

It is an argument by your honours against the immediate confiscation of the property in question, "that the sale will be too nasty, and that it will be purchased at an under value;" yet you express your wish, that we had informed you, when the last payment from the sale of British property is proposed to be made; for if it is put off to a long day, the advantage to the public will be still more considerable." In this case we must acknowledge, that your honours have thrown us into a dilemma; for if we dispose of it immediately, in the opinion of your honours, it is too soon; and if we do not dispose of it immediately, it is not soon enough; and we do not know how it will be in our power to please your honours, but by not disposing of it at all. Believing that it will scarcely answer any end to point out the mistake of your honours, in supposing that the value of the property in question will be at all affected by the depreciation of the currency; for if the currency is still more depreciated, the property will command the more, and the correspondence between the value and the quantity will be always equal; but if, as your honours are willing to hold out, the currency shall continue to depreciate, and if the sale of the property in question is to be at all affected by it, it will be another argument for the immediate disposal of it; more especially as it is to save this depreciation that we propose to make sale of the property; for the sale will call the money from the hands of individuals into the public treasury, and may render unnecessary any farther emissions.

It is evident, and your honours admit, "that you are not greatly apprehensive of the consequence, should our money continue to depreciate and come to nothing, for even then we should be able to carry on the war." It is possible we should, but does it follow that we should be so well able? Because in the greatest extremity exertions might be made, are we then to reduce ourselves to this extremity? We know of no reason that can be given for it, but that we might have a greater opportunity to shew our virtue; and as the opportunities we have already had have been great enough, it would be rather romantic to wish for any greater. If war has been carried on without money, it has been in small states, or for a short time, or under the feudal tenures, where every man was a soldier, and yielded personal service. But in our situation money is undoubtedly the nerve of war, and it would be difficult, if not wholly impossible, to carry it on, for any long time, without it.

Your honour is of opinion, "that the sale of the back lands will be a resource to prosecute the war, even if internal taxes should not supply the deficiency of taxes." We are of the same opinion. And from this very circumstance I overthrow your honours reasoning with regard to the property in question, for if it will prove nothing will prove too much, and the back lands cannot be confiscated. If they belong to the natives, your honours will say, that though they have made war against us, yet their property cannot be confiscated, for Vattel, a late and celebrated writer on the law of nations, has shewn, "that the law of that law is much softened in this very point, by present usage and practice." If they belong to the crown of Great Britain, as trustee for the nation, as we conceive, and will be called British property, Congress, should they adopt the same way of thinking with your honours, will not be willing to confiscate it as it may be made a preliminary article of the peace, that it be secured, or at least the full value be paid to the original owners. Nay, if they should not adopt the sentiments of your honours, but be willing to confiscate it, yet will it not be dangerous, in the opinion of your honours, that in the mean time the title will be doubtful, and the purchase invidious, engrossers and speculators will buy it up, and depreciate the property still more? For, as your honours would suppose, the more readily money will buy land, the more readily it is depreciated. But it lies upon your honours, who have started these difficulties in the one case, to resolve them in the other. For with regard to the preliminary, of which your honours are so apprehensive, if it is made a preliminary with regard to the property in question, will it not also be a preliminary with regard to the back lands, which have belonged to the crown and people of Great Britain? Nay, will it not more probably be made a preliminary with regard to these lands, than with regard to the property in question? In the one case a solid emolument will arise to the crown and to the nation, in the other to those only who have manifested an attachment to it. In the one case interest will induce the enemy to make it a preliminary, in the other a sense of honour only; and in proportion as the love of interest is stronger in the British court than the love of honour, so much the more willing will they be to make the one a preliminary article, and to neglect the other. We may be assured the crown will not regard the property of those subjects, of whom we speak, so much as to continue the war a single day on their account. Did this property remain unalienated, and it appeared that the bare mention of it might obtain it, it is possible that court might, to save appearances, be induced to mention it. But as soon as applied and gone, they will be silent; for having lost thirteen states, and vast tracts of property for themselves, they will not much contend for others, whom they know only as retainers on the obnoxious of America. But should we not be willing to make any preliminary about the back lands, shall we not have all America interested with us? The property of British subjects, and those of them called Tories, through the several states, are already in the same predicament with the objects of our bill. The several states of America are therefore with us, and if it must be made a preliminary at all, let the states make it. But your honours may rest satisfied, that as the general interest is concerned, the states will not make it a preliminary.

From these principles we must conceive, that the fears and apprehensions of your honours are groundless; we have shewn that your reasonings are so, for, through the whole of the message, every sentence is at variance with the rest, and, if we grant what you suppose in the one case, it destroys what you suppose in the other.

There are several other matters in your message (foreign to the question, and which we think ought to have been omitted) that deserve our animadversion, but we shall conclude.

We do not think it necessary to send you a bill to prevent the removal or transfer of British property. The law of nature will be as good a security as any law we could possibly obtain your assent to. Whoever attempts to remove or purchase, will be answerable to the state.