



A barber's shop or 'A satire of the Westminster Election of 1784'

BUNBURY, William Henry.

A Barber's Shop. From an Original Drawing by W. Bunbury Esq.r in the Possession of S.r Joshua Reynolds to whom this Plate is Inscribed by his much obliged & most humble Servant, John Jones.

London: John Jones & William Dickinson, 1785. Coloured stipple engraving. Sheet 505 x 660mm.

£1,800

A humorous scene in a barber's shop, with caricatured figures of barbers and their customers, who are being shaved, having their hair combed, staunching a cut on his cheek, or admiring their curled hair in the mirror. At closer inspection the satire is more political, with scattered references to the famous 1784 General Election in Westminster. The shaving barber's apron is inscribed 'Success to the Poll'; the names of the three candidates are on pieces of paper that poke out from pockets; and the two dogs that fight over a wig bag have the names of the two Tory candidates and the Whig. In 1784 William Pitt the Younger called an election in an attempt to get a better majority for the Tories in Parliament. The candidates for the two Westminster seats were two Tories, Admiral Samuel Hood and Sir Cecil Wray, and the Whig Charles James Fox. Both sides spent a fortune and campaigned bitterly, with both George, Prince of Wales, and the Duchess of Devonshire campaigning for Fox. On the 17th May Fox and Hood were declared the winners but the result was contested by the Tories in an attempt to delay Fox taking his seat. On



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4 March 1785 the House of Commons finally ordered the Returning Officer to declare the result. It is no wonder that the man reading the newspaper here is clasping his bald head with a concerned expression.

GEORGE: Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires in the British Museum, 6882.

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