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*A State of the Civil Power
in Westminster.*

*The Outrages, and Violences,
lately committed in Westminster, by Mobs,
and tumultuous Assembly of People; & &
have raised a general Alarm among
the Inhabitants; who imagine; either that
the Civil Power of itself is not able to put a
stop to these disorders, or that it he & & &*

Preservation of the Peace, is not placed in the
hands of proper Magistrates; therefore a
Remedy has been long wish'd for; but as no
Judgment can be form'd of the Propriety
of any proposed Remedy, without some
previous Knowledge of the State of the
present Civil Power within this City and
Liberty; it is thought necessary to give a
short sketch of it, in hopes Gentlemen of
Rank and Ability, will turn their
thoughts to so important a Subject, and
endeavour to have some regular System of
Government established, in order to
prevent those Evils for the future.

Westminster, now containing
the Parishes of St. Margaret, St. John the
Evangelist, St. Martin in the fields, St. James,
St. George Hanover Square, St. Ann Soho, &
St. Paul Covent Garden, St. Clement Dons,
and St. Mary Le Strand, is a Franchise
granted by the Crown to the Dean and
Chapter of the Collegiate Church of St. Peter
Westminster; with many extraordinary
Privileges, some of which have been long
disused; those remaining, are the
holding a Court Lect, the Custody
of a Goal, and the Return of all Writs
and Procefs, they likewise claim by

Virtue of their Grant, all Excheats, ~// ~//
Deodands, Goods of Felons, Waifs, & Strays,
Fines, as well imposed by the Kings ~//
Justices, as by others; and all forfeitures
whatever, arising within the Franchise,
and also the Soil of the Common ~// ~//
called Tostill Fields.

To enable them to support such
their Jurisdiction, they generally have
chosen a Steward from amongst the Nobility,
whose Appointment is for Life; rather a
protector of their Privileges, than a Servant;
the Office being executed by the Deputy

Steward, who presides in the Court Seet,
and is usually in the Commission of
the Peace for the County of Middelsex,
and this City and Liberty, and was
always Chairman till lately of the
Quarter Sessions of the latter.

The Dean and Chapter
likewise appoint the High Bailiff
generally for Life, to whom they grant
all their Profits and perquisites, arising
within the Franchise; for which he
pays them the annual Sum of £100.

A Coroner for the Franchise,
as likewise a Goaler of the Goal, called
the Gatehouse, and a Clerk of the \approx \parallel \approx
Market, are also appointed by them,
generally for the Life of the Possessor.

Westminster, in the Reign of
King Henry 8.th then containing only the
Parishes of St. Margaret, St. Martin, \approx \parallel \approx
St. Clement, and St. Mary Le Strand, was
styled a Borough, some short time after,
the Appellation of City was given it.

In the Parish of St. Margaret,
was a Town properly called Westminster,
and in that of St. Martin, a Village \approx // \approx
called Charing; the other parts of these
Parishes, as well as those of St. Clements
and St. Mary Le Strand, consisted of \approx //
his Majesty's Palace of Westminster, \approx //
Houses belonging to the Nobility, and
others, and of several Farms, Lands, and
Tenements, the Occupiers of which, had a
right of Common in Tothill Fields.

From the Increase of Buildings,

and Inhabitants, it was found necessary
by an Act of Parliament passed in the 27.th
of Queen Elizabeth, to divide this City into
Wards, And to direct a Burgeſs, and 2
Assistant, to be appointed over each Ward;
as alſo to conſtitute a Court of Burgeſſes,
composed of the Dean, High Steward, 2
Deputy Steward, and Burgeſſes, to whom
Authority was given, to examine into, and
punish, all Incontiencies, Common Scolds,
Inmates, and Common Annoyances; and
likewiſe to eſtabliſh Orders, and ordinances,
for the well governing of the Inhabitants.

This City and Liberty still ≈ 112
increasing in Buildings and Inhabitants,
it was about the latter end of the Reign
of Charles 1st; or beginning of that of Charles
2nd found necessary to grant a Special ≈ 112
Commission of the Peace therein; distinct
from that of the County.

The Legislature, finding a still
greater Increase in the Buildings, did in
1660 establish the Parish of St. Paul
Covent Garden, in 1670 that of St. Ann
Soho, in 1684 that of St. James, in 1724 that
of St. George Hanover Square, ^{and} in 1728 that

of St. John, all which Parishes were taken
out of those of St. Margaret, and St. Martin,
and by the many Chapples, Meeting \approx \approx
Houses, Hospitals, and Buildings, erected
of late Years; what was before Arable; \approx \approx
Meadow, and pasture Lands, are now \approx \approx
become Sheets, Squares, Lanes, and Passages.

By an Act of Parliament passed
in the 29th of his late Majesty, additional
Powers were given to the Court Sect, Viz
of appointing the High and petty \approx \approx
Constables, who are to obey all such \approx \approx
Orders as they shall from time to time

receive from the High Steward or his
Deputy, on pain of being punished by
fine in a summary way; And by the
same Act, further powers were given to
the Court of Burgesses, to examine into all
annoyances committed within the City
and Liberty; and punish by Fine, the
offenders; as also to examine into
and punish by fine, all persons dealing by
false weights or measures.

Commissioners for paving
cleansing and lighting the Streets, and
a Court of Request for recovery of small

In answer to the Objection, that =||
persons of Fortune and Character, will not
act in the Commission of the Peace in =||
Westminster; it is presumed, that they =||
might be prevailed upon to accept the =||
Office, if they were of equal Rank in Life,
and properly rewarded; for as great =|| =||
Vigilance and Integrity, with a competent
Knowledge and Abilities, should be the
Qualities of a Magistrate, who must in
this Place, from the Multiplicity of the
Business, which daily arises, devote the
chief part of his time, to the due Execution
of his Authority; he is certainly intitled

to an honourable reward; but if that Reward
is made to arise from Practice, then Practice
will necessarily become a Temptation, to
pervert or abuse Justice; and as the
Magistrate is in fact an Inferior Judge,
to punish small offences, as well as chief
Officer to preserve the peace, his Income
surely ought to be made independent of
Practice, so that it would not only be a
better, but also a greater security to the
Inhabitants, if they had Salaries rather
than Fees; and if only a necessary number
was appointed, under due precautions,
this would encourage Men of Integrity,

and abilities to accept the Office, and make
it highly serviceable, and honourable, &
and the City and Liberty would ≈ 11 ≈ 11 ≈
experience the most happy effects thereof.

It might naturally be expected,
that a City so large as Westminster, the
Residence of his Majesty, the Royal ≈ 11
Family, and most of the Nobility and ≈ 11
Gentlemen in the Kingdom, the Seat of
Parliament, and the Courts of Justice, ≈
would have some regular police or System
of Government, that it hath not, is an ≈ 11
astonishment to many, as well as that it

still continues a Franchise remaining
in the Dean and Chapter, notwithstanding
the additional Buildings, and Number of
Inhabitants, since the original Grant; ~||
which may probably be one of the Causes,
why no such Police hath been yet ~||~||
established; either for fear of breaking
in upon their Rights, or of enlarging ~||
their Civil Power; therefore the ~||~||~
Surrendering their Grant to his Majesty
for a valuable Consideration, it is ~||~
apprehended may produce great ~||~
Advantages, both to the Crown, and the
Publick, for besides the pecuniary ~||~

emoluments of the Franchise; the Crown
will be put into possession of the ≈ 112
Appointment of several Officers of Honour,
Trust and profit, after the Death of the
present possessor, and the Publick will
have reason to expect from the Influence
of the Crown, very great Improvements
in the Police of this City and ≈ 112
Liberty.







