

THE
POOR MAN'S FRIEND ;

OR,

ESSAYS ON THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES

OF THE POOR.

By WM. COBBETT.

LONDON:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY W. COBBETT,
183, FLEET-STREET.

1829.

No. I.

**COBBETT'S
POOR MAN'S FRIEND:**

(R,)

Useful Information and Advice for the Working Classes ;
in a Series of Letters, addressed to the Working Classes
of Preston.

LONDON :

Printed and Published by W. COBBETT, No. 183, Fleet-Street.

PRICE TWO-PENCE.

LETTER I.

TO THE
WORKING CLASSES OF PRESTON.

Kensington, 1st August, 1826.

MY EXCELLENT FRIENDS,

1. DURING one of those many speeches, which you have so recently done me the honour to listen to, I promised to communicate, in the form of a little book, such information and advice as I thought might, in the present state of things, be useful to you. I am now about to fulfil this promise. The recollection of the misery in which I found so many of you ; those melancholy effects of poverty produced by taxation, that I had the sorrow to witness amongst a people so industrious and so virtuous ; the remembrance of these will not suffer me to be silent on the subject of the means necessary to the restoration of your happiness, especially when I think of the boundless kindness which I received at your hands, and which will live in my memory as long as memory shall live in me.

2. We are in a very ticklish state of things : the most sluggish and torpid of men seem to be convinced, that there must now, at last, be *some great change*. Then, observe,

the *manufacturing concern* is, in some sort, approaching *its end*: a total change in its *very nature* is about to take place: the demand for *food* and *raiment* must now address itself *to the land*: the *rights*, therefore, of the working man ought now to be clearly understood by him, and especially his *right to food and raiment*; a right guaranteed by the laws. Upon this and many other important subjects, the working man ought, in this awful state of things, to be made fully acquainted with *his rights*, and *his duties*, in order to guard him against the consequences of erroneous opinions. There are projectors, some of whom recommended an issue of *assignats*, and others a *mulcting* of all those who lent the King and Lords and Gentlemen and Parsons money, or, in other words, who lent the Government and Parliament, or nation, as it is called, money to carry on the late wars with, and to pay pensions and salaries and barrack-establishments and sinecures with. There is one SIR JAMES GRAHAM OF NETHERBY in Yorkshire, who in a large pamphlet, recommends this sort of *mulcting*. But, I shall tell you more about this in another Number. It is, however, an affair that *you must clearly understand soon*; for, you are all deeply concerned in the proposed *mulcting*. If that were to take place *with impunity*, all but the aristocracy and parsons would become the basest of slaves: we should all be mere beasts of burden to those two sets of men. If this impudent aristocrat's project could be *quietly carried into effect*, the people of England would deserve to be lashed to death.

3. The subjects on which I have to submit my thoughts to you are many, and every one of great importance. In the present state of things, when *starvation stalks forth in the midst of plenty*, it behoves us to look well into the *nature and origin of property*, and into the *conditions* on which it is held. Men are not to *lie down like dogs and die for want*: God never made them for that, and the laws of England positively command the contrary. This, therefore, is now become a great subject; and we must rightly

understand it in all its branches. But, indeed, the subjects on which I wish to address you are *many*; and as I wish to make this little work as convenient and as useful to you as possible, I intend to publish it in SIX OR EIGHT NUMBERS, one Number on the first day of each Month, until December or February next. Each Number will be sold to other people for TWO-PENCE, by the single copy; but, according to my promise, I will cause, as far as I am able, every working family in *Preston*, to have delivered at their dwelling one copy of *each Number*, as a gift from me, and as a mark of my gratitude for their great kindness towards me. There will be some difficulty attending this delivery; but that which is done without any difficulty is seldom much worth.

4. I shall endeavour to make this little work *really useful* to the *working classes in all the manufacturing districts*. I shall, from time to time, give them *my best advice* on matters of great importance to them; I shall make every effort in my power to give them clear notions of their *rights* and *duties*; I shall do every thing in my power to guide them safely through the perilous times that are approaching; I shall neglect nothing that I can lawfully do in order to rescue them from the miserable state, into which they, without any fault of their own, have now been plunged; and, above all things, I shall endeavour to show them, to *prove* to them, that the *fault will be in themselves*, if they *lie down like dogs* and die with hunger; for, as I shall show them, the humane laws of their country have provided ample succour for every one that is in want, and that, if succour be not obtained, there must be neglect to appeal to, or daring violation of, the laws.

5. This is a subject of so much importance; it is so vitally interesting at this moment, that I should enter on it in preference to all others were it not necessary for me, first of all, to address you on the subject of the LATE ELECTION, and to offer you something in the way of *caution* as to the NEXT ELECTION. When I have done this, I shall treat of other matters; and I hope to make these six or eight

Numbers form, when put together, a book worthy of the title that I have given it.

6. The history of the late election for Preston is, at present, fresh in your minds; but it ought, nevertheless, to be recorded in print: it is due to you and to me, that we put in black and white a statement of the facts and circumstances which led to the return of WOOD, whom none of you cared a straw about, and to the exclusion of me, for whose return nineteen-twentieths of you were anxious beyond description. At Preston the right of election amounts very nearly to *universal suffrage*. Every man, who has attained the age of twenty-one years, and who has *inhabited* the town for the *last six months*, without receiving *parochial relief*, has a vote. Even this is an unjust limitation; for, according to the Charter of the Borough, the right of voting is in "*the inhabitants at large*," without any limit as to time of residence; and there is no more law for limiting it to a residence of six months than for limiting it to a residence of ten years. The exclusion on account of *parochial relief* is also arbitrary, and it is cruelly unjust. A man in want has a *right* to relief; it is a right which he possesses in exchange for other and greater rights which he has given up; and is he, because he has *need to use this right*, to have his right of voting taken from him?

7. However, we shall have to discuss this matter more fully by-and-by, when we come to talk of the means which you ought to make use of effectually to prevent yourselves and your children from starving, during the dreadful times that are approaching. The right of voting extends, in practice, to *four fifths, at any rate, of the working men*; and as almost the whole of these working men were decidedly and openly for me, while a large part of the shopkeepers and others anxiously *wished* me success, it is necessary that we clearly see and well remember the means by which these wishes and hopes were defeated, in order that we may effectually guard against any such means in future.

8. All Lancashire, and, indeed, all England, knows, that Stanley and Wood canvassed the town early in May; that I entered Preston for the first time on the 15th of May; that I remained there only three days, and then returned to London; that my reception was that of an old and beloved friend rather than that of a stranger; that I returned to Preston on the 29th of May, and was received amidst the acclamations, not only of the people of Preston but of those of the country all round about, who had been drawn together by the news of my intended arrival, many of them coming from a great distance, and forming, all together, an assemblage, from first to last, of, perhaps, forty thousand people; that, on my canvass, I was voluntarily promised more than half the real good votes in the town; that, during the month that I was in Preston, I never appeared in the streets but amidst huzzas and blessings; that, upon no occasion did any one person ever, in public, and before my face, openly and aloud express disapprobation of me, or of any thing that I said or did; that STANLEY (a grandson of the Earl of Derby), having caused an expensive procession to be prepared to do honour to his entrance into Preston, was hissed, hooted, and spitten upon by the people; that WOOD (a son of an old cotton manufacturer) prudently crept into the town unseen; that BARRIE (a Captain in the Navy and a Commissioner in Canada), the moment he showed his face, was pursued and pelted, and was actually compelled to flee from the hustings the first day he appeared upon them; that, even after the election was over, all the marks of popular attachment to me remained; that I came out of the town amidst all those demonstrations of respect and admiration which had marked my entrance into it; and that the like demonstrations accompanied me even beyond the boundaries of the county.

9. These facts are well known; and it is also known that I had a majority of, perhaps, twenty to one on the *show of hands*. It is also well known to you, that, on the actual canvass, I had promised me more than three times as many

votes as WOOD, and many more than STANLEY. It is, therefore, necessary to state the means by which my exclusion and the return of Stanley and Wood were effected. These objects were accomplished principally by the use of *deal boards* and other *deal timber*. A model is now making of these curious contrivances of NICHOLAS GRIMSHAW; and I think it likely that this model will finally be deposited in the Town-Hall of Preston, and there kept to the immortal honour of the engineer. The history of the deal boards is very well known to you; and, as the whole nation will hear enough of them, before next winter be over; as there will be both a model and a copper-plate picture of this set of most curious contrivances, it is unnecessary for me to say more of them here, than to state their effects. They enabled the Mayor to keep me, from the outset, at the *bottom of the poll*, though I had three times as many votes as WOOD, and more than either of the other two, and though my voters were waiting in hundreds to be polled. These deal boards and timbers enabled him to know *whom every man was going to vote for, before the man was examined, and before the validity of his vote was decided on*. They enabled him to cause the polling to be quick, or slow, just as he pleased; accordingly, he kept ten of my voters more than *two hours* under examination, in the early part of the election; and, in the latter part, when I had ceased to bring up men to vote, he frequently polled at the rate of *a man in half a minute*. During the *three* first days he polled only two hundred and eight men; and, in one of the latter days, he polled 610 men. In short, these deal boards and timbers enabled him to put into the seats those whom he chose to put into them, except in case of such an accident as that which, on this occasion, put in Wood, and an account of which we shall presently see.

10. The *tally-scheme*, by which you have been *jostled* out of your rights for half a century, having, on the third day, been put an end to at my demand, and at the demand of some of my voters, the Mayor then took the votes *by fours*, for a day,

and after that by *ones*; but he still kept the *ditches*, which accomplished two things: namely, they enabled him to know *whom every man was going to poll for BEFORE the goodness or badness of the vote was decided on*; and they enabled him to prevent my voters from coming on faster than those of any other candidate; or, in other words, as the Tallies had put me at the bottom of the poll so this polling, through ditches and by *turns*, must necessarily keep me there.

11. Seeing him resolved to pursue this course, having evidence that *terror* was at work amongst the voters, and that some had already been thrown out of bread for having voted for me; seeing also, that much more than enough had been done to set aside the election, and I, at the end of the ninth day, declared my intention *not to bring up any more voters*, and I gave notice, that, next morning, I should *throw my ditch open to all parties!* Here was a pretty scene! Here had I the absolute power of causing Wood, or Barrie, just which I pleased, to be elected. I could *give* my ditch, or *sell* it, to which I pleased; and he would, thereby, have *two votes to the other's one*. And this they call a *free election!* I neither gave nor sold my ditch, but flung it open for the use of all parties. Now, then, as it was become next to impossible to poll all the voters, it was clear that whoever (of Barrie and Wood) got the command of this ditch, got the election. Here, then, there was something to *fight* for: and accordingly the fight began the next morning!

12. The great object with my friends was to *keep out Barrie*. I was *now* out of the question myself, and they cared nothing for Wood; but they *abhorred* Barrie, as the tool of those who had kept them down for so many years. Wood had *green* colours; *green* was the people's colour; *the green*, it is positively asserted, had been *tied under the hoofs of the horses*, ridden in the chairings, by the HORNBIES and HORROCKSES! The people were, therefore, bent upon the defeat of Barrie; they were re-

solved, at all hazards, that *the green* should not, this time, be trampled under the hoofs of the horses of the insolent tyrants. Wood had, at this time (when I opened my ditch) only fourteen votes more than Barrie; Barrie had, for several days, been fast gaining upon him; only about *a third* of the voters had polled; and Wood would have been driven off in two days, had it not been for the poor fellows, some of whom HE, WHILE HE SAT QUIETLY, *saw hand-cuffed and taken to gaol by dragoons*, after they, and *they alone*, had given him his majority; and by dragoons, too, of the bringing in and the employing of whom *he had expressed his approbation!*

13. These good fellows had, for the most part, voted for me plumpers. They still carried my colours, *green and white*. They took the green and white staves (about six feet long), which my people had used, and had laid by. These they carried to Wood's Committee Room, where each staff was cut into *three bludgeons*; and as there were seventy-two staves, here were arms for two hundred and sixteen men. Other bludgeons were got; and, at last, there were, I believe, about two hundred and fifty men thus armed. Their object was *to keep out of my ditch* all but those who were about to vote for me, or for me *and Wood*; or in other words, their object was *to defeat Barrie*, or, still more correctly, to defeat those who had trampled on them for so many years.

14. Barrie could muster no force to resist this; his voters were driven back from my ditch; and, as mine now split between me and Wood, Barrie must, it was clear, be beaten, unless this bludgeon force could be put down; and, unless Stanley and Barrie *instantly coalesced*, and Stanley, by ceasing to split occasionally with Wood, shut him out. On the 21st of June, therefore, after a vain attempt, on the part of Barrie's people, to get into my ditch; after, in short, they had been beaten and kicked away from the place, what does the Mayor do but *adjourn the court to the next day!* It is very curious, that Stanley, *with some of his committee*, had,

just before this adjournment, set off to LORD DERBY'S, whence they returned the next day. It was said, that their business was, *to consult on a proposition which Stanley had received for forming a coalition with Barrie*, like the old one between the Stanleys and the Horrockses. It was also said, that this proposition was *rejected*; and, indeed, the cold and shabby and even sneering reception, given to LORD STANLEY, by the *Tories* and even by the *Whigs*, when he came in at the *race-time*, seems to warrant this report. Be all this as it may, the polling began again on the 22d in the morning, and continued throughout the day, the green and white bludgeon-men having the absolute command of my ditch, and shutting out all those who were not about to vote for me, or for me *and Wood*. Thus was Wood, by these good, honest fellows, whom he (*sitting perfectly quiet*, alongside of Dr. Crompton,) saw hand-cuffed and taken off to gaol *under the sabre*; aye, under the sabres which he himself had approved of bringing in; thus was Wood placed above Barrie on the poll; and Barrie, seeing that there was to be no coalition with Stanley sufficient to take Stanley's splits from Wood; Barrie, seeing this, now, on Thursday morning, the 22d June, delivered to the Mayor *a protest against the proceedings!*

15. Nevertheless the polling kept on throughout the day, Barrie's people being strictly excluded from my ditch; but, the next day (the 23d June), at about eleven o'clock, in came *the dragoons*, some galloping in amongst the people in *front of the hustings*, others posting themselves at the entrance of my ditch, while others, dismounted, rushed into the ditch, sword in hand, and seized many of the bludgeon-men, who were actually hand-cuffed, and taken directly from the hustings to the goal, under the naked sword! Three of the dragoons were then posted at the entrance of my ditch; they sat there, on their horses, with their swords drawn, during the remainder of the polling time of that day, and during the whole of the polling time of the next day. So that we were, nearly two whole days, actually poli-

ing under the naked sabre! At this rate, we shall soon see Captains and Serjeants taking the poll! If we were not under "*military government*" at Preston, I should like to know what "*military government*" means. All this is positively forbidden by *the law*; and, it remains for us to see, whether the electors and town of Preston be *out-lawed*.

16. There now remained but one day to come, Monday, 26th June. It came, and the Mayor declared Stanley and Wood *duly elected*. The number of votes, according to the Mayor's account, were thus: STANLEY 2923, WOOD 1993, BARRIE 1653, COBBETT 995. Nothing can be more deceptious than the appearances here; for, of *plumpers*, Stanley had 36, Wood 92, Barrie 71, Cobbett 451. So that, if we reckon by *half votes*, Stanley had 2959, Wood 2064, Barrie 1728, Cobbett 1446; and, observe, that, on the 9th day I left off bringing up, and desired no more of my voters to come, unless it were to please themselves; and, observe also, that, at this time, only about *a third* of the voters had polled. But the curious thing is to observe, *how Wood got in*. He had only 736 votes *of his own*, he got more than 700 from Stanley, and he got 446 from me! Take my 446 from him, and he is 110 *under Barrie*. And these 446 he got merely because my friends wished *to keep out Barrie*. Those who gave Wood these votes disliked him. "D—n Wood," said one of them, when he gave his vote; "but," said he, looking at Barrie, "I vote for him *to keep thee out*." Wood had far less of real votes *for him* than Barrie had; and, observe, Stanley's *great majority* is all a deception. He got about 700 splits from Wood, and about 800 splits from Barrie; so that he *brought up*, after all, only about 1400 men, and there *came up* for me 995 men, because all mine would have been plumpers, if it had not been that 446 gave Wood splits, in order to keep out Barrie. It is very material to bear this in mind; for it shows, that neither Stanley nor Wood has any real weight on their side in the borough. Stanley was supported by many of those,

both high and low, who would not look at him another time; and, as for Wood, I should think that the horse on which he rode round the town, would be as likely to be chosen as he.

17. Other opportunities will offer for speaking to you of the family of Stanley, and of the *benefits* you are likely to derive from them; other occasions will offer for asking you whether you will again suffer yourselves to be cajoled by ten or a dozen of poor fowls being set a fighting, and three or four horses set a galloping, by the family of Stanley; other occasions will offer for expressing a hope, that you are no longer to be thus *amused*, as the Romans were, after they became the slaves of haughty and insolent nobles, who, while they fed them, like dogs, on offal and on garbage, instituted shows and games to amuse them; other occasions will offer for speaking to you on the subject of the Stanleys; and, as to Wood, I should not have said a word (it being impossible that he should ever trouble us again), had not the transactions connected with his name been such as to give us a true idea of the fellows who set up for *gentlemen*, on the ground of pretending to be *duellers*.

18. To say that Wood was first a cotton-broker, then a sugar-baker, then in training for an Unitarian Parson, and then a God-knows-what; to say this is nothing; thousands have been members of parliament with no fairer pretensions to *gentlemanship*. It may have been a joke to say (as was said at Preston), that, when he went on his canvass, he carried *lolly pop* in his pocket to please the electors' children with, but who can behold the man's *look*, hear the sound of that *voice* of his, and see (when he is speaking) the movement of that seamstress-like *arm and elbow* of his; who can see and hear these, and reject as incredible the amiable gentlemanship of the lolly-pop appeal to the paternal feelings of the electors?

19. It was not, however, till he came to be placed in open hostility with Barrie and his *men of war*, that the *gentlemanship* of Wood became so very conspicuous. He had three antagonists; and we shall now see how he dealt with

them. I shall relate the facts as they are stated in the MANCHESTER GUARDIAN of 1st July, because this paper is owned and edited by one TAYLOR, who was, as he tells us, Wood's negociator in these "affairs of honour." Wood had three antagonists; first CAPT. COLQUITT, next CAPT. BARRIE, and, third, the red-coated Captain, whose name was POLHILL. As to the first, he, on the hustings, and to Wood's face accused him of "*cowardice and treachery.*" Wood took *no notice* of this at the time. It was *published* in the PRESTON PILOT the next day (Saturday morning), and then this TAYLOR, this newspaper-man of Manchester, was set to work to try to get Capt. Colquitt to "*explain* the offensive words," in order to "*save the honour,*" as it is called, of Wood. Taylor sent somebody (whom he does not name) to Colquitt; but, observe, with how *gentle a message!* It was this: to ask whether, "on receiving from "Mr. Wood, an assurance, *on his word and honour,* that "he had not been accessory, directly or indirectly, to the "*employing of bludgeon-men,* Capt. Colquitt *might not "feel it right* to make *some explanation* of the offensive "words he had used;" that is to say, whether, *after* Wood had protested his *innocence,* Colquitt might not consent to unsay the charge of "*treachery and cowardice.*" Colquitt positively refused to do this: he, in the most manly manner, said, that he had accused Wood of *treachery* and *cowardice,* and that he would give *no explanation at all,* and would *retract nothing;* that is to say, that he would abide by what he had said; namely, that Wood had been guilty of "*treachery and cowardice.*"

20. Now, then, to be sure, there must be *a fight,* especially as the "*man of honour,*" Taylor, the newspaper-man from Manchester, had the "*honour,*" of Wood in his keeping. It was impossible for Wood to avoid fighting, unless he, at once, gave up all pretensions to being a "*man of honour.*" Here was a man who had called him "*traitor and coward,*" and who stood to his words. So that he must, according to the law of "*honour,*" *fight* the accuser, or

pass for a "*traitor and a coward!*" Hard choice! Sad hobble! And now you shall see how your Member of Parliament got out of it with *a whole skin* at any rate.

21. Colquitt's disdainful refusal was conveyed to Wood's "*man of honour and gentleman*" (as the fellow *calls himself*), about *noon* on the Saturday. Nothing was done! No challenge sent to Colquitt. It was, however, necessary for Wood *to do something,* or to give up, at once, all pretensions to the character "*of a gentleman and a man of honour,*" as the great fool, Taylor, calls it. Well, now, what was done; what did these "*men of honour*" do? Did they determine to *fight,* or did they determine to confess that they *would rather not!* They did neither of these. They did that which one almost blushes to think of as the act of human beings. I told Wood, at the hustings, that my feeling towards him was that of *contempt:* let the world hear the following facts, as related by this Taylor himself, and then say, whether this feeling of mine was not just and proper.

22. There was, at the election, a Dr. CROMPTON, who was so constantly with Wood, on the hustings and every where else, that he was called "*Wood's dry-nurse;*" but the people, when they gave the Doctor this name, could hardly be aware how very apt it would finally appear to be. It is the business of a dry-nurse to keep the child from harm, from harm of all sorts, and especially from *bodily* harm. The Doctor, therefore, at *midnight,* on the Saturday, taking one CHARLES HOWARD (*another companion of Wood*) along with him, went to the Mayor's house; and, having called him up, brought forward HOWARD, who SWORE, that "*he believed* that a duel was about to take place between Mr. Wood and Capt. Colquitt." Then Dr. Crompton *demandd from the Mayor* a WARRANT for the taking of Wood and Colquitt into custody, in order that they might be *bound* to keep the peace: that is to say, *bound not to fight!* This was done accordingly; Wood entered into a bond of 2,000*l.* to keep the peace for *two*

years, with two sureties in 1,000*l.* each; but, it is curious to observe, that the Capt. was (as this Taylor acknowledges) suffered to go at large upon *his word*, without being bound at all, though he, on the Saturday, had (as this Taylor says) actually sent Wood a threatening message on another subject.

23. This newspaper-man, Taylor, would have his readers believe, that neither he nor Wood *knew* that the good and kind and watchful DRY-NURSE was going to the Mayor. He would have us believe, that the Doctor went to the Mayor and got Wood taken up and bound over in 2,000*l.* for *two years*; and all this *sorely against the will* of Wood, who was (Taylor would have us believe) as *eager for fight* as one of Lord Derby's cocks! Ah! "gentleman" Taylor, the newspaper-man, you cannot gull us in this way; for, if the DRY-NURSE had acted *contrary to Wood's wishes*, how came Wood, the next morning, to have the said DRY-NURSE for one of HIS BAIL? And, how came he to be, on the day after, sitting, at the hustings, under the wing of the DRY-NURSE, like a frightened chicken under the protection of an old hen? Oh! no, "gentleman" Taylor, the newspaper-man of Manchester, we are not to be induced to swallow this. What! Did Dr. CROMPTON go to the Mayor *without Wood's knowledge*? Did he go, and *inform against Wood*; and get a warrant to take him up; and then get him *bound over for two years*, in the sum of 2000 pounds: did the doctor do all this *against Wood's wish*; and was Wood *not angry* with the Doctor! And, *if he were angry* with the Doctor, how came he, on the Sunday, to have the Doctor for one of his bail, and, on the Monday, to be again sitting *cuddled up under his wing* at the hustings? What! DOCTOR CROMPTON go and *inform against a man*, get a warrant to take the man up, cause the man to be seized by a constable and led prisoner before a magistrate; the Doctor do all this, and then *go with the prisoner*, and BE HIS BAIL! Why, my friends of Preston, if Charles Howard, Dr. Crompton, Newspaper Taylor

(though, as he says, "a gentleman"), and Wood himself; if they were all to make their several voices into one, and if with that one voice, they were to *take an oath*, that the DRY-NURSE and HOWARD did not go to the Mayor and get the warrant *with Wood's knowledge and wish*; if they were all to swear this, till they were hoarse, is there one single man of you that would believe it?

24. But, whatever we may think of this affair, it is nothing, when compared with the affairs with BARRIE and POLHILL. COLQUITT finding, on the Saturday afternoon, that his charge of "*treachery and cowardice*" produced *no effect*, sent a real challenge to Wood. "Gentleman" Taylor the newspaper-man, gives this challenge (of which Capt. M'QUHAE was the bearer) in the following words: "Captain M'Quhae is instructed by Captain Colquitt to demand from Mr. Wood *immediate satisfaction* for having stated, in one of his speeches from Croft's Inn, that the British colours were disgraced by being followed by such a man as Captain Barrie; Mr. Wood's communication to be full and in writing.—Saturday, 24th June, 1826." Now, "*immediate satisfaction*" means *unsaying what you said*, or fighting the party. You will observe that COLQUITT does not *ask for explanation*, as Wood did; but that he "*demand satisfaction*," and "*immediate*" satisfaction too!

25. Now mark. This TAYLOR, the "gentleman" newspaper-man, says, upon this, "that he, finding, from conversation with WOOD, that WOOD had *never made use of any such language about BARRIE*; and, being himself quite sure, that WOOD never had made use of any such language about BARRIE," he, the gentleman newspaper-man, being *quite sure* that WOOD had never made use of any such language, said that there could be "*no objection to an explicit disavowal of it*." And this was the answer that a "*man of honour*," that a fighting gentleman newspaper-man gave to so peremptory, and, indeed, so insolent a demand as that of COLQUITT! But,

the gentleman newspaper-man went a great deal further than this; for he gave Colquitt's messenger the following written certificate:—"Mr. Taylor is requested, on the part of Mr. Wood, in reply to Captain M'Quhae's note, explicitly to state, that he has never, at any time during this election, asserted that 'the British colours were disgraced by being followed by such a man as Captain Barrie,' or made use of any words to that effect.—Red Lion, Preston, June 24th, 1826, eleven o'clock, p. m."

26. The men of war finding that all these efforts had failed, Capt. BARRIE, himself, tried his hand upon WOOD, on the Monday, upon the hustings, by sending a message to him to know, whether he, WOOD, had made use of the following words, which words had appeared in the Preston Chronicle of the Saturday: "Let him (Captain Barrie) bear the national flag against the foe if he will: but if he were here I would tell him this, that the *national flag was never more disgraced then it is by being borne in a procession of men, who are brought up to vote against their consciences by the price of bribery.*"—WOOD, after consulting, as man-of-honour TAYLOR tells us, wrote and sent to Captain BARRIE the following words: "I am not answerable for newspaper reports, but I have no hesitation in saying, that the report of my speech is inaccurate in many important points, and *that I did not utter the words as above quoted by the Chronicle*; and I have further no hesitation in saying, *that I never said, or meant to imply, that Captain Barrie had in any way whatever disgraced the national flag; or that he (Captain Barrie) had brought up his men to vote against their consciences, by the price of bribery,*—JOHN WOOD."

27. This is gentleman TAYLOR's account of this transaction; but it was a great deal more humiliating to WOOD than this; for BARRIE read the offensive passage in the Preston Chronicle to WOOD upon the hustings; and then, turning to Wood, he said, looking fiercely at him, at the

same time, "*is that true?*" To which Wood, to the astonishment of his own people, answered, "NO: IT IS NOT." Still BARRIE was unsatisfied; and, still looking fiercely at Wood, said, "*I must have that in writing.*" Upon this WOOD immediately left his box, and went out to the hall at the back of the hustings, where he, and the gentleman newspaper-man, got up the purgation note which I have inserted at the close of the last paragraph.

28. Poor fellow! What a hunting they gave him! It is notorious that he did say these words, or words to this effect. This is known to hundreds and hundreds of persons at Preston. The Reporter of the Morning Herald still insists that he heard the words. The Editors of the Preston papers say as much for themselves. Could all these people be deceived? After I left Preston, I read, with great surprise, the above account in the Manchester Guardian. Several people at Preston had told me that WOOD had, in his speeches at the inn, accused Barrie of bribery; I, therefore, wrote back to my son, who was still at Preston, to make strict inquiries into the matter; and to send me such evidence as would enable me to speak positively upon the subject. My son found that there were many of our own friends who heard WOOD utter the words: but, in choosing a person to give evidence on the subject, he thought it best to take one of WOOD's own friends, great numbers of whom had heard the words uttered, had approved of the words, and had felt most indignant at WOOD, for having, in so shocking a manner, eaten those words. My son, therefore, inquired for some friend of WOOD who had heard these words; and he found THOMAS LEE, who had, observe, *voted a plumper for WOOD*, and who made the following affidavit:—

Thomas Lee, of No 3, High-street, in the parish of Preston, in the county of Lancaster, Weaver, maketh oath and saith, that on Monday the 19th day of June last, after the close of the poll on that day, he attended with a great number of other persons to hear Mr. Wood speak from the window of his inn; that this deponent

stood on the edge of the pavement, at about four yards distant from the house and nearly directly under the window from which Mr. Wood spoke; that he, so situated, heard the whole of Mr. Wood's speech very distinctly; that he has a clear recollection of all that Mr. Wood said, so that if the report of Mr. Wood's speech were read to him, he could, if any word were stated in such report which had not been delivered by Mr. Wood on the occasion aforesaid, immediately point it out; he further saith that the report, which appeared in the Preston Chronicle, of the 24th of June last, being a report of the said speech of Mr. Wood, has been read to him, this deponent; and he further saith, that with respect to the words following, to wit.—“Let him (meaning Captain Barrie) bear them (meaning the national colours) against the foe if he will, but if he were here I would tell him this, that the national flag was never more disgraced than it is by being borne in a procession of men who are brought up to vote against their consciences by the price of bribery;” that with respect to these words he did distinctly hear them, or words to the same effect, uttered by Mr. Wood in the course of his speech aforesaid; and this deponent moreover saith, that when these words were uttered there was great applause from the persons assembled, in which applause he believes that no one joined more heartily than himself.

Sworn before me, at my office in } The mark of
Preston, this sixth day of July, in } +
the year our of Lord one thousand } THOMAS LEE.
eight hundred and twenty-six.

EWD. RISHTON,
a Master Extraordinary in Chancery.

29. There needs no other remark upon this, than that, even this is not more than we might reasonably expect from the man who could bring forward, and appear to believe in, the BOOK OF WONDERS.

30. We now come to the third antagonist; namely, little Captain POLHILL. This Captain was the Commander of the horse soldiers that were brought into the town, during the election. He had, it seems, been attacked, by hooting, or in some such way, by people, as he asserted, *wearing green ribbons*. And he took it into his head, that WOOD should *make an apology for this to him*; though it was not done in Wood's presence, nor within half a mile of the spot where Wood was at the time. The fact is, as I heard,

and as I believe, that these marks of hatred bestowed upon the little Captain, were bestowed upon him by good fellows, who were wearing *my* colours, and not WOOD's, and who had been *disarmed* by the soldiers on the Friday. Nevertheless, the little Captain, wishing to have an apology from *somebody*, and thinking it not very likely that he should get one from me, was resolved to have one from poor WOOD! Accordingly when WOOD had concluded his last speech, at the hustings, this POLHILL, who was standing in the Mayor's box, called out to WOOD, in an authoritative tone, to make the acknowledgment; that is to say, to disclaim the men, who, as he, POLHILL, asserted, had insulted him! Monstrously impudent as this was, coming from a *paid soldier*, to a man who was now a *Member of Parliament*; monstrously impudent as this was, the poor thing, WOOD, with the “man-of-honour”-newspaper-man on one side of him, and with the dry-nurse, Doctor CROMPTON, on the other side of him, first wanted to be *allowed* to make the disclaimer from the window of his inn; but the noble Captain *insisted upon his doing it on the spot!* He submitted; and, he was proceeding to say, that, “the gentleman who was insulted, was an officer in the *King's Guards*”; but here he was interrupted by POLHILL (who is not half so big as himself), crying out, “The *King's Dragoon Guards!*” and WOOD, just like a boy, standing before his master at school, resumed: “the *King's Dragoon Guards.*” After this he went on to disclaim all connexion and acquaintanceship with, all friendship for, all mercy towards, those who had been so dreadfully wicked as to insult this great little Captain! Is there a man, or a boy? no, nor a woman, nor a girl, amongst the radicals of Preston, who would have done such a thing as this!

31. So much for the election that we have had: now, for that which we shall have next spring. BARRIE said that he would petition. I do not believe that he will do it. I think that those whom he will listen to, will bid him *be quiet*; will tell him, that *they like Wood and Stanley very well*;

that these are two men that will *do no harm*; that Cobbett has been *kept out*; and that, the holes being both shut now against Cobbett, it would not be *wise to open them again*. I dare say, that, if the Captain really have set his heart upon a seat, he will find some good-natured gentleman to give him one, rather than see him upon the holes again at Preston. Therefore I do not think that Barrie will petition; but, *I know that I shall*; and that, unless all law and all justice, and even all pretence to law and justice, be abandoned, I shall *set aside the election*. WOOD, I hear, comforts himself with the hope, that I shall not venture to encounter the *great expense* of a petition. The same thoughts are, I dare say, passing in the mind of the spitten-upon STANLEY. To their mortification be it known, that this expense, whatever it may be, will be borne by others and not by me, who, however, will take special care that it shall amount to but very little. Not so will it be on their part. They have not the knowledge, the talent, the zeal, the labour, for such an undertaking. They must BUY them all. Every thing must be bought by them. Hardly any thing need be bought by me; and there is one thing, that we shall have the eyes of the whole country upon the Preston Election Committee. In Lancashire you are prone to think (and God knows with but too much reason), that there is no justice for any body that the Government does not like. However, there are, except in Lancashire, certain *bounds* to be thought of in matters of this sort. The mode of forming the Committee, or Court, for trying an Election, is perfectly fair. The members are all upon their oaths; the witnesses are upon their oaths; the evidence is taken down in short-hand; the trial is *open*; the parties are heard by themselves or counsel; I shall plead my own cause; I shall examine my own witnesses; I shall cross-examine the witnesses of WOOD and STANLEY; I shall draw up my own petition; I shall frame my own charges; and I have no scruple to say, that, seeing the great interest that will be excited by the trial, and seeing that the eyes of

the whole country will be fixed upon this Committee; I have no scruple to say, that there must be something very much like an end of all law and of all government, before fifteen members of the House can be found to declare *upon their oaths*, that the election ought not to be set aside.

32. This being the case, you may confidently look forward to another election in the course of about eight or nine months; and if I be *alive* at the time, I will be a candidate. I make, observe, *life* the only condition. If I be ill, I will send somebody to canvass and to speak for me. I may possibly be elected for some other place, before that time; but that shall not prevent me from standing for Preston. In short, there is nothing but death itself that shall prevent my being a candidate at the next election for Preston. We shall have one thing, at least, quite new, at another election; that is to say, we shall see no more TALLY TRAPS. There will be a model of our late traps exhibited to the Committee of the House of Commons; and you may be well assured that even your children's children will never see another TALLY TRAP. I think, too, that the Master Manufacturers will, before the next election, have found out *quite sufficient reasons*, for not attempting to bribe, to bias, or to sway their men; and, in short, for not doing any of those things, which many of them have heretofore done, in order to induce their men to vote contrary to their inclinations, or to withhold their votes contrary to their inclinations. I am very much of the opinion that these masters will never play, nor attempt to play, these tricks again.

33. I am decidedly of opinion, that things are now so working together as to cause the next Election for Preston to be something like *free*. In the meanwhile, let me advise you all to promise nobody your votes until you see all the candidates before you. You cannot know what will happen before the election takes place; and therefore it will be best to promise nobody, and then nobody can complain of breach of promise; this complaint was, in the last instance, at once most impudent and most ridiculous. However, it is as well

to make no promise, and then no such complaint can be hatched up.

34. Having now said what is necessary relative to the Election, I should proceed, if I had room, to give you my best advice, with respect to the line of conduct which you ought to pursue amidst the troubles and the sufferings that now exist in the country, and amidst those greater troubles and greater sufferings that are at hand. When I had the honour to address you, for the first time, I told you that these sufferings were but *beginning*. You have found them increase daily and hourly; and I give it you as my decided opinion, that they will continue to increase; and that there will be no efficient relief until there be a *Reform of the Parliament*. But, in the meanwhile, the people must not starve: it is no man's duty to *lie down and die with hunger*. This is what no Government has a right to demand of any man. The law of Nature, the law of God, and the law of England, say that no man shall starve while there is food in the land. In countries, on the Continent, where there are no *Poor-rates*, it is *not theft* to TAKE food, if it be necessary to preserve life, whether of a man's self, his wife, or his children. Men are held to have a *right* to preserve life by taking food belonging to others, unless there be an Overseer, or Magistrate, or somebody to cause sufficient relief to be given to the person who is in danger of perishing of hunger. According to the laws of nature, *all things belong to all men*. Men possess things *in common*. There is, according to the law of nature, no private property. My loaf is as much your loaf as it is mine, and it is more yours than it is mine, if you want it more than I do. This is the law of nature. When men entered into civil society, they gave up this law, and they established the law of *rights*, or of *private property*. My loaf is now, therefore, *exclusively mine*, and you have no *right* to have even a slice of it. Thus, one man becomes rich, while other men remain poor; distinctions, of which the law of nature knows nothing. But (and

now I beg you to *mark well* what I say), if civil society get, no matter by what means, into such a state, that men cannot, by their labour, provide themselves and families with a sufficiency of food and of raiment; if, at the same time, there be no Magistrate, or other person, having authority to take from the rich and to give to the suffering poor, a sufficiency to preserve them against the natural effects of hunger and of cold: if (mark well what I say) civil society get into this state, then *the law of nature, as far as regards the destitute person, returns in its full force*. My loaf is no longer exclusively mine: it is yours, as much as it is mine; and you, if you be amongst the destitute persons, are held to have a *right* to take as much of my loaf as you want to relieve yourself, so that you do not expose me to suffer from want.

35. Now, my kind and good friends of Preston, while I most earnestly pray God that our country may never witness a state of things that shall make this doctrine of practical application; and while I most anxiously and earnestly hope that you and your families will be preserved from this scourge; while these are my prayers and my hopes, such are my fears with regard to the evils which this system is calculated to bring upon the kingdom, that I think it my bounden duty to discuss the doctrine contained in the foregoing paragraph. However that doctrine may appear to hardened ruffians, who can talk so calmly about the "*thinning of the population*," I repeat, that if civil society get into such a state that men cannot, by their labour, provide themselves and families with a bare sufficiency of food and of raiment; and if, at the same time, there be no Magistrate, or other person, to supply the destitute with a sufficiency to preserve them against the natural effects of hunger and of cold; then I say, that it is our duty to inquire, whether, according to the law of nature and the law of God, and according to the civil law and the law of England; according to all these, whether it be THEFT for destitute persons to TAKE,

THE POOR MAN'S FRIEND.

without payment and without leave, food and raiment, which are the property of other people; provided they do not take more than enough to relieve their necessities; and, provided also, they do not, by their taking, leave in want those persons from whom they take.

36. As long as our humane and excellent *Poor-laws* shall be duly executed, we never can be exposed to this dreadful alternative; but, to hear what the law says on the subject, and to discuss that subject; these are necessary, in order to show the excellence of our own *Poor-laws*, to induce the people to appeal to and rely upon them, and to induce the Overseers and the Magistrates promptly to obey them, in order that, in the perilous times that are apparently approaching, we may, at any rate, avoid those violences, which must add to the misery already existing. This duty I shall, therefore, endeavour to perform in my next Number.

I am

Your faithful friend and most obedient servant,

W. M. COBBETT.

N^o. II.

COBBETT'S POOR MAN'S FRIEND:

OR,

Useful Information and Advice for the Working Classes
in a Series of Letters, addressed to the Working Classes
of Preston.

LONDON:

Printed and Published by W. COBBETT, No. 183, Fleet-Street.

PRICE TWO-PENCE.

LETTER II.

TO THE

WORKING CLASSES OF PRESTON.

Burghclere, Hampshire, 22nd August, 1823.

MY EXCELLENT FRIENDS,

37. AMONGST all the new, the strange, the unnatural, the monstrous things that mark the present times, or, rather, that have grown out of the present system of governing this country, there is, in my opinion, hardly any thing more monstrous, or even so monstrous, as the language that is now become fashionable, relative to the condition and the treatment of that part of the community, which are usually denominated the POOR; by which word I mean to designate the persons who, from age, infirmity, helplessness, or from want of the means of gaining any thing by labour, become destitute of a sufficiency of food, or of raiment, and are in danger of perishing if they be not relieved. Such are the persons that we mean, when we talk of THE POOR; and, I repeat, that, amongst all the monstrous things of these monstrous days, nothing is, in my opinion, so monstrous, as

the language which we now constantly hear, relative to the condition and treatment of this part of the community.

38. Nothing can be more common than to read, in the newspapers, descriptions the most horrible of the sufferings of *the Poor*, in various parts of England, but particularly in the North. It is related of them, that they eat horse-flesh, grains, and have been detected in eating out of pig-troughs. In short, they are represented as being far worse fed and worse lodged, than the greater part of the pigs. These statements of the *newspapers* may be false, or, at least, only partially true; but, at a public meeting of rate-payers, at Manchester, on the 17th of August, Mr. BAXTER, the Chairman, said, that some of the POOR had been *starved to death*, and that *tens of thousands were upon the point of starving*; and, at the same meeting, Mr. POTTER gave a detail, which showed, that Mr. BAXTER's general description was true. Other accounts, very nearly official, and, at any rate, being of unquestionable authenticity, concur so fully with the statements made at the Manchester Meeting, that it is impossible not to believe, that a great number of thousands of persons are now on the point of perishing for want of food, and *that many have actually perished from that cause*; and that this has taken place, and is taking place, IN ENGLAND.

39. There is, then, no doubt of the existence of the disgraceful and horrid facts; but, that which is as horrid as are the facts themselves, and even more horrid than those facts, is the cool and *unresentful* language and manner, in which the facts are usually spoken of. Those who write about the misery and starvation, in Lancashire and Yorkshire, never appear to think *that any body is to blame*, even when the poor die with hunger. The Ministers ascribe the calamity to "*over-trading*"; the cotton and cloth and

other master-manufacturers ascribe it to "*a want of paper-money*," or, to the *Corn-Bill*; others ascribe the calamity to the *taxes*. These last are right; but, what have these things to do with the treatment of the poor? What have these things to do with the horrid facts relative to the condition and starvation of English people? It is very true, that the enormous taxes which we pay on account of loans made to carry on the late unjust wars, on account of a great standing army in time of peace, on account of pensions, sinecures and grants, and on account of a *Church*, which, besides, swallows up so large a part of the produce of the land and the labour; it is very true, that these enormous taxes, co-operating with the paper-money and its innumerable monopolies; it is very true, that *these enormous taxes*, thus associated, have produced the ruin in trade, manufactures and commerce, and have, of course, produced the *low wages* and the *want of employment*: this is very true; but, it is not less true, that, be wages or employment as they may, the poor are not to perish with hunger, or with cold, while the rest of the community have food and raiment more than the latter want for their own sustenance. The LAW OF ENGLAND says, that there shall be no person to suffer from want of food and raiment. It has placed *officers* in every parish to see that no person suffer from this sort of want; and, lest these officers should not do their duty, *it commands all the magistrates* to hear the complaints of the poor, and to compel the officers to do their duty. The LAW OF ENGLAND has provided ample means of relief for the poor; for, it has authorized the officers, or overseers, to get from the rich inhabitants of the parish as much money as *is wanted* for the purpose, without any limit as to amount; and, in order, that the overseers may have no excuse of inability to make people pay, the law has armed

