

them; there they see, (pointing to the Ministry) look at them, do their Countenances betray any outward Signs of supernatural Understanding? No; then let their Deeds speak for them; and really it is wonderful, so long as they have been in Office, the present Administration should not have done by Chance, one single meritorious Act: Providence seems to have put a peculiar Stamp on their Existence, and, he hoped, would on their End. Lord C— answered, (justifying the Conduct of the Ministry) that it was the Disposition of the Times to abuse Men, because they were Ministers; that such Abuse did not affect his Peace of Mind, which was solely grounded on the Uprightness of his Intentions: As to the Discontents in America, he said, this Ministry was not the first Cause of them; and tho' from Experience it is now found, those Acts of Parliament are contrary to the Commercial Interest of this Kingdom, yet the Design of them was a good one. He then considered the Propriety of the proposed Amendment, and said, he supposed it had its Foundation in the Petitions; but that no Petitions were presented to that House, or before it, as comprised in the Speech, and therefore they could not take Notice of them: That if the Fact was otherwise, the Petitioners were a great Minority of the Freeholders in the Kingdom, and those Petitions that had been procured, were by the Solicitations of Persons of factious Spirits, and disappointed Ambition; that the House of Commons were the sole and proper Judges of their own Privileges, and ought to support and maintain them: No further Enquiry could with Propriety be made on that Subject, for if the former Vote was wrong, it could not be expunged at a subsequent Session, and it would be inconsistent and ridiculous for that House, to advise the King to dissolve themselves; it might too be of dangerous Tendency, future Ministers, or disappointed Patriots, would cite the Precedent, and apply it to their own Purposes: The Exercise of that Prerogative of the Crown, is a dangerous one, and often used to oppress the Subject: The Burthen of Elections many Members had experienced, and at this Time, when by daily Publications, and false Representation of Facts, the Minds of the People were inflamed, a General Election would throw the whole Kingdom into Convulsions. Many Members spoke on both Sides, of whose Principles you may judge from the Language of their Leaders, but as their Speeches did not obtain them much Credit, I shall for my own, and your Sake, omit them; in general, they pursued the Principles of Lord C—, upon the Point of the Amendment, and dropt entirely America, except G— O—, who said, he feared if the Colonies perished in their unwarrantable Combinations, it might prove fatal to the Commercial Interest of both Countries. If any Person would therefore shew him the Man who could reconcile all Animositities between them, he would bend to meet him: That the Situation of the Colonies required more serious Attention, than the Clamours of a pusillanimous Faction. Sir G— S—, who is one of the most independent, unblemished, amiable Men in the Kingdom, then said, he had heard Threats and Menaces against those who had been the Instruments of procuring Petitions for the Dissolution of Parliament, that if any Censure was in Store for them, he now stood forth to receive it; and averred, that he was so thoroughly convinced of the Illegality of the Proceedings of the House on that Subject, that he had plighted himself to his Constituents, to assert and maintain their Privileges to the utmost of his Power in that Instance. As to that great and important Question respecting America, if it ever comes again before us, (which he thought it shortly must) let us, said he, judge of that Question, as one Freeman ought of another, it is all I wish to obtain, its all an American dare ask. He was answered by R—y, who lamented that the American Revenue-Act had ever passed that House; but said, the repealing the Stamp-Act, was equally impolitic with the enacting it: However, he wished once more to see the Colonies brought to their original State, and the Minds of the People appeased; but upon what Principle or Terms it could be done, he was at a Loss to conjecture, he was so perplexed in the Extremes. Col. B—y answered, by what unaccountable Conduct has it happened, that the Minds of his Majesty's Subjects are inflamed against his Government in every Part of his Dominions? We need look no further back, said he, for the Cause, than the last Sessions of Parliament; we shall there find his Ministers urging the People to Excesses, and making those Excesses the necessary Pretence of Sevenfold greater Oppressions. In America, we were taught to believe, the People were in an actual State of Rebellion; and at the very Time this Language was held forth, to prejudice the Minds of the People here against the Americans; nay, within Five Days after this House addressed his Majesty to extend the Act of H. 8 with all its oppressive Consequences to the Colonies, we find the Minister for that Department writing to the Governor of Virginia, that all Means should be used to obtain a Repeal of those Laws this Session. How can we account for this strange Duplicity of Conduct? Were they really in Earnest when they obtained that Address, (which will ever reflect on this Parliament) or was it only to shew how servile and ready we are to comply with the most extravagant Wishes of a Spoils

* A Term given them by some of their Advocates in the Debate.

Administration, who then declared they would bring America to their Feet? Their Menaces were treated with the Contempt they deserved, and now we see the same Ministry prostrate at the Feet of America; (a Result that will ever mark the Conduct of Men, who act on false Principles) but Prejudices so wantonly created, are not so easily removed; and whatever the Motives may be for this Conduct, the Americans will never give the Ministry much Credit for it. If those Acts are now to be repealed on Commercial Principles, why was it not done sooner? The Ministry meant to make an Experiment, and ought to be answerable for the Consequences. He said in Favour of the Amendment, that the confined narrow Principles of Evidence in Courts of Law, was not applicable to that House; that altho' no Petitions had been presented to them, expressing any Discontents in the Minds of the People, yet the Fact was notorious, and not a Member present that did not know it; that if there was not a Majority of the Freeholders who had petitioned, there was at least such a Number, and among them Persons of such Figure, as ought to make them respectable; that other Petitions were daily coming in, and while the Ministry are tui'd in pleasing Security of a Majority, they would do well to remember, that Lord C— says, "When King Charles lost his Head, he had a Majority of the Nation in his Favour;" that if the Members of that House were the Judges of their own Privileges, yet it is inconsistent with Common Sense, that those Privileges should give them Powers repugnant to the Ideas of Representation, and contrary to the Interests of their Constituents, and still more pernicious to the Liberties of the People, is that Doctrine which tends to establish Infallibility in the House of Commons, and exempt them from being amenable to that Power which gave them Existence. He concluded with saying, he blushed to think he had been casting Reflections on Men, who had not an Opportunity of personally vindicating themselves; as to that wretched Row (pointing to the Treasury Bench) I hold them merely nominal and slavishly executing the Commands of a Superior. Lord N— with great Warmth called to Order; he said, he scarce knew how to think, much less to act, his Words, and even his Thoughts, had of late been so much misrepresented; he flatly denied the Ground of Discontent among the People, as imputable to the Ministry, but said, it was owing to such Persons, who, to gratify disappointed Ambition, regardless of Shame and Dishonour, continually uttered without any Foundation, Tales purposely invented to prejudice the ignorant Multitude against them; that there never was a Ministry greater Friends to the Liberties of the Subject, than the present. As to America, he never wished to infringe the smallest of their Liberties, much less to trample them under his Feet; that Expressions might drop from him in the Warmth of Argument, not corresponding with his cooler Thoughts, which some Gentlemen did him the Honour to treasure up and utter with some Aggravation to his Prejudice: If the Colonies were aggrieved, upon proper Application it is the Duty of this House to hear and redress them. He was of Opinion, the Americans last Sessions did not shew a proper Disposition to receive Favour, they had actually bid open Defiance to the Authority of Parliament, which ought to be asserted; it had been asserted. He averred the Letter Lord B— mentions in his Speech, and said, so desirous was he to re-establish Harmony between the Colonies and Mother-Country, that he wished the Friends of America would meet him Half Way. Upon the Petitions he held nearly the same Language with Lord C—, and gave full Vent to his Splice on those who had been the Means of procuring them. G— next, in a plaintive Tone, submitted his Thoughts to the House, on the Part of the Amendment; he declared against the Ministry, said an Enquiry into public Discontents, was expedient and necessary, and knowing what had been done, he would not undertake to say what the House could do to remove those Complaints; but carefully avoided mentioning a single Word of America. He was answered by N—, who compared the Judgment of the House of Commons, to the Judgment of a Court of Law, which had competent Jurisdiction, and from whence no Appeal would lie, in which Case, tho' the Judgment be erroneous, the Party can have no Relief but by an Act of Parliament; and B—, who lay by on Purpose for him, replied, and closed a Debate, which lasted from One o'Clock in the Afternoon, to One o'Clock next Morning, in a long, animated, tho' very unconnected Speech; he stated fully the Conduct of the Ministry towards the Americans, and commended the spirited Behaviour of the latter, supported ably the Complaints of the Freeholders of this Country, and suggested the probable Consequences if either remained unredressed; that as to America, the Road was plain, and the Ministry seemed too fatigued with experimental Excursions, to go out of it: But, said he, we have a more difficult Part to appease the Minds of our Constituents; they have the Means of Redress in their own Power, and are not easier bullied than the Americans. The honest Country Farmer will never subscribe to the Doctrine of our Infallibility, and when he feels himself injured, the same Motives which actuate him to seek Redress, should compel us to do him Justice. He said, he was of Opinion, that at a subsequent Session, the Vote of a preceding one could not be expunged; but there are Persons who have been the Cause of oppressing the Americans, for not doing that, which, in similar C

circumstances, they now contend they cannot do selves; that the Exercise of the Prerogative in Cases, at the Desire of the People, could never be verted to their Prejudice, if it should happen, wife and virtuous Parliament, at any future should be dissolved to favour the iniquitous Desires of a King, or his Ministers, the People would choose them; that its so far from being below the dignity of a virtuous Mind, it was the greatest Proof of Virtue to acknowledge and rectify its Errors; from Appearances he feared the Dissembler equally malicious, raged among the Ministers, as the Harmed let us therefore, said he, enquire into the Cause of these Complaints, and if we have no other Means of Relief, as we have already addressed ourselves in Contempt of our Constituents, into the Contempt of Europe, into the Contempt of America, let us pro ourselves at the Foot of the Throne, and address our own Dissolution.

"Thus have I given you as near as I can recollect (I speak from Memory) the Substance of the Debate in the House of Commons, at the Opening of this Session. In the House of Lords the Debates turned on the same Points, the Ministry were again an Amendment, because it related to the Privileges of the House, and might produce a Jealousy between the Houses.

"Lord C— opposed them with great Warmth, said it was a constitutional Question, upon which was their Duty to advise his Majesty; that he thought the greatest Question that could come before that House, was the Right of taxing America; he thought this of more Importance; that a Breach had been made in the Constitution, at which any Minister might enter, who meant to destroy it. He it was an Insult upon Sense to say, the People in America were in a State of Disobedience to the legal Authority of this Country. He justified the Resolutions to import British Manufactures, and again denied the Right of Taxation. The Americans, he said, had been harassed, oppressed, and such Measures adopted to enslave them, that he could hardly help supposing despotical Principles in Government; and parliamentar Profittution went Hand in Hand. To an Infamous that Lord M— throw'd out, that he was ambitious of being the Patron of America, he answered, he lo the Americans, they were a brave, generous, and able People; he did not mean to flatter, but to favour; he spoke as their Friend, and gloried in the fact that they had been bravely traduced, and ungenerously condemned unheard. Lord C— in every Particular confirmed his Opinion, in Language so obvious to the Ministry, that the general prevailing Opinion is, that he will be compelled to resign. Upon a Division, the Ministry carried the Question for the Address without any Amendment, by a great Majority in both Houses.

"If I am at Liberty to say what is my own Opinion, it is, that the American Revenue-Acts will be repealed. I have observed, however, in the Letter wrote by the Ministry to Lord B—, they have cautiously created the Article of Tea; but I am informed, from good Authority, that if there should be an Attempt to continue the Duty on Tea, the India Company will interfere, and present a Memorial against it at the Step of the House of Commons; nor do I believe if that Step should fail, the Minority will consent to a partial Repeal."

Annapolis, April 24, 1774
To Messieurs Stevenson, Smith, Flouman, and M—

GENTLEMEN,
I HAVE read with Attention, your Publication in the last Maryland Gazette, and as I am satisfied it was a passionate Proceeding. I shall pass over the exceptionable Parts, and confine myself to the principal Points in Question; therefore take the following Vindication of the Proceedings objected to, and read upon it in a cool Moment.

You disclaim the Pamphlet; you ground yourself upon Two Reasons; in the first Place you alledge, that a Narrative of Facts was settled by the General Committee, and that the Special Committee was appointed merely to revise and correct for the Press, that Narrative of Facts; in the next Place you alledge, that stating the Second Question, your Conduct as a Committee is represented as inconsistent and ridiculous, and therefore that Stating you conclude an Insult on your Understandings; this I take to be the drift of your Publication, though I wish you had been explicit in your Meaning.

If the Fact was admitted, that the special Committee was constituted merely to revise and correct for the Press, the Narrative of Facts, I should readily admit that the special Committee had exceeded their Authority in the Pamphlet, in this, that the Pamphlet published not only gives the Narrative, but suggests the Grounds and Reasons, upon which the Committee founded their Judgment. But Gentlemen, you are greatly mistaken in Point of Fact; the special Committee was not only appointed for the Purpose of revising and correcting the Narrative of Facts, but also for the Purpose of stating to the Public the Grounds and Reasons upon which the Committee gave their several Resolutions; and as a plain Proof that you are mistaken in your Supposition of the Fact, be pleased to read the following Answer, delivered by Mr. Moderator, upon the coming in of the Address of the Parliament.

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