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It is, with great Humility, presented to the Right Honourable the Lords, Spiritual and Temporal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled,

*By the Debtors confined in the Prison of the King's Bench ;*

**T**HAT they are imprisoned for debts which they have not the means of paying.

That they are desirous of surrendering all their respective effects, for the use of their creditors.

That as the debts for which many of them are confined, were not incurred by fraud, or for any malicious injury, they are suffering punishment at the discretion of their Creditors, although they have committed no crime.

That, inasmuch, as there is no public provision of food, beds, fuel, or medicine, for persons confined in this place, many of them suffer the severest effects of want and wretchedness:—inasmuch, also, as the industry of the Debtors cannot be conveniently cultivated here, many wives and children, who were formerly in comfort and respectability, experience the most rigid distress, or are dependent on parochial assistance. And that, inasmuch as the want of employment generally leads to depravity, the morality of prisoners becomes seriously endangered by long incarceration.

For these considerations, they most humbly implore this Right Honourable House, that it will be pleased, in its wisdom and humanity, to exercise its legislative authority for their early relief.

**With great deference, they beg leave further to present to the Right Honourable the Lords, Spiritual and Temporal,**

That by the present mode of proceeding for the recovery of civil debt, a man may be taken into custody, upon the unsupported oath of an individual to a debt of ten pounds.

That, if the Defendant cannot find bail, he may remain in prison, friendless and destitute, for more than a year, before it be ascertained whether he owe the money for which he has been arrested.

That, if the Plaintiff obtain a verdict for his demand, several months further may elapse before the Defendant can require the only allowance which the law has provided for him—sixpence a day; extended only to debts under 300*l.* which is sued for at an expense of about two guineas.

That if the Plaintiff carefully pay the sixpences, he may, in many cases, hold the Defendant in prison until his death

That if the Plaintiff fail in proving his demand, the Defendant may, nevertheless, remain some time; and be at some expense, before he can be liberated.

That the charges of his Attorney for conducting the defence, are all that he can then obtain; and there are very few cases in which he can recover any indemnity for the various injuries which he has sustained by imprisonment.



That, as the principles of virtue and religion are greatly affected, and even genius, erudition, and industry, suffer severely by the contamination of prison intercourse, many, after residence amongst gaol habits, become mischievous to the community who had formerly been useful members of society.

That there is no distinction made between the punishment of a fraudulent Debtor, and that which is suffered by the victim of misfortune; and that even the subsistence of Felons is provided for, whilst that of Debtors is unregarded by law, excepting by the allowance of the sixpences.

For these, and other powerful Considerations, which involve the most sacred Interests of Mankind, They adventure to entreat this Right Honourable House, to exercise its high Authority, in furtherance of such Measures as may seem likely to correct or ameliorate the Circumstances which are presented: Nor will the Memorial of National Gratitude be less sacred, if it shall be recorded, that the Fiftieth Year of His Majesty's Reign was made an Æra of personal Liberty, by the Act of this Right Honourable House.

Signed by 346 Prisoners, having 276 Wives, and 999 Children.

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*May it please your Royal Highness*

*The numerous Prisoners confined for Debt in the King's Bench, having presented a Petition to the Right Honourable the House of Lords, praying for Relief, have requested that a Copy should be transmitted to your Royal Highness —*

*They hope and trust, that your Royal Highness will promote their Cause, which has so many and such powerful Claims on your Humanity and Benevolence.*

*On behalf of the Petitioners,*

*I have the honour to subscribe myself,*

*King's-Bench Prison,  
Feb. 23 1810.*

*Your Royal Highness's most obedient humble Servant,  
Joseph Leaper*