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Letter XV

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LETTER XV.

TO HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF GRAFTON.

MY LORD,

8. *July*, 1769.

IF nature had given you an understanding qualified to keep pace with the wishes and principles of your heart, she would have made you, perhaps, the most formidable minister that ever was employed, under a limited monarch, to accomplish the ruin of a free people. When neither the feelings of shame, the reproaches of conscience, nor the dread of punishment, form any bar to the designs of a minister, the people would have too much reason to lament their condition, if they did not find some resource in the weakness of his understanding. We owe it to the bounty of providence, that the completest depravity of the heart is sometimes strangely united with a confusion of the mind, which counteracts the most favorite principles, and makes the same man treacherous without art, and a hypocrite without deceiving. The measures, for instance, in which your Grace's activity has been chiefly exerted, as they were adopted without skill, should have been conducted with more than common dexterity. But truly, my Lord, the execution has been as gross as the design. By one decisive step you have defeated

all the arts of writing. You have fairly confounded the intrigues of opposition, and silenced the clamors of faction. A dark, ambiguous system might require and furnish the materials of ingenious illustration; and, in doubtful measures, the virulent exaggeration of party must be employed to rouse and engage the passions of the people. You have now brought the merits of your administration to an issue, on which every Englishman, of the narrowest capacity, may determine for himself. It is not an alarm to the passions, but a calm appeal to the judgment of the people, upon their own most essential interests. A more experienced minister would not have hazarded a direct invasion of the first principles of the constitution, before he had made some progress in subduing the spirit of the people. With such a cause as yours, my Lord, it is not sufficient that you have the court at your devotion, unless you can find means to corrupt or intimidate the jury. The collective body of the people form that jury, and from *their* decision there is but one appeal.

Whether you have talents to support you, at a crisis of such difficulty and danger, should long since have been considered. Judging truly of your disposition, you have perhaps mistaken the extent of your capacity. Good faith and folly have so long been received as synonymous terms, that the reverse of the proposition has grown into credit, and every villain fancies himself a man of abilities. It is the apprehension of your friends, my Lord, that you have drawn some hasty conclusion of this sort, and

that a partial reliance upon your moral character has betrayed you beyond the depth of your understanding. You have now carried things too far to retreat. You have plainly declared to the people what they are to expect from the continuance of your administration. It is time for your Grace to consider what you also may expect in return from *their* spirit and *their* resentment.

Since the accession of our most gracious Sovereign to the throne, we have seen a system of government, which may well be called a reign of experiments. Parties of all denominations have been employed and dismissed. The advice of the ablest men in this country has been repeatedly called for and rejected; and when the Royal displeasure has been signified to a minister, the marks of it have usually been proportioned to his abilities and integrity. The spirit of the Favorite had some apparent influence upon every administration; and every set of ministers preserved an appearance of duration, as long as they submitted to that influence. But there were certain services to be performed for the Favorite's security, or to gratify his resentments, which your predecessors in office had the wisdom or the virtue not to undertake. The moment this refractory spirit was discovered, their disgrace was determined. Lord Chatham, Mr. Grenville, and Lord Rockingham have successively had the honor to be dismissed for preferring their duty, as servants of the public, to those compliances which were expected from their station. A submissive administration was at last gradually collected from the deserters of all parties,

interests, and connexions: and nothing remained but to find a leader for these gallant well-disciplined troops. Stand forth, my Lord, for thou art the man. Lord Bute found no resource of dependence or security in the proud, imposing superiority of Lord Chatham's abilities, the shrewd inflexible judgment of Mr. Grenville, nor in the mild but determined integrity of Lord Rockingham. His views and situation required a creature void of all these properties; and he was forced to go through every division, resolution, composition, and refinement of political chemistry, before he happily arrived at the caput mortuum of vitriol in your Grace. Flat and insipid in your retired state, but brought into action you become vitriol again. Such are the extremes of alternate indolence or fury, which have governed your whole administration. Your circumstances with regard to the people soon becoming desperate, like other honest servants, you determined to involve the best of masters in the same difficulties with yourself. We owe it to your Grace's well-directed labors, that your Sovereign has been persuaded to doubt of the affections of his subjects, and the people to suspect the virtues of their Sovereign, at a time when both were unquestionable. You have degraded the Royal dignity into a base, dishonorable competition with Mr. Wilkes, nor had you abilities to carry even the last contemptible triumph over a private man, without the grossest violation of the fundamental laws of the constitution and rights of the people. But these are rights, my Lord, which you can no more annihilate, than you

can the foil to which they are annexed. The question no longer turns upon points of national honor and security abroad, or on the degrees of expedience and propriety of measures at home. It was not inconsistent that you should abandon the cause of liberty in another country, which you had persecuted in your own; and in the common arts of domestic corruption, we miss no part of Sir Robert Walpole's system except his abilities. In this humble imitative line, you might long have proceeded, safe and contemptible. You might probably never have risen to the dignity of being hated, and even have been despised with moderation. But it seems you meant to be distinguished, and, to a mind like yours, there was no other road to fame but by the destruction of a noble fabric, which you thought had been too long the admiration of mankind. The use you have made of the military force introduced an alarming change in the mode of executing the laws. The arbitrary appointment of Mr. Luttrell invades the foundation of the laws themselves, as it manifestly transfers the right of legislation from those whom the people have chosen, to those whom they have rejected. With a succession of such appointments, we may soon see a house of commons collected, in the choice of which the other towns and counties of England will have as little share as the devoted county of Middlesex.

Yet I trust your Grace will find that the people of this country are neither to be intimidated by violent measures, nor deceived by refinements. When they see Mr. Luttrell seated in the house

of commons by mere dint of power, and in direct opposition to the choice of a whole country, they will not listen to those subtleties, by which every arbitrary exertion of authority is explained into the law and privilege of parliament. It requires no persuasion of argument, but simply the evidence of the senses, to convince them, that to transfer the right of election from the collective to the representative body of the people, contradicts all those ideas of a house of commons, which they have received from their forefathers, and which they had already, though vainly perhaps, delivered to their children. The principles, on which this violent measure has been defended, have added scorn to injury, and forced us to feel, that we are not only oppressed but insulted.

With what force, my Lord, with what protection, are you prepared to meet the united detestation of the people of England? The city of London has given a generous example to the kingdom, in what manner a king of this country ought to be addressed; and I fancy, my Lord, it is not yet in your courage to stand between your Sovereign and the addressees of his subjects. The injuries you have done this country are such as demand not only redress, but vengeance. In vain shall you look for protection to that venal vote, which you have already paid for — another must be purchased; and to save a minister, the house of commons must declare themselves not only independent of their constituents, but the determined enemies of the constitution. Consider, my Lord, whether

this be an extremity to which their fears will permit them to advance; if *their* protection should fail you, how far you are authorized to rely upon the sincerity of those smiles, which a pious court lavishes without reluctance upon a libertine by profession. It is not indeed the least of the thousand contradictions which attend you, that a man, marked to the world by the grossest violation of all ceremony and decorum, should be the first servant of a court, in which prayers are morality, and kneeling is religion. Trust not too far to appearances, by which your predecessors have been deceived, though they have not been injured. Even the best of princes may at last discover, that this is a contention, in which every thing may be lost, but nothing can be gained; and as you became minister by accident, were adopted without choice, trusted without confidence, and continued without favor, be assured that, whenever an occasion presses, you will be discarded without even the forms of regret. You will then have reason to be thankful, if you are permitted to retire to that seat of learning, which, in contemplation of the system of your life, the comparative purity of your manners with those of their high steward, and a thousand other recommending circumstances, has chosen you to encourage the growing virtue of their youth, and to preside over their education. Whenever the spirit of distributing prebends and bishoprics shall have departed from you, you will find that learned seminary perfectly recovered from the delirium of an installation, and,
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what in truth it ought to be, once more a peaceful scene of slumber and thoughtless meditation. The venerable tutors of the university will no longer distress your modesty, by proposing you for a pattern to their pupils. The learned dulness of declamation will be silent; and even the venal muse, though happiest in fiction, will forget your virtues. Yet, for the benefit of the succeeding age, I could wish that your retreat might be deferred, until your morals shall happily be ripened to that maturity of corruption, at which the worst examples cease to be contagious.

JUNIUS.

LETTER IX.

TO THE PRINTER OF THE PUBLIC ADVERTISER.

SIR,

19. *July*, 1769.

A Great deal of useless argument might have been saved, in the political contest, which has arisen from the expulsion of Mr. Wilkes, and the subsequent appointment of Mr. Luttrell, if the question had been once stated with precision, to the satisfaction of each party, and clearly understood by them both. But in this, as in almost every other dispute, it usually happens that much time is lost in referring to a multitude of cases and precedents, which prove nothing to the purpose, or in main-

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