

SOME ACCOUNT

A

OF THAT

Ancient and Honourable Society,

VULGARLY DENOMINATED

THE HENPECKED CLUB

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A

Dedication to Napoleon Bonaparte.

BY A MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY.

“Heav'n gave to woman the peculiar grace,
“To spin, to weep, and cull the human race.
“The wives of all our race have ever rul'd
“Their tender husbands, and their passions cool'd.”

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DEDICATION

TO

*That most distinguished and lately acquired Member
of the Henpecked Society,*

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE,

KING AND EMPEROR, &c.

SIRE,

THOUGH the writer of this dedication is unfortunately a subject of a power now engaged in hostilities with your Majesty, you may rest assured of the sincerity of his motives for addressing to you the following production. Indeed, nothing but the certainty he entertains of your being the most worthy Member of that venerable Society to which he himself appertains, could have induced him to confer on your Majesty so flattering a mark of the estimation in which he holds you, as that of dedicating to you an account of a Society, which is unquestionably the most numerous, the most ancient, the most peaceable and respectable in the world. It is a tribute, Sire, of the most profound respect, which he pays, not to your exalted rank, but to the eminent example of true Henpeckicifism which you hold out to the world.

It has always been the first aim of every body of men, who differed materially from the remainder of mankind, either by holding particular opinions, or by the practice of certain actions or duties, to add to their number, if possible, those of their contemporaries who were the most distinguished for their virtue, their talents, or their rank; and as your claims to the possession of the highest rank on this globe, of the most splendid talents, and of the most god-like virtue (which last claim, by the by, it is suspected by many, has no better support than what the most consummate hypocrisy and dissimulation can afford,) render you a conspicuous personage on the great theatre of the world, it was with the most anxious solicitude that the Henpecked Society hoped you might be induced to become a Member of their union, and it was with silent, but deep chagrin, that they witnessed your presumptuous conduct to your late Empress, who, to be sure, appears to have been too weak a Princess to be capable of subjecting so fierce and turbulent a spirit as you possess.

The period has at length arrived, however, when the fondest hopes of the Society have been more than realized, and at a time when they had almost despaired that your late Empress would ever be able to present so valuable an addition to their number as your Majesty. Fortunately, you

yourself, by your last act of rebellion towards that Princess, facilitated so desirable an event, though by a means, indeed, which was altogether unexpected, and which could only have occurred to a man possessed of so great a mind as your Majesty—your divorcement of your first wife, and your union with her successor. That was the extreme point to which your Majesty's contempt of her could be carried. But, out of the worst corruption has arisen incorruption, and the most daring of rebels has become the most submissive of slaves.

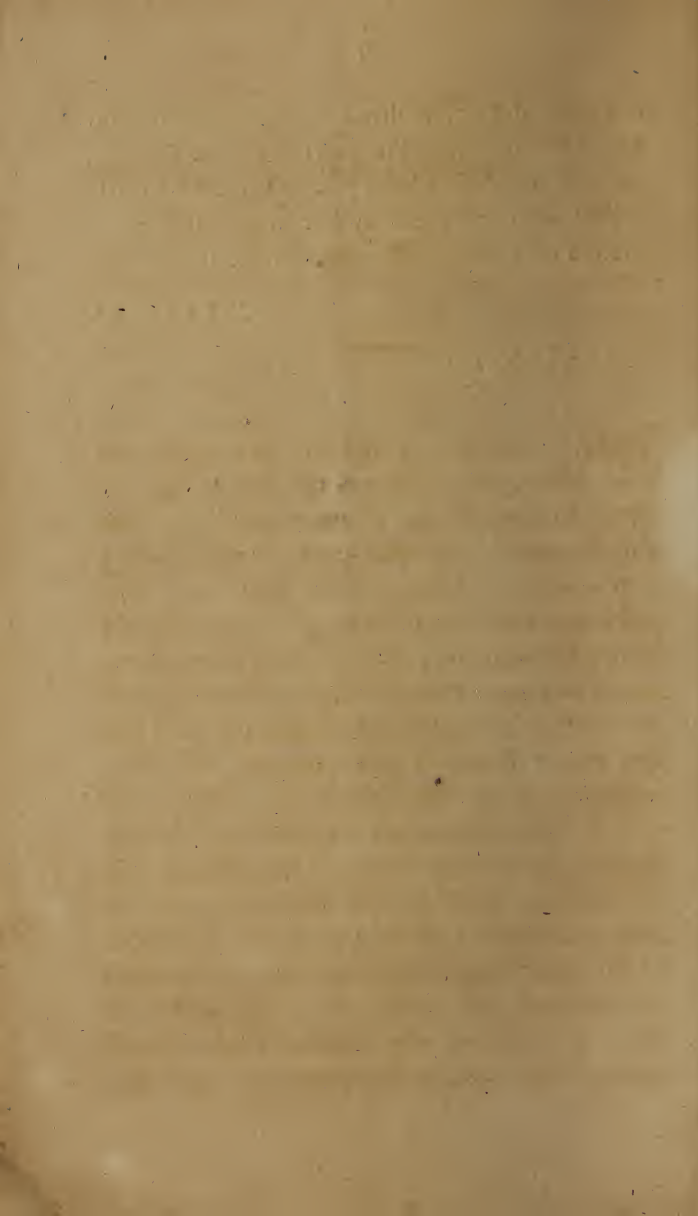
Permit me, Sire, to congratulate you on so important a change in your dispositions, important not only to our Institution, but to your Majesty's happiness. Instead of the toils and dangers of warfare, to which your unrestrained impetuosity exposed you, you are plunged in all the calmness and sweets of retirement and of love. Instead of falling forth, as a mighty conqueror, as a portentous pestilence, to mark your progress, like a devouring plague, by every calamity which can be inflicted on suffering and degraded humanity, you have abandoned to your agents the horrific grandeur of scenes once so congenial to your soul, for the enjoyment of the less conspicuous, but at the same time less dangerous magnificence of a court.

Permit me once more to congratulate your Majesty on a change which is scarce less important to your future happiness, as it will have considerable influence in preventing a return of that turbulent spirit so inimical to your true welfare, and to the interests of our Society. I mean the change which appears to have taken place in the fortune of your Majesty's arms, by the late events in Spain and Portugal. Do not rashly consider those events as disasters, which, by instilling into you, more and more, the dangers of presumption, and by strengthening your present habits of submission, are to be estimated as most invaluable blessings. Misfortune is the best nurse of virtue: A restless, ungovernable, or ambitious spirit, cannot be checked but by calamity: Violent diseases of the mind, like violent diseases of the body, can only be cured by the application of violent remedies. When your Majesty duly reflects on these important truths, I am confident you will join with me, in fervently praying that the vigorous prescriptions of your attentive physician (Great Britain) may operate with expedition to produce the desired effect, that of stripping you of a great portion of your overgrown power, that you may be brought to that degree of humility so essential to your peace, and to the return of your reason. When that happy period arrives, which it is to be hoped

is not far distant, with what gratitude will your Majesty contemplate the exertions made for your welfare, by those whom you now inconsiderately regard as your enemies, but who will then be viewed by you as your most valuable friends.

X * * * * *

June 30th, 1811.



SOME ACCOUNT,

&c. &c.

THE Society, vulgarly denominated *The Henpecked Club*, is of the most remote antiquity, so remote, indeed, that the boasted antiquity of Freemasonry can stand no comparison with it, Henpeckicizm deriving its origin immediately from its founder, Adam, or rather Eve, since whose time it has continued to flourish in all ages and countries, and under every form of government, whether republican or monarchical. Nay, we could even trace its origin to a much higher date than that of the subjugation of Adam, were it not that a species of disgrace might be attached to our Society by allowing it to have been founded by sin and the devil. It is, however, a fact, that, since the moment of Satan's union with Sin, he has remained as com-

pletely subject to her despotic sway as the most henpecked mortal that ever existed.

Although Henpeckicism has never formally received the sanction of any legislature, and has even been endangered by a law, I am informed, still in force within the British dominions, by which a husband is most iniquitously authorized to inflict corporeal punishment on his wife (with this provision, indeed, that he must use no weapon of greater efficacy than a stick, and that such stick must be no thicker than his thumb), it has yet been encouraged by some governments, particularly that of the French, which has in no other instance that I know of displayed any great degree of judgment, and has been connived at by all, as a necessary part of the regulations of every well-governed and reputable family. So necessary, indeed, has the experience of the world shewn it to be, that while every other human institution has gone to wreck, and during periods when even the divine light of Christianity was nearly extinguished by the barbarous darkness of ignorance and superstition, this venerable and ex

cellent spirit of Henpeckicism continued to retain its original purity and influence, and husbands were found to submit to the pleasing bondage of their wives, in as great numbers, and with as much good will, as in the more enlightened periods of ancient or modern times. In short, Henpeckicism has withstood the shock of every convulsion or revolution which has visited the surface of this globe, surviving even the universal deluge of the earth.

Henpeckicism, which has been graced by ranking as its Members the greater part of the most celebrated men who have appeared since the creation to the present day, whether legislators, philosophers, conquerors, poets, or divines, requires no other argument to vindicate and establish its right to the most extensive influence and operation than the language of every lover, who readily acknowledges himself to be, and swears to continue, the slave of his mistress before marriage; *ergo*, he who denies her supremacy when she becomes his wife, is guilty of a most criminal and unnatural rebellion against an authority which God and himself have set over him. If other arguments were wanted, however, many might be adduced to prove that the superiority of

the female is an ordination of nature. For example, the noblest or the fiercest dog will tamely submit to the snarling and snapping of the most pitiful bitch of his species.

Besides, however, having the honour to include among its Members so many amiable, wise, and accomplished personages, the Society, likewise, always has been, and now is, partly composed of persons either less distinguished for their virtues or their talents, or collected from the more humble and obscure walks of life. These various classes and characters, nevertheless, though so distinctly parted from each other in their appearance in the world, and in the transactions in which it is engaged, are yet of equal rank as Members of the Society. For in Henpeckicism there is no distinction: The peeress lords it over her vassal, even as the peasant: All are equally comprised in the description so happily given by the poet:

“ The crouching vassal of the tyrant wife,
 “ Who has not sixpence but in her possession,
 “ Who has no will but by her high permission,
 “ Who must to her his dear friends secrets tell,
 “ Who dreads a curtain lecture worse than hell.”

To meet at stated times and places, without any pretensions to distinction of rank, except that conferred by the vote of each Sub-meeting on its President, whose brows were adorned by a pair of enormous pasteboard horns, was found by the Members of our ancient and honourable Society a mighty inducement to continue firm in their obedience, and a mighty incitement to surrender entirely what little ideal liberty some of them might imagine they still retained. For the most perfectly submissive derived considerable delight from the contemplation of their own felicity, when contrasted with the occasional mortifications of the more refractory, while these latter were stimulated by envy or emulation to attain to the same degree of happiness and ease with the former.

The Rules observed by the Members of these Meetings were every way adapted to preserve the existence of the Institution. Such Members as had the honour to receive a black eye from their spouses were entitled to an allowance of 10s. 6d. per week, for so long as the glorious colouring remained. The allowance for two black eyes was 1l. 1s. In all cases, however, proof was required that the contusion was received according

to the true spirit of genuine Henpeckicism, that is, without resistance or murmuring, according to the example of that inestimable deceased Member, Socrates, who, together with his lady, is alluded to by the poet in the following lines :

“ How oft she scolded in a day he knew,
 “ How many pisspots at the sage she threw,
 “ Who took it patiently, and wip’d his head—
 “ *Rain follows thunder—that was all he said.*”

Such married men as had not the honour to appertain to the Society were earnestly requested to attend these Meetings, not as Members, but as visitors, in order that they might be induced to unite themselves with it, by witnessing the perfect happiness which it was calculated to confer. For what happiness can be greater than that of belonging to a spouse who takes upon herself the weighty care of regulating not only her own conduct, but that of her husband and the rest of her family; to a spouse who takes the trouble of receiving and paying all money; and who kindly undertakes the task of judging for her husband (in every occurrence) of what is most proper for him to do, of what time he should spend in public houses, of how much mc-

ney he must expend, of what secrets ought to be retained in his, or rather her possession, and of what ought to be divulged to the world? In short, who takes upon herself all anxiety, all trouble, and leaves to her darling husband nothing to do but the delightful task of executing her commands; well remembering that

“ His proper body is not his, but mine,
 “ For so said Paul, and Paul’s a sound divine.”

The design and ostensible object of the Institution having always been to preserve, and even, if possible, to extend the just and laudable dominion of the fair sex, the several Meetings thought it proper, also, to request the attendance of bachelors, not merely with a view that they might be benefited by witnessing such perfect examples of submission, but that those bachelors who had not yet turned their thoughts towards matrimony, or who might have overlooked so great an inducement to enter into the married state as the existence of our Institution, might be induced, as early as possible, to place themselves on a level, in this respect, with most of the greatest men in the world.

The simple declaration of any person

that he was a Member, was sufficient to insure his admittance to any of the Meetings.

Each Meeting was governed by a President, who was chosen by vote at every Meeting for the time being, unless any Member could produce proofs of very superior excellence, when, as an honour extraordinary, he was elected for twelve months.

If any Member of the Society neglected to attend a Meeting at least once in twelve months, he was served with a summons in writing by a Secretary; and if, after that step, he remained an absentee, a public censure was passed upon him, printed, and posted up in the streets of the town in which he resided. In the same paper his wife was exhorted to use every means to restore him to a due degree of submission, his brother Members were forbid to hold converse with him for a specified term, and their wives were humbly requested to afford to the wife of the rebellious Member, their advice and assistance in bringing him back to his obedience.

Though these Meetings, by the influence of the Rules which I have noticed, and of many others admirably calculated for the same purposes, were attended with infinite

benefit to the Society, they were, nevertheless, foolishly and unfortunately suppressed when the raging itch for politics seized upon the people, and induced the Members to spend the leisure time allowed to them by their wives over a pint of ale and a newspaper, rather than in enjoying the delectable conversation of each other. Luckily for the interests of the Institution, however, some Members have escaped the contagion of the political mania, and are preparing to re-establish the ancient Meetings on their former footing (of which event due public notice will be given): And as the minds of most men must now be convinced, with whatever earnestness they may have engaged in and prosecuted the discussion of political topics, that the important advantages which they no doubt expected to result from their strictures and observations are by no means likely to ensue; but, on the contrary, that the more time and attention they have thus bestowed for the interest of their country, and the more pints they have drunk and pipes they have smoked, the aspect of its affairs has become more and more dismal, and that the political horizon has acquired a darker and more stormy appearance, it

is not doubted that they will now be brought gladly to renounce so unprofitable and mortifying an employment, and to return, with additional zest, to the pleasing, innocent, and satisfactory attendance of the Henpecked Meetings. Of this, indeed, there appears such slight cause for apprehension, that it is almost superfluous to notice it; were it not that the Members who are about to re-establish the meetings have observed, with some astonishment, that the greater part of their brethren, in the course of their news-hunting, have acquired a violent predilection for smoking pipes and drinking pints, objects, which, at first, were only of secondary consideration; and as they are of opinion that there is good ground to suspect, from that circumstance, that they will rather continue in their present habits than relinquish such highly-prized luxuries, it is proposed that the meetings be held at public houses, in order that the appetites of the smokers and beer-drinkers may be no obstacle in the way of so important a re-establishment.

I have thus endeavoured to give a con-

cise account of the origin and nature of the Henpecked Society; noticing only such circumstances as display, in a striking light, the genius and object of the institution. But as wives are at present deprived of that able assistance which it was in the power of the Society to afford them, it may not be improper, before concluding, to take some notice of the most successful methods of reducing husbands to a state of submission. Strongly attached to the Society, as I am; formed by nature with dispositions prone to obedience, and willing, to the utmost of my abilities, to be the means of bringing every one into so happy a situation as I enjoy in common with my brother Members, I hope a word or two more from one who is proud to acknowledge himself not a despicable Member of the Society (of which certificates can be produced), will not be unacceptable, especially to my fair readers, each of whom it is my wish may become as absolute a sovereign, as I am completely a slave.

The most common method by which females attempt the full exercise of that unlimited power which of right belongs to them, is, at a very early period after marriage, to become extremely noisy and abu-

sive, and to make a point of dealing out blame very liberally to their husbands for every action which they commit, whether they are really of opinion that their conduct has been reprehensible or not. This method is at some times attended with blows. Though a vigorous and persevering course of this treatment may frequently be successful, yet there is considerable danger of resistance from those brutal fellows injudiciously termed *men of spirit*, a resistance which may be attended with consequences extremely injurious to the female countenance. I would strenuously recommend this method to be pursued, however, with all those effeminate characters who are more afraid of sustaining a drubbing, than eager to vindicate their title to manhood, and would especially advise it to be practised on the whole tribe of fops or puppies, creatures possessed of no better proofs that they are privileged to rank as men, than that each of them has only two legs and wears breeches. Indeed, so much of the female enters into the composition of these pretty fellows, that they will generally be found to submit without reluctance to the authority of a wife, as nature, by having (apparently) intended them for women,

has granted them a sort of intuitive knowledge that the female part of the species is formed to command. With most men, however, a consequence attends this method of subjugation which is alone a sufficient reason for its being used with caution, and not before the wives have thoroughly ascertained that they belong to either of the two classes which I have mentioned as being best managed by it. This dreadful consequence is not the being subjected to a repayment of blows with interest, at which I have already hinted, but is no less than, that in proportion as the submission of the husbands increase, their affection will be dissipated, and will be succeeded by secret but continually increasing contempt, and at last by insufferable disgust and rooted aversion.

Some women pursue a course quite the opposite to this, and with greater success. They at one time load their husbands with caresses, magnify their own affection, and seem to have no other avocation worth their attention, but that of convincing them that the sole study of their lives will be to invent fresh blandishments, and to render them in all respects completely happy. At other times, however, they affect

a sulkiness of behaviour: a sudden and sullen gloom succeeds their former cheerfulness: they sigh frequently, and burst into floods of tears: nay, they are even seized with swoonings and hysterics. The wretched husband of such a wife, alarmed at these surprising symptoms, anxiously inquires the cause. She affects to evade his questions—he becomes more importunate—she persists in declining to assign a reason—his importunities are redoubled—till he is at length informed, with gentle reproaches and a burst of grief, that he himself is breaking her heart, that the reward of all her tenderness is his neglect, &c. &c. Astonished at a charge which he is wholly unconscious of having merited, he at first endeavours to ridicule what he terms her childish uneasiness. She affects, however, still to doubt—he makes solemn protestations of his innocence; and they are reconciled. In a few days, however, the same farce is played over again, and again, and again, till the unhappy man is at length almost convinced, contrary to the evidence of his own senses, that his conduct has been criminal. Nay, to pacify his afflicted partner, he is even brought to confess his imaginary faults, and to pro-

mise amendment in future. For fear of unintentionally giving offence, he learns to keep a strict watch over his own actions, becomes afraid to take any notice of those of his wife, is, for the same reason, cautious of contradicting her, lest his cruelty should make her swoon, and, in short, becomes a Member of the Henpecked Society. This method, however, is liable to the same objection as the former, and may be attended with consequences no less pernicious.

Though the great object of our Society is to extend the dominion of the female sex, it is far from being its intention to obtain that end by such unhappy and reprehensible means. The only worthy Members of the Society are those who have become so as much from conviction of its utility, as from entertaining a due sense of the superiority of their wives. All such Members, however, have been treated in a manner very different from the preceding. They have (and let every wife endeavour to follow the same plan) been first brought to acknowledge that their wives, by their care and economy, were better adapted than themselves to manage their concerns, have been satisfied, by their attentive be-

haviour, that they were well qualified to govern their families, and have been convinced, by their mildness and moderation, that the authority with which they were invested would never be abused. In such a family, resistance will never be attempted. Commands from the one party will be met by prompt obedience from the other. Perpetual harmony will be established; and correction, when necessary, will be submitted to, according to the fundamental Rule of the Society, *without murmuring and without resistance.*

THE END.

