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T W O  
L E T T E R S

F R O M

D. HARTLEY, Esq. M. P.

ADDRESSED TO THE

COMMITTEE OF THE COUNTY OF YORK.

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L E T T E R I.

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*Sodbury, Dec. 22, 1779.*

S I R,

I HAVE received the honour of a letter, by the direction of the Committee at *York*, upon the subject of a proposed meeting of the Gentlemen of the county of *York*, to consider what measures

measures it may be expedient to adopt in the present critical situation of public affairs. The Committee are pleased, in their letter, to express themselves as being desirous of collecting a numerous approbation of such a measure, which I doubt not they will receive to their fullest satisfaction, and for which I think they are entitled to the sincerest thanks of their country. If I could think it possible for any person in this kingdom to withhold his approbation and concurrence to such a proposal, in the present time of public alarm, I should be most anxious to protest, in the strongest terms, against such reluctance, as unworthy of any man who enjoys the common protection of society; a reluctance equally repugnant  
to



to all the principles of public virtue, and destructive to all the means of public welfare.

The attention of the whole body of constituents throughout the kingdom to the present state of public concerns, and their interposition, in a constitutional manner, is now become a matter of the *highest* and most *immediate necessity*. Ministerial influence, by means of *places, pensions, and beneficial contracts*, being universal and unbounded, the legislature itself, under that baneful influence, is so far degraded in the public confidence, as to be esteemed but little better than the *personal property* of the Minister for the time being, and transferable to any successor.

The

The vain and unavailing struggle which an handful of men can make in parliament, against the torrent of ministerial influence, serves only to give the *form* of deliberation and the appearance of parliamentary sanction, to any system of measures, the most ruinous that can be devised and accompanied with the most unbounded extravagance, which may have been pre-determined by the Minister, and which only remain to be carried through by his irresistible power. Millions upon millions are voted in lumping votes, without the production of a single voucher, or any enquiry into the expenditure of a single shilling. The national riches and resources are thus bestowed, not in the support of the  
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national greatness and honour, but to uphold that unmeasurable fund of ministerial power and influence which now pervades every corner of this kingdom. The fatal consequence resulting from this destructive system, is, that Parliament instead of being revered as the adviser of the Crown, and the controul over its Ministers, is now no longer looked upon in any other light than as an instrument to legalize the most *enormous exactions* upon their fellow-subjects, and to screen the Ministers of corruption, from any effectual responsibility to their country.

No temporary expedients will go to the root of these evils. The real source and origin of all our natural calamities

calamities being derived from the unbounded influence of the Ministers of the Crown, we are led to this obvious and direct conclusion, that no other remedy under Heaven, can rescue this unhappy country from *immediate ruin*, or re-establish its future constitution in security, but a FREE and INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENT. The greatness and dignity of this kingdom require that the constitution of its Parliament should be not only *uncorrupt*, but *unsuspected*. Whenever the great body of constituents throughout this kingdom shall take this principle into their consideration, as fundamental to all their hopes of future greatness and safety—and whenever they shall come to the unanimous judgment and decision,

sion, that the exigency of the times, and the dangers of the public situation are such, as to call for and to justify great national movements being put into action, I hope and trust, that there will be found sufficient virtue and vigour in this constitution, to repel the mortal attack from its vitals; and to give a new born life and energy to those inherent faculties of our constitution, by which, when freed from the bondage of corruption, we may be again restored to every exertion of national strength and greatness.

I heartily wish, that every degree of honour and success may attend the deliberations of the County of *York*, for the public good. I shall esteem it

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as the highest honour to myself, to receive their commands, and shall ever be most zealous to obey them.

I am,

S I R,

With the greatest respect

Your most obedient

Humble servant,

D. HARTLEY.

To the Rev. Mr. *Wyvill*,  
Chairman of the Com-  
mittee of the County  
of *York*.

L E T T E R II.

*London, March 21, 1780.*

S I R,

**T**HE universal concurrence of all parts of this kingdom who have followed the laudable example of the County of York, in promoting principles of public œconomy, and in recommending a system of active vigilance and vigorous exertions in the several departments of the state, is the most honourable and satisfactory testimony of public gratitude to those worthy and respectable characters who have stood foremost in the public cause. This system has proved doub-

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ly fortunate in its operation, not only in the primary effect, of establishing the rights of the public at large, to require from their representatives in Parliament the most rigid frugality in the expenditure of public money; but most principally by drawing the national attention unanimously to this one object, of concerting some future system of wise and prudent measures, which may extricate this nation with honour and safety from those numerous embarrassments under which we labour at present. In this object the most perfect unanimity prevails now. Land, manufactures, and commerce are all equally interested. Their *all* is now at stake. The enormous debts and taxes which have been accumulated upon us since the commencement of the present unfortunate war, are almost beyond measure. The annual interest



interest of the national debt at the beginning of the war was something more than four millions. It is now more than six millions ; and even if we should take the shortest road to put an end to the war, I am sorry to say that our present out-standing debts, and the expences which are now running on, will soon bring it up to an annual rent charge of eight millions. It will be still more if we go on farther. It is therefore time to consider how this nation may stand under an annual rent charge of eight millions sterling for the interest of our accumulated national debt ; more especially, when the certain effect of the greatness of that debt, and of the almost insupportable weight of that annual charge, will be a grievous depression of the national rent-roll of this kingdom. Taxes upon taxes pursue us to our most interior

domestic recesses, without sparing the tenant or cottager any more than the landlord. Seven hundred thousand pounds per annum *for ever* is mortgaged for the current service of this *single* year of the war; and double that annual sum (or nearly) will be still farther necessary to be laid upon the land-owner, the merchant, and the manufacturer for the present enormous out-standing debts, and such expences as must be incurred only by *one* year's longer continuance of the war.

These things require our most serious reflection, and call upon us to consider our actual situation, in respect to that war, which has, and still must, continue, in an increasing measure, to involve us in endless debts, taxes, and ruin. We must, at all events, support our national honour, by the most vi-  
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gorous exertions, without shrinking. But surely, in such a complicated war as this is, if we can make any equitable offers of treaty to any of the parties, common prudence calls upon us to use our endeavours, to unravel by negotiation the combination of powers now acting against us. That there does exist a most formidable confederacy against this country, is too true. The House of Bourbon have formed that confederacy, and America is involved in it. But I do not think it can be imputed to America, to have been active in seeking and forming a confederacy against this country, upon any other motive than what appeared to them to arise from the necessity of self-defence. Let us therefore be understood not to apply the charge of a confederacy against this country specifically to America, who has been evidently driven  
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into it with reluctance. Permit me, therefore, to suggest a few conciliatory sentiments upon this subject. If it should appear that America has proceeded with regret and reluctance into foreign connections, I think the chief ground of irritation would be removed, and an obvious road would be laid open to facilitate the restoration of peace and national reconciliation between Great Britain and America.

The Americans, about two years ago, formed a *defensive eventual* alliance with the Court of France. The event upon which that *eventual* alliance was to become positive, and to take effect, was the continuation of the war by the British Ministry. Now, surely, there cannot be two things in the world more different from each other, than a *defensive eventual* alliance,  
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for their own security, in case of the continuation of the war, and the charge of forming a confederacy against Great Britain. A confederacy is an offensive act, not a defensive one. The league of Cambray, in former days, against the state of Venice, was a confederacy—The league against the King of Prussia, in the beginning of the late war, was a confederacy—The late league for the division of Poland, was a confederacy.—But a *defensive eventual* alliance, formed by America for their final security, just at a moment of time when the British Ministry pretended to conciliatory dispositions—and while America was in suspense as to their sincerity—which alliance was only to take place *eventually* upon the proof of the insincerity of the British Ministry, by the continuation of the war—can never be called a confederacy against this country.

country. This indeed is the language which the Ministry have held out in the King's speech at the opening of the present Session of Parliament; and they are at this moment endeavouring to inveigle the nation into the continuation of the American war, under this pretext, of a supposed American confederacy. Their motives are obvious: *They* wish to instigate the continuance of the American war. But surely, on the part of those who wish the restoration of peace, or any future friendly connection with America, it would have a more conciliatory effect to avoid words of crimination, which cannot fail to revive the memory of all the grievances and mutual reproaches during the contest. Let all such aggravations be consigned to oblivion.

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There is every rational ground of argument to hope, that, by generous and temperate management on the part of this nation, America may be reconciled to this country, and prevented from forming any perpetual alliance with France. Their obligations to France are limited, and as such, may be satisfied and discharged. France cannot have been ignorant that America has been excessively harrassed by the continuation of the war, the seat of which is in their own country; and yet it is apparent to all the world, that France might long ago have put an end to that part of the war which has been most distressing to America, if they had chosen so to do. Let the whole system of France be considered, from the very beginning down to the late retreat from Savannah, and I think

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that it is impossible to put any other construction upon it, but this, *viz.* that it has always been the deliberate intention and object of France, for purposes of their own, to encourage the continuation of the war in America, in the hopes of exhausting the strength and resources of this country, and of depressing the rising power of America. If such has been the conduct of France, let the reverse of this policy be the guide of our conduct. Let us hold out a conciliatory hand and a cordial offer of peace to America. Let America feel that the people of England are not their enemies. Let them feel that they have no enemies in this country, but an implacable and vindictive ministry; and let the result be a reconciliation and foederal union between Great Britain and America. The  
road



road to effect this is plain and broad before us: we have but to go strait forward, and we cannot miss the way. It is no more than this, to make, in the first place, a plain and sincere offer of peace to America (beginning perhaps with a truce, and cessation of arms for a sufficient length of time) and then to enter into a course of negotiation for establishing a foederal alliance. If the people of Great Britain will now step forth to restore peace to them, which their new ally has not effected for them, let any man judge whether America will in future prefer the connection with Great Britain or France, as their truest friend and ally.

There is no constituent member of this community which can with more

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dignity and propriety take the lead in recommending the adoption of some plan for the termination of the American war, and for reconciliation with America than the County of York. Such an object would be most worthy of their interference. That would be laying the axe to the root of the evil. Pensions, Places, exorbitant emoluments, sinecures, contracts, and all such instruments of corruption for the purpose of establishing a ministerial influence in Parliament, are abominations at all times, but the greatest of all our evils *now* is the continuation of the American war. The restoration of peace with America, and of independence to Parliament, may go hand in hand together ; and, I believe, that both these points are equally consonant and cordial to the sentiments and wishes

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wishes of every real friend to this  
Country.

I am, SIR,

with the greatest respect,

your most obedient

humble servant,

D. HARTLEY.

*To the Rev. Mr. Wyvill, Chairman of the  
Committee of the County of York.*

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