

Document 9

PETITION OF JANUARY, 1648

Appeared in London on or about January 18, 1648. In *An Impeachment* Lilburne calls it the "Petition of the 19 of January." The petition was not collected by Thomason. It is reprinted here from *A Declaration of Some Proceedings*, February 14, 1648, pp. 26-34. Lilburne later (July 17, 1649) reprinted it in his *An Impeachment of High Treason Against Oliver Cromwell*, pp. 45-53.

When the organization of agitators failed to secure the united support of the army for the promulgation of *An Agreement Of The People*, the Levellers, believing that either chaos or a Cromwellian dictatorship lay in the offing, turned again to the device of petitioning to secure mass support for their scheme of government. Apparently the petition was never formally presented to Parliament. According to one of his enemies, Lilburne declared on the evening of January 17 that thirty thousand copies were printed and would be ready for distribution the next day.¹ Lilburne himself directed the organization of the campaign; he promoted mass meetings in London; he caused a committee to be selected to plan and co-ordinate a nation-wide effort to secure signatures to the petition; he appointed Chidley and Prince to collect contributions ranging from two pence to a half crown a week for sending messengers with the petition into all the counties. "Trustees" were to serve in every parish.² Lilburne told the Commons that he had had "a finger" in the framing of the document, that he and his comrades had brought it forth "as a salve to cure all our sores and diseases, and to knit the hearts together

¹ *A Declaration of Some Proceedings*, p. 17. In a later edition of Masterson's information, this figure was changed to three thousand. *The Triumph stain'd*, February 10, 1648, p. 14.

² *An Impeachment Of High Treason*, pp. 21 and 22. In *The Triumph stain'd* Masterson reproduces an interesting letter signed by Lilburne, Wildman, John Davis, and Richard Woodward, addressed to the people of Kent, and dated January 9, 1648. The letter urges meetings in every division of the county and appointment of active men in every town to rouse the citizens to support of the petition. On January 23 the supporters of the petition were to confer with the signers at Dartford. The letter is certainly authentic, but so far as I know it does not appear elsewhere.

of all ingenuous men, in every faction or interest, that had but the least spark of a desire to do unto their neighbours as they would be done unto." ³ He thought the petition "of transcendent concernment to all honest and just men in my native Country," ⁴ and claimed that had it not been for Cromwell's agents a hundred thousand people would have signed it.

Sounding the tone of Lilburne and Overton rather than the conciliatory accents of Walwyn, the petition is much more peremptory in tone and specific in demands than its predecessor of March, 1647. Every sentence speaks the bitterness and despair of the Leveller faction. They still fear, as is apparent in the introduction, that king and Lords will be restored to their pre-war power. Hence the emphasis in the first three articles on the constitutional responsibility of the Commons to the people only, and its complete supremacy as the governing body. Article 4 reveals a widely shared dissatisfaction with Parliament's powerful committees, reflected also in Milton's bitter condemnations; this article has no counterpart in the March petition. Another new Leveller plank is the sharp demand for accounting of national expenditures (Article 10); still others appear in Article 14, for the levying of taxes according to ability to pay; in Article 13, for provisioning the poor and raising wages; and in Article 16, against Parliament members appearing for private clients in courts of law. Strangely enough, no demand appears for the annihilation of tithes; the Levellers for the first time announce themselves content with toleration of all sects, without accompanying abolition of the state church.⁵ Their constitutional demands show a sharp shift to redress of economic grievances, now intensified by the scanty harvests of 1647, and a new awareness of the insistent pressure of economic power.

When the January petition was printed, over two months had passed since the presentation of *An Agreement Of The People*. Yet in the petition appears no specific limitation of Parliament's power, no suggestion of "a law paramount." The only reflection of *Agreement* influence is the threat of appeal to the people and the demand for manhood suffrage in Article 11. This is highly

³ *An Impeachment*, p. 21.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Wildman says the plank on tithes was omitted in order not to "disengage any considerable partie, and so continue our distractions." *Truths triumph*, p. 3.

significant, of course, representing, as it does, a constitutional pattern not realized until two centuries later, and then not in England. There were several advantages, from the Leveller point of view, of foregoing for the moment the principle of a written constitution. The first was that the petitionary principle was well established, acceptable in theory even to their enemies, and therefore not subject to attack as a revolutionary proposal; it therefore could be used as a propaganda instrument to rally mass support. A second was that legal precedents favorable to democratic ideas, in the use of which Lilburne was by this time more expert than any other English leader, could be advanced as justification for specific demands. Its enemies remonstrated against the long marginal notes,⁶ which gave the impression that every article had its roots deep in English history. Then, too, according to his own statements, Lilburne was seeking relief from the injustices and imprisonment heaped upon him by the Lords, the Commons, judges, Parliamentary committees, and jailors. The petition was at once the most effective means of seeking redress and of dramatizing the wrongs suffered, as he thought, by thousands of workers and tradesmen. From each new arraignment, each new imprisonment, he emerged with a new application of an ancient freedom, demanding recognition of this freedom for every commoner. The *Agreement*, on the other hand, admittedly had no forerunner in English practice. Moreover, it embodied an abstract principle, difficult to comprehend for the average mind; whereas the abolition of monopolies, the reduction of the sales tax, the right to vote, the righting of Lilburne's wrongs,—all these struck instant response in the thoughts and feelings of thousands of Londoners.

The enemies of the Levellers recognized a new danger in the January petition. The radicals had proved themselves too formidable in raising up rebellious spirits and forcing their sentiments into army covenants to be taken lightly. On February 14, therefore, an Independent pamphleteer sent forth *A Declaration Of some Proceedings*, a tract of skillful and penetrating propaganda analysis. Invaluable to a comprehension of both Leveller doctrine and its impact upon conservative mentality, *A Declaration* deftly probes the weak points in the ideological armor of the Levellers. The author claims that they have distorted the very

⁶ *A Declaration Of some Proceedings*, p. 36.

purpose of the petitioning act: "A Petition is to *set forth* your grievances, and not to *give a rule* to the Legislative Power." ⁷ The Levellers complain of hard times. But would the execution of all their particulars turn famine into plenty? They speak of the right of all men to vote. But who are they to determine the qualifications of electors? Constantly they speak of themselves as representing the English people, whereas no one in his senses can assume that they represent more than a small minority. Every one agrees that improvements can be made, and has not Parliament abolished the Star Chamber, curbed the bishops and defeated the King's forces? It is not for Parliament to create a utopia; no nation can leap from confusion to perfection in a single bound. "He that out of a desire to repaire his house, shall move all the foundations, will sooner be *buried* in the ruines of the *old*, then *live* to see the erection of a *new* structure." ⁸ The writer is evidently what John Harris in *The royall Quarrel* calls a "royal Independent," more aristocratic than Milton or Vane, for instance, leaning to the Independents on religious issues and to the Presbyterians on economic and political assumptions. He defends Parliament members effectively against Lilburne's accusations, defends the excise as a means of winning the war. Though in places the author falls into absurd platitudes, and though his arguments fell on deaf ears among the lower middle class, his arguments have the tenaciousness of countless repetitions in seventeenth-century pamphleteering.

⁷ *A Declaration*, p. 40.

⁸ *A Declaration*, p. 43.

To the Supream Authority of *England*, the Commons Assembled in Parliament.

The earnest Petition of many Free-born People of this Nation.

S H E W E T H,

THAT the devouring fire of the Lords wrath, hath burnt in the bowels of this miserable Nation, until its almost consumed.

That upon a due search into the causes of Gods heavy Judgments, we find [a] that injustice and oppression, have been the common National sins, for which the Lord hath threatened woes, confusions and desolations, unto any People or Nation; Woe (saith God) to the oppressing City. *Zeph. 3. 1.*

That when the King had opened the Flood-gates of injustice and oppression [b] upon the people, and yet peremptorily declared that the people, who trusted him for their good, could not in, or by their Parliament require any account of the discharge of his trust; and when by a pretended negative voyce [c] to Laws, he would not suffer the strength of the Kingdom, the [d] Militia, to be so disposed of, that oppressions might be safely remedied, & oppressors brought to condign punishment, but raised a War [e] to protect the subvertors of our Laws and Liberties, and maintain Himself to be subject to no accompt, even for such oppressions, and pursuing after an oppressive power, the Judg of the Earth,

^a *Amos 5, 9.10.11.12. Micah 2, 2.3. Micah 3, 3.4.9.10.11.12. Habba 2, 8.17. Joel 3, 3.*

^b See the Remonstrance of the State of the Kingdom, *Decem. 1641*, p. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15.

^c See the Kings Answer to the Parliaments Remonst. of May 19, 1642. 1 part book Decla. page 254, 284, 285. See the Kings Answer to the *Parl. Decla* of May 26, 1642, page 298.

^d See the Ordinance for the Militia, *Feb. 1641*. 1 book Decla. page 89 & pa. 96. 105, 106, 114, 126, 175, 176, 182, 243, 289, 292.

^e See the Parliaments Votes May 20, 1642 1 part Book Decla, 259, see also page 509, 576, 577, 580, 584, 617.

with whom the Throne of iniquity can have no fellowship, hath brought him low, and executed fierce wrath upon many of his adherents.

That God expects Justice from those before whose eyes he hath destroyed an unjust generation. Zeph. 3. 6. 7. and without doing justly, and releeving the oppressed, God abhors fastings and prayers, and accounts himself mocked. Esa. 58.4 5,6,7. Mic. 6.6,7,8.

That our eyes fail with looking to see the Foundations of our Freedoms and Peace secured by this Honorable House, and yet we are made to depend upon the Will of the King, and the Lords, which were never chosen or betruſted by the People, to redress their grievances. And this Honorable House, which formerly declared, that they were the representative of al England, & betruſted with our Estates, Liberties and Lives, 1 part Book of Decla. 264. 382. do now declare by their practise, that they will not redress our grievances, or settle our Freedoms, unless the King and the Lords will.

That in case you should thus proceed, Parliaments wil be rendered wholly useless to the People, and their happiness left to depend solely upon the Will of the King, and such as he by his Patents creates Lords; and so the invaluable price of all the precious English blood; spilt in the defence of our freedoms against the King, shal be imbezelled or lost; and certainly, God the avenger of blood, wil require it of the obstructors of justice and freedom. Judges 9.24.

That though our Petitions have been burned, and our persons imprisoned, reviled, and abused only for petitioning, yet we cannot despair absolutely of all bowels of compassion in this Honorable House, to an inslaved perishing people. We still nourish some hopes, that you wil at last consider that our estates are expended, the whole trade of the Nation decayed, thousands of families impoverished, and merciless Famine is entered into our Gates, and therefore we cannot but once more assay to pierce your eares with our dolefull cries for Iustice and Freedom, before your delays wholly consume the Nation. In particular we earnestly intreat:

First, That seeing we conceive this Honorable House is intrusted by the People, with all power to redress our grievances, and to provide security for our Freedoms, by making or repealing Laws, errecting or abolishing Courts, displacing or placing Officers, and the like: And seeing upon this consideration, we have often made our addresses to you, and yet we are made to depend

for all our expected good, upon the wils of others who have brought all our misery [f] upon us: That therefore in case this Honorable House, wil not, or cannot, according to their trust, relieve and help us; that it be clearly declared; That we may know to whom, as the Supream power, we may make our present addresses before we perish, or be inforced to flie to the prime Laws of nature [g] or refuge.

2. That as we conceive all Governors and Magistrates, being the ordinance [h] of man, before they be the ordinance of God, and no Authority being of God, but what is erected by the mutuall consent of a People: and seeing this Honorable House alone represents the People of this Nation, that therefore no person whatsoever, be permitted to exercise any power or Authority in this Nation, who shal not clearly and confessedly, receive his power from this House, and be always accountable for the discharge of his trust, to the People in their Representatives in Parliament: If otherwise, that it be declared who they are which assume to themselves a power according to their own Wills, and not received as a trust from the People, that we may know to whose Wils we must be subiect, and under whom we must suffer such oppressions, as they please, without a possibility of having Iustice against them.

3. That considering, that all iust Power and Authority in this Nation, which is not immediatly derived from the People, can be derived only from this Honorable House, and that the People are perpetually subiect to Tyranny, when the Iurisdiction of Courts, and the Power and Authority of Officers are not clearly described, and their bounds and limits [i] prefixed; that therefore the Iurisdiction of every Court or Iudicature, and the Power of every Officer or Minister of Iustice, with their bounds and limits, be forthwith declared by this honorable House; and that it be enacted, that the Iudges of every Court, which shal exceed its Iurisdiction, and every other Officer or Minister of Iustice, which shal intermeddle with matters not coming under his Cognizance, shall incur the forfeiture of his, and their whole estates. And

[†] See the Kings Decla. of the 12 Aug. 1642. 1 part book Decla. page 522, 526, 528, 548, & pa. 617:

[‡] See 1 part book decla. pa. 44, 150, 382, 466, 637, 690.

[§] See Col. Nath. Fines his Speech against the Bishops Canons, made in 1640, in a book called Speeches and Passages of Parliament, from 3 Nove. 1640 to June 1641, page 50, 51, 52.

[¶] See your Remonstrance of the state of the kingdom, book decla. pag. 6, 8. See also the Acts made this Parliament, that abolished the Star-chamber and High Commission.

likewise, that all unnecessary Courts may be forthwith abolished; and that the publike Treasury, out of which the Officers solely ought to be maintained, [k] may be put to the lesse Charge.

4. That whereas there are multitudes of Complaints of oppression, by Committees of this House, determining particular matters. which properly appertains to the Cognizance of the ordinary Courts [l] of Iustice; and whereas many persons, of faithful and publike spirits, have bin, and are dayly molested, vexed, Imprisoned by such Committes, sometimes for not answering Interrogatories, and sometimes for other matters, which are not in Law Criminall; and also without any legal warrants expressing the cause, and commanding the Jaylor safely to keep their bodies, untill they be delivered by due course [m] of Law; And by these oppressions, the persons and estates of many are wasted, and destroyed: That therefore henceforth, No particular cause, whether Criminal or other, which comes under the Cognizance of the ordinary Courts of Iustice, may be determined by this House, or any Committee thereof; or any other, then by those Courts, whose duty it is to execute such Laws as this honorable House shal make; and who are to be censured by this House in case of injustice: Always excepted, matters relating to the late War, for Indempnity for your Assistens; and the exact Observation of al articles granted to the adverse [n] Party: And that henceforth, no Person be molested or Imprisoned by the wil or arbitrary powers of any, or for such Matters as are not Crimes, [o] according to Law: And that all persons Imprisoned at present for any such matters, or without such legall warrants as abovesaid, upon what pretence, or by what Authority soever, may be forthwith releast, with due reparations.

5. That considering its a Badg of our Slavery to a Norman Conqueror, to have our Laws in the French Tongue, and it is little lesse then brutish vassalage to be bound to walk by Laws which the People [p] cannot know, that therefore all the Laws and Customs of this Realm, be immediatly written in our Mothers

^k See the Statute of Westmin. 1, made 3 Edw. 1 chap. 26, & 20 Edw. 3, 1, and the Judges oath made in the 18 Edw. 3, Anno 1344, recorded in Pultons collections of statutes, fol. 144.

^l See the 29, chap of Magna Charta, and Sir Ed CooKs ezposition upit, in his 2, part instit. fol. 187, and the Petition of Right.

^m See the Petition of right made in the 3 of the King, & Sir Edward COOKS 2 par., insti. fol. 52, 53, 589, 590, 591.

ⁿ See Psal 15, 4.

^o See Rom 4, 15.

^p See the 36 Edw. 3, 15, & 1 Cor. 147, 11, 16, 19, 23.

See also the English Chronicles, in the Reign of Wil. the Conqueror.

Tongue [q] without any abreviations of words, and the most known vulgar hand, viz. Roman or Secretary, and that Writs, Processes, and Enroulements, be issued forth, entered or inrouled in English, and such manner of writing as aforesaid.

6. *That seeing in Magna Charta, which is our Native right, it's pronounced in the name of all Courts, That we wil sel to no man, we will not deny, or defer to any man either Justice or Right, notwithstanding we can obtain no Justice or Right, neither from the common ordinary Courts or Judges, nor yet from your own Committees, though it be in case of indemnity for serving you, without paying a dear price for it; that therefore our native [r] Right be restored to us, which is now also the price of our blood; that in any Court whatsoever, no moneys be extorted from us, under pretence of Fees to the Officers of the Court, or otherwise: And that for this end, sufficient sallaries or pensions be allowed to the Iudges, and Officers of Courts, as was of old, out of the common Treasury, that they may maintain their Clerks and servants, and keep their Oaths uprightly; wherein they swear to take no money or Cloaths, or other rewards except meat and drink, in a smal quantity, besides what is allowed them by the King; and this we may with the more confidence claim as our Right, seeing this honorable House hath declared, in case of Ship-money, and in the case of the Bishops Canons that not one peny, by any power whatsoever, could be leavied upon the people, without common consent in Parliament, and sure we are that the Fees exacted by Iudges, and Clerks, and Iaylors, and all kind of Ministers of Iustice, are not settled upon them by Act of Parliament, and therefore by your own declared principles, destructive to our property; [s] therefore we desire it may be enacted to be death for any Iudg, Officer, or Minister of Iustice, from the highest to the lowest, to exact the least moneys, or the worth of moneys, from any person whatsoever, more then his pension or sallary allowed from the Common Treasury. That no Iudg of any Court may continue above three yeares.*

^q See *Deut* 30, 12.13.14.

^r See Sir Ed. Cook in his 1 part *insti.* lib. 3 chap 13, Sect. 701, fol. 3, 8, where he positively declares it was the native & ancient Rights of all Englishmen, both by the Statute & Common Law of England, to pay no Fees at all to any Administrators of justice whatsoever. See also 2 part *insti.* fol. 74, 209, 210, and 176, and he there gives this Reason, why Judges should take no fees of any man for doing his office, because he should be free, and at liberty to do justice, and not to be fettered with golden fees, as fetters to the subversion or suppression of truth and justice.

^s See the Articles of high treason in our Chronicles against Iudg *Tresilian*, in Rich, the seconds time.

7. *That whereas according to your own complaint in your first Remonstrance of the [t] State of the Kingdom, occasion is given to bribery, extortion and partiality, by reason, that judicial places, and other Offices of power and trust, are sold and bought: That therefore for prevention of all iniustice, it be forthwith enacted, to be death for any person or persons whatsoever, directly or indirectly, to buy, or sell, or offer, or receive moneys, or rewards, to procure for themselves or others, any Office of power or trust whatsoever.*

8. *Whereas according to Iustice, and the equitable sense of the Law, Goals and Prisons ought to be only used as places of safe custody, until the constant appointed time of tryall, and now they are made places of [u] torment, and the punishment of supposed offenders, they being detained many years without any Legal tryalls: That therefore it be enacted that henceforth no supposed offender whatsoever, may be denyed his Legal tryall, at the first Sessions, Assizes, or Goal delivery, after his Commitment [w] and that at such tryal, every such supposed offender, be either condemned or acquitted.*

9. *Whereas Monopolies of all kinds have been declared by this honorable House, to be against the Fundamentall Laws of the Land, and all such restrictions of Trade, do in the consequence destrey not only Liberty but property: That therefore all Monopolies whatsoever, and in particular that oppressive Company of Merchant Adventurers be forthwith abolished, and a free trade restored, and that all Monopolizers may give good reparation to the Common-wealth, the particular parties who have been damned by them, and to be made incapable of bearing any Office of power, or trust, in the Nation, and that the Votes of this House Novemb. 19. 1640. against their siting therein, may be forthwith put in due execution.*

10. *Whereas this House hath declared in the first Remonstrance of the (x) State of the Kingdom, that Ship-money, and Monopolies, which were imposed upon the people before the late War, did at least amount to 1400000 l. per annum, and whereas since then, the Taxes have been double and treble, and the Army*

^t See 1 part book decla. p. 9.

^u See Sir Edward Cook 1 part *Insti.* lib. 3, Cha. 7. sect. 438 fol. 260. who expressly saith, that imprisonment must be a safe custody, not a punishment; and that a prison ought to be for keeping men safe, not to punish them. See also 2 par. *institut.* fol 589, 590, 591.

^w See the Statute of the 4. E. 3.2. 12 R. 2. 10.

^x See 1 part book decl. pa. 14.

(y) hath declared that 1300000 l. per annum, would compleatly pay all Forces and Garisons in the Kingdom, and the Customs could not but amount to much more then would pay the Navy; so that considering the vast sums of moneys, raised by imposition of money, the fifth and twentieth part, Sequestrations, and Compositions, Excise, and otherwise, it's conceived much Treasure is concealed: that therefore an Order issue forth immediatly from this Honorable House, to every Parish in the Kingdom, to deliver in without delay to some faithful persons, as perfect an accompt as possible, of all moneys Leavied in such Town, City, or Parish; for what end or use soever, since the begining of the late War, and to return the several receivers names, and that those who shal be employed by the several Parishes in every Shire or County, to carry in those accompts to some appointed place in the County, may have liberty to choose the receiver of them, and that those selected persons by the several Parishes in every County or Shire, may have liberty to invest some one faithful person in every of their respective Counties or places, with power to sit in a Committee at London or elsewhere, to be the General Accomptants of the Kingdom, who shal publish their Accompts every moneth to the publick view, and that henceforth there be only one Common Treasury where the books of Accompts may be kept by several persons, open to the view of all men.

11. Whereas it hath been the Ancient Liberty of this Nation, that all the Free-born people have freely elected their Representatives in Parliament, and their Sheriffs and (z) Iustices of the Peace, &c. and that they were abridged of that their native Liberty, by a Statute of the 8. H. 6. 7. That therefore, that Birth-right of all English men, be forthwith restored to all which are not, or shal not be legally disfranchised for some criminal cause, or are not under 21 years of age, or servants, or beggers; and we humbly offer, That every County may have its equal proportion of Representatives; and that every County may have its several divisions, in which one Representer may be chosen, and that some chosen Representatives of every Parish proportionably may be the Electors of the Sheriffs, Iustices of the Peace, Committee-men, Grand-jury men, and all ministers of Iustice whatsoever, in the respective

⁊ See the Armies last Representation to the House.

⁂ 28. Edw. 1 Chap. 1.8. and 13. See a part instit. fo. 174. 175 where Sir Ed. Cook positively declares that in ancient times by the common law of England the Coroner, the high Sheriff, Iustices of Peace, Verderors of Forests yea, and in times of war, the leader of the Counties soldiers, were chosen in ful county by the free-holders.

Counties, and that no such minister of justice may continue in his Office above one whole year, without a new (a) Election.

12. *That all Statutes for all kind of Oaths, whether in Corporations, Cities, or other, which insnare conscientious people, as also other Statutes, injoyning all to hear the Book of Common Prayer, beforthwith repealed and nulled, and that nothing be imposed upon the consciences of any to compel them to sin against their own consciences.*

13. *That the too long continued shame of this Nation, viz. permission of any to suffer such poverty as to beg their bread, may be forthwith effectually remedied: and to that purpose that the Poor be enabled to choose their Trustees, to discover all Stocks, Houses, Lands, &c. which of right belong to them, and their use, that they may speedily receive the benefit thereof; and that some good improvement may be made of waste Grounds for their use; and that according to the promise of this honorable House, in your first Remonstrance, care be taken forthwith to advance the native commodities of this Nation, that the poor may have better wages for their labor; and that Manufactures may be increased, and the Herring-fishing upon our own Coasts may be improved for the best advantage of our own Mariners, and the whole Nation.*

14. *Whereas that burthensom Tax of the Excise lies heavy only upon the Poorer, and most ingenious industrious People, to their intolerable oppression; and that all persons of large Revenues in Lands, and vast estates at usury, bear not the least proportionable weight of that burthen, whereby Trade decays, and all ingenuity and industry is discouraged: That therefore that oppressive way of raising money may forthwith cease, and all moneys be raised by equal Rates, according to the proportion of mens estates.*

15. *That M. Peter Smart, Doctor Leighton, M. Ralph Grafton, M. Hen. Burton, Doctor Bastwick, M. William Prinne, Lievt. Conell Iohn Lilburne, the heires and executors of M. Brewer, M. Iohn Turner, and all others that suffered any cruelty, or false illegall imprisonment, by the Star-Chamber, the high Commission, or Councell-Board, as M. Aederman Chambers, and all others that suffered oppression before the Parliament, for refusing to pay*

* It hath been a maxime amongst the wisest Legislators, that whosoever means to settle good Laws, must proceed in them with a sinister, or evil opinion of all mankind; and suppose that whosoever is not wicked, it is for want of opportunity. & that no State can be wisely confident of any publick minister continuing good longer then the Rod is over him.

illegall imposts, customes, or Shipmoney, or yeeld conformity to Monopolizing Patentees, may (after 7. years attendance for justice and right) forthwith by this House receive legall and just reparations out of the estates of all those without exception, who occasioned, acted in, or procured their heavy sufferings, that so in future Ages men may not be totally discouraged to stand for their Liberties and Freedomes, against Oppressors and Tyrants.

16. *Whereas we can fix our eyes upon no other but this honourable House for reliefe in all these our pressing grievances, untill we shall be forced to despaire, we therefore desire, that the most exact care be had of the right constitutions thereof: And therefore we desire that all Members of this House chosen in their Nonage, may be forthwith ejected, and that all Votes for suspension of Members from this House may be forthwith put in execution; provided, that the House proceed either finally to expell them, that others may be elected in their stead, or they be restored to serve their Countrey: And likewise that all Lawyers who are Members of this House (by reason of their over-awing power over Judges of their owne making) may wholly attend the peoples service therein, and that every of them may be expelled the House who shall hereafter plead any cause before any Court or Committee whatsoever, during his Membership in this House: And we further desire, that every Member of this House may be enjoined under some great penalty, not to be absent above three dayes, without the expresse license of this House, and not above one month without the licence of the place by which they are entrusted: And likewise that no Law may be passed, unlesse two third parts of all the Members of this House be present, and that the most speedy care be had to distribute Elections equally throughout the Nation.*

Now whereas the particular requests in our Petitions, are for the most part never debated in this House, but when we are at any time rightly interpreted in our meanings and intentions, we onely receive thanks for our good affections, or promises that in due time our desires shall be taken into consideration, and by such delayes our distractions are daily increased, and our burdens made more heavy; therefore we desire, that a Committee be forthwith appointed by this honourable House, who may be enjoined under some penalty, to sit from day to day, untill they have debated every particular of our requests, and reported their

sense of the justnesse and necessity of them to this House, that we may attend for an answer accordingly; and that a time be fixed when such a Committee shall make their report. And we further desire the same Committee may be invested with power to heare all our other complaints, and offer sutable remedies to this honourable House, and to bring in the Appeales of any persons from the Iudges at Westminster, to this honourable House, against their injustice, bribery, or illegall delay and oppression.

Now O ye worthy Trustees! let not your eares bee any longer deafe to our importunate cries, let not our destruction be worse then that of Sodome, who was overthrown in a moment. Let us not pine away with famine and bee worse then those who die by the sword. Oh dissolve not all Government into the prime Lawes of nature, and compell us to take the naturall remedy to preserve our selves, which you have declared no people can bee deprived of (b.) Oh remember that the righteous God *standeth in the congregation of the mighty, and judgeth among the gods, and saith, How (c) long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked, defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy, deliver the poor and needy, and rid them out of the hands of the wicked,*

And your Petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

^b See your Declaration of May 19. 1642. 1 book dec. pag. 207. And your Declaration Nov. 1642. pa. 728. as also pa. 150.

^c *Psal.* 82, 1.2.3.4.