

RAMSEY'S Waterford Chronicle

THURSDAY, MAY 16, 1811.

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PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

LONDON, MAY 4.

The friends of Parliamentary Reform in the City had yesterday a meeting and dinner at the New City of London Tavern, Bishopsgate-street, Mr. Robert Waltham in the chair. About 400 persons sat down to dinner. After the cloth was removed, the following toasts were given, with appropriate observations, from the Chairman, and drank with THREE.

"The King."
"The Prince Regent—and may he never forget the declaration he made, 'That the power and prerogative of the Crown was vested therein for the benefit of the people.'"
"The People."

Sir Francis Burdett, and a full, fair, and free representation of the People in Parliament."
Upon giving which, the Chairman took occasion to lament the absence of one of its staunch and determined friends, the maintenance of which they were assembled, but the Honourable Member was necessarily detained in the House of Commons on a question affecting the Electors and High Bailiff of Westminster, which being dispensed of, he was assured he would lose no time in hastening to attend the meeting.

The next toast, "Mr. Brand, and the Freeholders of Herefordshire," called up

Mr. Brand, who returned thanks for the honour done him, which he assured the meeting were dictated by gratitude and self-gratification, which he was sure could not last long unless he felt that his earnest desire of acquiring their regard by pointing out a patriotic object, had been successful. He would not dwell on professions of liberality, nor call upon them to believe him sincere in the cause, but he trusted that his actions had proved him so; but begged leave to occupy a few moments of their time in stating his hopes and expectations—his certainty of success, if the people of England would follow the example of the Metropolis, and cast their vote, unanimously to assert their just and Constitutional rights. In the parts adjacent to them, there was, he had great pleasure in addressing it, a similar spirit pervading the people; and it was only from the apathy of those in the distant portions of the country, to which that spirit had not yet been communicated, that it was owing that a simultaneous expression of their opinion was not insuperable. No change could be effected but by such a general opinion, expressed through the medium of a free press, against any tyranny which could exist—no corruption could prevail. It was impossible that the Parliament could stand against the opinion of the people expressed in an energetic and constitutional manner; and yet they had felt more to expect from the aid of the liberal sentiments entertained and expressed by his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, who had given to gratifying an earnest wish that he would do when intrusted with the powers which naturally belonged to him. From these considerations it was that his sanguine hopes arose, that no Administration which, by a change, might succeed the present, could resist the united voice of the people. He therefore called on Gentlemen present to be firm, and in endeavouring to infuse their spirit into others of their fellow-citizens, and their unanimous call would infuse to them the grant of every constitutional right they demanded, as the remedy for the evils under which they laboured. Before he sat down, he begged to say a few words to request the absence of one, the truly tried friend of Liberty and Reform in Parliament—of him who had found by them in the hour of difficulty and danger, and who longed to march in their front on the day of their triumph. He needed not to mention, that he meant his friend Mr. Whitbread, from whom he had this day received a letter expressing his sincere regret that he could not attend this Meeting. It concluded by eulogizing Mr. Whitbread as a man than whom he had never known one more upright in the principle and true in the practice. This speech was received with great applause.

Mr. Waltham said he had not known the reason why Mr. Whitbread was not there this day, but now he was relieved by what had fallen from the Honourable Gentleman. He begged leave to give the health of

Mr. Whitbread, the determined enemy to public abuses—which was drank with three.

Mr. Brand proposed the health of the Chairman (Mr. Waltham); which was drank with three times three.

Mr. Waltham, in returning thanks, said, that this was an occasion on which the ablest speakers were the least able to express themselves. They would indeed be inflexible who did not feel the applaus of their fellow-citizens and if they did feel it, it would be useless for him to explain what those feelings were. For fifteen years he had laboured in the public cause; he had begun and continued among them; and if during that period he was chargeable with any failure, it did not proceed from want of inclination to serve them, but from a mistake in judgment. It was needless for him now to repeat, that on all public occasions they might command his services. Neither would he mention them, that it was public opinion that gave them courage and spirit to go through with their labours, and meet the opposition to which they were exposed. He cordially agreed with the sentiments of the Honourable Gentleman who had so ably preceded him, that the people must express

their opinions, which, when expressed, must be attended to. On these grounds he had to submit to the Meeting a Declaration, which on a suggestion from a Gentleman on the Committee, he had drawn up as briefly, and with as much ability as he was master of, for their acceptance. It was not in order to convince them, for that was unnecessary; but to call the bluffs of those on the checks of fame of the old supporters of Parliamentary Reform, who had deserted the cause, that he had thought it necessary to go back to a period of twenty years, to show them what the City of London and other places, as well as some of the most distinguished characters in the Kingdom, had then said and done. He then read the Declaration, which was as follows:

"That towards the close of the unjust and calamitous war with our fellow-subjects in America, it was declared by the Liberty of London in Common Hall, 'That our excellent Constitution appeared in no circumstances more grievously delayed, than in the unequal representation of the People in Parliament, which constitutional principle had never been so left unprotected to calamities in this country, than deplorable to the Rights of Englishmen.'"

"That about the same period, similar declarations were made by numerous public meetings throughout the country, as well as by the most distinguished and enlightened Statesmen of the time, who predicted a continuance and an increase of National Grievances and calamities, unless a speedy Reformation were effected in the Representation of the People in Parliament."

"That since that period the same hateful system has been pursued—the same oppressive influence exercised and widely extended—freedom and extension of the Law and Constitution committee—the best blood and treasure of the nation profusely wasted—the public burdens economically increased—a deprecatory paper currency established, which has caused the constant coin of the Realm to disappear—an army of plagues, pestilences, contractors, jobbers, financiers, impostors, sycophants, speculators, and usurers, created and enriched, whilst the great body of the people have been pining under grievous and unequal taxation. We have allowed great public departments and ministers of the Constitution escape with impunity, whilst those who have dared to expose public abuses, and to reform the mismanagement of the constitution, have been punished with imprisonment."

"That such has been the progress of corruption in the Representation of the People, that we have seen it openly avowed in the House of Commons to sell and when Lord Castlereagh and the Right Honourable Speaker, both Ministers of the Crown, were charged with being concerned in continuing the sale of seats in the House of Commons, they were defended and acquiesced upon the alleged authority of such positions, which were there declared to be as necessary as the sun and moon day practices, as the Speaker of the House declared at the same session of which our ancestors would have smiled with indignation."

"That nothing can more strongly demonstrate the corruption and degeneracy of Parliaments, than that during the whole course of our late wars, notwithstanding the waste of blood and treasure, the many misadventures and destructive expeditions—the numerous failures and disasters we have experienced—our want of confidence has appeared in no symptom of abatement—no effort of our Legislature to promote reformation, or to reform abuses—and we have seen the same unmitigated confidence alike extended to all Administrations."

"That by the predominant influence of a Despotic Faction, every Constitutional check and control upon Ministers appears to be completely lost; and we cannot but apply the expression of Lord Brough to Dr. Sturt, 'That were his Majesty to appoint his body-constableman Prime Minister, the wheels of Government would move just as easily as with the sagacious driver who now sits upon the box.'"

"That nothing short of a full, fair, and free representation of the People in Parliament can afford a remedy for public grievances, restore our constitution, and rights, and finally secure his Majesty's Crown and Dominions."

"That we will use every constitutional means to obtain the liberal end; and we do hereby pledge ourselves, and as one brethren of the Liberty, as well as the Electors of the United Kingdom, to vote for such Candidates only as will engage to support every measure which has for its object a Reform in the representation of the People in Parliament."

Having read the Declaration, Mr. Waltham, after from compliments to the political conduct of Mr. Whitbread, concluded by giving his health. This toast was drank with considerable applause. The Chairman then proposed the health of a Gentleman who was well known to be as virtuous, upright, and French a Patriot as any in England. He gave the health of "Lord Ollifstone."

The toast having been drunk with the usual applause, Lord Ollifstone rose to return thanks. He felt that there could be no reward for zeal in the public cause equal to the approbation of the public; and that the approbation he had received was more from the liberality of his wishes, than for any real services he had been able to render. There was a class of politicians, however, which he thought necessary to advert to; they were the fashionable politicians of the present day; men who wished to stand well with all parties, and to be carried off by all parties. They affected peculiar liberality when the question was a question of the Crown

but when it was a question in favour of the people, then all their discretion was called forth, and they perceived great dangers in the grant. These were the men who wished to be considered the safe politicians of their country. This was an article they kept especially to themselves. [Applause.] There were two factions, which, in the judgment of these Gentlemen, were particularly unfavourable to the agitation of the question of Reform—the one was the faction of war, and the other was the faction of peace. [A laugh.] Now it appeared to him, that neither of those factions were right; and if he was to say in which faction it was most fit to agitate the question, he would say, that, in his opinion, it was most fit and necessary to think of Parliamentary Reform at that time in which our expenditure was the greatest, and the largest burthens were imposed on us.

Mr. Waltham next begged leave to propose the health of Mr. Bingham.

Mr. Bingham returned his warmest thanks for the honour which had been conferred upon him—Next to the approbation of his own conduct, nothing could gratify him so much as the approbation of his fellow-citizens. From his first entrance into public life, he never had any private interest to gratify, but had always acted for the best interests of the people from whom he derived his wealth, reading to the steps of his father, and acting upon those principles which he had inherited from his youth.

Mr. Waltham next called their attention to an individual to whom the country was under the greatest obligations. All those tenes of searching and other abuses, which had existed the duration of the country, had been brought to light through his exertions. It was highly necessary for him to call the name of Mr. Waltham, whose health he begged leave to propose. [Unanimous applause.]

Mr. Waltham then rose, and said, that there was no man in the country who had more cause for gratitude than himself, on account of the support he had always received; no man was more anxious to continue to do so, and to do so for the people. It was necessary for him to say, that he was a friend of Parliamentary Reform, but that he was the friend of a measure that would be first of all for the people a full, fair, and free representation in Parliament. He did not think there was danger in any scheme which left the people as they are. A word or two to himself. Supported as he had been by the great body of the people, he thought it right to communicate to them a circumstantial account of the manner in which he had been treated, and which had lately occurred to himself. For days he received a letter from a servant of his which quitted his employment four years ago. His man happening to be in Chelsea, was taken before two Gentlemen, and chiefly examined as to several confidential relations which had been entrusted to him while in his service. The servant had communicated all the circumstances, but thought it necessary to put on an innocent man, to accuse him (Mr. W.) that he had given him a bribe. (Mr. W.) thought it necessary to ask the Gentlemen why they did not know what purpose the inquiry was made, but that it was done by order of Government. He forgot to mention that the person who took the servant to those Gentlemen had a wife aged out of the army for theft. This was not the only instance. About six weeks ago, he received a letter from a former solicitor of his, and who had a son of 20 years of age. He returned an answer, in which he stated that he had given him a bribe, and that he had the matter ended. Now, whether it was the design of this virtuous Government to attack his purity, as well as his character, he would leave to their judgment; but he felt that, as long as he conducted himself honestly and honestly, he should have the support of the people, and overcome their machinations. [Loud and continued applause.]

Mr. Waltham next gave the health of Mr. Alderman Comber. Mr. Comber shortly returned thanks. The health of Mr. W. Smith, and the Electors of Norwich, was next proposed. Mr. Smith observed, that he was now an old Reformer, for he had supported that cause before many of those who now heard him were in exile—and thirty-five years ago he embarked in the same cause with his friend Major Cartwright, who now sat near him. The enemies of Reform said, that it was not fit either for a man of peace or a man of war. There was another way of expressing the thing, form and grammatically—that with them the verbal form never had a present tense. To continue this grammatical allusion, he would merely express a wish that the conjunctive form of the people, being thoughtly expressed in the optative mood, may be considered into the imperative.

The Chairman next observed, that he was sure the Meeting would be gratified by the concurrence of men from every part of the United Kingdom. And there was one Gentleman present who had long done claims on them, and whose health he would next propose—Mr. Hutchinson, and our Brethren in Ireland—which was drank with much applause. Mr. Hutchinson then addressed the Meeting and said that he rose under a variety of feelings, which he found it difficult to express; but he thanked them from the bottom of his heart for the honour they had done him, and for connecting his name with that of Ireland; it was a connection which he was proud to confess here, and to feel every where, and should ever preserve an inviolable attachment to the country which had given him birth. As to Reform, he would only say, that there could be no safety for the State without it, liberally and constitutionally obtained, for it was by those means

alone it could be accomplished. It was common to censure any Member who maintained these feelings, for appearing to the people; but he was not ashamed of such an imputation, for the low voice and unbiassed opinion was (as it ought to be) indelible. [Applause.] If there was any sympathy this desirable end could not be obtained, and therefore the people should be exhorted to express their sentiments, may more, their determination, never cease till they had obtained it. [Applause.] He had to caution them against their enemies, against those who advised the Friends of the People with taunts, and talked of the King, the Constitution, and the Church, but who, if they were judged by their actions, were the worst foes to each. He had to caution them against those who were not fit to think of Parliamentary Reform at that time in which our expenditure was the greatest, and the largest burthens were imposed on us.

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Mr. Waltham next called their attention to an individual to whom the country was under the greatest obligations. All those tenes of searching and other abuses, which had existed the duration of the country, had been brought to light through his exertions. It was highly necessary for him to call the name of Mr. Waltham, whose health he begged leave to propose. [Unanimous applause.]

Mr. Waltham then rose, and said, that there was no man in the country who had more cause for gratitude than himself, on account of the support he had always received; no man was more anxious to continue to do so, and to do so for the people. It was necessary for him to say, that he was a friend of Parliamentary Reform, but that he was the friend of a measure that would be first of all for the people a full, fair, and free representation in Parliament. He did not think there was danger in any scheme which left the people as they are. A word or two to himself. Supported as he had been by the great body of the people, he thought it right to communicate to them a circumstantial account of the manner in which he had been treated, and which had lately occurred to himself. For days he received a letter from a servant of his which quitted his employment four years ago. His man happening to be in Chelsea, was taken before two Gentlemen, and chiefly examined as to several confidential relations which had been entrusted to him while in his service. The servant had communicated all the circumstances, but thought it necessary to put on an innocent man, to accuse him (Mr. W.) that he had given him a bribe. (Mr. W.) thought it necessary to ask the Gentlemen why they did not know what purpose the inquiry was made, but that it was done by order of Government. He forgot to mention that the person who took the servant to those Gentlemen had a wife aged out of the army for theft. This was not the only instance. About six weeks ago, he received a letter from a former solicitor of his, and who had a son of 20 years of age. He returned an answer, in which he stated that he had given him a bribe, and that he had the matter ended. Now, whether it was the design of this virtuous Government to attack his purity, as well as his character, he would leave to their judgment; but he felt that, as long as he conducted himself honestly and honestly, he should have the support of the people, and overcome their machinations. [Loud and continued applause.]

Mr. Waltham next gave the health of Mr. Alderman Comber. Mr. Comber shortly returned thanks. The health of Mr. W. Smith, and the Electors of Norwich, was next proposed. Mr. Smith observed, that he was now an old Reformer, for he had supported that cause before many of those who now heard him were in exile—and thirty-five years ago he embarked in the same cause with his friend Major Cartwright, who now sat near him. The enemies of Reform said, that it was not fit either for a man of peace or a man of war. There was another way of expressing the thing, form and grammatically—that with them the verbal form never had a present tense. To continue this grammatical allusion, he would merely express a wish that the conjunctive form of the people, being thoughtly expressed in the optative mood, may be considered into the imperative.

The Chairman next observed, that he was sure the Meeting would be gratified by the concurrence of men from every part of the United Kingdom. And there was one Gentleman present who had long done claims on them, and whose health he would next propose—Mr. Hutchinson, and our Brethren in Ireland—which was drank with much applause. Mr. Hutchinson then addressed the Meeting and said that he rose under a variety of feelings, which he found it difficult to express; but he thanked them from the bottom of his heart for the honour they had done him, and for connecting his name with that of Ireland; it was a connection which he was proud to confess here, and to feel every where, and should ever preserve an inviolable attachment to the country which had given him birth. As to Reform, he would only say, that there could be no safety for the State without it, liberally and constitutionally obtained, for it was by those means

alone it could be accomplished. It was common to censure any Member who maintained these feelings, for appearing to the people; but he was not ashamed of such an imputation, for the low voice and unbiassed opinion was (as it ought to be) indelible. [Applause.] If there was any sympathy this desirable end could not be obtained, and therefore the people should be exhorted to express their sentiments, may more, their determination, never cease till they had obtained it. [Applause.] He had to caution them against their enemies, against those who advised the Friends of the People with taunts, and talked of the King, the Constitution, and the Church, but who, if they were judged by their actions, were the worst foes to each. He had to caution them against those who were not fit to think of Parliamentary Reform at that time in which our expenditure was the greatest, and the largest burthens were imposed on us.

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