

46
13

AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND,
ON
ECCLESIASTICAL AND CIVIL
LIBERTY.

EDINBURGH:

Printed in the Year M, DCC, LXXXII.

O N

ECCLESIASTICAL LIBERTY.

TO the love of ecclesiastical liberty, the people of every country in Europe owe any degrees of civil liberty they possess. And it must give pleasure to men of liberal principles, to observe that spirit which animated our fathers still continuing to animate their sons. From certain advertisements published in our news-papers, it appears, that sentiments of ecclesiastical liberty have not yet deserted the breasts of a considerable body of citizens in the west and interior parts of this country. That which is most surprising is, that the upper ranks of men seem to have reconciled themselves to that mode of settling churches which, of all others, is most expressive of their own insignificance. Is it because men of fortune have lost all regard to religion and virtue, that they are satisfied with the arbitrary execution of the law of patronage, practised by this church for upwards of thirty years? Does not this mode of settlement put the whole body of landed gentlemen (patrons only excepted) upon the same footing, in the choice of a minister, as the meanest cottager of their estates? Nor is it possible to conceive a gentleman placed in a more contemptible situation than when a minister is obtruded upon him, his family, and his tenants, by the influence of a deacon or a bailie in a country burgh, who has the merit of having voted for a member of parliament. This influence is exerted in favour of a schoolmaster, on account of the great care he has taken to correct and instruct the sons and daughters of the magistrate for a course of years. If a calculation is made of the settlements, of churches for several years past, it will be found, that schoolmasters have filled a great number of our pulpits, in consequence of a previous bargain struck between them and their employers. Nor can the servile spirit, and the adulation of power, which

has disgraced the church for many years, be better accounted for, than by tracing them up to the education of those who have by such pactions obtained presentations. Much has been said of simoniacal practices. Whether such pactions do, or do not fall under this denomination, I leave it with you to judge. Certain it is, that gentlemen, who can afford their sons a liberal education, do not now commonly train them for the pulpit; for this plain reason, that young men of liberal principles and independent spirits, though possessed of the highest qualifications, will lie at the pool through life, if they have not obtained a patron by means of such as have been represented.

WHEN it is considered of what importance a good ministry is to the domestics, the farmers, and the whole vicinity of gentlemen, it is astonishing that they are not more attentive to the characters of such as are candidates for vacant parishes! If they are not capable and zealous to inform the minds of the people, and impress their hearts with sentiments of piety and sound morals, what security can gentlemen have in transacting business in commercial or social intercourse? what confidence in their fidelity, their honesty, their most positive averments? what reason to hope that their goods, their habitations, their persons, shall remain inviolate? When men are destitute of a sense of God and religion, they merit no confidence,—they are public enemies. But how are religious sentiments to be infused into the minds of illiterate men? You will say, by the grace of God: But is not the grace of God conveyed by the use of means—the means of a faithful and zealous minister of the Gospel? What reason have you to hope for such a ministry, when our pulpits are filled by *young fellows*, who, assured of a presentation many years before they think of theology, remain very careless of the moral or intellectual qualities of a minister of religion? Their interest, their ambition, are not concerned in these qualifications: these have not touched the springs of action in their hearts: the grand object, *a presentation*, is ascertained; and they have no apprehensions when they come to pass, when they recollect that many of their judges have been in the same predicament with themselves, and therefore

fore will do by them as they themselves have been dealt by. The grand affair is to read a sermon with a theatrical grace. The business of a pedagogue has secured this important article, and the settlement is ascertained.

NOR is the case exceedingly altered if the judges should be of a different complexion. Men of the strictest piety and morals cannot penetrate the hearts of men; they cannot investigate the character of a youth who has formed no character, who has perhaps never been in the country where his judges reside, and who can be judged only by a few discourses which may have been composed by another. But, why should it be expected that that should happen in a presbytery which happens no where else? In no department of civil society,—among lawyers, writers, officers of the customs and excise, in military life, and even in the higher political departments, men pass muster every day who are destitute of the necessary qualifications. And why should more be expected from the clergy than other societies of men? Is it because they have fewer feelings, and are less apt to sympathize with youth and inexperience? Certain it is, that a weaker excuse cannot be given for bestowing a presentation on an illiterate or immoral man, than to alledge that, because he has passed trials, therefore he is qualified. Will this apology be sustained by the Supreme Judge? and is there any action in a man's life for which he must give a stricter account than the exercise of his right of presentation?

CAN any man of reflection hope for a proper set of clergy thus educated, and thus introduced into the ministry? Will they not naturally be haughty and insolent to their people? Escaped from their masters and mistresses, who have lorded it over them, with absolute sway, through a tedious course of servitude, will they not carry it with equal imperiousness towards the poor people whom they are taught to despise? Servility to their superiors, insolence to their inferiors, and a contempt of better men on a level with themselves, characterise too many of those who have thus been obtruded on a reluctant people. Fine gentlemen, as many of them wish to be esteemed, and capable of cutting a figure in the circles of the gay and the giddy,—

giddy,—nay, of pronouncing a speech in an assembly, vilifying the populace for their ignorance and presumption,—as to science, moral or theological, they are but novices; at least, this is the opinion of men of true discernment, that, from the beginning of the present century, there has not appeared a set of clergy so superficial in point of real learning, as these fine gentlemen who parade it at present with so much address and assurance.

CAN YOU, men of Scotland, continue patient and resigned in circumstances so unfavourable to your sacred interests? Is there any object of more moment to you, than the comfort of a learned and a godly ministry? ready on all occasions to adapt their knowledge and piety to your particular circumstances and capacities, who feel for your infirmities and wants, console you in trouble, and dispense to you the bread of life with skill, patience, and charity. That happy connection which subsisted between our fathers and their ministers was productive of the most salutary effects. They were so united to each other as to form but one body; they were mutual supports to each other amidst all the emergencies of life. Compacted together, they withstood the shocks of the most difficult times. Civil government, when threatened with enemies abroad and at home, was often indebted to this happy union. The church of Scotland, free from sectaries of all denominations, formed a firm and impregnable barrier, and rendered government respectable.

VERY sensible of this were the Tories when they plotted the restoration of the Pretender near the end of the reign of Queen Anne. To divide the church of Scotland, ever hostile to the introduction of a Popish Pretender, and to break the union which subsisted between the clergy and the people, was the policy of the administration at that time. They knew that the restoration of the law of patronage would effect this design sooner or later: they had not, indeed, power to rescind the act of King William, appointing the election of ministers by heritors and elders; but they restored patronage. The noxious influence of this law did not fully appear till after the lapse of near forty years. Still the church considered it in the light of

an intolerable grievance. She continually reclaimed against it, and hardly ever settled without a legal call. The moderation of the church preserved a connection between the clergy and their congregations, and, in spite of the malignant spirit of patronage, the clergy were beloved by their people, and respected by government; and the influence of the church with the throne was so considerable, that, in many instances, they prevailed in warding off those blows that were levelled at her by a latent, but insidious and implacable enemy.

Now, alas! this happy connection is generally dissolved. Much zeal and great address have been employed by our rulers in order to produce a total alienation of mind and of heart.—Whence hath this zeal originated? Patronage is an engine of political power; corruption and venality have always distinguished a tory administration; your clergymen of Scotland have become the tools of your enemies—to them they have sold you; the price is those emoluments they have so carefully monopolized; the leaders among them have engrossed to themselves, and to their creatures, all that the Crown can give to churchmen in this part of the island; their acquirements are the price of your liberty—I say, of your liberties and rights; for, if you have not liberty to chuse your own minister, you are deprived of one of the most essential rights of Christians. Do patrons and proprietors assert their exclusive right of chusing because they pay the clergy?—Nothing can be more obviously futile and false. Stipends are a part of the public stock, to which the meanest man who labours in the field contributes, as well as the first subject in the realm. It is your money, the money of the public, the fruit of your productive labours, that constitutes the stipend of the clergy: And will you suffer yourselves to be robbed of a right to which you are as much entitled as to the bread which you earn by the sweat of your brow?

THE act 10th Queen Ann is still in force, and can we counteract the law?—It neither is, nor ever was in such force, as to oblige the church to settle a minister, in opposition to a reluctant congregation. The same law was in force from

from the year 1712, and, for forty years thereafter the act 1690 was generally the rule of settlement notwithstanding. Scarce was there an instance of a minister's being obtruded on a congregation. The power of collation is in the clergy; and it was their fixed belief, that to settle against the congregation was a violation of their rights.

THE patron will retain the stipend.—He cannot. Every subject patron is obliged to apply the vacant stipend to pious uses within the parish, *at the sight* of the presbytery; and, if he attempted to retain it, he would be completely odious in the sight of God and man; he would take advantage of a hard law to retain what he had no right to possess, in violation of the most sacred rights of a respectable body of good citizens. In respect of those presentations which are in the gift of the Crown, it is to be presumed, that his Majesty's Servants will not sacrifice their Master's most essential interests so far as to insist on the settlement of a presentee against the inclinations of the people. His Majesty declares that the affections of the people are the support of his throne: That Ministry, who, by the arts of oppression, alienate the affections of the people from their Sovereign, are traitors to their trust.

IF patronage were abolished, or rendered consistent with the constitution of the church, what rule of settlement can be established in its room?—The act establishing presbytery at the revolution, and abolishing patronage, requires that churches be settled by a majority of heritors and elders; and the consent of the people was, by the practice of the church, from the year 1690, till about thirty years ago, considered as essential to the settlement of a minister, and controversies respecting settlements were ultimately determined by the supreme judicature of the church. When the act 10th Queen Ann is attentively considered, it will appear, that the right of election in heritors and elders, contained in the act of the settlement of presbytery, was not rescinded. The Ministry had not power at that time to venture upon so strong a step. It was then considered as in force, notwithstanding the restoration of patronage, and still is in force, notwithstanding the zeal expressed by clergy and laity

lajty in General Assemblies to consider it as repealed; and it will be found that this mode of settlement is incomparably preferable to any other that has been projected. Heritors have an interest both civil and sacred in the choice, and every person paying cess and stipend out of his property is an heritor; nor will elders, who represent the people, betray the confidence reposed in them, implied in their election to that sacred office, and comprehended in their ordination vows.

DIVISIONS and animosities occur in the mode of settlement proposed. A presentation is decisive.—Despotism is the most decisive form of government; the arbitrary will of the despot silences all complaint, and pronounces the doom of thousands of innocents without controul; liberty is too precious a gift for mortals to enjoy without alloy; disputes originating in the passions of men are inseparable from freedom; nor is there any good institution without a certain mixture of inconvenience.—Who does not admire the constitutions of Greece and Rome?—Who does not regard with horror the despotic sway of Turks and Moguls?—Men of arbitrary principles look upon every exertion of liberty, and all its ebullitions, as faction and sedition. Appius, when controuled in his project of enslaving his country, declaimed on faction and sedition;—and so will all the partizans of power, when their plans of domination meet any degree of resistance.

OBSERVE, my friends and brethren, that the constitution of your church is republican. Presbytery is formed on the model of a commonwealth; patronage favours of arbitrary government; patronage breathes the spirit of unlimited monarchy. Perhaps it may suit the mode of church government by bishops and archbishops; but it is in diametric opposition to the genius of presbytery. The dignitaries, and such as would be dignified by the honours and emoluments peculiar to hierarchy, are fond of patronage, because it is congenial to their principles, and calculated to flatter their passions. But those of your church will check and suppress passions so contrary to those vows in which they swore fealty to presbyterian government. Is not a call from the congregation an essential branch of

this government? and will men dispense with this institution, or appoint a settlement, without any call, in direct violation of the constitution, and, at the same time, affect to hold vows and oaths to be sacred engagements?

MAY we not deliver ourselves from those corruptions which threaten this church with ruin, by connecting ourselves with dissenters?—Flatter not yourselves with the imagination that you will find any body of dissenters exempted from corruptions. Among them you may connect yourselves with many decent and serious persons; and if decency and seriousness have become less prevalent among us now than heretofore, it must console every good man, in some measure, to recollect, that they have not wholly deserted our country.—Waving what may be said respecting the various sects into which you have split, let me ask, are there not still many serious Christians in this church, and of the clergy not a few, of true learning and godliness?—It is wrong to charge Ministers in the gross with the errors in government into which this church has fallen. We have ruling elders, who rule over all the ambitious and aspiring among the clergy—elders of high rank and fortune—officers of state—patrons with the influence, and under agents of the Crown. If the numbers and interests of this order of men, with the principles they adopt, and cause they espouse, are taken into consideration, candour will allow for the effects they produce on the decisions of the church, and acknowledge that, though many of them are erroneous, a very considerable body of the ministers are blameless. Nay, whoever attentively considers the records of our Assemblies, will find that many judgments which have received their sanction could not have been pronounced, if a great majority of ministers had not been averse from the arbitrary execution of the law of patronage.

WHAT, my brethren and friends, are the effects of a wanton separation from the established church? Is it a light thing to break that union which the glorious Head of the church has established, and sanctified among Christians? Is not this union explained, recommended, and enjoined by Christ and his Apostles in the most decided terms? Can any thing less than

than being obliged to violate some plain law of religion or morality, justify a man in separating from the great body of Christians denominated the *Church*? Has not the King of the Church taken into his own hands the censure due to a breach of the great law of union?—Far be it from us to judge harshly of our brethren gone out from among us: But in what light will we be beheld by him who presides in his church, if we can entertain a serious thought of deliberately tearing asunder, and lacerating that body which he has sanctified and saved—of deserting that communion to which he continues to vouchsafe his countenance, and weakening the hands of those ministers who are honoured with the communications of his grace?

BUT you are better edified without than within the established church.—Perhaps you are more gratified—you are better pleased; but observe, that the most palatable food is not always the most nourishing;—does not providence place you often in those circumstances that demand the sacrifice even of your edification? You attend the sick-bed of a friend, when you might be much more edified by attending the worship of God? Is it a light thing to loath the provision appointed you in providence, because it is not perfectly adapted to your taste? When God has assigned you institutions, which he requires you to observe after the due order, is it safe for you to spurn at his appointments, and reject the ordinances of divine allotment?—If, by your example and influence, pastors called and ordained of God shall be deprived of their flocks,—will the edification you imagine you shall receive compensate for the injuries you do to multitudes, or will it prove a counterpoise to the breach you make of the union and peace of the church of God? Are not strife, variance, and dissention, far greater evils than the want of that degree of edification you desire can prove to you? And, permit me to insist upon it, that to divide from that great society of Christians with which providence hath connected you, under the influence of prejudice, caprice, pride, or any other malevolent or interested principle, is a crime of the first magnitude.

IN order to obtain that edification which every good man earnestly desires, let me beseech you attentively to consider the character and qualifications of the person who is a candidate for the charge of that parish where providence has ordered your lot. If his character is doubtful, or his qualifications unsuitable to the station he wishes to fill, oppose his induction by all legal methods; let all your authority and influence be employed to obtain the settlement of an unexceptionable pastor. And if a candidate is elected by a majority of them who were formerly termed legal voters, consider his ordination as the appointment of God—for, in all societies whatsoever, the minority is under the strictest obligation to acquiesce in the judgment of the majority.

BUT, that the choice of a proper pastor may be free and constitutional, it is incumbent on all who have any concern for whatever is held sacred among men, to employ every method, consistent with a due submission to government, to obtain a deliverance from the intolerable yoke of patronage,—a nuisance without the removal of which the church must sink into nothing. Patronage will always prove the instrument, in the hands of designing men, of disappointing all our hopes of union or of reformation. We will decline from bad to worse, till our churches are desolated. Scarce does an Assembly rise without driving from the church several thousands of her members. Hundreds of thousands are already numbered by the dissenters, besides Episcopalians and Papists, (who are always very forward in supporting presentations). Above a twelfth part of the church have forsaken her communion, thro' the petulance, the servility, and despotic principles of those they call moderate men. Certain it is that a dissenting interest has increased, and is still increasing; that civil society and social intercourse are thereby greatly obstructed; animosities and dissensions prevail in every parish, and the dissocial passions reign in triumph. Contention and every evil work have occupied the place of that cordial union, and those generous affections, which our fathers cultivated with great success. All, all this, and more than I have leisure or inclination to describe, are the woeful effects of patronage;—Patronage, which has proved

proved for many years the grand obstructor of the progress of religion, the dire engine of corruption and tyranny, the cruel foe of peace and harmony, the nurse of faction, and the refuge of vice.

A ray of hope breaks through the gloom, and affords us some prospect of relief. An administration, of unequalled ability and liberality of sentiment, hath, in the course of providence, been raised up, we hope, at this tremendous crisis of public affairs, not only in support of civil, but also ecclesiastical liberty. Familiar as ideas of patronage have always been to the minds of Englishmen, a distinct account of the nature of our ecclesiastical constitution, its inconsistency with the principle of patronage, the habits of thinking peculiar to this part of the island, the aversion of its inhabitants from hierarchy and superstition, their height of spirit, always impatient of restraint in religious matters—the fatal effects of the arbitrary exercise of the rights of patrons, with the obsequiousness of the leaders in the church to the great, to whom they have sacrificed the strength, the beauty, and the utility of the church,—all this, held up to the view of a virtuous administration, it is hoped, may reconcile them to the object of our wishes.

OUR present rulers have expressed a just jealousy of the increasing power of the crown. Shew them that patronage had in Scotland been applied by the servants of the Crown to no other purpose than to promote the interest of the Court in Parliament; that it has been a powerful engine of corruption, and destroyed that freedom of Parliament which is so essential to political liberty. Demonstrate to those in power, that as patronage was restored by the enemies of liberty and the royal family, the exercise of it has contributed to alienate the hearts of the people from their government, to produce murmuring and discontent in the minds of men, to exasperate them against their rulers and to embitter their spirits against one another. Shew them without reserve the amazing desertion of the people from our ecclesiastical establishment, the immense sums drawn from a poor people, and alienated from the common stock for erecting meeting-houses, and endowing
them

them. Point out to them the vast multitudes of his Majesty's subjects placed under the tuition of teachers, many of whom are destitute of the benefits of a regular or liberal education; and upon the whole, convince them that liberty, of which they have hitherto approved themselves patrons, requires an abrogation of the Act to the Queen Ann, or at least such a qualification of it as may prevent in future the evils complained of.

Patrons, and the whole aristocracy, will oppose the project with great violence; and great is their influence at Court. Hitherto applications to the legislative body on this account have proved ineffectual, and if no check is given to the aristocracy which hath long governed this country, neither this, nor any other branch of political liberty, will be reserved to us. Still it may be hoped, that sound policy will determine our present rulers to lend an ear to the great body of people in this kingdom, without permitting their judgment to be warped by the biased representations of personages even of the highest rank, who are fond of power, and have long remained in the untroubled exercise of domination.

NOR ought our great ones, if they consult their real interests, to stretch their power beyond the limits prescribed by humanity and justice. It is but the recovery of an unalienable right that is requested by the great body of the nation;—of a right wrested from them by men of arbitrary principles, by surprize, and even in a surreptitious manner. Why will men of honour continue tenacious of a power incompatible with the rights of those they ought to comfort and protect? Is it safe for the great to insult the many, by continuing to contemn their remonstrances, their requests, their most humble supplications? Have not the nobility, in other instances, by insisting pertinaciously on their powers, involved themselves and their country in ruin?

The Plebeians in Rome, while treated with lenity by the senators, lived quietly in submission to the laws enacted by the latter; but the former, finding their rights infringed in contempt of their complaints and petitions, gradually

gradually perceived their own importance in the scale of government, and, after a course of reciprocal encroachments, the balance of power was lost; the senators became cyphers in the state, and the result of the struggle was the introduction of the most miserable despotism that ever degraded or disgraced human nature. Good politicians have often remarked, that laws from which the body of the people are averse, how salutary soever, ought never to have been enacted, or, if enacted, ought to be repealed. The law of patronage, so far from being salutary, can subserve no purpose, but to increase the power of an aristocracy already too powerful, and to add to that system of corruption become already far too prevalent. It runs counter to the inclinations, because it violates the rights, of all his Majesty's subjects (a few members of the aristocracy only excepted), and, if insisted upon, may be productive of accumulated disorders, to which every good man must feel in his breast the utmost repugnance. Our rulers, animated with truly political ideas, will beware of forcing the people to perceive their own powers. Inalienable rights will not always continue to be invaded with impunity: Nor ought it to be forgotten, that sentiments which have long been accustomed to run in one channel, though they may be forcibly diverted for a season, will not fail to recur to their wonted current: It is also worthy remark, that power, in places remote from the seat of government, operates against liberty in proportion to its distance.

An illiterate and fanatical clergy must necessarily be the effect of this popular plan of election.—This hackneyed objection falls to the ground, when we consider the character of the clergy who filled the pulpits in this church for fifty years from the Revolution. Their superiority to the present incumbents will be cheerfully acknowledged by all who knew them. In point of piety, literature, and prudent abstraction from the world, there can be no comparison. Your clergy of late, it is true, have made some figure in the Belles Lettres: they merit the encomiums of the polite world, and do honour to their country.—These are but very few; but in point of the qualifications above mentioned, you will not venture any comparison.—
These

These respectable pastors were settled upon the plan proposed to you; and, were it steadily adhered to, would in due time produce a marvellous change to the better in the affairs of the church. Instances, indeed, occur in which the people, when permitted their choice, have chosen candidates far inferior in point of character and abilities to those proposed by the patron.

But these instances are few when compared with the great numbers imposed by the power of the patron, violently, on a reluctant people. True it is that the taste of the people has nothing in it of elegance or refinement; but it will bear a comparison with the taste of those who commonly take upon them to condemn the judgment of the middle and lower classes of men, and impose upon them, with great violence, those from whom they are averse. The former have generally the fear of God, and some degree of the religious principle by which they are determined in their choice of a minister; but it is matter of regret that a total forgetfulness of God, dissipation, selfishness, and vanity, are very striking features in the character of those who figure in the circles of the gay and the great.

THIS circumstance renders it probable, at least, that the middle and lower classes of men will form a truer judgment of the qualifications of a teacher by whom they may be best instructed. The heritors and elders of any parish are most interested in the character of a minister, and will be incomparably more cautious in their choice, than a patron who does not reside, or who has no interest in the parish, or a magistrate in a burgh, or a member of Parliament, who would secure his election, by obliging with a royal presentation such as he expects will favour him in return.

I HAVE held up to your view, my friends and countrymen, a plan for liberty and religion, justified by the practice of the church from her earliest ages, and as old as the establishment of Christianity in the reign of the Emperor Constantine, and continued till the corruptions of Popery had defaced religion, and extinguished all sense of order

order and liberty in the minds of its professors. A multitude of topics, perhaps of equal or superior weight, might be proposed to your consideration, to excite your zeal, and animate you to a due exertion of your influence in support of a cause connected with your dearest interests. Let me only beg that you will deliberately consider that patronage, if properly and candidly investigated, will be found to originate in superstition, and is a relic of Popery. It is congenial to the hierarchy of the Romish church, and breathes the spirit of despotism. Diametrically opposite to a republican constitution, it unhinges the whole frame of Presbyterian government.

It is calculated to introduce among you a lax, an illiterate, and improper clergy; to dissolve that connection which ought to unite ministers with their people, and to introduce faction, discord, and division, in the church.— It hath already driven a twelfth part of her members out of her communion, and produced disorders and mischiefs which, if persisted in, will in time annihilate your ecclesiastical establishment.

PATRONAGE is the engine of political corruption, renders the people averse from government, and the clergy incapable of contributing to their loyalty to their Prince, or influencing them to support government in times of difficulty and danger. The present is the moment you are required to seize, to obtain deliverance from a calamity which hath been the subject of complaint, and the deepest regret, for many years past. In vain will men affect a lively concern on this important subject, who will not embrace the present opportunity. In vain will they profess among their friends a zealous anxiety for the deliverance of the church, if they do not now openly and avowedly stand forth the advocates of a cause on which her existence seems to depend. Professions, you all know, unattended by suitable practice, prove their authors gross hypocrites. Are any of you capable of such indolent inattention to the liberty, to the constitution, to the sacred interests of your friends and posterity, as to remain inactive when you are solicited to strain every nerve in a cause so honourable, so beneficial, and so worthy the spirit which animated your ancestors, who spilt their best
C
blood

blood to procure you the blessings of liberty? Men who boast of their caution and prudence, and whose proceedings originate in pusillanimity and selfishness, will discover many apologies, and plausible excuses, for withholding their influence in the present crisis. But all men of spirit and candour will be at no loss to interpret such conduct as it ought. If the present is not the proper time, no future period can reasonably be expected more propitious: nor indeed will any occasion of doing good be considered in the proper light by men whose zeal evaporates in empty professions. But it is hoped that men of ability, of influence, of piety, and of prudence, will lay hold on the fair occasion which now offers itself to the wishes of the truly religious; for such an opportunity as the present will not probably again recur. Nor is it possible to conceive how men possessed of these qualities and talents, can employ them more for the honour of God, and the comfort of all good men.

It is not from General Assemblies that you can expect much relief. Perhaps the present are still more zealous partizans of patronage than the late rulers of the church. They want the experience, the discernment, the mild address, and candid eloquence, of him who was distinguished above all others by his authority and influence in former Assemblies. That avowed contempt of the people, that petulant insolence to those who differ from them, that domineering spirit of persecution, and that open apostacy from the moderate and orthodox habits of thinking and acting, which rendered your fathers so truly venerable, are characteristic of those who now would manage your Assemblies. From them, therefore, you may expect every discouragement. Still there are in the church as many of the laity and clergy as may conduct the object of your wishes to a comfortable issue; only be not discouraged by casual obstructions. Act with vigour and firmness, and associate for a purpose so interesting to your wishes. Above all, secure to your cause the patronage of the glorious Administrator of his church, by a steady adherence to truth, a gentle forbearance to those who differ from you, and a lively faith in the protection of that power, who will reward your honest endeavours in this and a better world.

O N

CIVIL LIBERTY.

FROM the memorable events of the present times, taken in connection with the liberal principles of those now in administration, we have reason to conclude, that many of the people have discovered their rights, and have courage to set bounds to arbitrary power. North America has exposed herself to most cruel calamities, and is become free. Ireland has vindicated her rights, and her noble endeavours are crowned with success. The Commons of England seem to emerge from venality and corruption, breathe a purer air, and emulate their ancestors in their zeal for liberty and virtue. The grand object of our patriotic ministers, to purge the House of Commons of servile dependants, and to rectify the representation of the people in Parliament, must interest the wishes of every honest man.

SHALL the inhabitants of Scotland be distinguished by a servile and supine indifference respecting their most invaluable rights, when his Majesty's other subjects, with a becoming ardour of spirit, vindicate those liberties which add dignity to human nature? When the liberal proposition was made in Parliament to reform the representation of England, one worthy citizen of this country stood single and unsupported, when he requested that the reformation should extend to Scotland. Since the year 1707 you have been excluded that proportion of liberty which has been enjoyed by England, in consequence of a compact made by your fathers. At that time they were under the influence of the terror of those cruel severities by which England had oppressed this country abroad and at home. A despotic aristocracy has continued since that period to controul and overawe you, and with all that boast of liberty, which hath been so loud
and

and clamorous, the middle and lower ranks of this country have hardly been able to taste the sweets of freedom. The members of an aristocracy have monopolised the blessings of government, and carefully retained in their pay a chosen band of their inferiors, who have celebrated the praises of a government, the benefits of which were confined to themselves and their employers.

But what good reason can be alledged why you may not be as free as your neighbours? Have you not the same right to liberty? Why are the rights of the representation of this country wrapped up in mysterious laws, which the learned alone can explain? Forty shillings of landed property intitles an Englishman to vote for a commissioner of Parliament. In Scotland near the same number of pounds, of old valued rent, are necessary.

THE Articles of the Union of the two kingdoms circumscribe and define the qualification of voters.—But have not you the same title to change the representation that your fathers have adopted? Are you bound by a convention concluded by a junto, in contradiction to the opinions, the remonstrances, the prayers of nine-tenths of the country? It is true, that the Union to us hath produced many salutary effects. Still our representation in parliament is by all men of thought considered as illiberal, and repugnant to justice and subordination. Is it rational, that a mean fellow in a trifling burgh shall be entitled to vote for a commissioner to parliament, while a gentleman in the country of rank and affluence is unqualified,—that in a city a few who have got into power, shall remain in it for ever, to the exclusion of thousands of superior ability and fortune,—that the great body of the people, those of most respect and usefulness in the commonwealth, shall have no representation, no protection of their rights, no liberty!

THE Helots in Greece were not on a more illiberal footing in this respect than the merchants, the farmers, the most respectable artificers in this country. Aristocracy saddles you with heavy taxes, whilst you are disqualified even for remonstrating against them. This body of men procures acts of parliament oppressive and intolerable,
whilst

whilst no resource remains for the sufferers but to mourn over those chains which still become more and more burdensome. Perhaps a greater instance of oppression does not occur in Turkey, than what is practised in this country! Your grandees obtain a law to assess the farmers in a county in a tax of more amount than the land-tax. They assume to themselves the exclusive administration of it; they apply it to purposes foreign to the interests of those who pay the tax, whilst the complaints of the industrious farmer are treated with contempt and accumulated oppression.

ARE your grievances without remedy? Will not the noise of the bursting chains of others awaken in you a virtuous anxiety and impatience to be delivered from those which have long continued to bind you, and which every day increase in their weight? Have you been so long inured to servility and thralldom, that, through the force of habit, you are reconciled to insignificance? Are you afraid to perceive your own strength, or to recognize your natural rights? Four hundred years have elapsed since Englishmen discovered and asserted their rights, and never lost sight of them amidst all the vicissitudes of government. In particular, the right of taxing themselves they maintained when they seemed to have yielded up every other claim to despotism. Have our Lords and Esquires an exclusive right to liberty? Are they the only useful members of society? Is freedom circumscribed by titles and by birth? Are the great the only wise and worthy citizens? Is merit necessarily connected with fortune? And have all the learning, penetration, sagacity, and virtue of human nature taken up their residence with wealth and honours?

Is there any good reason why civil causes should receive their decision only from this order of men, to the exclusion of a jury of peers of the parties concerned? In criminal cases this right is preserved to the people of this part of the island; why are they denied it in every other, whilst those of England are in possession of it in all? Are men of inferior rank possessed of less good sense, less perception of the difference betwixt right and wrong,—less probity,

probity, less religion than those of the same class on the other side the Tweed? Why should the latter boast of a privilege so highly interesting to the rights of human nature, whilst the former are left to lament, without remedy, the want of a branch of liberty so truly valuable?

MEN of Scotland, consider your natural rights, and have the spirit to assert them! Long, very long have you been excluded from many of the privileges of men and citizens; now is the happy moment which invites you to vindicate the blessings of free-born Britons: Seize it! Lose not an instant! Sentiments of liberty are breathed in every department of government. Those generous principles which glow in the breasts of the men who fill the first stations in administration, solicit your addresses,—they will exult at the prospect of a nation claiming their natural rights under their auspices. Confide in the grandeur of their spirit, and you cannot be disappointed.

LET not the illiberal and contracted principles of a few among yourselves, deter you from your duty to your country, your families, and posterity. If men of rank can discern their own importance, they will count it their honour to support your claim of liberty. They are not all so intoxicated by vanity and the love of power, as to despise the natural and acquired rights with which merchants, tradesmen, farmers, and the clergy of various denominations, are endowed. High rank, and a polite education, are the advantages of many members of the present aristocracy; but good sense, piety, and free and virtuous principles, are generally the endowments of the middle ranks of men. Our gentlemen of fortune know for whose sake they rule,—who vested them with authority, who have power to deprive them of it, to whom they must have recourse in times of danger for protection,—and by means of whom they can continue to enjoy their affluence in security. The wise and the sober will judge with candour; the noble and generous will support your claim: the lovers of Caledonia will triumph in an opportunity of contributing to her liberty;—nor can any Scotsman of worth hesitate to interest his warmest wishes, that the same measures of liberty to this, that have long been the blessings of our sister kingdom.

OBSERVE

OBSERVE, with gratitude, men of Scotland, the confidence reposed in you by your present rulers. They invite you to accept of arms in defence of your persons and properties, against your foreign enemies. A man deprived of his arms is a slave. The Romans disarmed the Britons after they had conquered them, and, for near four hundred years, laboured to civilize and enrich them. But when their conquerors were forced to desert them, these rich and polished Britons, ignorant of arms and their use, became a prey to your brave ancestors, and afterwards the slaves of warlike invaders. Resume, Caledonians, resume your arms. Display the ardent spirit of your heroic ancestors. It is for all that ought to be held dear among men that you are required to exert your utmost vigour. What avails your property if you have not power to protect it?—Your trade, your manufactures, your corn, your cattle, are held by a most precarious tenure, if you want skill and ability to defend them. Let it appear to the conviction of all the world, that you have no occasion to flee for protection to an army of mercenaries, whose bayonets may be turned against your own breasts, in consequence of the jealousy or caprice of a tyrant. The amiable character of the Prince upon the throne renders apprehensions on this score wholly groundless: But who knows what principles may animate the ministers of some of his successors?—Why should you think of holding your lives and fortunes at the mercy of any invader, when God and good men have put it in your own power to protect yourselves?—Will you think of loading yourselves and your posterity with heavy taxes, in support of a standing army, when you are invited to prove, by your own courage and magnanimity, that you are more than equal to the task of protecting yourselves?—It is now in your power to demonstrate the futility of every argument adduced in favour of an internal military force, for the protection of free men. It is a golden opportunity now put into your hands!—For the sake of your liberties, your properties, your children, your wives, and, I add, of your religion, and all your privileges as men and Christians, embrace it. Let not men of arbitrary principles—let not men of titles and fortune, snatch from you the fair occasion which providence has put in your power
of

of conferring on your country, yourselves, and your posterity, the most indelible obligations. By improving the propitious moment you may be safe, happy, and free, and entail those blessings on future generations. If you hesitate—if you slight or neglect it, you must transmit your names with infamy to all future generations. You will be classed with those Cappadocians who refused liberty when offered to them by the brave Roman people. The blessing was never restored to them, and they continued to be execrated on account of the debasement and degradation of their spirits.—Demonstrate, men of Scotland, demonstrate to those brave patriots who now govern you, that you are entitled to those claims of liberty you propose to their consideration. Merit from them, and from your country, that importance in the commonwealth to which you aspire. Prove, to the conviction of the world, your title to the same extent of liberty with your brethren of England; and ascertain your relation to those free and warlike ancestors who achieved the most heroic deeds of virtue.

11 JY 63