

# MR. BANNERMAN AND HIS PLEDGED VOTERS.



TO THE EDITOR OF THE ABERDEEN OBSERVER.

SIR,—I have read in the *Aberdeen Journal* of this day a queer letter from Mr Al. Bannerman addressed to “the Independent Electors of the city of Aberdeen,” and I crave permission to make some remarks thereon. But, in the first place, I would beg of the “Independent Electors” to take a short retrospective glance of the proceedings of Mr Bannerman as a candidate for the honour of representing them in Parliament. Some twelve months ago, Mr Bannerman was requested by about three hundred of his fellow-citizens to allow himself to be put in nomination as a candidate, and with this request he readily complied. He admitted, however, that he had neither talents nor fortune to entitle him to aspire to such an honour, but he stated that when the proper time arrived, if the general wishes of the electors accorded with those of the requisitionists, he would cheerfully attempt to discharge the high duties of the office. In the mean time Mr Bannerman had, on more occasions than one, publicly recommended to the prospective electors, not to pledge their votes to any one until they should see who might come forward to claim their suffrages. The propriety of this advice no one can call in question, but considering how anxious Mr Bannerman is to hold his requisitionists pledged to support him, it may be worth while for them to enquire what consistency he has shown in following up the advice which he voluntarily tendered. A week or two ago it was rumoured that Provost Hadden would probably come forward as a candidate for the representation of the city, and no sooner did this rumour reach Mr Bannerman than he came forward with an appeal to the “Independent Electors.” A meeting of his friends was held—a committee of a hundred strong was formed, and before the requisition to Provost Hadden could be presented, the whole town, from the Craiglugg to the Scatterburn, was canvassed by the supporters of Mr Bannerman. Now, considering that Mr Bannerman had recommended that no movement should take place among the electors until it should be seen who was to come forward—that according to his *professed* principles the unbiased voice of the people should be heard in the election of representatives—and above all that he took the field as the popular leader, the Director-General of Reform Meetings, Processions, and Jubilees, he ought at least to have given his opponent a fair start along with him. But no. The most breathless haste was shewn to secure pledges from the electors; and I have heard on what I believe to be good authority that gross misrepresentation was had recourse to, in more quarters than one, to induce the electors to pledge themselves in Mr Bannerman’s favour. I perceive that an opposition has been started to Mr Horatio Ross, in the southern boroughs, by Mr Chalmers of Auldbar; but what has been the conduct of this gentleman on the occasion? He has addressed the electors, stating his intention to come forward as a candidate, but he declines entering upon a canvass until Mr Ross be relieved of attending his duties in Parliament. What a contrast does this present to the conduct of our would-be representatives in this quarter! Mr Alexander Bannerman, in opposition to his own advice, employs a hundred men to canvass for him, and Sir Michael Bruce, availing himself of the necessary absence of his opponent, endeavours to steal a march upon the county electors. These gentlemen, I suppose, call themselves Whigs, and if they do they certainly display by their conduct a due sense of the weakness of their cause in this quarter.

In the letter which appeared in the *Journal* of Wednesday, Mr Bannerman appears to be very apprehensive lest those who formerly promised to support him should vote for the opposite candidate, or at least remain neutral; and he says that attempts have been made by his political opponents to persuade his supporters that any pledges they may have given are not binding. Now, I know nothing whatever of any attempts being made to induce Mr Bannerman’s pledged voters to desert him, but *this* I know, that if they are inclined to follow HIS OWN EXAMPLE they may very easily get rid of their pledges. It will be in the recollection of many of the “Independent Electors” that a few months ago, a memorial was transmitted to the Board of Police, praying that the services of the Day Patrole might be continued. This memorial was signed by eight or nine hundred of the Police tax-payers, and among the rest by Mr Alexander Bannerman, but before the matter was discussed at the Board Mr B. addressed a letter to the Clerk of Police stating that he had signed the paper under a misapprehension, and requesting that his name might be withdrawn. Now, I happen to know that many of those who signed the requisition to Mr Bannerman, did so under a misapprehension, and a misapprehension too of no ordinary importance. They state

that they were not aware that the requisition contained a clause binding them to pay the expense of Mr Bannerman’s election, and some of them say they are ready to make oath that *the paper contained no such clause when it was signed by them*. Far be it from me to insinuate that the paper was falsified by Mr Bannerman—I have not the most remote suspicion that it was so. My argument is that those who signed that requisition under a misapprehension, are just as well entitled to withdraw their signature from it, as he was to withdraw his signature from the memorial in favour of the Day Patrole. But I beg it may be distinctly understood, that I do not bring forward this argument as sufficient to justify any of Mr Bannerman’s requisitionists in withdrawing their signatures. If they are still of opinion that Mr Bannerman is the best qualified candidate that has come forward, they ought to give him their support, but if they are of opinion that he is *not* the best qualified candidate, it would surely be very inconsistent with Mr Bannerman’s professed principles to hold them bound by a premature pledge to give an unconscientious vote. And here another question arises. It is now upwards of a twelvemonth since the Requisition was presented to Mr Bannerman, and it comes to be a question whether such a change of circumstances may not have occurred as to justify those who signed it in withdrawing their names. Mr Bannerman is anxious to make it appear that when a pledge is once given it can under no circumstances be withdrawn. But it is extremely easy to imagine a case where the very reverse of this is the truth. Suppose that Mr Bannerman had twelvemonths ago given a certificate of character to a servant, and, suppose, that since that time he had ascertained that this servant was not a trust-worthy person, would he not be under a “moral obligation” to cancel the certificate as quickly as possible? Now, supposing, what I believe to be the case, that some of Mr Bannerman’s requisitionists have resolved not to support him, the question is whether he or they have undergone a change since last year? A twelvemonth ago, Mr Bannerman was the acknowledged head of the Reform party in Aberdeen, and he enjoyed the entire confidence of the greater part of those who wished to see a change in the institutions of the country; but what has been his conduct since that time? He has associated himself with radical levellers who, acting on the advice of his friend Mr Hume, supported the Reform Bill merely as a stepping-stone to farther innovations. He has even condescended to feed such persons in order that he might have the advantage of their lungs when a display of “physical force” was required. He has, along with a few others who ought to have known better, paraded the streets under the accursed insignia of revolutionary France. He has attended and taken part in the business of a meeting, which, by passing a resolution to petition the House of Commons against voting supplies, plainly demonstrated that its object was to coerce the Sovereign in the exercise of his constitutional rights, and while he addressed that meeting, surrounded with flags bearing mottoes of the most atrocious nature, he admitted that the assemblage was merely a display of physical force, for, as he declared, it was impossible for him to have made himself heard by a small fraction of those who were present, even if he should have addressed them through a speaking trumpet. At that meeting too, Mr Bannerman *demeaned himself* by acquiescing in a resolution condemnatory of the public conduct of *his friend* Mr Horatio Ross, although nothing whatever was then proved against him, and every unprejudiced person is now ready to admit that Mr Ross’ conduct was perfectly irreproachable. If Mr Bannerman has begun to discover that his former supporters are deserting him, in my opinion he ought to blame his own injudicious zeal rather than the exertions of those who are canvassing against him. But if he be inclined to notice all the reports which may reach his ears, he will have a busy time of it before the day of election arrive, and his letters will be at least as amusing as any thing that his “playfulness of fancy” has hitherto produced. Sure I am that the gravest member of Mr Bannerman’s Committee would have indulged in a grim smile if Provost Hadden had written a letter to the newspapers, complaining that one clergyman had been canvassing for Mr Bannerman before leaving the church after divine service, and that another had actually *preached* in his favour from the pulpit, and yet these things are as roundly asserted as the story to which Mr Bannerman has chosen to allude.

Yours truly,

A LOOKER ON.

P.S.—Is it true that Mr Bannerman has pledged himself to the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery?