

is a difference attached to the meaning of this word by the two parties. The supporters of the ballot mean by independence, the power of the individual to vote for whichever candidate he thinks best, without the prospect of any reward, or the fear of any oppression. When the opponents of the ballot say independence would be destroyed by secret voting, they mean that what may be called the *feeling* of independence would be destroyed. When a man wallowing in wealth, or blessed with a sufficiency of the good things of this life, says that he hopes never to see the day when the voter will not approach the poll, and give his vote openly like an Englishman, he shews himself an admirer of that stiff-neckedness, and that recklessness of consequences which an Englishman often exhibits when his passions are up. Phrases of that kind are very apt to work upon John Bull. Touch his courage and pride, and he fears neither man nor devil. He goes to the poll to vote openly, like a plain, straight-forward Englishman, and support the rights of a Briton dear to him as his life, and after doing his duty to his conscience and his country, he returns from the poll to find himself on the parish. This is the "healthy feeling" of independence which is so much admired by some as "truly English." And certainly it may be cheering to the well fed and well clothed 'squire, to witness a man bringing himself to ruin and beggary, rather than not do his duty to his conscience and his country; but it is a species of bull-baiting at the best, and the sooner it is done away with the better. If the man can do his duty without bringing himself to starvation, it will be all the better for himself and family, and who is there that would not willingly give up the spectacle of suffering

virtue for that of smiling safety and plenty. I am not such an admirer of the tragic as to find pleasure in oppressed honest voters, even granting that they choose rather to suffer oppression than not vote against their consciences.

Who are the voters at an English election? The rich and the poor. It is notorious as the sun at noon-day, that the class of poor voters are not independent. They dare not vote for whom they please without the chance of oppression. They are regularly bought and sold. The poor voter can only give his vote according to his conscience, when secrecy screens his vote from one that can oppress him, from his landlord or his master. He is either a slave or a beggar, and better ten times for him and the country that he had no vote.

But the rich! they can give an independent vote! Certainly they cannot be brought to beggary. But there are degrees of oppression which may be too severe for endurance by some, though considered light as air by others. The poor voter may be turned out of his tenement; but the grocer may lose the 'squire's custom, and though the loss does not ruin him, yet he thinks it very hard, and the oppression, as he considers it, is to him as vexatious as the loss of his house to the poor voter. The wealthy plebeian may lose the invite to the 'squire's great political dinners, and this is as vexatious oppression to his craving for aristocratical notice, as the loss of house or custom to the two former. The daughters of the small 'squire may lose a card to the Lord Lieutenant's annual ball, and his wife may lose a nod from the great lady at the parish church; and this is as annoying and vexatious to them, as the loss of his house to the poor man, or of custom to the well-to-do shop-keeper. Where