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A
L E T T E R
FROM
JOHN WILKES, Esq;

Paris, March 12, 1764.

My Dear Lord,

TEN thousand thanks for your last most agreeable favour, containing an account of the late noble struggle at Westminster, with the inclosed *printed* list of the Minority, which poured balm into my wounds, and was a cordial to my spirits. I am much obliged to you for the kindness of your compliments of condolance on my expulsion and exile, which indeed made some little abatement of the natural gaiety of my temper at first, though

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upon mature reflection, I cannot help felicitating myself on being in France, rather than lamenting my absence from England. I find myself, on consideration, much safer at the *Hotel de Saxe*, than I should be at my house in Great George Street, notwithstanding I had there so agreeable a neighbour, and *correspondent*, as the Earl of Halifax. I think I am in much less danger of being clapt into the *Bastile* at *Paris*, than I should be of going to Newgate in London.

The spirited remonstrances of the parliaments in the several provinces, particularly that at Rouen, where there at present prevails a glorious state of Anarchy, give me some idea that I am *now* in a country of liberty. To complete my happiness, my daughter, the delight of my *soul*, (if I have one) is in perfect health; speaks French like a native; and sends her *baisemains* to my Lady — and all the family at —. As to my expulsion, except on account of the loss of my privilege, it gives me no concern, and affects me no more than walking out of the house on a division.

I am extremely rejoiced to find that you have so exactly followed the advice which I so often repeated, and the example I so often afforded you, of inserting inflammatory letters and paragraphs in the news papers, and printing and distributing *gratis* in all coffee-houses, &c. incendiary papers and hand-bills. You must keep the
bellows.

bellows for ever in your hand to blow the coals of opposition, and be perpetually feeding the fire with fresh fuel, or the works will fail or blow up, before we come to projection. I perused the *printed list* with a most singular pleasure; and, methought, my *marble hearted friend* (whose name rises above the rest in bold capitals) seemed to look me in the face with a chastised smile of inward approbation. There are indeed some names in those columns, which, *though neither rich nor rare*, yet I cannot help wondering *how the devil they came there*: and if the eloquence of a PITT or a NICHOLSON CALVERT could work such miracles, I should not be at all astonished at seeing a *white wand* on our side of the question.

Your information that these lists lie in heaps, along with the Two Volumes of the North Briton, the *Royal Register*, and Gazetteer, upon the tables at WILDMAN'S, gives me great pleasure; as well as the resolutions lately made there to subscribe for Pamphlets, and not to suffer dinner to come upon table till both Houses break up. Cultivate WILDMAN'S. Such a *Coterie* is of infinite importance. Though the continued round of patriot dinners (where by the bye I might at least, in honour of liberty, have had a place with the Sir-loin at a side-table) appeared almost as constantly in the papers, as Dr. Hill's medicines, or the advertising
Taylors,

Taylors, ~~yet~~, still there wanted some establishment, more ostensible to the public, some society of ability as well as nobility, more active as well as more numerous. Let the War-kettle therefore no longer simmer in private kitchens, but hang it up to foam and bubble in Albemarle-street. Take your old infirm patriots, and, as in the kettle of Medea, boil them young again. Take even the Clergy, Bishops if you can get them, and boil them, like lobsters, from black to red. I have no aversion to the Church, if it be Church Militant. Your not making it necessary for every member of the club to be a Member of Parliament, I consider as a particular compliment to myself. My expulsion, I know, will so little tend to my exclusion from your honourable society, that it will act as a recommendation. If half a dozen more of you were but sent to the Tower, what a noble parallel might be drawn, by the Monitor or some future North Briton, between our case and that of the Seven Bishops ! But we must wait with patience in hopes of those better times. In the mean while, let me beg that your Lordship will be so kind as to put up my name immediately at WILDMAN'S. Let me be ballotted for in the most general and numerous assembly you can collect together ; and, as I am sure that my *friend* SAM. MARTIN is not a Member of the club, I have not the least apprehensions of a *black-ball*.

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But though I am admitted (as I make no doubt but I shall) as a kind of honorary Member, yet as I cannot come among you to assist in stirring about the ingredients of the political cauldron, pardon me, my Lord, if I presume at this distance to draw out upon paper the rough sketch or out-line of a plan of your proceedings. I shall only consider myself as suggesting the heads of a bill, and must desire your Lordship, and some few other friends, to prepare and bring in the same. You, my Lord, I know will interest yourself in this business with pleasure: You, who so openly countenanced and patronized the North Briton; you, who thought it no affront to Majesty to visit the supposed delinquent, when CLOSE PRISONER; and at the time when his character was most liable to aspersions, and his proceedings most obnoxious to our Court, could declare the disbanded Colonel the darling of the amiable *corps* from which he was dismissed; you, my Lord, I flatter myself, will still continue to shew the same partiality to him, and exert the same zeal for the liberties of your country.

Your Lordship well knows, that whenever a faction is formed in parliament, the members must have (to use the language of the Great Commoner) some MEASURE on which they may ground their opposition. It is not prudent to let slip the dogs of faction, to bark at the heels of a minister, and open on every trifling occa-
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tion; but leashed in like hounds, with *the Church*, or *the Excise*, *Liberty*, or *the Scotch* in their mouths, the hounds may run him down in full cry.

In the same manner, it is necessary that all political societies, public or private, dining at home or at WILDMAN'S, should found their conduct on some system. The Cocoa Tree, we all know, was *originally* intended as an Asylum for the *reliquias Danaum*, the *Beau reste* of Jacobitism. The *Virtue Club* at Boodle's was, in its primary institution, intended for the support of the Earl of Bute; though now, as your Lordship will concur with me, more agreeable to the idea of a *Virtue Club*, it is one of the principal rules and orders, that no *Scot* shall be admitted into that society. In a word, I could run over every such assembly in London, from the Robin Hood up to Arthur's, to prove the necessity of some supposed rule, by which the vulgar are to imagine, that the members of the society propose to square their principles, and regulate their conduct.

Beef and Liberty is the motto to the Beef-steak Club; of which Lord Sandwich and I have so long been members, and where I have so often heard him and that agreeable Scots Peer, the Earl of

Eglinton, join in a catch: and whatever might be said or done, still it had the sanction of Beef and Liberty. Let the Gentlemen of WILDMAN'S, which, in respect to the number of great orators among them, I consider as a kind of Robin Hood society at the court end of the town, dwell on some popular maxims, in order to delude the *Canaille*. Court the mob.

The Majority without doors is no mean second to the Minority within. *Odi profanum vulgus, et arceo*, is no wise maxim for a modern patriot. There is not, among our *dismissed* Generals, any Coriolanus, who will care to affront the Plebeians; nor will Isaac (*late col.*) Barrè say, with Captain Bobadil, that he does not affect to be too popular.

Agreeable to these considerations, I have endeavoured to lay the firm foundation of a well-grounded opposition; not that I expect you all to work, as it were, by line and rule, in raising the intended superstructure. No; let there be as much confusion among you as at Babel, so that you do but report to the world, that you are building a tower to reach the heavens. Pretend one thing, and do another: that will not signify. Do but let your pretences be specious, and the Great Commoner, with whom your Lordship joined
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in subscribing the *written reasons*, will teach you how to reconcile all inconsistencies.

In order to explain myself still further, I shall point out the particular principles I would have you *pretend* to maintain, and afterwards shew how far, and in what manner, it is necessary for you *really* to maintain them.

Imprimis,

Give it out that your society is founded on Revolution Principles.

And, in consequence of that,

2dly, That you are all staunch Whigs.

3dly, That you are zealous opposers of the present Administration.

Now although none of these three declared principles of your opposition are strictly true, but the last, yet must That be no farther avowed than as it relates to the two first; upon which it must seem to depend, like the consequence on the Major and Minor in a syllogism.

First

First then, by representing the members of the Club at WILDMAN'S, as warm espousers of Revolution-Principles, you will pretty plainly insinuate, that the present proceedings of the court are in point-blank opposition to those principles: And although nothing can be less true than such an insinuation, yet it will be of infinite service to your party. You must, however, on all public occasions at least, affect the highest veneration for the character of the King; and the more openly and grossly you offer to affront him, say the more in his praise. Though there has been uncommon pains taken in this reign, to secure the independence of Judges, talk loudly of Prerogative-Lawyers. Make a division, if possible, between the two highest courts of law by invidious comparisons between the *chief* persons that preside in each. Draw one in the character of Holt, and paint the other in the colours of Jefferies.

As to the Church, I am afraid you must give up that hold entirely, since it will be very easy for your adversaries to silence any battery of that sort, as the King is, perhaps, almost the only person in the nation, who interests himself about Religion at all. However, if the Bishops have not forgot their Maker, let their old friend in Lincoln's-Inn Fields plant political heresies and schisms on the Right Reverend Bench. Take advantage of the unparal-

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belled remissness of the Crown in not having at all interested itself in the choice of Representatives at the last General Election : make every use of your own *creatures*, yet speak loudly at the same time against ministerial influence on others.

Whenever you have a Majority against you in Parliament, let almost the same question be agitated again at the other end of the town, and secure a Majority on your side of the question in the Common Council. Talk learnedly of the Aristocratical and Democratical parts of the constitution ; and say, that the Prerogative and the influence of the Crown, thrown into the other scale, are more than an overweight for both.

Had I either leisure or ability I could not better describe the species of Revolution-Principles really to be maintained by the Club at WILDMAN'S, than by drawing a parallel between them and the servants of our East-India Company. Such principles are not founded on a past revolution, but intended to promote a succeeding one. An interested squabble makes a Nabob of Aly Cawn ; another pulls him down ; and a third sets him up again. In the mean time, a few English subjects thrive on the revolutions in the Subahship, and grow rich with the treasures of Indostan. Thus the Revolution-Principles of Albemarle-Street mean nothing more than

than a revolution in the Ministry. One Minister is forced out in troublesome times. Another forces himself in. He goes out in his turn, but retires with a *Jaghire* of three thousand a year.

The second leading principle avowed by your society, which is naturally deduced from the first, must be Whiggism. It is true, indeed, that at the beginning of this reign, there seemed to be some probability of a union of all parties, which might have been so blended together, so mixt and incorporated with each other, that the very names of Whig and Tory might have been lost and forgotten. But this Utopian project for the general peace and benefit of the nation, plainly clashed with the interest of particulars.

In the two late reigns, the Tories were excluded from employments, and kept at a distance from Court, under the pretence of disaffection. But that pretence is now grown stale, and almost the very name and idea of Jacobitism extirpated.

The Cocoa-Tree is now an assembly of Courtiers: The Earl of Denbigh is a Lord of the Bed-chamber; Sir John Philips is a Privy Counsellor: An Oxfordshire Peer (my old friend, whose *milk punch* I have tasted in the *Golden-Ball*) is Keeper of the Wardrobe; and
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the Chancellor of Oxford himself is Captain of the Band of Pensioners.

Since then we can no longer accuse those, whom we call Tories, of disaffection and Jacobitism, let us turn the tables, and charge them with too servile an adherence to the Crown: If we cannot prove them guilty of fomenting tumults, and exciting rebellions, let us tax them with being enemies to Liberty, bred up in the slavish doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance.

If a certain set of men, under the sanction of unsettled times, dictated to two monarchs, let them not remit their claim to the same right over the third. Let them make a league among themselves, and refuse to associate with any but those of their own complexion; by which there will appear to be at least *one* just definition in the dictionary of *Pensioner* JOHNSON, who explains the term A WHIG, as *the name of a faction*.

It is true, indeed, that the assembly of partisans at WILDMAN'S are a motley collection; a jumble of opposite interests, a miscellany of various factions, a Joseph's coat of many colours, not without some shreds and patches of Toryism. It is also equally true, that, the administration, notwithstanding a small leaven of Tories, is
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composed chiefly of Whigs: Notwithstanding which, your *Corps* must all march under the banner of Whiggism, as if there were none but professed Tories to be seen or met with at St. James's, and no such thing as a Whig out of the precincts of Albemarle Street.

In regard to the present Administration, you must shew the justice of your opposition to it, by representing the several Members of it, as persons possessed of neither integrity, capacity, nor property. Declare that all the wealth and honours, as well as honesty, of the kingdom are included in your society: That all the persons in employments are *Scots*, or *Scottified English*; Tories, or *Torified Whigs*. You may say, perhaps, that whoever will reflect but for a moment, or even take the pains of consulting the Court Calendar, must perceive that most of the wealthiest, as well as most distinguished characters, are in great offices, and that only a few places of little or no importance are filled by reputed Tories. I will grant you this; but the world is unmindful, and the popular cry is ever in favour of opposition. Besides, what are the illustrious names of the Dukes of Bedford, Marlborough, Rutland, Ancafter, &c. in comparison with the splendor of that

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of the Duke of N——? that great Duke, whose name has so long, and so deservedly, been popular in the three kingdoms! who has filled every great office of the State with *equal* credit and ability; who was so far from thriving on the public ruins, or growing rich by presiding over an exhausted Treasury, that the accumulation of the public debts scarcely kept pace with the increase of his own; who hath been so anxious for the interest of the House of Hanover, that his zeal for it hath eaten him up: who, after the shameful revolt of a venal Levee, now exercises in a good old age the same ministerial attention of hugs, and squeezes, and kind enquiries after children unborn, and wives never in being; still shewing the same promiscuous civility to those he does know, and those he does not know; and still acting; though to a less numerous audience, in Albemarle Street, the same character he sustained with so much applause at the old Theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields.

The inexpressible satisfaction arising in my mind, from my reflections on this last picture, makes me look with additional pleasure on the institution of your society at WILDMAN'S. Long may it flourish, at once the nursery of young unfledged patriots, the
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wounds, which the union was intended to heal; and when rebellion and dissension seem to have left the land, call them back again by the name of NORTH BRITON!

I am, My Lord, &c.

My Lord, &c.

J. W.

I hope HUMPHREY COTES serves the Society with Wine.

POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

I Was just going to dispatch my Letter, when the arrival of the mail brought me the St. James's Chronicle, containing the resolution of the City of Exeter to present Lord Chief Justice PRATT with the freedom of that City, together with his Lordship's Letter of Thanks. I am glad to find that the game of *Gold-Boxes* is beginning to be play'd over again; and particularly congratulate his Lordship on receiving the first compliments from one of the Cyder counties. But what charms me most, is the stile and matter of his Lordship's most excellent Letter, equal at least to any epistle of my own to either of the Secretaries of State. There is a sublimity of language, and elevation of sentiment in it, not sufficiently adorned in the humble dress of prose. I could not therefore, resist the temptation of cloathing it in a poetical habit, and hope for his Lordship's approbation of the following version.

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THE favour of yours, Sir, this post came to hand,
 By which I am given to understand,
 To present me your Chamber *unanimous* vote,
 The freedom of Exeter, City of note :
 For which pray return them my thanks without measure,
 And assure them I feel an extraordinary pleasure
 To receive such a mark of good-will and great bounty
 From the City of Exeter, plac'd in that county
 Where Papa, Grand-papa, and Great Grand-papa too,
 Great, Great Grand-papa, Great, great, great Grand-papa drew,
 With a long line of Grandfires on Grandfires, their birth ;
 And where I myself found more grace than I'm worth.

If my countrymen's praise I have ever deserv'd,
 That Justice and Law I have truly observ'd,
 I shan't be ashamed to confess I am proud
 In applauses that speak my integrity loud,
 Still leaving the praise of parts and capacity,
To OTHERS, endued with superior sagacity.