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978-1-108-02511-9 - The Correspondence of William Wilberforce, Volume 1
William Wilberforce
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CORRESPONDENCE
OF
WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

RT. HON. WM. PITT TO WM. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

Burton Pynsent, Saturday, August 22. 1783.

Dear Wilberforce,

I hope you have found benefit enough from your inland rambling, to be in perfect order now for crossing the seas. Eliot and I meet punctually at Bankes's the 1st of September, and in two days after shall be in London. Pray let us see you, or hear from you by that time, and do not verify my prophecy of detaining us a fortnight, and jilting us at the end of it. We shall really not have a day to lose, which makes me pursue you with this hasty admonition. Adieu.

Ever yours,

W. PITT.

RT. HON. WM. PITT TO WM. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

Burton Pynsent, August 30. 1783.

Dear Wilberforce,

Your letter has relieved me from the two fears I have for some time entertained; the one of losing the

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pleasure of your company, the other of being made to wait for it. I am very sorry for the state of your eyes ; but I am quite of opinion that the air of Rheims is exactly the thing for you. I hope to find it equally sovereign for toothaches and swelled faces, which have persecuted me ever since I have been here, as if it was the middle of a session. We shall agree excellently as invalids, and particularly in making the robust Eliot fag for us, and ride bodkin, and letting him enjoy all the other privileges of health. He is to be at Bankes's certainly on the 2d or 3d, that is, Tuesday or Wednesday. I shall be there the 1st, and mean he should not bait more than one night if I can help it. Bankes will have some reason to quarrel with me ; but I hardly see why you should come 100 miles from London merely to go back the next day. I am afraid of all unnecessary delays, as we shall certainly find no time to spare.

If you can meet with a very commodious carriage, I think you will do well to secure it ; if not, we must take up with such as Monsieur Dessen will furnish us with at Calais. I direct this to the Castle of Wimbledon. If you do not come to Bankes's before we set out, leave word in Spring Gardens where you are, that we may be sure of you as soon as you arrive. I have heard some rumour of your having talked of embarking at Bright-helmston ; but I assure you Dover is the place, especially as I must absolutely pass through London.

Yours most sincerely,

W. PITT.

RICHARD PEPPER ARDEN, ESQ.* TO WILLIAM
WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

Lincoln's Inn, March 31. 1784.

Dear Wilberforce,

I received your letter, and you may be assured of every wish of my heart for your success if you stand for Yorkshire. God grant you health to go through the fatigue of being a candidate for such a county.

I wrote the moment I received your letter, to my father, desiring him to exert what influence he has in favour of Duncombe and you. I desired him likewise either to attend at the nomination himself, or send my brother if he is at home, and I hope he will subscribe handsomely. His estate in Yorkshire is not a very large one; but I think it will be in his power to be of service to you, and I cannot entertain a doubt of his good will. I have just kissed hands as attorney-general, and chief-justice of Chester. Every thing goes on well both at Cambridge and the world in general as to elections. Pitt, thank God, keeps his health and spirits amidst a series of fatigues which would make me mad.

I am, dear Wilberforce,

Your most sincere and affectionate friend,

R. P. ARDEN.

* Afterwards Lord Alvanley.

RT. HON. WM. PITT TO WM. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

Downing Street, December 24. 1784.

My dear Wilberforce,

I hope you will have received a letter I sent you last post, the chief business of which was to apprise you that the Reform must come on early in the session — I now think the time must be between the 20th and 25th of February. Since I wrote, I find that it is probable a meeting will be called before that time in Yorkshire, to renew a general petition, and in fact to support my proposals. It is impossible for me in writing, and especially in violent haste, to enter into all the particulars. I think a reasonable and generally satisfactory proposal may be digested; and I am working hard on all sides with a view to it. The idea with regard to Yorkshire seems to be what it ought, to procure as general a concurrence of the county as possible, and to steer clear of jealousies with regard to the Association.* Wyvill seems to suppose the business not very difficult; though some friends are unwilling to stir. The time of the meeting is likely to be the end of January or beginning of February. You may just have time to write; and your suggestions to *your party* (which, I believe, is not less numerous, in proportion, in Yorkshire than in the House of Commons) may be of great use. You will perhaps have heard from Wyvill about this; but I would not

* The Yorkshire Association.—Vide *Life of Wilberforce*, vol. i. p. 51.

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delay telling you all I know; as your taking some steps may be very material, and it is of great consequence that the business should come forward in a proper manner.

Adieu: I must conclude, having no time for *foining*— I hope you have in abundance, and profit by that, and by being some hundred miles from as hard a winter as the last. You have left us an unreasonable while without any news of your motions; and I rather fear Aix-en-Provence is become an obsolete direction, but it is the best we have.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. PITT.

HON. EDWARD J. ELIOT TO WM. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

1784.

My dear Wilberforce,

To begin in your own manner: “If” you think any of your friends here have not written to you because they don’t love and esteem you, or because you have not been very much and very constantly in their thoughts since you went abroad, I must take upon me to say, for all and each of them, that you are most exceedingly mistaken, and doing very great injustice both to yourself and them. It would be needless to add that I am very anxiously longing for the time of your return to us, but, besides what is common to all the other *foinsters*,

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there is a point or two on which I want particularly to talk to you.

Pitt has written to you lately, so I will say nothing of the reform of parliament except what has happened since, which is Wyvill's letter: I don't know whether you see any papers; but he says he has authority from Mr. Pitt to say, that he will exert all his power and weight, as a man and as a minister, to carry his motion into effect. These are brave words, and I think a sort of publication of secret influence, but I believe his authority did not extend quite so far as he seems to think it did; though Pitt has certainly taken due pains about it, and, I understand, sees much more reason to expect success than he imagined after Mr. Sawbridge's motion. The Westminster scrutiny, I fear, will not end, in any way, this year, especially if the session is to be as short as we are promised, for you are to know none of the managers will hear of the parliament's sitting after the middle of May. I do not quite believe what they say of their readiness; however, they are certainly very forward in their work, and our first lord does fag them confoundedly. The resolutions for the plan of settlement of trade with Ireland are finally drawn up, and I believe many of the tax bills are ready to be presented. In the mean while, Pitt has found time to be very civil and attentive to your favourite the Countess of Salisbury (Sally Salisbury). He dined there about five or six weeks ago, and, what is almost ridiculous, went to her twelfth-night ball, very much to the edification of the butchers and bakers of Hartford and St. Albans. Steele showed him about with great propriety,

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and they became “sworn brothers to” several “leash of drawers.”

P—— has been on a visit to E——, whom he found very happy on his 600*l.* a year, and *supposing* he should live within it. He is, you know, at a lodge of the Duke of Gloucester’s, in Wiltshire or Hampshire. The old boy is thought to be still obstinate.

I hope to send you soon an account of my proceedings about a reader. Best compliments to your sister.

I am, my dear W., your ever affectionate

E. J. ELIOT.

RT. HON. WM. PITT TO WM. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

Brighthelmston, September 30. 1785.

My dear Wilberforce,

I can hardly imagine (though perhaps from observation and experience you may guess) how it has come to pass that, by the simple operation of putting off only from one day to the next, I have been now some months without writing to you. By the date of my letter you will perceive that idleness has had more share than business in the latter part of this delay. I have been here about three weeks in the enjoyment of exercise and leisure, and eating and drinking; things which to me, from their antiquity, were nearly forgotten, and (as you know) must for that very reason have the charm of novelty.

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The only interruption which has called me to town was to dispose of my sister, whom Eliot has taken into his possession, as you have probably heard from himself, if he has yet found leisure for the use of his pen. They are, I believe, perfectly happy (though after having had some family plagues to encounter); and this, you will imagine, contributes not a little to make me so. A vacancy has occurred of remembrancer in the court of exchequer, an office for life of about 1,400*l.* per annum, which I am to be a good deal abused for having given to Eliot. I think not justly, though perhaps a little plausibly; but which I shall have abundant reason to endure with patience. It will be obsolete history to talk of the fate of the Irish propositions. It is not forced philosophy which makes me look back to it as an issue (though not the best), yet, on the whole, far from bad. To have carried the whole triumphantly would have been the first wish: to fail without endangering the quiet of the country, and even with fresh security against partial innovations in the present state of our commercial relations; and to leave the business on a clear and honourable issue, to be resumed or abandoned as the real current of opinion in that country may direct,—ought to be second. And *that* I take to be the actual situation. It is said that there is a change of disposition already in favour of the system. But I receive these reports with caution; and though possibly it may one day be called for, I do not expect that day to be very soon. I hear of you at Spa, where (except for climate) you have, I imagine, your choice at once of all nations in a small compass; at least a collection of what your

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friend calls *excellent specimens*, and which must resemble a little the forest in our *jardin* of “*les peuples végétaux surpris de croître ensemble.*” I hope you profit by the waters, and that, in the mean time, it will be your principal care to select the best correspondences for the best wines from all the countries you hear of. I am going in a few days to Somersetshire to meet Eliot and my sister.

I touch at Bankes's in my way back, and shall then conclude my holidays with a fortnight more at this place. My scene of business is removed from Putney Hill to one in Kent, about fourteen miles from town, where I have just had the folly to purchase the most beautiful spot within that distance, and wanting nothing but a house fit to live in. A propos, we are all turning country gentlemen very fast; George Rose having just bought an estate in the New Forest, which he vows is just a breakfasting distance. The produce of our revenues is glorious, and I am half mad with a project which will give our supplies the effect almost of magic in the reduction of debt. It will be at least new and eccentric enough to satisfy your constant call for *something out of the common way*. Pray let me hear from you again very soon, and particularly how you do, and when you meditate returning.

Our session will not begin till the end of January, and will end of course by the 29th of April.

Adieu, ever yours,

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RT. HON. WM. PITT TO WM. WILBERFORCE, ESQ.

Downing Street, October 20. 1785.
Thursday.

My dear Wilberforce,

I obey punctually the commands contained in your despatch of the 6th, which reached me only last night; and address this letter immediately to *Squire Fectors*. The tender and affecting subject which you have to negotiate, I reserve till we meet. I have only now to tell you that I am going on Saturday next, for the last time this season, to Brighthelmston, with Pratt and Apsley. Bob Smith and Steele are there likewise. I shall remain there till this day fortnight, being Thursday, 3d November, when I shall come to town for two days. On Saturday the 5th I mean to take possession (lest the opportunity should elapse) of Holwood Hill, near Bromley, Kent (the name and description of my new residence). I shall continue to give punctual attendance, every Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, in Downing Street, and the rest of the week at said Holwood Hill, till the meeting of parliament. Did you imagine I should ever be able to give so exact an account of my intended motions for three months to come? At any of the three places, namely, Brighthelmston, Downing Street, or Holwood, I can answer for your finding a good bed, within the respective periods I have mentioned. Adieu.

Yours ever,

W. PITT.