

IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MONDAY, MAY 2. On entering the house this evening the first object that attracted attention was the Chartist petition...

CHARTIST PETITION.

Mr. T. DUNCOMBE rose to present the petition of the Chartists; and the house, which previously was rather noisily conversational, became, at once, hushed and still. The hon. member said, that, looking to the vast importance of the petition which he was called on to present...

The question having been put and agreed to, The clerk read from a printed copy the petition at length, as follows:—

TO THE HON. THE COMMONS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

"The petition of the undersigned people of the united kingdom sheweth,—That government originated from, was designed to protect the freedom and promote the happiness of, and ought to be responsible to, the whole people; that the only authority on which any body of men can make laws and govern society is, delegation from the people; that as government was designed for the benefit and protection of, and must be obeyed and supported by all, therefore all should be equally represented; that any form of government which fails to effect the purposes for which it was designed, and does not fully and completely represent the whole people, who are compelled to pay taxes to its support, and obey the laws resolved upon by it, is unconstitutional, tyrannical, and ought to be amended or resisted; that your hon. house, as at present constituted, has not been elected by, and acts irresponsibly to the people; and hitherto has only represented parties, and benefited the few, regardless of the miseries, grievances, and petitions of the many. Your hon. house has enacted laws contrary to the expressed wishes of the people, and by unconstitutional means enforced obedience to them; thereby creating an unbearable despotism on the one hand, and degrading slavery on the other; that if your hon. house is of opinion that the people of Great Britain and Ireland ought not to be fully represented, your petitioners pray that such opinion may be unequivocally made known, that the people may fully understand what they can or cannot expect from your hon. house, because, if such be the decision of your hon. house, your petitioners are of opinion that where representation is denied, taxation ought to be resisted; that your petitioners instance, in proof of their assertion that your hon. house has not been elected by the people, that the population of Great Britain and Ireland is at the present time about 26,000,000 persons; and that yet, out of this number, little more than 900,000 have been permitted to vote in the recent election of representatives to make laws to govern the whole; that the existing state of representation is not only extremely limited and unjust, but unequally divided, and gives preponderating influence to landed and monied interests, to the utter ruin of the small trading and labouring classes; that the borough of Guildford, with a population of 9,920, returns to Parliament as many members as the Tower Hamlets, with a population of 300,000; Evesham, with a population of 3,998, elects as many

representatives as Manchester, with a population of 200,000; and Buckingham, Evesham, Totness, Guildford, Honiton, and Bridport, with a total population of 23,000, return as many representatives as Manchester, Evesham, the Tower Hamlets, Liverpool, Marylebone, and Lambeth, with a population of 1,400,000; these being but a very few instances of the enormous inequalities existing in what is called the representation of this country; that bribery, intimidation, corruption, perjury, and riot prevail at all Parliamentary elections, to an extent best understood by the members of your hon. house; that your petitioners complain that they are enormously taxed to pay the interest of what is termed the national debt—a debt amounting at present to 800,000,000 of pounds—being only a portion of the enormous amount expended in cruel and expensive wars for the suppression of all liberty, by men not authorised by the people, and who, consequently, had no right to tax posterity for the outrages committed by them upon mankind; and your petitioners loudly complain of the augmentation of that debt, after 26 years of almost uninterrupted peace, and amidst poverty and discontent rage over the land. That taxation, both general and local, is at this time too enormous to be borne, and in the opinion of your petitioners, is contrary to the spirit of the Bill of Rights, wherein it is clearly expressed that no subject shall be compelled to contribute to any tax, tallage, or aid, unless imposed by common consent in Parliament; that in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, thousands of people are dying from actual want; and your petitioners, whilst sensible that poverty is the great exciting cause of crime, view with mingled astonishment and alarm the ill provision made for the poor, the aged and infirm; and likewise perceive, with feelings of indignation, the determination of your hon. house to continue the Poor Law Bill in operation, notwithstanding the many proofs which have been afforded by sad experience of the unconstitutional principle of that bill, of its unchristian character, and of the cruel and murderous effects produced upon the wages of working men and the lives of the subjects of this realm; that your petitioners conceive that bill to be contrary to all previous statutes, opposed to the spirit of the constitution, and an actual violation of the precepts of the Christian religion; and, therefore, your petitioners look with apprehension to the results which may flow from its continuance. That your petitioners would direct the attention of your hon. house to the great disparity existing between the wages of the producing millions and the salaries of those whose comparative usefulness ought to be questioned, where riches and luxury prevail amongst the rulers, and poverty and starvation amongst the ruled; that your petitioners, with all due respect and loyalty, would compare the daily income of her Sovereign Majesty with that of thousands of the working men of this nation; and whilst your petitioners have learned that Her Majesty receives daily for her private use the sum of 164,178. 10s., they have also ascertained that many thousands of the families of the labourers are only in the receipt of 3d. per head per day; that your petitioners have also learned that his Royal Highness Prince Albert receives each day the sum of 104,28s., whilst thousands have to exist upon 3d. per head per day; that your petitioners have also heard with astonishment that the King of Hanover daily receives 57,10s., whilst thousands of the tax payers of this empire live upon 2d. per head per day; that your petitioners have, with pain and regret, also learned that the Archbishop of Canterbury is daily in the receipt of 52,10s. per day, whilst thousands of the poor have to maintain their families upon an income not exceeding 2d. per head per day; that, notwithstanding the wretched, and unparalleled condition of the people, your hon. house has manifested no disposition to curtail the expenses of the state, to diminish taxation, or promote general prosperity; that, unless immediate remedial measures be adopted, your petitioners fear the increasing distress of the people will lead to results fearful to contemplate; because your petitioners can produce evidence of the gradual decline of wages, at the same time that the constant increase of the national burdens must be apparent to all; that your petitioners know that it is the undoubted constitutional right of the people to meet freely, when, how, and where they choose, in public places, peaceably, in the day, to discuss their grievances and political or other subjects, or for the purpose of framing, discussing, or passing any vote, petition, or remonstrance, upon any subject whatsoever; that your petitioners complain that the right has unlawfully and unconstitutionally been infringed; and 500 well-disposed persons have been arrested, excessive bail demanded, tried by packed juries, sentenced to imprisonment, and treated as felons of the worst description; that an unconstitutional police force is distributed all over the country, at enormous cost, to prevent the due exercise of the people's rights.

And your petitioners are of opinion, that the Poor Law, the police stations, being co-existent, have originated from the same cause,—viz. the increased desire on the part of the irresponsible few to oppress and starve the many; that a vast and unconstitutional army is upheld at the public expense for the purpose of repressing public opinion in the three kingdoms, and likewise to intimidate the millions, in the due exercise of those rights and privileges which ought to belong to them; that your petitioners complain that the hours of labour, particularly of the factory workers, are protracted beyond the limits of human endurance, and that the wages earned, after unnatural application to toil in heated and unhealthy workshops, are inadequate to sustain the bodily strength and supply those comforts which are so imperative after an excessive waste of physical energy. That your petitioners also direct the attention of your hon. house to the starvation wages of the agricultural labourer, and view with horror and indignation the paltry income of those whose toil gives being to the staple food of this people; that your petitioners deeply deplore the existence of any kind of monopoly in this nation; and whilst they unequivocally condemn the levying of any tax upon the necessities of life, and upon those articles principally required by the labouring classes, they are also sensible that the abolition of any one monopoly will never unshackle labour from its misery until the people possess that power under which all monopoly and oppression must cease; and your petitioners respectfully mention the existing monopolies of the suffrage of paper, money, of machinery, of land, of the public press, of religious privileges, of the means of travelling and transit, and a host of other evils too numerous to mention, all arising from class legislation, but which your hon. house has always consistently endeavoured to increase instead of diminish; that your petitioners are sensible, from the numerous petitions presented to your hon. house, that your hon. house is fully acquainted with the grievances of working men; and your petitioners pray that the rights and wrongs of labour may be considered, with a view to the protection of the one and to the removal of the other; because your petitioners are of opinion that it is the worst species of legislation which leaves the grievances

of society to be removed only by violence or revolution, both of which may be apprehended if complaints are unattended to and petitions despised.

That your petitioners complain that upwards of £9,000,000 per annum are unjustly abstracted from them to maintain a church establishment from which they principally dissent; and beg to call the attention of your hon. house to the fact that this enormous sum is equal to, if it does not exceed, the cost of upholding Christianity in all parts of the world beside. Your petitioners complain that it is unjust, and not in accordance with the Christian religion, to enforce compulsory support of religious creeds, and expensive church establishments, with which the people do not agree; that your petitioners believe all men have a right to worship God as may appear best to their consciences, and that no legislative enactments should interfere between man and his Creator; that your petitioners direct the attention of your hon. house to the enormous revenue annually swallowed up by the bishops and clergy, and entreat you to contrast their deeds with the conduct of the Founder of the Christian religion, who denounced worshippers of mammon, and taught charity, meekness and brotherly love. That your petitioners strongly complain that the people of this kingdom are subjected to the rule of irresponsible lawmakers, to whom they have given no authority, and are enormously taxed to uphold a corrupt system, to which they have never, in person or by representation, given their assent. That your petitioners maintain that it is the inherent, indubitable, and constitutional right, founded upon the ancient practice of the realm of England, and supported by well-approved statutes, of every male inhabitant of the united kingdom, he being of age and of sound mind, non-convict of crime, and not confined under any judicial process, to exercise the elective franchise in the choice of members to serve in the Commons House of Parliament; that your petitioners can prove that by the ancient custom and statutes of this realm; Parliaments should be held once in each year; that your petitioners maintain that the members elected to serve in Parliament ought to be the servants of the people, and should, at short and stated intervals, return to their constituencies, to ascertain if their conduct is approved of, and to give the people power to reject all who have not acted honestly and justly; that your petitioners complain that possession of property is made the test of men's qualification to sit in Parliament; that your petitioners can give proof that such qualification is irrational, unnecessary, and not in accordance with the ancient usages of England; that your petitioners complain that by influence, patronage, and intimidation, there is at present no purity of election; and your petitioners contend for the right of voting by ballot; that your petitioners complain that seats in your hon. house are sought for at a most extravagant rate of expense, which proves an enormous degree of fraud and corruption; that your petitioners, therefore, contend, that to put an end to secret political traffic, all representatives should be paid a limited amount for their services; that your petitioners complain of the inequality of representation, and contend for the division of the country into equal electoral districts. That your petitioners complain of many grievances borne by the people of Ireland, and contend that they are fully entitled to a repeal of the legislative union. That your petitioners have viewed with great indignation the partiality shown to the aristocracy in the courts of justice, and the cruelty of that system of law which deprived Frost, Williams, and Jones of the benefit of the objection offered by Sir F. Pollock during the trial at Monmouth, and which was approved of by a large majority of the Judges. That your petitioners beg to assure your hon. house that they cannot, within the limits of this their petition, set forth even a tithe of the many grievances of which they may justly complain; but should your hon. house be pleased to grant your petitioners a hearing by representatives at the bar of your hon. house, your petitioners will be enabled to unfold a tale of wrong and suffering—of intolerable injustice, which will create utter astonishment in the minds of all benevolent and good men that the people of Great Britain and Ireland have so long quietly endured their wretched condition, brought upon them, as it has been, by unjust exclusion from political authority, and by the manifold corruptions of class legislation; that your petitioners, therefore, exercising their just constitutional right, demand that your hon. house, to remedy the many gross and manifest evils of which your petitioners complain, do immediately, without alteration, deduction, or addition, pass into a law the document entitled 'The People's Charter,' which embraces the representation of male adults, vote by ballot, annual Parliaments, no property qualification, payment of members, and equal electoral districts; and that your petitioners, desiring to promote the peace of the united kingdom, security of property, and prosperity of commerce, seriously and earnestly press their petition upon the attention of your hon. house. And your petitioners, &c."

The petition having been read, Mr. T. DUNCOMBE moved, "That this petition be printed with the votes.—Ordered"

AFGHANISTAN.

The Times publishes, by permission, the following letter of Lady Sale to her husband, who has so gallantly and skilfully maintained his post at Jellalabad. Lady Sale's letter is interesting, as giving the account of an eye-witness of the events which preceded the tremendous disasters which accompanied the retreat through the mountain passes, and throughout which she is known to have preserved the same heroic firmness which she showed at Cabul. The conduct of Captain Sturt is beyond all praise, and Lady Sale's masculine energy and determination are marvellous.

It would appear that Shah Soojah was dethroned early in the affair, but it will be observed that Lady Sale's account only extends to the 8th November, and that we are yet far from having any accurate knowledge of the terrible series of events which lasted from the 2nd of November, when the insurrection broke out, to the 6th of January, when the final catastrophe of the retreat commenced. It is impossible not to see that great blame attaches in some quarter, and that General Elphinstone has been greatly wanting in firmness; but how far he was compelled to act under the orders of Sir William Macnaghten, and afterwards of Major Pottinger, is still a problem. It is also very confidently stated, that the insane act of separating the troops from their Commissariat at Cabul was the act of Sir William Macnaghten; but whether it was to be attributed to the love of parade in his own quarter of the town near the palace, or to a regard for his safety, does not appear. It was the act which, by depriving the troops of provisions, led to their and his own destruction. But no general ought to have consented to such an act of folly.

COPY OF A LETTER FROM LADY SALE TO GENERAL SIR ROBERT SALE, From Cabul, giving a Precis of Events in that city from the 2nd to the 8th of November, 1841, and despatched on the 9th of that month.

"My dear Sale,—The last letter I had from you was dated the 1st from Gundamuck. On the 2nd an insurrection broke out in Cabul, the shops plundered, Johnson's house and treasury looted (stripped) and burnt. He was in cantonments, his guards and servants murdered. Troup and Warburton were in cantonments; their houses burnt; Sir A. Burnes, his brother, and Mr. Broadfoot, murdered; Skinner supposed to be secreted by his gomashtha; Sturt was sent by the General a message, and was stabbed in four places in the King's presence—the face, the shoulder, a glance on the arm, and on the side. There are three principal chiefs at the head of this—Abdoolah Khan, Atehokaye Moota Mouin, and Segunda Khan. The Kussubashes are in, but are afraid to declare openly in our favour. Shelton, with two regiments and one company, in the Bala Hissar. On the 3rd the 27th came in. They had to fight their way, being followed by 200 men, and had five killed and fifteen wounded. Gordon slightly wounded. A number of Kohistanes came into Cabul.

"The Trevors got out of the city with just the clothes they had on their backs. Their house burnt. The Affghans attacked the cantonment and fort, but were repulsed by Waller, who was wounded by a ball, which lodged in his armpit. Another large party, who have raised the religious standard, came against the cantonments at the rear gate, where our guns dealt destruction, and the cavalry cut them up. Sturt able to speak, the wound in his shoulder deep, the side not so bad, the lungs uninjured; the face wound near the corner of the eye; he was struck on the bone with such force, that he was stunned for the moment; he had warded off two blows.

"On the 4th, Khan Shurreen Khan and others drove part of the fighting men out of the town. The enemy took possession of the small fort nearly opposite our bazaar that joins on the King's gardens. The guns played all day against the gate of the Shah Bagh, which is filled with the enemy; it cannot be blown open with powder, as there are too many people about it. A large party of horsemen showed themselves on the Shah Sang-bill, Mahmoud Khan's fort, where the tower has been thrown down, has been taken possession of by the enemy. He is on our side, and therefore they have cut off his soul's ears. We shotted and shelled the fort opposite our bazaar all day, but with little or no effect. The Kohistanes up in arms and furious. Maula and Wheeler murdered: the men overpowered. Maule's khatagie (servant) alone escaped; came in half naked this day (the 4th). Saw killed Gordon and Swayne, of the 4th, Robertson of the 44th, and four men wounded. Walsh, Hollaken, Warren, and sixteen men, 6th cavalry, wounded; thirty-one missing. At tea-time an alarm; very brisk firing.

"5th inst.—The troops employed all day. Guns and mortars, with shot and shell, at the fort, with very little effect.

"6th inst.—Sturt insisted, weak as he was, in shirt, plasters, and pay jumas, (drawers,) on going to the General, (Elphinstone,) as there was no engineer there but himself. We have only Warburton and Eyre as artillery officers—no laboratory man—the General gave him leave to do what he pleased—by ten o'clock we got all in order—by twelve a good breach, and in a few minutes the wall was carried—Raban killed—Dear wounded—Hobbes and twelve of the 13th volunteered for the assault—the man badly wounded—those of the enemy who escaped were joined by a large body of horsemen, well dressed and mounted, evidently Kussubashes. More than 2,000, others say 3,000—a beautiful day. Anderson's horse charged up the hill, and drove the enemy all along the crest of it to the extreme left, where the 5th Cavalry charged up—they were hemmed in—More Affghan horse came up, and they had a great struggle with swords, but the Affghan matchlock was so hot, that the in turn drove ours back all along the ridge, and they had outnumbered us so greatly as to be able to retire in excellent order. Anderson's horse again went up the road to challenge them, but their position was good and they maintained it. We had every man out on duty cantonments. A brigade was much wanted in the field. Two guns of Warburton's were seized by the enemy in the city, and the men forced to work them. They have thrown a number of balls into cantonments and into Sturt's garden from Mahmoud Khan's fort. Sir William Macnaghten has given 50,000 rupees to a Kussubash chief to create a diversion in our favour, and promised him two lacs if he succeeds. The Envoy and General agreed to send for the 13th and 35th (Sale's brigade)—at first the General would not, but yesterday the order went off for you to return with the 13th and 35th, leaving your sick, wounded, and baggage in safety to come on by long marches: but much responsibility is thrown on you in this way, and you will have to fight great numbers near this, whatever the state of the country may be far off.

"The enemy have had possession of the Commissariat Fort these two days—to-day they have set it on fire, as also a village near the town that fired on them. We thought it was the city on fire. Sturt got the wall of the garden near the Commissariat Fort down by the Sappers to-day. A new King and Vizier had been set up, but the other chiefs will not have them. Codrington's corps in Chareekan surrounded. All the officers wounded. Rattray and Salisbury killed. Sturt's wounds are doing well, but he overworks his strength: his mind keeps him up; and Harcourt tells me to give him wine and arrowroot. He cannot get open his mouth to get food in properly. His tongue and throat have suffered, and all the nerves about. He is out all day, and the soldiers help him about. Last night he did not get to bed till one, and then was waked up by a note. Mackenzie defended the fort he was in till his ammunition was expended, and then he cut his way out: has three wounds. We have intelligence that we were to be attacked to-night, and that they were making boosa bags to throw into the ditch. No one had made arrangements for an attack. The General and Anquetil gave Sturt a carte blanche. He has told off the officers and people to their posts, and paraded them this evening, and at nine went with Piton, Eyre, and Pellew, all the rounds. The Envoy is in cantonments, and his place is a cavalry and infantry entrenched camp and the walls loop-holed. We have a nine and six-pounder in the battery next us, fifteen guns in position, the walls well manned, and our men staunch. If we get over to-night, we shall, I trust, repulse the enemy till you arrive. Heaven shield us all! I hope they will not attack us this night; but the unusual stillness of no firing looks like mischief.

"8th inst.—We had an alarm at four o'clock. The enemy attempted to take the fort back again. They mined a large hole, and set fire to the bastion, but were driven back. We are all in high spirits, and look forward to your arrival with interest and anxiety.

"With our united love. "FLORENTINE SALE."