

Col. J. H. Gordon to Col. McKeath

18839-40

Chelsea

Nov: 15. 1811.

My dear friend,

As I can offer no sufficient apology for intruding my political disquisitions upon your attention, I shall trust wholly to your good nature, & kind regard for me, and at once enter upon the subject, premising however that the circumstances of the Times, — the critical situation of the Prince — and the personal obligations I owe to him, are the motives that impel me to this communication. —

The text of every conversation in every company is the question "What will the Prince do when he has full power? will he change the Government? — will he abandon his old friends, and will he concede any thing to the Catholics?" This I need not tell you is the substance of every conference, at every table, & in every society at this moment in the Metropolis, & probably in the Kingdom: — not being any politician myself, at least having no political expectations, but having a very general acquaintance, & a business kind of communication with the several leading men of the day, and being known also to be honoured

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with the Prince's regard, I am perhaps as much in the way of ascertaining the various bias and bearings of opinion, as any man, and I thus endeavour to lay them before you.

You know that the present Ministers, with Mr. Perceval at their head, owe their situation, and power, wholly and solely to the undivided support of the King, arising from His Majesty's conscientious opposition to the Catholic Petition.

You know also that this Administration is the remains of the Pitt School, of which School however two most important members are schismatic, Lamming and Lascelles, each of whom have their supporters and followers, and may be considered as possessed of a large share of the confidence and respect of the House of Commons, and also of the Country:— the other Party (of this School also) is the Sidmouth Party of which Mr. Bathurst is the usual organ, and they also have their share of power in the House.

This I believe, may be considered as the main body of the Pitt School, Orthodox, and Heterodox, but all sprung from the Tree of Pitt.

The Opposite Party, those hitherto distinguished by the appellation of the Prince's Friends, are

18840

the remains of the Fox School, the head of which may be considered Earl Grey, uniting the whole Grenville family and followers, and having as their organs in the House of Commons, Messrs. Whitbread, Ponsonby and Tennyson;— there are many eminent young men on both sides, but certainly of no leading capacity, and it is therefore unnecessary to mention them in this disquisition.

As the Fox Administration, in fact deposited itself upon the Catholic Question, it may be fairly considered as a great Political Party indisputably pledged and committed to carry it when in Power, and if taken into Power as a Party, they would not have an alternative, but must effect it, or resign their seats as ill-judging & misapprehensive men.

Upon a due consideration of these points, it appears to me that the Prince stands between these two Parties, as the Arbitrator upon the Catholic Question, that is, if he rejects it, he draws upon him at once the united hostility of his former friends, and also of the

great Mass of the people of Ireland, and he unites himself  
for war as the head of the Pitt Party, subjecting himself  
also to the violence of decided Opposition upon a great pub-  
-lic Question, and which if war carried, would be a sort of  
Assault upon the Crown:— if, on the other hand, he forms  
an administration of which Catholic concession is the Basis,  
he unites against him, the Peruvian part of the Pitt School,  
(the remaining part of that School will be hollow suppor-  
-ters for the popularity of the moment,) and he craves all  
the consequences attendant upon a failure, which is the  
Protestant, and I may add Protestantly Bigotted Kingdom,  
I doubt whether any man can safely predict:— indeed  
if I may trust my own limited observation, I should  
certainly say that as an English Question, the Catholic  
Petition is decidedly unpopular, and unless the temper  
of the people is very much changed, there is nothing which  
would be more likely to create a popular ferment, if  
handled by designing knaves, (of which there is never a  
scarcity,) than a Catholic concession:—  
In this state of

18841 - 2

Political difficulty, let me appeal to your good sense whether it would not be practicable and easy for the Prince to avow himself wholly unfettered by any conscientious feelings upon the Catholic cause, and to be ready to do that which shall appear to be the true sense of the Nation upon the Case, but that he will not himself personally interfere in the discussion, seeing that His Family is a Protestant Family, and seated upon His Throne upon sound Protestant Principles, and seeing also that His Father was uniformly adverse to it — that he wishes the Question to be decided as a great National Question, unfettered by party, unbias'd by power, and that his fiat will be given when the decision of the Legislature shall be duly laid before him: — in short that he wishes it to be discussed as was the Slave Trade, where every individual spoke, as his mind dictated. — If the Prince should see this matter in a point of view similar to this, he would be at perfect liberty to form an administration as extended as he

pleased, and by including in his Household Establishment  
the Heads, and Heirs of the Great Families of this Country, viz

The Devonshires,  
Bedfords  
Northumberlands  
Rutlands  
Brawfords  
Hertfords  
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he might then, aided by his old friends, dictate to any ad-  
-ministration he chose to form, nor could any formidable  
power be raised against him: - no reasonable objection  
could be made by the King's Old friends, as it must be a  
natural proceeding for every new Monarch to surround  
himself with those who from political & personal interests,  
he may consider most useful to his Government, and  
most satisfactory to himself. -

This is the outline of what I  
wished to lay before you, and when I assure you that it  
is most exclusively the result of my observation & reflection,  
and that no man living is privy to the secret of this

18842

letter, I need not intreat of you to keep it perfectly con-  
-fidential, and to yourself. -

Ever yours affect.

Colonel Gordon  
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