

ON THE BALLOT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ABERDEEN MAGAZINE.

I AM a decided enemy to annual Parliaments and universal suffrage, but there is another reform which is too frequently anathematized along with these, which stands on very different grounds, and to which I yield my most hearty consent—I mean election by ballot; and it is my firm impression, that of those who oppose it not from any personal motives, one part do so merely because it is supported by the sticklers for annual Parliaments and universal suffrage, and the other because it is opposed by certain great men who have in this matter allowed interest or prejudice to get the better of their reason. Daniel O'Connell and Henry Hunt cry out for the ballot, therefore it savours of revolution, and must be bad. Lord Brougham and Tom Maccauly, the head and the tail of the late opposition, declared against the ballot, and therefore it cannot be good.

It is the misfortune of both these classes of opponents, that they have taken names instead of things, and that they have grounded their faith on the authority of a great man, instead of the authority of a good argument. Truth, however, will ultimately prevail, and though we cannot expect to find the ballot amongst the reforms to be brought forward by the ministry, yet it is certain the truth is *progressing*, as brother Jonathan would say, and secret voting will prevail, for to this it must come at last.

For the sake of the friends of reform who are divided in opinion on the subject of the ballot, it is my object in this letter to bring forward the arguments for and against the ballot, and contrast them fairly and dispassionately to-

gether. I do not pretend to offer new arguments on either side, but I may perhaps shew a little skill in making the old ones more clear and interesting to your readers.

I take as my example an English election, because there the arguments *pro* and *con* apply with most force, and because the supporters of the ballot are so satisfied of its efficacy in reforming the representation of England, that they have declared by one of their organs, that they would rather take the present system with the ballot, than the extension of the franchise without it.

I think it will be granted that the concomitants of an English election are more or less of independence, of bribery and corruption, of drunkenness and riot, and I suppose it will likewise be granted, that the method by which the most of the first, and the least of the others can be obtained, should be preferred. The friends of the ballot say, that by substituting secret for open voting, perfect independence in the voter is obtained; a better guard exists against bribery and corruption, than all the acts of Parliament that can be made: the most fitting and proper representatives will be chosen, and the election must be conducted without any injury to the public morals.

The opponents of the ballot say, that by secret voting independence will be lost, that fraud, duplicity, and corruption will take place to a very great extent, that the legitimate influence of property will be destroyed, and to these the mob add, that badgering of candidates, and porter, and expences, will be no more.

I. *Independence.* I suspect there