[1801]

My Lords,

Relying on the Candor of this committee, who know that I am unused to public speaking, I come with the fullest confidence in your permitting me to read this paper, which contains Facts, but the occasion calls forth all the feelings that can ornament human nature as a Father and a Husband. I come, my Lords, to do Justice to a Wife and Children, who I trust will not suffer from my seeming inconsistency of Conduct.

As to my reasons for so long concealing my first Marriage, I trust the Committee will not judge my declaring them publicly, I have imparted them to two of my Friends, Noble Lords, now present, who have acknowledged to me, and I am sure will pledge themselves to the Committee that they are honorable reasons, of such a nature as cannot without the most serious consequences to a very respectable Family be made public.

The Ceremony of the second Marriage was gone through from the fullest conviction on my part that the Registration of my first Marriage was destroyed, and as I had in some measure sanctioned the act, it was not in nature for me

Lord Brentford

to bring Mr Hufsman to punishment. Before I married first, I urged to Mr Hufsman in the strongest manner, the necessity of secrecy, and of keeping the Register in his own hands, but when I found among other instances, that the late Sir John Guise had written to my Brother, saying that the rumour was too strong not to be true of a marriage having taken place between me and Lady Berkeley, which letter Admiral Berkeley shewed to a Friend of mine, I then gave Mr Hufsman to understand that he would forfeit my Friendship for ever if he did not prevent all possibility of discovery, I received in answer a few lines, saying, in every thing I should be obeyed, Nor was I aware of the latitude I had given him 'till afterwards when he wanted money, I heard from him, that he had rushed his life for me in destroying the Register, and 'till that moment I knew not the penalty.

Circumstanced as I was, I could not in honor do any thing that might expose him to punishment, What then was to be done? In case Mr Hufsman outlived me, or Mr Tudor should die, who ran more risks of death from his public capacity, What then would be Lady Berkeleys situation? What proof could she bring of her Marriage? How be heard in the World? As soon therefore as the causes of secrecy were removed, we were married again, and I am

sure this Committee will feel in my situation, that the second Marriage must at all events have been a — fundential step. — As to the manner in which the Baptisms of my Children were Registered, it was the natural and necessary consequence of that secrecy. I thought it might be impossible to prove my first Marriage without the Registration of it, and conse= =quently not only the Children I then had, but any other I might have, would be doomed illegitimate. I did not however, risk this measure, till I had been assured by an eminent Counsel that such second marriage could not have the effect of invalidating the first, in case the solemnization of it could be proved.

The Registration of my first Marriage was discover'd in consequence of a search made by the advise of another Counsel of great eminence, who suggested that possibly some traces of it, either in the Parish Registers or — among the late Mr Hufsmans Papers, might remain, In pursuance of this advise a very careful search was made, and the result has been such as has been related to the Committee.

But if the least doubt should remain in the Breast of any Noble Lord as to the fact of my first Marriage, Lady Berkeley and my self are willing to give our — Personal Testimony of it in any manner the Committee may think proper to require; for I can no longer withhold the justice which I feel due to my Wife and Children, nor suffer them to remain Victims of my Family Pride, or my own false notions of honor.

Berkeley Papers