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A LETTER

ON THE SUBJECT OF

Parliamentary Reform,

ADDRESSED TO

MAJOR CARTWRIGHT,

BY SIR GEORGE CAYLEY, BART.

Pork:

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—
1818.



PREFACE



THE following pages were written, and in part sent to the press, rather more than a year ago; but the publication was wholly abandoned, in consequence of the sudden and unexpected division of sentiment among the gentlemen of this county, friendly to parliamentary reform. At that time, it would have been ridiculous to speak of a party, which no longer appeared to exist in the county. Both the green bags have, however, now been deprived of their terrors, by the simple exposure of their contents. The country has been inoculated with the virus of revolution, after a due course of previous preparation, by abstaining from animal food; no general fever could be excited, and the faint areola, with one adjoining pustule, plainly proves that our constitution is proof, even against all external infection, and therefore totally incapable of engendering this disease. The danger has recoiled upon those, who unwarrantably asserted our national disgrace, and harshly acted upon that assertion; conscious they can have no efficient defence under the ordinary habits of the country, they are obliged to solicit parliament to erect a shield between them and retributive justice. The most

timid friends of temperate reform, are now fully aware that they have been under the influence of a groundless alarm ; hence, though they have not by any public act shown their sentiments, yet I may safely venture to assume that *Yorkshire*, I might say *England*, is itself again.

This change in the state of public affairs, would not alone have induced me to reprint these pages ; but having been lately addressed by an anonymous writer, in five successive letters, under the title of a *Yorkshire Freeholder*, (in consequence, I conceive, of my having been last in the chair, after our late memorable division) I feel desirous that my sentiments may not be misconceived to be similar to those expressed in that publication ; though not insensible to the compliment of being thus noticed, even by an anonymous friend to constitutional liberty. Hence, this address is revived more with a view of self-justification, than with much hope of being serviceable to the cause of parliamentary reform—with Major Cartwright, this very term will be a sufficient passport to ensure his forgiveness. And the approach of a general election, renders the present moment peculiarly suitable for the publication of any sentiments, relating to the great vital questions of the state.

The issue of the ensuing election, is of the greatest national importance. Never were the people more imperiously called upon to give their votes, to those who

will defend the ancient habitual and chartered freedom of our native land, than at the present moment. There have gone forth throughout the kingdom, two diametrically opposite, and I conceive, equally false opinions. One party maintains that universal suffrage is the only cure for all our political evils; the other, that supporting ministers in every encroachment on the rights and liberties of commoners, is necessary to enable us to stem what they conceive to be the popular tide towards revolution, in which the privileges of the higher orders of society would be lost for ever. The great bulk of both these parties are equally sincere, and therefore equally entitled to respect, in holding these opinions; but they each think ill of the other. The liberties of the land may be lost, by either of these parties altogether prevailing; but why not save it from either risk, by mutual and good-humoured concession? Let *wisdom* govern, is the ultimate maxim. Human society improves in all arts, century by century; and the ultimate perfection of representative government, cannot with impunity be thrust upon a state unfitted to receive it.

If we see the great mass of the people at the periods of election, crying aloud for a third candidate, for the sake of a tripple share of bribery and corruption, what credit can we give them for that purity of political intention, implied in being advocates for universal suffrage? If all actual property, above £40 per annum, constituted

a right to twenty votes, when 40s. gives a right to one vote, it would do more towards a real representation of the wisdom of the land, than any other change in the elective franchise. Property implies independence and education, and these are the two chief ingredients to constitute an efficient elector under a free government.

I am as great an advocate as any one, for constantly leaning towards an extension of the power of the people, as much as their progressive state of improvement in education and political morality of conduct will safely permit; but as the actual *rights* of the British people, were the same two thousand years ago that they are now, whereas, under the plans of Divine Providence, political *power* has been but slowly descending to the lower orders of society; it becomes a nice question of refined policy, and general philanthropy, to assign the present limits of this fluxionary line.

BROMPTON, March 21, 1818.

Brompton, March 1, 1817.

DEAR SIR,

AFTER the length of time that has elapsed, since the date of our last correspondence, you may probably be surprised to find me addressing you in this public manner. Several reasons have induced me to take this step. You are avowedly at the head of those reformers, who seek annual parliaments and universal suffrage—I am an individual of no political weight, but holding the opinions of those who have either nominated themselves, or been denominated moderate reformers. By these two classes of men, reform, if at all, must be brought about; and without reform, the constitution of England, that glorious fabric of strength and national liberty, must expire under the weight of uncontrolled court and borough influence on the one hand, or of popular violence, regardless of all forms, on the other.

It is absurd to deny that there exists an overbearing party in the state, distinct from the Crown, the House of Lords, or the House of Commons, in their respective constitutional *essences* and *functions*; though many of the indi-

viduals are connected with both these houses. This oligarchy acts wisely with regard to it's own interests, it says, *divide and govern!* The reformers, both in and out of parliament, say in perfect unison, *let us divide and be governed!*

Surely to those who could not but have anticipated, that whenever the cat was to be let out of the green bag, it must, *ex officio*, bear the semblance of a tiger, it does seem strange that they should yet be afraid of it's claws, and that they should lend themselves to immure, without limit, within the massive walls of a real dungeon, the moving shrouds of this baseless paper phantom; from behind the eyes of which, as from a pasteboard stalking horse, the oligarchs titter at the fear they create, whilst they may take a more secure aim at the vitals of the constitution. *Unite*, is my motto, but not upon the principles of annual parliaments and universal suffrage, for this plain and palpable reason, if no other be admitted—that, as you occupy the extreme limits of what may questionably be termed constitutional reform; whereas the great mass of the nation, if associated with their natural rulers, (and I trust they will not be driven by these neglecting their duty, into the hands of demagogues) will at most, venture upon one cautious step towards that object; it becomes *impossible* ever to unite, but by your sacrificing your extreme principle, and meeting the mass at some middle point. Let

Major Cartwright contend, if he please, that annual parliaments, commensurate with direct taxation, or universal suffrage, are, in his opinion, the most constitutional objects: but, let him for the sake of high national expediency, immediately by some public act, most solemnly pledge himself, though holding these opinions, to petition only for some moderate and *specific objects*; such for instance, as those proposed by Mr. Pitt, in the year 1785, the leading features of which were, the introduction of an hundred new members; to be elected chiefly by the counties, and to extinguish, under certain equitable regulations, as many borough members. Various other modifications have since been thought of; take any, or all of these, and digest them into what I may call the *least* terms of reform with which you can feel satisfied—but having so done, doubly and triply *pledge* yourself, that when these objects have been obtained, you will not attempt any further political interference; but will leave all subsequent regulations to a House of Commons, thus invigorated and identified with the best blood and property of the kingdom; this will be no sacrifice of opinion, but doing that which in most cases of human society must ever be done—meeting each other half way for a benefit which can only be obtained by mutual consent. It is upon this principle that I have ever been a moderate reformer. I am

firmly attached to the constitution, as by law established, under the power of a King, Lords, and Commons; and to preserve and purify the latter branch, to which I am by birth most immediately attached, as much as the present state of society will *securely* permit, forms the whole of my political wishes. Why should we, who are blessed with the best practicable political institutions, for the present state of human society, that the world has ever known, wander into the extreme limits of political speculation—human society has been gradually improving in political consequence, with many misgivings and interruptions, from the earliest days of military chieftains, to that mixture of national councils, with regal authority, which best suits the present time. What forms of government will be required for the ultimate improvement of the human race, I leave to the ultimate beings to determine: I make no doubt that universal suffrage, nay even republicanism, will have it's day; when, if they can look so far back into ages gone, as to see the objects of our contention, they will only pity us for prematurely puzzling ourselves about things, in their own nature, ultimately true, but relatively false and absurd. We must not forcibly unravel the opening bud of human society, and leave those ripening glories to wither in the early chill of spring, which were designed to develope

themselves under the full sunshine of a maturity yet unborn.

The public will feel inclined to ask what plea I have, as a private individual, thus publicly to address you upon these topics. In my own justification, I must state, that as you thought proper, without my knowledge or assent, to publish in some of the Oxford newspapers, parts of my private and confidential correspondence with you, together with some of your own private letters to me, it cannot be deemed indelicate to speak those sentiments I wish to communicate to you, thus openly before the public, in the first instance, rather than subject them to be dragged forth partially in some distant corner of the kingdom, with your comments at full length, to smother them; and where, as in the last instance, I may never hear of their publication, till many months have elapsed. But I can forgive you all this, and much more, in the indefatigable pursuit of the freedom of your country; and I should not now come forward to revive a matter that has slept so long, on my own private account, did I not think that in thus addressing you, I should be calling the attention of this county to the general subject of reform, in which, at this moment, the vital interests of the state are most deeply involved; *and at the same time assert that the moderate reformers, though long silent, have not been unmindful of their duty*, but that their

silence arose from no other cause, than the fear *created* by the too ready excitability of your own party. This is a fact which ought to be understood *by the people at large*, who have been taught to believe that the moderate reformers have altogether *deserted* them ; whilst the real truth of the case is, that you who bawl so loudly for an extreme reform, are the most effectual barrier to the accomplishment of any reform whatever, that exists in the kingdom—the oligarchy itself not excepted.

In thus, my dear Sir, requesting you to sacrifice your theoretic opinions, (which cannot be acted upon without a risk to that constitution I know it to be your first object and dearest wish to preserve, greater than is justifiable) and to join, without any mixture of parties, in promoting the objects of the moderate reformers ; I beg leave to say, that you must not consider this in the light of an impudent assertion of superiority of judgment, but as arising from the absolute *necessity* of the case, and because I think no other proceeding can effect a co-operation of those wishing well to the state, with the main body of the people, under the influence of those natural but almost immovable rulers, which have grown up amongst them, and without whom they can never effect any object in that temperate manner, which their own and their country's safety demands. I must further remark, that in

thus inviting you to this step, I stand perfectly *alone*, and by no means as stating, the known opinion of even any one of my political associates, though I cannot conceive that any objection can arise to our cause, should we, as a body, have thus requested not a junction with you, but a co-operation of both, towards *our* peculiar object, you giving a *solemn pledge* not to pass that limit of safety, prescribed by the slow progress of society, towards the ultimate improvements of representative government.

Let us suppose for a moment the contrary of what I have been stating, and that what you call the prejudices of the moderate reformers, were to drop off all at once, and they were to join the cry for annual parliaments and universal suffrage—would not this bind every hand, not at present in these two interests, firmly against us; and make out a strong case in favour of those who now have no case to support them? You say that you contend for the constitution as it was, and that we contend for our own fanciful improvements in it! We deny this; but the truth is, that we both see a fault in the present order of things, of so great a magnitude, that some remedy must be had, or the liberty of the land is gone; and we both would be glad to graft what we think *expedient* upon the ancient spirit and practice of the constitution. There is no doubt that inasmuch as our parliaments primarily arose from the Saxon

Witena-gemot, they were *annual* assemblies. But how will your main point of extended suffrage be aided, by an appeal to these very early times? Before the union of the seven kingdoms, the chief holders of estates, and they only were assembled in person. After the union, by the remoteness of the parties, and the increase of numbers, this personal appearance became impracticable; a representative system arose, and all the tythings sent up their witen or wise men; these were *annually* chosen, not by universal suffrage, but by those holders of estates, who formerly had the right of appearing in person, in an assembly drawn from a population of one-seventh of the whole land; and of course, must have been men of considerable consequence, or such an assembly would have been inefficient, from the weight of its own numbers. No such order of men as our small freeholders existed, and their ceorles, who held the rank of our farmers, and rented their lands, never were members of the Witena-gemot.

At the conquest, the Normans being much inferior in numbers to the Saxons, established their power, by placing a Norman chief over most tythings, and making this part *hereditary*, in lieu of *elective*. Thus arose the barons, then a new order in the state. These barons, or petty princes, frequently being ranged on opposite sides, in various civil wars, the conquered parties were dispossessed of their lands—and these were shared

out in smaller tenancies in chief, to repay the partisans of the conqueror. This practice, by the time of King John, had formed so unequal a representation of the kingdom, (these lesser barons having an equal share in the legislature, with the more powerful ones) that a clause was inserted in magna charta, by which all the greater barons were to be summoned to parliament in *person*, and the lesser ones *in general* (meaning by representation.) The wording here, shows who were to be the electors—*omnes illos qui de nobis tenent in capite*. These lesser tenants in chief being equal amongst themselves, exerted equal rights in electing their representatives; and the parties so chosen were, from the tenure of their lands, and from their representing the respective counties for which they served, called knights of the shire. These were to be chosen at the county courts, where no others but the lesser barons, or immediate tenants of the crown came; however, by the progress of time, those had become subdivided into a troublesome number, as may be collected from the preamble to the act of the 8th of Henry VI., where the right of voting for knights of the shire, is restricted to freeholders having not less than forty shillings per annum. It is difficult to estimate what the present value of forty shillings of that day is—in the fifteenth year of this reign, wheat was permitted to be exported as of small

price, when at 6s. 8d. per quarter, but was an extremely fluctuating article; this might give a value of about twenty pounds per annum to constitute a right of voting; but in the report of the committee of the Society of the Friends of the People, on the state of the Scottish representation, where the old forty shilling tenures have been kept up; it appears that, in general, they were worth in the year 1792, from £70 to £130 per annum. Now although during these times, the boroughs still *annually* chose a magistrate and representative, under a variety of local regulations—these were not so numerous as to vie with the representatives of the *land*; such in fact was the spirit of the system—it was a representation regarding *property*, not *population*, of which the greater barons formed the chief part—therefore I think you must concede, that when you are demanding universal suffrage, or representation commensurate with taxation, you are not demanding it by a *constitutional right*, but according to your own idea of what is *expedient*.

I admit that annual parliaments were most constitutional in the spirit of the origin, and in the early practice of that assembly, but in these days men were hired to sit there, as an irksome service, to guard the interests of their constituents; and when of course at elections, the contention, if any, must have been who could be

excused from the office, rather than who could obtain it. But will this form any reasonable plea, for our annually throwing open the kingdom to a tumultuous contention for seats of *power* and *influence*, now that the whole form of society is re-modelled? Surely human society must be at liberty to alter and amend it's laws, as circumstances vary by the progress of ages. In those days the kings governed, and the parliaments watchfully obeyed—in these an oligarchy sways both—we wish it is true to reduce this oligarchy, but would this destroy the valuable interests attached to seats in the House of Commons? From whence in these days of complicate state affairs, (which require the labours of a life in some departments fully to wield) would the efficient government take it's tone? why plainly from the parliament! Hence there must ever be contention for these seats; and, in our opinion *it is expedient*, that only once in three years this contention should take place. The question of the duration of parliament, is quite premature; let us but once obtain a parliament free from either borough or court influence, and all that we ought to wish for, will be accomplished. But it is time to turn from those points on which we have unfortunately differed, to those in which I am sure we shall agree.

The landed gentlemen are surely not aware of the real situation of their own properties, (be

they ever so regardless of their liberties) when they even refuse to support the introduction of a hundred more of the highest class of their own body into the House of Commons, and to do away as many members for boroughs, which are open to the highest bidder; and, of course, are occupied by any interest but the landed interest. Are they fully aware, that after exerting themselves to prevent being burdened by the property tax, which deprived them of a tenth of their incomes, they are permanently saddled by the unavoidable pressure of the state upon their tenants, with a diminution of at least one-fourth part of their properties? Can they be aware that the whole taxable income of the kingdom, did not amount to more than 130, or say 150, millions; and hence that even the reduced annual demand of about 50 millions*, amounts to one-third of the whole of the then flourishing income of the state; and is therefore little short of half of the present diminished income. Add to this statement the eight millions of parish assessments, for supplying the mouths of three millions of paupers, independently of the other ordinary sources of parochial expense; and the real sum left at the disposal of the owner of an estate—may well ac-



* The real demands of the State to keep matters square, including the operations of the Irish debt and Sinking Funds, in fact, rather exceeds 56 millions for the current year.

count to him for the difficulty he finds, in a vain struggle to maintain that station in life, to which he is by birth entitled.

Is it not astonishing to find these men thus experiencing the condemnation of more than half their property, by the wasteful extravagance of a party in the state, in which, generally speaking, they have no interest, and certainly over which they have no control; and yet more terrified at a contemptible handful of pot 'ale-house Spenceans, than at the sweeping evil that awaits them. These gentlemen seem to view without jealousy, a banking company, allowed by a new species of *unaccountable* legerdemain, to be in the receipt of a greater revenue, and in the exercise of much more political influence, than all the landed dukes of the realm. Can they who ought to wield the councils of the nation themselves, view without remorse the ancient families of the land; those whose ancestors have swayed the state to their own honor and their country's glory; outlorded and bearded by a set of ephemera, the offspring of that corruption they are now straining every nerve to perpetuate. Surely the real weight and pressure of the times can never have occupied their serious attention; they hear of millions, but never bring these matters home to a scale which the mind can grasp. The assessments of a parish we estimate by poundage, upon it's acres. The map of England, contains

40 millions of such acres, including barren mountains, lakes, and rivers—hence a taxation of 50 millions per annum, is at the rate of 25s. per acre, over the whole of this vast surface.— True the land does not pay all this, for one palpable reason, that it far exceeds the rental.

The population of the whole united kingdom may be taken at 15 millions of people; hence, 50 millions a year amounts to £3. 6s. 8d. a head, including every puling infant in an English work-house, or an Irish cabin. Allowing five persons to a family, this taxation amounts to £15 13s. 4d. per annum to the head of every family, on an average—whilst the national debt itself, if similarly distributed, quotes not far short of as many pounds per head, as there are *days in the year*. There are in the united kingdom three millions of men, the heads of families, for whom you are disposed to claim universal suffrage. There are also, including women and children, three millions of paupers. Are we to expect that this debt and interest will ever be paid, either by the paupers, or your universal suffrage men? Who then must pay it? Those who live from hand to mouth, must *live still*; and it only makes a temporary, though often a cruel difference to them, how much the articles of consumption are taxed; the wages they are to receive, must finally be regulated by the prices they have to pay, unless the whole fabric of so-

ciety is to be broken down. But mark the slow but sure process of this operation, to those who have real property; they pay, but cannot receive in return, more than the consumers can afford them, after deducting their share of taxation—thus is the *real* burden ever ultimately transferred to those who have *real* property. A race of labourers, it is true, may from favorable circumstances have become rich; and whilst their riches are draining from them, they do actually pay towards the burdens of the state; but when that process is, as at present, complete, they only act as *conductors*, to convey the *shock* of taxation to its ultimate destiny—*real property wherever it can be found*. There is no natural necessity that protects real property being obtruded upon, till it be totally exhausted, unless the owners have an efficient voice in regulating the demand; but if it prove the melancholy fate of this country to be so exhausted, then the value of each man's hands will find their natural level; then he will awake from his dream of oligarchical protection, and wish in vain that he had borne his share in protecting himself and his posterity from such an overwhelming destruction. It will be said; true, all these fearful and heavy burdens exist, but they were unavoidable evils, arising out of the unexampled state of Europe; and, no reform in parliament, can either lessen or avert them. I know not your opinions, but I am quite

convinced that, so far as the *reasonable* expenses of the late war, form a part of the present distress of the country, they are justifiable ; for, however individuals may have differed upon various points respecting that war, it must be allowed to have received the sanction of the people ; and I am proud to acknowledge, as a cheering ray amidst our gloom, that the British arms have thence acquired a glory, never before equalled in the brightest pages of our history. Under this view of the subject, it is manifestly unfair to heap the whole odium of the burden it has entailed, upon an administration, which at the time, only went hand in hand with the major part of the complainants ; and who ought to be allowed the credit of exerting vigorous and efficient measures, in promoting an object of the first national importance : the destruction of an inveterate enemy, of first-rate military talents, wielding nearly the whole power of Europe towards the extinction of this country, if possible, from the map of nations.

So far therefore but no farther, it must be admitted that the *reasonable* expenses of the late war, are justifiable in the eyes of the nation. But as war, or any other pretext for vast expenditure, and particularly where the reasonable amount is difficult to be ascertained, is precisely what most tends to increase the influence of the executive power ; so it necessarily furnishes the opportunity

of proportional encroachments on the rights and property of the subject—witness the late assumption of a right on the part of the crown, to appropriate to itself the whole profits of victory, whilst the expenses of the military power, by which these profits are obtained, is drawn from the pockets of the people—witness the half million of money that was promised in secret, to maintain the Russian Fleet in our ports—witness the procrastination of the regulations respecting the civil list, whilst the fund was lavished in royal gifts and entertainments. What but the infatuation of a popular war, could have sanctioned the facility of parliament in granting in *advance*, year by year, votes of credit, amounting at length to six millions of money—what check, what economy, was likely to be practised over money thus thrown into the lap of administration, as the sportive overflowings of wealth, to be squandered at the great game that was playing; rather than as enormous sums borrowed, by mortgaging the comforts of a posterity yet unborn. A watchful parliament would have kept ministers within the bounds of reason, in the expenses incurred, and would have confined these expenses strictly to the real and unavoidable cost of the war; using the utmost economy in the charges of government at home, to balance this necessary evil. What *has* been the case? Why at the conclusion of the war, we find our own

property, and that of our grandchildren, exhausted, and all *economy* even yet *most reluctantly to commence*.

I must now draw this long epistle towards a close, and once more most seriously exhort you, as you value your country, publicly to draw some moderate and definite line of reform, beyond which you stand pledged never to pass. Should you happily adopt this suggestion—you will, I am confident, do more to effect what you wish, than by any numerical show of hands in favour of annual parliaments and universal suffrage, that can ever be collected. The fact is, the more these accumulate, the greater barrier do you erect against all co-operation from that class of society which can temper your efforts, by that solid hold within the state, which can alone ensure a secure result. If you form a temperate limit, how can the oligarchy, or the timid reformers, in future be able to say, “we will not embark with you in reform, though abuses exist, because there appears no safe harbour on the termination of our voyage.” It is certainly true, that in any petition to the House of Commons, it is disrespectful to present a specific plan; but the expression, out of doors, of a specific *equatorial* line, that “*flammantia mœnia mundi*” which was never to be passed; is all that is requisite to reconcile every friend of rational liberty, to make one simultaneous, temperate, but irre-

sistible effort to obtain it, by those legal means which the constitution prescribes.

You are now in possession of my sentiments on the present posture of affairs, and you will be inclined to say that I am a selfish advocate for the exclusive advantage of the owners of estates; and at the same time, in my *moderation*, am willing to compromise away half the liberties of the subject. I own it is to the landholder, I chiefly look for the security of our liberties; the interests of a monied man are not so interwoven with the soil of Britain, but that he can readily transfer them to any part of the globe he pleases; hence, to submit to a temporary evil for a distant good, is not so much in his view, as a temporary advantage without regarding futurity: a question respecting any temporary obtrusion on the sinking fund, would be a test of this difference of feeling, on a subject of vital importance to the state.

As to my moderation, you are in possession of the line of conduct it would lead me to adopt, I would use the most temperate means to obtain such a limited advantage towards the freedom of election, as would ensure parliament the power, if it so willed, in despite of the court or borough faction, to proceed in the abolition of all those political abuses affecting *commoners*; but should at the same time secure, by the *high quality* of the persons thus introduced, against any tendency

in parliament to exceed the constitutional limits of its power, by encroaching upon the prerogative of the crown, or the stability of the aristocracy. Temperate as I hope I am, I think it the bounden duty of every Englishman to defend his natural and chartered rights, by every lawful means in his power; and, if driven to the last necessity, *vi et armis*—but in saying this, Spa Fields is in my view, and not the borough faction. The *war* of words, and the *march* of public opinion, is all that must be opposed to a set of men who, like most others in a similar situation, having gained an advantageous position, for valuable consideration bestowed, are no further enemies to the state, than as those emoluments and advantages they seek to profit by in return, must be at variance with plain dealing and economy. It is not what would fully satisfy any one generation of this exclusive faction, that could injure the country—let an hundred of these men be given by the state, if it so pleased, an hundred thousand pounds each beyond the market price, to extinguish their seats for ever; what would ten millions of money, in addition to our eight or nine hundreds of millions of debt be, when compared to the wide spreading *compound interest* of evil, produced by a vitiated representation of the people?

As we are accustomed to see these men change with each new administration, we may reasonably

expect that, when they are reduced to that state in which they will have an interest in common with ourselves, we shall find amongst them, as good reformers as any in the land. We have now no external enemy to fear—no revolutionary government exists. The great continental potentates have entered into a religious compact to govern Europe as one large family, upon one common principle of divine right—a compact that will no doubt be most religiously adhered to, and from which, if one single advantage towards the rational liberty of the human species can be derived, it must be in the perfect calm which it leaves to this land of chartered rights and temperate freedom, to adjust, in perfect external security, those aberrations which the sweeping convulsion that has passed has so much contributed to create. If parliament at the present moment, should adopt any rational plan of reform, without further interference on the part of the people, the general wish would be accomplished without ferment; and, however difficult the task may be to regulate the distresses of the country, still no one could fail to be satisfied under his own share of privations, if he knew that the circumstances of the state were met by the best intelligence, regulated by the best intentions, of the soundest part of the community. Let it not then be said, that those who demand moderate reform, are the fomentors of disturbance—or that the infusion of

an hundred disinterested country gentlemen into the House of Commons, could endanger, by their votes, a constitution which it is their dearest interest to support. Such a House of Commons would be far more likely to increase the magnitude of the freehold constituting a right to vote, from forty shillings to half as many pounds, than to extend it to universal suffrage; or in lieu of this, to cause landed property to be represented in certain terms of it's amount, leaving forty shillings as the first unit of the scale—and adopting some modification of the same principle for other kinds of property. The real and the only danger we have to fear, is, that the borough faction, whose *interest* is directly in opposition to that of the state, should, by artifice, cajole a virtuous, loyal, and peaceable nation, to abet them in their desperate game, in which their motto is—aut Cæsar aut nullus. The time is passed in which this question can be adopted with impunity—the nation sees no prospect of amendment, but in some undefined, though expected change of political measures—*something* must be conceded to the public wish, or all good temper will soon be lost. Though temperate reform or revolution, are equally fatal to the borough faction, (and hence they prefer the risk of the latter to the certainty of the former) these two events are as heaven to perdition, with respect to the nation at large. Such a reform, if the higher classes of the nation

wills it, is now securely within our reach; shall we then, merely for the sake of giving this faction a last chance of finally establishing their illegal power, have the folly to permit our frail political bark, idly to glide down the deceitful surface on which we at present float, till we are awake from our dream of security, by the howling scylla of revolution on the one hand, or the no less fatal charybdis of despotism on the other? Depend upon it, my dear Sir, the rapids are near, we must exert our whole strength, to guide us in the current; and unless all that are honest friends to the liberty of old England, cease to pull different ways, and bring their voices to keep tune, and their oars to keep time, to the chant of, *medio tutissimus ibis*, we shall be hurried, past recovery, into one or other of those political vortices, in which the glorious freedom of England may sink, never to rise again. I feel almost ashamed of having harped so long upon the string of caution, to one so much my senior in years, and in the cause of reform; I trust, however, you will excuse the warmth of my expressions in their sincerity, and believe me to be,

Dear Sir,

Yours Truly,

GEO. CAYLEY.