant Constitution of*
 OLD ENGLAND!!!

And I would venture to entreat of you, *if you are not prepared for all these things*, that you will pause, before you proceed further, in the work of constitutional destruction,—and *study, for yourselves*, this *vital* question, in all its bearings—touching the *immediate* effects that it will produce, on our ancient system of legislation—as well as the consequences, that *must result*, from so total a change in the polity of the British Empire—a question, *certainly*, the *most important*, that ever yet has, or most probably ever will again, come under your consideration and discussion.

Do not, I entreat you, gentlemen, permit yourselves, from the want of a deliberate contemplation, of the consequences that *may*, and *will arise*, from the adoption of the impending measure—to be led away by the votes of other members, whom you may believe to be better informed upon it, than yourselves—by the fascinating powers

of eloquence—or by the shallow argument, howsoever dazzling and brilliant—of men—no matter of what political persuasion they may profess themselves to be—who,—regardless of consequences, look not beyond the present hour, and suffer themselves to be governed, by the temporizing spirit of the day.

Before I conclude, gentlemen, I would, with every sentiment of sincere deference, and unfeigned respect, towards the dignified stations which you hold, and a due sense of the great responsibility that attaches to those high stations—of Representatives of the People of Great Britain and Ireland—venture to put to you one question more.

Have you *already informed* yourselves—*fully—minutely—and dispassionately—with minds divested of every prejudice, but that of love for your country,*—concerning the religious and political tenets, of that body, whom you are about to embrace, as co-operators with yourselves, in the great work of British Legislation?

If you have not! and some there may be who have not—will you permit me to intreat of you to do so, before it is too late;—but, to this effect, you must study **FACTS**—and not *men*.

The best *authenticated facts*,—and the *most indisputable reasonings*, are to be found in the writings of the Earl of Clarendon, “*On Religion and Policy*,” particularly the 10th chap. in the 2d volume.

Of Doctor Barrow, his “*Theological Works*,” vol. 6, on “*Popish Supremacy*.”

Of Doctor Hales, his “*Letters on the Religious and Political Tenets of the Romish Hierarchy*.”

Of Granville Sharpe, “*On the POPISH CATECHISM* ;” and various other works of that enlightened, liberal, and truly Christian author.

And to those, who differ in respect to the doctrines, and principles of the establishment—I would recommend those—

Of John Wesley, “*Popery calmly considered*,” and a Letter dated 12th January, 1780, “*On the Catholic Claims*.”

And above all, gentlemen, I would recommend to your *peculiar* attention, the more recent arguments, of the great Lord Clare, in the memorable speech delivered by his Lordship, in the Irish House of Peers, on the 13th of March, 1793. I could quote to you, gentlemen, from that unexampled speech, abundance of *convincing* and *irresistible* argument; but to select from a document, so perfect throughout, would be but to mar, and mutilate, without doing justice to, his most able and patriotic reasoning. I would therefore refer you to the speech itself—which is published by Stockdale.

These writings, gentlemen, will afford you abundant information, both as to facts and reasonings, upon this *vital* topic; and if, after having read them with attention, you should entertain conscientious doubts, — as to the policy—the expediency.—or the safety — of granting political power, to Roman Catholics in this Protestant State, — I conjure you, gentlemen—in the name of God and your Country, — *to withhold your votes*; and save your posterity

from the painful reflection, that *you* should have been among those—who have borne a part—in the sacrifice, of the *best and dearest interests of their country*;— in the subversion of the *only solid, political constitution in the world*—purchased by your ancestors at an incalculable price,—and by them, *bequeathed to you*—the envy, and admiration of the universe;—which many nations have attempted in vain to imitate, but which, is found to be inimitable;—and which, gentlemen,—if once overthrown by you—all the political wisdom of the present age, combined—or that, for ages and ages to come — will never be able to restore—to its original perfection—purity—and strength.

And, let it not be forgotten, gentlemen, (such is the rapid lapse of time) that ere very long—*there will be another line of posterity*, looking back upon *your deeds*—and, with feelings of joy, or sorrow, (perhaps, upon the *decision of this very question*)—estimating by their blessings, or their curses—the *value of the political legacy*, which *their ancestors*, shall have *bequeathed to them*.

I will conclude, gentlemen, by marking to you the *effect*, that was once eagerly expected to be produced, from the PROGRESS of INNOVATION—when another body—were seeking for immunities—which the principles of the *British Constitution*, forbad them to receive; but—which innovating spirit, had gone so far—as (in his own judgment) to justify *Dr. Priestley*, in asserting—that “*Their silent propagation of the TRUTH, would in the end, prove EFFICACIOUS—THEY WERE WISELY PLACING, AS IT WERE, GRAIN BY GRAIN, a TRAIN OF GUNPOWDER, to which a match would one day be laid, to BLOW UP THE FABRIC OF ERROR, which could never be again raised, upon the same foundation.*”

The application, gentlemen, I will leave to yourselves;—and subscribe myself, with every sentiment of respect—

A Friend to RATIONAL Religious Toleration, and the Constitution as by Law established—in Church and State.

W. Pople, Printer, 67, Chancery Lane.

*X Part 4th edition - 24 Mar: 1754 -
on the subject of the Propriety of the
several of the Corp^s - "The Propriety"*

