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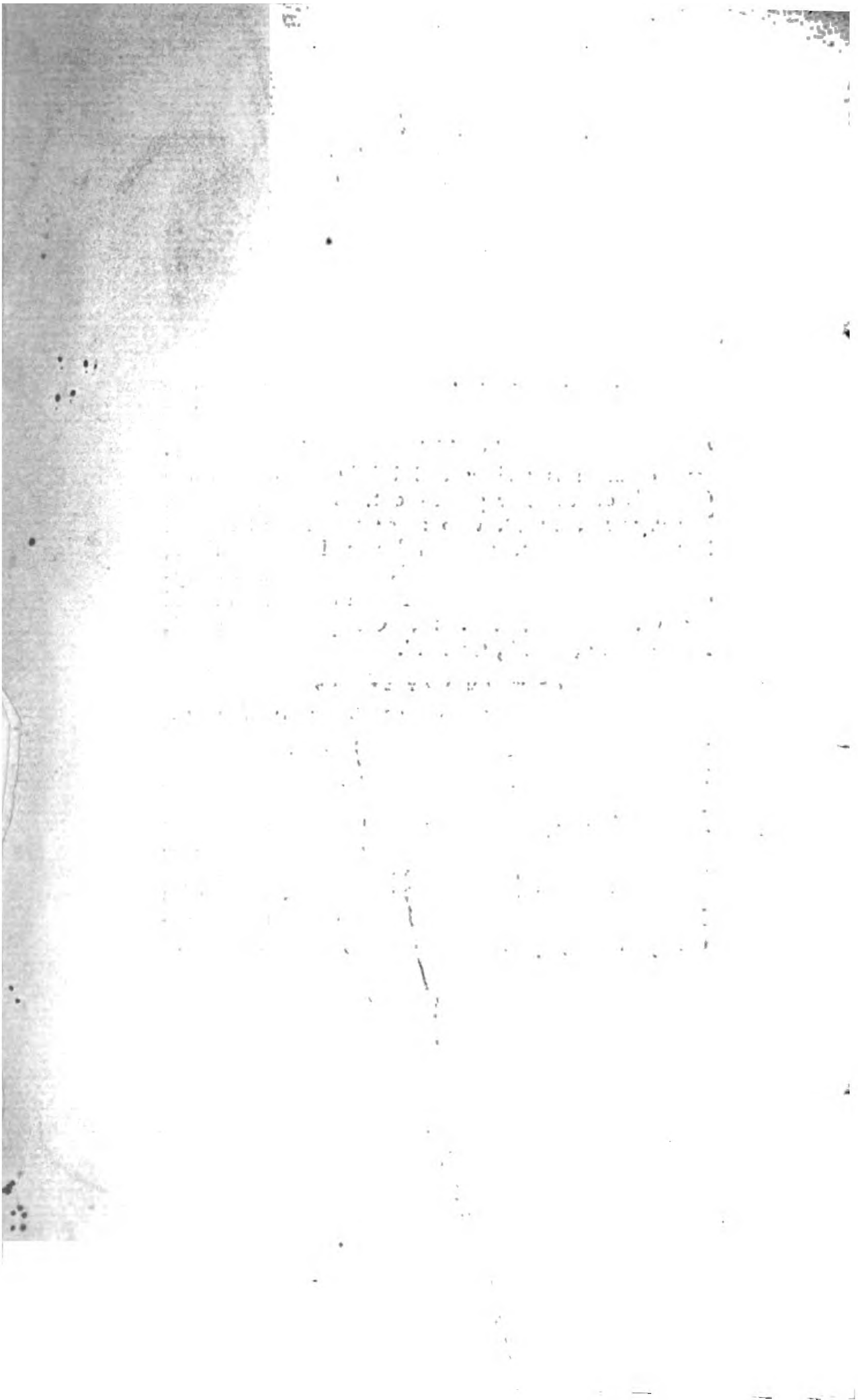
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1777

Godw. Pamph: 450.



THE

AMERICAN CRISIS.



[ Price One Shilling. ]

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THE  
AMERICAN CRISIS,

BY A CITIZEN  
OF THE WORLD;

INSCRIBED

TO THOSE MEMBERS OF

THE COMMUNITY,

VULGARLY NAMED

PATRIOTS.

L O N D O N :

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MDCCLXXVII.



T H E  
AMERICAN CRISIS.



P A R T I.

GENTLEMEN,

**A**BOUT the end of the fifteenth century, a period distinguishable for a spirit of adventure after new countries, Christopher Columbus first discovered South America in the name of Spain, as did Sebastian Cabot that of North America, in the name of Henry VII. king of England; but nothing like a settlement took place in the latter country, till the reign of that great princess queen Elizabeth, who laid the foundation of a commerce in various parts of the world, that has raised this kingdom to its present glory, and which is now become essentially necessary

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cessary to our existence as a leading state amongst the powers of Europe.

In this reign Sir Walter Raleigh, a brave commander, began the first English settlement at a place which he called Virginia, in honour of his royal mistress, and in every successive reign new establishments have been made, or greatly forwarded, along the eastern shore of that continent, the whole forming a line of above 1500 miles in length, reaching from Nova Scotia to Cape Florida; and in breadth from the sources of rivers, to where they fall into the Atlantic Ocean.

A country comprehending such a variety of climates, must also be various in its soil and natural productions. And, when to these considerations are added its marine advantages; its vicinity to the ocean, its capacious bays, and its extensive rivers affording all the benefits of navigation and fisheries, it is no wonder if this new world soon engaged the attention of the maritime powers of Europe:

but



but I shall confine myself to the English establishments in that quarter, which took place in the following order of time.

VIRGINIA, in the reign of queen Elizabeth.

NOVA SCOTIA, in that of James I. but falling into the hands of the French, it was retained by them till the peace of Utrecht, when for the conveniency and security of New England, it was restored to Great Britain for a valuable consideration.

NEW ENGLAND, (comprehending four provinces, viz. Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire) in the same reign.

MARYLAND, under Charles I.

NEW YORK, PENNSYLVANIA, and the JERSEYS, were planted by the Dutch and Swedes, under the name of the New Netherlands; but these settlements proving troublesome neighbours to the English colonies above-mentioned, they were by  
Charles

Charles II. added to the British empire, partly by conquest and partly by purchase, that monarch having given up to the Dutch the English settlement of Surinam in South America.

NORTH CAROLINA, SOUTH CAROLINA, and GEORGIA, began to be settled in the same reign.

EAST FLORIDA, and WEST FLORIDA, were given up by Spain in consideration of the island of Cuba, which we restored by the treaty of 1763.

CANADA, the largest and most dangerous foreign settlement in North America, had in vain been attacked by the New Englanders, who were driven back with disgrace and considerable loss. It was however subdued by the British arms in the late war, and afterwards annexed to that crown in consideration of Martinico, Guadaloupe, and other islands in the West Indies, which we restored by treaty.

Thus,

Thus, partly by colonization, and partly by conquest or purchase, arose the British empire in America, at an expence which every individual of the mother country severely feels, and must feel until that very uncertain period when the bulk of her debt shall be discharged. And in this manner also hath that country been ingrafted in our state, forming a part of an imperial crown, which nothing less than the sword of conquest can alienate therefrom. For was any minister, or set of ministers, to evacuate these colonies, so long as we shall be able by force of arms to hold them, it is to be presumed that such relinquishment would be considered as a breach of trust, whereby the state had been betrayed, and the offenders might become responsible to the laws of their injured country.

Therefore, the unhappy contest in which we are engaged with these shallow politicians, does not so much owe its origin to this or the other minister, as to a belief  
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amongst every successive ministry, *one excepted*, that the colonies ought in gratitude, and in equity, to contribute a moiety, suited to their abilities, towards the general exigencies of that state from which they derived existence, under which they arose to splendor, and by which they had always been protected. This opinion gained strength in proportion to the alarming increase of those expences, particularly in the acquisition of Canada, when the French power was totally annihilated in that part of the continent, and when every impediment that tended to obstruct the growing wealth of the colonies had been removed.

The expediency of an American revenue or permanent subsidy, raised equally amongst all the colonies, \* being considered  
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\* At the beginning of the last war, several of the provincial assemblies, instead of supporting our troops, whilst bravely fighting their battles against a superior enemy wasted their time in wrangling amongst themselves, or with their Governors, upon the quotas that each respective province  
ought

as an unalterable proposition in British politics, that period was deemed the most eligible for putting it in execution. It was  
not

ought to furnish towards the common cause. To this delay was in some measure owing the misfortunes of our first campaigns in that country; and surely no state can be governed by political wisdom, who must thus, in the moment of danger, depend on the capricious humours of its distant provinces for the means of repelling bold invasion.

While some assemblies (viz. those of New England, who have since been re-imbursed by the generosity and equity of the British parliament) were contributing too much, others were contributing too little, and there was a certain set of men who would neither lead nor drive, though the enemy were nearly at their gates. Therefore, at the end of a seven years war, in which Great Britain had been involved solely to protect that country, in which she had sustained the weight throughout every quarter of the earth, at an expence not less than fifty thousand lives, and seventy five millions of money—a war, which, to this day, and for many ages to come, must enhance the morsel which the labourer, and the children of the labourer, in this island, with difficulty procure to support exhausted nature—It was then that the shadow of an American revenue, but upon a *permanent foundation*, became the subject of parliamentary consideration. The object that next engaged the attention of that illustrious body, was the mode by which it might be raised without affecting the people at large; and their determinations upon these important heads does honour to their moderation and their wisdom.

not laid on by the hands of tyrannic masters, as many amongst you, Gentlemen, have been made to believe, but with all the tenderness and gentleness of kind friends and fellow subjects: it seemed to indicate a desire that both countries should exist under the same mild government and laws; that they should for ages remain one people, mutually contributing to each other's prosperity and defence.

Britain enjoyed the benefits of an exclusive commerce with America, but was highly taxed; America was partly restrained in trade, but was to be slightly taxed—a system wisely adapted to the present situation of each country, and discovering a line of equity which well deserves the attention of those who choose to think for themselves.

Mutual benefits require a mutual return of services, but unfortunately for our American brethren, they lost sight of the great law of moral obligation, and of moral justice. They claimed their de-  
scend



scent from Britain, they gloried in the name of Englishmen, they flourished under the influences of her equitable laws, and the protection of her victorious arms : But when indispensable necessity urged the propriety of reimbursement, however trifling when compared to the burthens of the mother country, our brethren seemed thunderstruck. They imagined, or seemed to imagine, that American Englishmen had an exclusive privilege of exemption ;—that to contribute towards the general exigencies of state was slavery, and that all Englishmen were slaves.

It becomes every country, said they, to regulate its own affairs, and to judge of its own concerns. You have been very kind to us it is true, but you had your own views therein. If we have not fully answered all your expectations, we are sorry for it. We are at a great distance from you. Thanks to your warriors and your ships of the line, the enemy is now removed from the frontiers. We are be-

come a great people and able to act for ourselves. Taxes are odious to every true American, and herein we discover our profound wisdom, for who would pay taxes if they could by any means avoid them? Freedom is our birth-right, and should any power vainly attempt to deprive us of our property, we shall convince them that we understand the first law of nature.—So, most venerable parent, your very humble servant.

This kind of reasoning had the desired effect; it roused America, it divided Britain; and now the expected period arrived, when ministerial oppression (the genuine offspring of liberty tree) raised their indignation, while American freedom inspired their courage. Every man felt bolder than his brother; the sound of war, like a pestilential disease, flew from province to province, and two millions of people were eager to “undo or be undone.”

PART





P A R T II.

GENTLEMEN,

**I**T is a maxim as universal as philosophy itself, that those who wish to become useful members of society, should carefully endeavour to regulate their tempers, and to prepare their minds for such salutary purposes. They should act upon a scale (if I may use the expression) as extensive as the world which we inhabit; and, particularly so, when their deliberations happen to be directed towards collective bodies of men, or towards contending states.

In such cases they should be of no nation, no partial plan of politics, but they should

should think as citizens of the world, and, as citizens of the world they should consider, in every point of view, the pretensions, the just claims, and the rights of one country as well as those of the other. It is a field becoming the dignity of the human mind, wherein it may exercise its noblest faculties in a full display of whatever is understood by candour, by impartiality, or by moral justice.

This consideration, in these days of civility, I hope every honest statesmen invariably keeps in his eye; but whenever it is found necessary to permit a lesser evil, in order to avert a greater one, a true politician will make a virtue of necessity, and, happily for mankind, it is always in the power of a conquering state to exercise benevolence, and every amiable act of humanity and mercy.

Upon this principle, Gentlemen, I am clearly of opinion, that the unhappy contest with our own brethren is now arrived

rived to so great a height that nothing but decisive victory on our side, and that very speedily, can prevent general devastation in Europe and America. If any reconciliation could have been effected two years ago, how much blood and treasure would have been saved, and what inexpressible distress amongst thousands of families might have thereby been prevented!

But, Gentlemen, in the present state of the contest, when the leaders of the latter country, have begun to thirst after power, honours and fame, and when the great body of the people, (madly hazarding their lives and fortunes with all the zeal and enthusiasm of a religious war) are no longer left to act or to think for themselves, we have too much reason to fear, that all proposals which are not attended with uninterrupted success on our side, will be rejected with disdain, serving only to buoy up the Americans with higher notions of their own abilities, protract the war, enrich the natural enemies of both countries,

countries, load us with new taxes, and discover to the world the declension of this once powerful kingdom. The Provincials now laugh at the majority, they despise the minority, and every friend of government deploras the fatal delusive intelligence sent from hence. They have listened to the language of men whose principles are founded on prejudice, and mistaken notions of that mode of government which seems best suited to the genius of Englishmen; and with these men they have again begun to sap the foundations of an empire which nothing but regal government can keep together. Substituting imaginary evils for real ones, they complain of grievances which they never have felt, and of tyrannies which exist only in the sanguinary declamations of their orators, and in the determinations of their infatuated councils.

May heaven forgive those who, from whatever motives, have thus wantonly  
kindled

kindled the flames of destructive war! Should America make a stand for a year or two longer, we shall find all Europe (already preparing for action) in arms. Each nation will be actuated by *self*, and under that banner they will take their stand in the field of universal discord.

If this should be so, and we have no just ground to doubt of it, there seems to be no alternative,—we too must take our stand, or rather we must support our fleets and our armies, until these self-made rulers of America shall be disposed to hear reason, and to restore their countrymen to that happy state, from which in the height of ease and of luxury, they have deviated.

Motives of policy towards both Countries, as well as the regard which we ought to have for the lives, the tranquility, and whatever is dear to mankind in general, should incline us to wish  
success

success to the British arms, as being the most effectual means under heaven, of averting all the horrors arising from a more general war. If this should be the case, if by one bold effort, a single battle, the swords of all Europe, already half drawn, should again be put up in their scabbards, does it not shew that those who, at this unseasonable period, incessantly rail against *all* the measures of administration, are not the true friends of either country, or of humanity? Does it not argue them to be men who rather than give up a favourite opinion, or relax from their seeming hereditary enmity to regal government, would support their ill founded prejudices at the expence of whatever is valuable on earth—peace, security, and good will amongst its inhabitants?

I would ask those sticklers for liberty (a word which like religion is made subservient to the caprice and all the sinister views of a deceitful world) if America,

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rica, under the protection of Great Britain, hath not, during the last half century, acquired immense wealth; and whether its inhabitants did not live far more sumptuous than any nation under the sun? I would ask these pretended champions of the common rights of mankind, if the American commerce, her shipping and her cities, did not increase with a rapidity unparalleled in the history of nations? I would ask the numerous sectaries of that country, whether they have not, in the strictest sense of the word, enjoy'd all the blessings of religious toleration? Finally, I would ask them, whether their lives, their properties, their commerce, their cities, their country, their civil and religious liberties, have not been protected at the expence of British valour, and of British blood, and whether the advantages of their commerce, great as they are, bear any proportion to the enormous debt contracted in nourishing those colonies, in defending them against the Indians, and in preserving them from falling

under the yoke of France and of Spain &

But, Gentlemen, the subject on which I have presumed to treat, is of a copious nature; it opens as we advance, it rises in its importance, and it demands the most attentive investigation.

Let us extend the view, and look forward towards futurity. If a vigorous effort on the part of Great Britain appears so indispensibly necessary to restore tranquillity to her deluded colonies, so will it also, in all human probability, give a happy cast or turn to the fate of North America thro' succeeding ages.

Generally speaking, every inhabitant of our island is a philosopher, a merchant, a soldier, a mariner, a farmer, or an ingenious artist. The ocean, is it bulwark; the constitution, its liberty; the law, its protection; and the whole world, its fountain of commerce and wealth. Independent of the western continent, this island is its own defence, and the most perfect state now existing.

What



What is North America? An immense Desert. And who are the Provincials? A Medley of people composed of English, Scotch, Irish, Germans, Swedes, Dutch, French and Indians, parcelled out into a dozen or more governments; opposite in manners, religion, and political opinions: jealous of each other, and viewing one another in the most contemptible light. The northern colonies hardy, contracted, and superstitious. Those towards the south, liberal, effeminate, gay, and luxurious; while the Indians, who worship the sun and moon, retain an implacable hatred to both, whom they consider as so many robbers or plunderers of their country.

Can it therefore, Gentlemen, be supposed that the Americans, under these circumstances, will enjoy the same degree of peace and security, when independent, as they have hitherto enjoyed, and may enjoy, under the mild sway of a British govern-

government? May we not, from our knowledge of human nature, from what we learn in the annals of Greece or Rome, of *the Congress*, and other republican states, infer, that so soon as our brethren in reality become pendent, so soon will they lose that freedom which hitherto they have not known how to value? Does not the history of every country, but more particularly of republican governments, furnish us with examples of unprincipled or ambitious men distracting the councils, and plunging the state into the most ruinous measures?

Unfortunately for the present times, and for posterity, there seems to be too much of this turbulent blood in the western world. Hath not every individual of this extensive empire, felt more or less of its baneful effects; and who does not foresee the fatal consequences of this unprovoked ill-timed rebellion, should these people at last prevail? May we not suppose, that having thrown off the kind veteran parent,  
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these restless spirits will, like Greece of old, fall upon one another; and, in this state of anarchy and confusion, may we not also infer, that some enterprizing Alexander will aim at despotic sovereignty over part, or the whole of that vast continent? Lastly, can it be imagined, that during a series of intestine commotions, the French, the Spaniards, and the native Indians would remain idle spectators?

It is but a few years since these ungrateful provinces saw themselves hemmed in between the sea on one side, and a powerful French colony on the other. They trembled at the approaches of the Canadians and Savages; they implored the assistance of the mother country, and to the valour of our troops they owe all those blessings which of late they have so grossly abused. Had they not in this critical period been under the protection of Great Britain, and had it not been the interest of Great Britain to protect them, it is more than probable, that before now

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we should have seen popery established at Boston, at New York, at Philadelphia; and very possibly these men who seem at present to court the favour of France, would have been the first who felt the weight of grievances which under an English government, existed only in idea. Their groans would not have reached beyond the walls of a dungeon, and their supplications would have been answered in the language of despotic Romish governments, *make your peace with the mother church for to-morrow you must die.*

Let us therefore candidly view the subject, whether respecting the present time or futurity, and we shall find that an union with Great Britain, will to the Americans prove a bond of security, of liberty, of wealth, and of peace. All these blessings they hitherto have enjoyed, and all these they will again enjoy, if providentially they see their truest interest.

A variety of circumstances concur to cement this union, and to render it permanent. Among others it may be observed, that Great Britain and her colonies are situated nearly opposite to one another, on both sides of the Atalantic, without any interveening land or hostile state to interrupt their commerce. Thus nature, tho' she has divided them by the ocean, has also united them by that element, and a very small share of sagacity may convince us, that she has pointed out the way to unanimity and to reciprocal advantages.

But, Gentlemen, the subject does not rest here, it leads us far beyond the consideration of mere commerical utility ; and it well deserves the attention of every friend of humanity. Wherever we look around amongst the various nations of Europe, of Asia and of Africa, we shall perceive the iron rod of oppression, and almost a total disregard to the common rights of mankind. We shall perceive that every nation has its tyrant, and that  
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the people are his slaves. Respecting the few republics now existing in Europe, it may be observed, that instead of one Tyrant, the people are crushed under the weight of many tyrants; through whose emulation, or intrigues after power, the state is held in continual fermentation. It is in this Empire only, where the spirit of liberty is truly understood, where it is happily felt, and where a judicious distribution of privileges and of equity amongst all its branches, forms that beautiful equilibrium, which the great body of mankind may admire, but have not yet been able to attain.

To minds of a generous turn, it must therefore be pleasing to observe the happy effects of unanimity amongst the various members of this celebrated state. It presents them with a prospect the most beneficial to the human race.—An empire under the mildest form of government, the wisest laws, and the most liberal system of religion, rising to pre-eminence, and to  
universal



universal umpire—The sword of power falling into the hands of those who know how to use it in the common cause of mankind; giving vigour to our laws throughout every quarter of the globe, and proclaiming freedom to those regions of Asia in particular, who from the remotest periods of antiquity, have been held in fetters and in the most deplorable ignorance.

An union producing such beneficial consequences towards a considerable part of world, will give a higher importance to the present æra, than all the dazzling achievements of those heroes, who in gratifying their ambition, their revenge, their avarice, or their lusts, have over-run the earth, only to enslave it. An event so desirable, will add dignity to our British councils, and it will immortalize the names of those who have been the happy instruments of its accomplishment.

To effect this invaluable purpose, it be-

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hoves the subjects in both countries to be guided by principles of moderation. Tho' supreme power must be lodged somewhere, and no where so properly, as amongst the representatives of the people, it is to be wished that the Gothic idea of superiority may totally lose its force, as in the case of England and Wales. May the only distinctions amongst the various inhabitants of this empire be purely commercial, arising from local situation, from climate, soil, productions, and other accidental causes—every American to be a Briton, and every Briton to be an American.

Respecting the present commotions, when all circumstances are duly considered, it would well become the British councils to incline towards mercy. Every unsuccessful rebellion is its own punishment. This one has been particularly so. It has reduced a numerous people from opulence, ease and security, to almost all the calamities that can fall upon mankind. The loss of life, and of property; painful wounds,



wounds, diseases, hunger, and nakedness, may be reckoned amongst the distressing scenes of unrelenting, destructive war. These evils our brethren have inadvertently been led into by men, who, bad as they are, possibly did not foresee the consequences of their ill-judged harangues. They are at this moment without allies, without money, and without the necessaries of life,—driven from their cities—their places of strength—and compelled to wander amidst endless regions of frost and snow, shivering under the severities of a climate, at this season more rigorous than what the imagination of Britons can fancy or conceive. In every encounter they fly or fall, and now they seem nearly reduced to the mortifying alternative of submission, or the dreadful vengeance of an enraged veteran army pouring in upon every side.

Such are the unexpected but the natural consequences of unprovoked rebellion—a revolt, which in its rise was founded upon injustice towards the Mother Country, and  
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in its progress has been too strongly marked with oppression towards those among themselves, whose wishes were for peace. Thus, justice having closely pursued these sons of discord, thro' all their progressive steps, amply avenging herself of their infringement against the laws of society, of order, and of good government; the period is now arrived for a display of British magnanimity.

In private life, the forgiving of injuries hath ever been considered as the summit of human virtue, the touchstone of christian perfection, and it well deserves to be remarked, that the founder of our religion set the example in that memorable prayer, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Politically speaking, clemency towards the vanquished, proves irresistible victory over generous minds, and its charms frequently reaches even the most stubborn heart, which it unhinges, softens, and qualifies for the duties of society. It is this, more than  
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the conquering sword, which raises petty states to mighty empires, as the opposite extreme reduces mighty empires to insignificant states. Of these truths, the history of all ages abounds with examples; but unhappily for mankind, the latter system has more generally prevailed. What is now become of those great empires of antiquity, who successively made the world to tremble—and to what causes are we chiefly to ascribe their downfall? To cruelty and to low revenge, trading upon the necks of whole nations, who for a time have temporised only to rise again with redoubled force, and to retaliate the barbarities of their former masters upon their posterity.

Clemency therefore, whether considered in a religious, or in a political view; whether as becoming the dignity of human nature, or as an essential principle in our political creed, seems to be the surest ground-work on which to erect and perpetuate the fabrick of extensive empire.

pire. Such an opportunity of gaining the affections of these deluded people may never more return. We may never have it in our power to gain a double conquest by means of lenitives as well as the sword. Towards our natural enemies we have been generous to an extreme, and shall not our poor infatuated brethren who have severely felt the weight of British arms, experience also, the happy effects of British magnanimity? Whenever they shall be inclined to submit, or to treat upon honourable terms, may the Mother country improve victory by that rule of conduct, which has been her distinguishing characteristic towards the vanquished—a generosity peculiar to herself alone. May she hold out to the unarmed, the bleeding, the ruined, and the disconsolate Americans, such a system of laws and commercial regulations, as will warm their hearts, heal their wounds, and restore their fathers, their husbands and their friends, with heartfelt gratitude to their half starved, desponding families.

If,

If, instead of executions, or confiscations, excepting in cases where wanton cruelties have been committed, we grant a general pardon, proclaim a day of general thanksgiving, we may be well assured, that such gentle proceedings will once more *unite* both sides of the Atlantic, and confirm to us the commerce of that country, upon a basis more durable than the precarious and the expensive security arising from any army of mercenaries stationed amongst them, to enforce obedience.

**F I N I S.**