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L O N D O N :
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MDCCLXXIV.

1774

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of the following Speech might justify his manner of publishing it by very great authorities. Some of the noblest pieces of eloquence, the world is in possession of, were not spoken on the great occasions they were intended to serve, and seem to have been preserved merely from the high sense that was entertained of their merit.

The present performance appears in public from humbler but juster motives: from the great national importance of the subject; from a very warm desire and some faint hope of serving our country, by suggesting a few of the useful truths which great men are apt to overlook.

The Author has abstained most religiously from personal reflections. He has

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censured no man, and therefore hopes he has offended no man. He feels most sensibly the misfortune of differing from many of those whom he wishes to live and act with; and from some of as much virtue and ability as this kingdom affords. But there are also great authorities on the other side; and the greatest authority can never persuade him, that it is better to extort by force, what he thinks may be gained more surely by gentle means.

He looks upon power as a coarse and mechanical instrument of government, and holds the use of it to be particularly dangerous to the relation that subsists between a mother-country and her colonies. In such a case he doubts whether any point ought to be pursued, which cannot be carried by persuasion, by the sense of a common interest, and the exercise of a moderate authority.

thority. He thinks it unnecessary to lay down the limits of sovereignty and obedience, and more unnecessary to fight for them. If we can but restore that mutual regard and confidence, which formerly governed our whole intercourse with our colonies, particular cases will easily provide for themselves. He acts the part of the truest patriot in this dangerous crisis, whether he lives at London or at Boston, who pursues sincerely the most lenient and conciliating measures; and wishes to restore the public peace by some better method than the slaughter of our fellow-citizens.

A SPEECH,

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S P E E C H, &c.

IT is of such great importance to compose or even to moderate the dissentions, which subsist at present between our unhappy country and her colonies, that I cannot help endeavouring, from the faint prospect I have of contributing something to so good an end, to overcome the inexpressible reluctance I feel at uttering my thoughts before the most respectable of all audiences.

The true object of all our deliberations on this occasion, which I hope we shall

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never lose sight of, is a full and cordial reconciliation with North America. Now I own, my Lords, I have many doubts whether the terrors and punishments, we hang out to them at present, are the surest means of producing this reconciliation. Let us at least do this justice to the people of North America to own, that we can all remember a time when they were much better friends than at present to their mother country. They are neither our natural nor our determined enemies. Before the Stamp Act, we considered them in the light of as good subjects as the natives of any county in England.

It is worth while to enquire by what steps we first gained their affection, and preserved it so long; and by what conduct we have lately lost it. Such an enquiry may point out the means of restoring peace, and make the use of force unnecessary against a people, whom I cannot yet forbear to consider as our brethren.

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It has always been a most arduous task to govern distant provinces, with even a tolerable appearance of justice. The vice-roys and governors of other nations are usually temporary tyrants, who think themselves obliged to make the most of their time; who not only plunder the people, but carry away their spoils, and dry up all the sources of commerce and industry. Taxation in their hands, is an unlimited power of oppression: but in whatever hands the power of taxation is lodged, it implies and includes all other powers. Arbitrary taxation is plunder authorized by law: It is the support and the essence of tyranny; and has done more mischief to mankind, than those other three scourges from heaven, famine, pestilence and the sword. I need not carry your Lordships out of your own knowledge, or out of your own dominions, to make you conceive what misery this right of taxation is capable of producing in a pro-

vincial government. We need only recollect that our countrymen in India, have in the space of five or six years, in virtue of this right, destroyed, starved and driven away more inhabitants from Bengal, than are to be found at present in all our American Colonies; more than all those formidable numbers which we have been nursing up for the space of 200 years, with so much care and success, to the astonishment of all Europe. This is no exaggeration, my Lords, but plain matter of fact, collected from the accounts sent over by Mr. Hastings, whose name I mention with honour and veneration. And I must own, such accounts have very much lessened the pleasure I used to feel in thinking myself an Englishman. We ought surely not to hold our colonies totally inexcusable for wishing to exempt themselves from a grievance, which has caused such unexampled devastation; and, my Lords, it would be too disgraceful to ourselves, to try

try so cruel an experiment more than once. Let us reflect, that before these innovations were thought of, by following the line of good conduct which had been marked out by our ancestors, we governed North America with mutual benefit to them and ourselves. It was a happy idea, that made us first consider them rather as instruments of commerce than as objects of government. It was wise and generous to give them the form and the spirit of our own constitution ; an assembly in which a greater equality of representation has been preserved than at home ; and councils and governors, such as were adapted to their situation, tho' they must be acknowledged to be very inferior copies of the dignity of this House, and the Majesty of the Crown.

But what is far more valuable than all the rest, we gave them liberty. We allowed them to use their own judgment in the
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management of their own interest. The idea of taxing them never entered our heads. On the contrary they have experienced our liberality on many public occasions: we have given them bounties to encourage their industry, and have demanded no return but what every state exacts from its colonies, the advantages of an exclusive commerce, and the regulations that are necessary to secure it. We made requisitions to them on great occasions, in the same manner as our princes formerly asked benevolences of their subjects; and as nothing was asked but what was visibly for the public good, it was always granted; and they sometimes did more than we expected. The matter of right was neither disputed, nor even considered. And let us not forget that the people of New England were themselves, during the last war, the most forward of all in the national cause; that every year we voted them a considerable sum, in acknowledgement of
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their zeal and their services; that in the preceding war, they alone enabled us to make the treaty of Aix la Chapelle, by furnishing us with the only equivalent for the towns that were taken from our allies in Flanders; and that in times of peace, they alone have taken from us six times as much of our woollen manufactures, as the whole kingdom of Ireland. Such a colony, my Lords, not only from the justice, but from the gratitude we owe them, have a right to be heard in their defence; and if their crimes are not of the most inexpiable kind, I could almost say, they have a right to be forgiven.

But in the times we speak of, our public intercourse was carried on with ease and satisfaction. We regarded them as our friends and fellow-citizens, and relied as much upon their fidelity as on the inhabitants of our own country. They saw our power with pleasure; for they considered

dered it only as their protection. They inherited our laws, our language, and our customs; they preferred our manufactures, and followed our fashions with a partiality, that secured our exclusive trade with them, more effectually than all the regulations and vigilance of the custom-house. Had we suffered them to enrich us a little longer, and to grow a little richer themselves, their men of fortune, like the West-Indians, would undoubtedly have made this country their place of education and resort. For they looked up to England with reverence and affection, as to the country of their friends and ancestors. They esteemed and they called it their home, and thought of it as the Jews once thought of the Land of Canaan.

Now, my Lords, consider with yourselves what were the chains and ties that united this people to their mother-country, with so much warmth and affection, at so amazing

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ing a distance. The colonies of other nations have been discontented with their treatment, and not without sufficient cause; always murmuring at their grievances, and sometimes breaking out into acts of rebellion. Our subjects at home, with all their reasons for satisfaction, have never been entirely satisfied. Since the beginning of this century we have had two rebellions, several plots and conspiracies; and we ourselves have been witnesses to the most dangerous excesses of sedition. But the provinces in North America have engaged in no party, have excited no opposition; they have been utter strangers even to the name of Whig and Tory. In all changes, in all revolutions, they have quietly followed the fortunes and submitted to the government of England.

Now let me appeal to your Lordships as to men of enlarged and liberal minds, who have been led by your office and rank to

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the study of history. Can you find in the long succession of ages, in the whole extent of human affairs, a single instance, where distant provinces have been preserved in so flourishing a state, and kept at the same time in such due subjection to their mother country? My Lords, there is no instance; the case never existed before. It is perhaps the most singular phenomenon in all civil history; and the cause of it well deserves your serious consideration. The true cause is, that a mother country never existed before, who placed her natives and her colonies on the same equal footing; and joined with them in fairly carrying on one common interest.

You ought to consider this, my Lords, not as a mere historical fact, but as a most important and invaluable discovery. It enlarges our ideas of the power and energy of good government beyond all former examples; and shews that it can act like gravitation

vation at the greatest distances. It proves to a demonstration that you may have good subjects in the remotest corners of the earth, if you will but treat them with kindness and equity. If you have any doubts of the truth of this kind of reasoning, the experience we have had of a different kind will entirely remove them.

The good genius of our country had led us to the simple and happy method of governing freemen, which I have endeavoured to describe. Our ministers received it from their predecessors, and for some time continued to observe it; but without knowing its value. At length, presuming on their own wisdom, and the quiet disposition of the Americans, they flattered themselves that we might reap great advantages from their prosperity by destroying the cause of it. They chose in an unlucky hour to treat them as other nations have thought fit to treat their colonies; they threatened and they taxed them.

I do not now enquire whether taxation is matter of right; I only consider it as matter of experiment; for surely the art of government itself is founded on experience. I need not suggest what were the consequences of this change of measures. The evils produced by it were such as we still remember and still feel. We suffered more by our loss of trade with them, than the wealth flowing in from India was able to recompence. The bankruptcy of the East India Company, may be sufficiently accounted for by the rapine abroad and the knavery at home; but it certainly would have been delayed some years, had we continued our commerce with them in the single article of tea. But that and many other branches of trade have been diverted into other channels, and may probably never return intire to their old course. But what is worst of all, we have lost their confidence and friendship; we
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have ignorantly undermined the most solid foundation of our own power.

In order to observe the strictest impartiality, it is but just for us to enquire what we have gained by these taxes as well as what we have lost. I am assured that out of all the sums raised in America the last year but one, if the expences are deducted, which the natives would else have discharged themselves, the net revenue paid into the Treasury to go in aid of the sinking fund, or to be employed in whatever public services parliament shall think fit, is eighty-five pounds. Eighty-five pounds, my Lords; is the whole equivalent, we have received for all the hatred and mischief, and all the infinite losses this kingdom has suffered during that year in her disputes with North America. Money that is earned so dearly as this, ought to be expended with great wisdom and œconomy. My Lords, were

you

you to take up but one thousand pounds more from North America upon the same terms, the nation itself would be a bankrupt. But the most amazing and the most alarming circumstance is still behind. It is that our case is so incurable, that all this experience has made no impression upon us. And yet, my Lords, if you could but keep these facts, which I have ventured to lay before you, for a few moments in your minds, (supposing your right of taxation to be never so clear) yet I think you must necessarily perceive that it cannot be exercised in any manner that can be advantageous to ourselves or them. We have not always the wisdom to tax ourselves with propriety; and I am confident we could never tax a people at that distance, without infinite blunders, and infinite oppression. And to own the truth, my Lords, we are not honest enough to trust ourselves with the power of shifting our own burthens upon them. Allow me, therefore,

therefore, to conclude, I think, unanswerably, that the inconvenience and distress we have felt in this change of our conduct, no less than the ease and tranquility we formerly found in the pursuit of it, will force us, if we have any sense left, to return to the good old path we trod in so long, and found it the way of pleasantness.

I desire to have it understood, that I am opposing no rights that our legislature may think proper to claim: I am only comparing two different methods of government. By your old rational and generous administration, by treating the Americans as your friends and fellow-citizens, you made them the happiest of human kind; and at the same time drew from them, by commerce, more clear profit than Spain has drawn from all its mines; and their growing numbers were a daily-increasing addition to your strength. There was no
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room for improvement or alteration in so noble a system of policy as this. It was sanctified by time, by experience, by public utility. I will venture to use a bold language, my Lords; I will assert, that if we had uniformly adopted this equitable, administration in all our distant provinces as far as circumstances would admit, it would have placed this country, for ages, at the head of human affairs in every quarter of the world. My Lords, this is no visionary or chimerical doctrine. The idea of governing provinces and colonies by force is visionary and chimerical. The experiment has often been tried and it has never succeeded. It ends infallibly in the ruin of the one country or the other, or in the last degree of wretchedness.

If there is any truth, my Lords, in what I have said, and I most firmly believe it all to be true; let me recommend it to you to resume that generous and benevolent

spirit in the discussion of our differences, which used to be the source of our union. We certainly did wrong in taxing them : when the Stamp Act was repealed, we did wrong in laying on other taxes, which tended only to keep alive a claim, that was mischievous, impracticable and useless. We acted contrary to our own principles of liberty, and to the generous sentiments of our sovereign, when we desired to have their judges dependent on the crown for their stipends as well as their continuance. It was equally unwise to wish to make the governors independent of the people for their salaries. We ought to consider the governors, not as spies intrusted with the management of our interest, but as the servants of the people, recommended to them by us. Our ears ought to be open to every complaint against the governors ; but we ought not to suffer the governors to complain of the people. We have taken a different method, to which no

small part of our difficulties are owing. Our ears have been open to the governors and shut to the people. This must necessarily lead us to countenance the jobbs of interested men, under the pretence of defending the rights of the crown. But the people are certainly the best judges whether they are well governed; and the crown can have no rights inconsistent with the happiness of the people.

Now, my Lords, we ought to do what I have suggested, and many things more, out of prudence and justice, to win their affection, and to do them public service. If we have a right to govern them, let us exert it for the true ends of government. But, my Lords, what we ought to do, from motives of reason and justice, is much more than is sufficient to bring them to a reasonable accommodation. For thus, as I apprehend, stands the case. They petition for the repeal of an act of parliament, which they

they complain of as unjust and oppressive. And there is not a man amongst us, not the warmest friend of administration, who does not sincerely wish that act had never been made. In fact, they only ask for what we wish to be rid of. Under such a disposition of mind, one would imagine there could be no occasion for fleets and armies to bring men to a good understanding. But, my Lords, our difficulty lies in the point of honour. We must not let down the dignity of the mother-country; but preserve her sovereignty over all the parts of the British Empire. This language has something in it that sounds pleasant to the ears of Englishmen, but is otherwise of little weight. For sure, my Lords, there are methods of making reasonable concessions, and yet without injuring our dignity. Ministers are generally fruitful in expedients to reconcile difficulties of this kind, to escape the embarrassments of forms, the competitions of dignity and

precedency ; and to let clashing rights sleep, while they tranfact their bufinefs. Now, my Lords, on this occafion can they find no excufe, no pretence, no invention, no happy turn of language, not one colourable argument for doing the greateft fervice, they can ever render to their country ? It muft be fomewhat more than incapacity that makes men barren of expedients at fuch a feafon as this. Do, but for once, remove this impracticable ftatelinefs and dignity, and treat the matter with a little common fenfe and a little good humour, and our reconciliation would not be the work of an hour. But after all, my Lords, if there is any thing mortifying in undoing the errors of our minifters, it is a mortification we ought to fubmit to. If it was unjuft to tax them, we ought to repeal it for their fakes ; if it was unwife to tax them, we ought to repeal it for our own. A matter fo trivial in itfelf as the three-penny duty upon tea, but which has given caufe
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to fo much national hatred and reproach, ought not to be fuffered to fubfift an unnecessary day. Muft the intereft, the commerce and the union of this country and her colonies, be all of them facrificed to fave the credit of one imprudent meafure of adminiftration? I own I cannot comprehend that there is any dignity either in being in the wrong, or in perfifting in it. I have known friendship preferved and affection gained, but I never knew dignity loft, by the candid acknowledgement of an error. And, my Lords, let me appeal to your own experience of a few years backward (I will not mention particulars, becaufe I would pafs no cenfures and revive no unpleafant reflections) but I think every candid minifter muft own, that adminiftration has fuffered in more instances than one, both in intereft and credit, by not chufing to give up points, that could not be defended.

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With regard to the people of Boston, I am free to own that I neither approve of their riots nor their punishment. And yet if we inflict it as we ought, with a consciousness that we were ourselves the aggressors, that we gave the provocation, and that their disobedience is the fruit of our own imprudent and imperious conduct, I think the punishment cannot rise to any great degree of severity.

I own my Lords, I have read the report of the Lords Committees of this house, with very different sentiments from those with which it was drawn up. It seems to be designed, that we should consider their violent measures and speeches, as so many determined acts of opposition to the sovereignty of England, arising from the malignity of their own hearts. One would think the mother country had been totally silent and passive in the progress of the whole affair. I on the contrary consider

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these violences as the natural effects of such measures as ours on the minds of freemen. And this is the most useful point of view, in which government can consider them. In their situation, a wise man would expect to meet with the strongest marks of passion and imprudence, and be prepared to forgive them. The first and easiest thing to be done is to correct our own errors; and I am confident we should find it the most effectual method to correct theirs. At any rate let us put ourselves in the right; and then if we must contend with North America, we shall be unanimous at home, and the wise and the moderate there will be our friends. At present we force every North American to be our enemy; and the wise and moderate at home, and those immense multitudes, which must soon begin to suffer by the madness of our rulers, will unite to oppose them. It is a strange idea we have taken up, to cure their resentments by increasing

creasing their provocations; to remove the effects of our own ill conduct, by multiplying the instances of it. But the spirit of blindness and infatuation is gone forth. We are hurrying wildly on without any fixed design, without any important object. We pursue a vain phantom of unlimited sovereignty, which was not made for man; and reject the solid advantages of a moderate, useful and intelligible authority. That just God, whom we have all so deeply offended, can hardly inflict a severer national punishment, than by committing us to the natural consequences of our own conduct. Indeed, in my opinion a blacker cloud never hung over this Island.

To reason consistently with the principles of justice and national friendship, which I have endeavoured to establish, or rather to revive what was established by our ancestors, as our wisest rule of conduct
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for the government of America; I must necessarily disapprove of the Bill before us; for it contradicts every one of them. In our present situation every act of the legislature, even our acts of severity ought to be so many steps towards the reconciliation we wish for. But to change the government of a people, without their consent, is the highest and most arbitrary act of sovereignty, that one nation can exercise over another. The Romans hardly ever proceeded to this extremity even over a conquered nation, till its frequent revolts and insurrections had made them deem it incorrigible. The very idea of it, implies a most total abject and slavish dependency in the inferior state. Recollect that the Americans are men of like passions with ourselves, and think how deeply this treatment must affect them. They have the same veneration for their charters, that we have for our Magna Charta, and they ought in reason to have greater. They

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are the title deeds to all their rights both public and private. What? my Lords, must these rights never acquire any legal assurance and stability? Can they derive no force from the peaceable possession of near two hundred years? And must the fundamental constitution of a powerful state, be for ever subject to as capricious alterations as you may think fit to make, in the charters of a little mercantile company or the corporation of a borough? This will undoubtedly furnish matter for a more pernicious debate than has yet been moved. Every other colony will make the case its own. They will complain that their rights can never be ascertained; that every thing belonging to them depends upon our arbitrary will; and may think it better to run any hazard, than to submit to the violence of their mother country, in a matter in which they can see neither moderation nor end.

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But let us coolly enquire, what is the reason of this unheard of innovation. Is it to make them peaceable? My Lords, it will make them mad. Will they be better governed if we introduce this change? Will they be more our friends? The least that such a measure can do, is to make them hate us. And would to God, my Lords, we had governed ourselves with as much œconomy, integrity and prudence as they have done. Let them continue to enjoy the liberty our fathers gave them. Gave them, did I say? They are coheirs of liberty with ourselves; and their portion of the inheritance has been much better looked after than ours. Suffer them to enjoy a little longer that short period of public integrity and domestic happiness, which seems to be the portion allotted by Providence to young rising states. Instead of hoping that their constitution may receive improvement from our skill in government, the

most useful wish I can form in their favour is, that heaven may long preserve them from our vices and our politicks.

Let me add farther, that to make any changes in their government, without their consent, would be to transgress the wisest rules of policy, and to wound our most important interests. As they increase in numbers and in riches, our comparative strength must lessen. In another age, when our power has begun to lose something of its superiority, we should be happy if we could support our authority by mutual goodwill and the habit of commanding; but chiefly by those original establishments, which time and public honour might have rendered inviolable. Our posterity will then have reason to lament that they cannot avail themselves of those treasures of public friendship and confidence which our fathers had wisely hoarded up, and we are throwing away. 'Tis hard, 'tis cruel, besides all our debts
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and taxes, and those enormous expences which are multiplying upon us every year, to load our unhappy sons with the hatred and curses of North America. Indeed, my Lords, we are treating posterity very scurvily. We have mortgaged all the lands ; we have cut down all the oaks ; we are now trampling down the fences, rooting up the seedlings and samplers, and ruining all the resources of another age. We shall send the next generation into the world, like the wretched heir of a worthless father, without money, credit or friends ; with a stripped, incumbered, and perhaps untenanted estate.

Having spoke so largely against the principle of the bill, it is hardly necessary to enter into the merits of it. I shall only observe, that even if we had the consent of the people to alter their government, it would be unwise to make such alterations as these. To give the appointment of the
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governor and council to the crown, and the disposal of all places, even of the judges, and with a power of removing them, to the governor, is evidently calculated with a view to form a strong party in our favour. This I know has been done in other colonies; but still this is opening a source of perpetual discord, where it is our interest always to agree. If we mean any thing by this establishment, it is to support the governor and the council against the people, i. e. to quarrel with our friends, that we may please their servants. This scheme of governing them by a party is not wisely imagined, it is much too premature, and, at all events, must turn to our disadvantage. If it fails, it will only make us contemptible; if it succeeds, it will make us odious. It is our interest to take very little part in their domestic administration of government, but purely to watch over them for their good. We never gained so much by North America as when we let them govern

vern themselves, and were content to trade with them and to protect them. One would think, my Lords, there was some statute law, prohibiting us, under the severest penalties, to profit by experience.

My Lords, I have ventured to lay my thoughts before you, on the greatest national concern that ever came under your deliberation, with as much honesty as you will meet with from abler men, and with a melancholy assurance, that not a word of it will be regarded. And yet, my Lords, with your permission, I will waste one short argument more on the same cause, one that I own I am fond of, and which contains in it, what, I think, must affect every generous mind. My Lords, I look upon North America as the only great nursery of freemen now left upon the face of the earth. We have seen the liberties of Poland and Sweden swept away, in the course of one year, by treachery and usurpation. The
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free towns in Germany are like so many dying sparks, that go out one after another; and which must all be soon extinguished under the destructive greatness of their neighbours. Holland is little more than a great trading company, with luxurious manners, and an exhausted revenue; with little strength and with less spirit. Switzerland alone is free and happy within the narrow inclosure of its rocks and vallies. As for the state of this country, my Lords, I can only refer myself to your own secret thoughts. I am disposed to think and hope the best of Public Liberty. Were I to describe her according to my own ideas at present, I should say that she has a sickly countenance, but I trust she has a strong constitution.

But whatever may be our future fate, the greatest glory that attends this country, a greater than any other nation ever acquired,
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is to have formed and nursed up to such a state of happiness, those colonies whom we are now so eager to butcher. We ought to cherish them as the immortal monuments of our public justice and wisdom ; as the heirs of our better days, of our old arts and manners, and of our expiring national virtues. What work of art, or power, or public utility has ever equalled the glory of having peopled a continent without guilt or bloodshed, with a multitude of free and happy common-wealths ; to have given them the best arts of life and government ; and to have suffered them under the shelter of our authority, to acquire in peace the skill to use them. In comparison of this, the policy of governing by influence, and even the pride of war and victory are dishonest tricks and poor contemptible pageantry.

We seem not to be sensible of the high and important trust which providence has committed to our charge. The most precious remains of civil liberty, that the world can

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now

now boast of, are lodged in our hands; and God forbid that we should violate so sacred a deposit. By enslaving your colonies, you not only ruin the peace, the commerce, and the fortunes of both countries; but you extinguish the fairest hopes, shut up the last asylum of mankind. I think, my Lords, without being weakly superstitious, that a good man may hope that heaven will take part against the execution of a plan which seems big, not only with mischief, but impiety.

Let us be content with the spoils and the destruction of the east. If your Lordships can see no impropriety in it, let the plunderer and the oppressor still go free. But let not the love of liberty be the only crime you think worthy of punishment. I fear we shall soon make it a part of our natural character, to ruin every thing that has the misfortune to depend upon us.

No nation has ever before contrived, in so short a space of time, without any war or public calamity (unless unwise measures may be so called) to destroy such ample resources of commerce, wealth and power, as of late were ours, and which, if they had been rightly improved, might have raised us to a state of more honourable and more permanent greatness than the world has yet seen.

Let me remind the noble Lords in administration, that before the stamp act, they had power sufficient to answer all the just ends of government, and they were all compleatly answered. If that is the power they want, though we have lost much of it at present, a few kind words would recover it all.

But if the tendency of this bill is, as I own it appears to me, to acquire a power of governing them by influence and corruption; in the first place, my Lords, this

is not true government, but a sophisticated kind, which counterfeits the appearance, but without the spirit or virtue of the true: and then, as it tends to debase their spirits and corrupt their manners, to destroy all that is great and respectable in so considerable a part of the human species, and by degrees to gather them together with the rest of the world, under the yoke of universal slavery; I think, for these reasons, it is the duty of every wise man, of every honest man, and of every Englishman, by all lawful means, to oppose it.

F I N I S.

