

## **The Crisis. No. VII.**

from the Pennsylvania Packet, November 12, 1778

To the PEOPLE of ENGLAND

THERE are stages in the business of serious life in which to amuse is cruel, but to deceive is to destroy; and it is of little consequence, in the conclusion, whether men deceive themselves, or submit, by a kind of mutual consent, to the impositions of each other. That England has long been under the influence of delusion or mistake, needs no other proof than the unexpected and wretched situation that she is now involved in: and so powerful has been the influence, that no provision was ever made or thought of against the misfortune, because the possibility of its happening was never conceived.

The general and successful resistance of America, the conquest of Burgoyne, and a war in France, were treated in Parliament as the dreams of a discontented opposition, or a distempered imagination. They were beheld as objects unworthy of a serious thought, and the bare intimation of them afforded the Ministry a triumph of laughter. Short triumph indeed! For every thing which has been predicted has happened, and all that was promised have failed. A long series of politics so remarkably distinguished by a succession of misfortunes, without one alleviating turn, must certainly have something in it systematically wrong. It is sufficient to awaken the most credulous into suspicion, and the most obstinate into thought. Either the means in your power are insufficient, or the measures ill planned; either the execution has been bad, or the thing attempted impracticable; or to speak more emphatically, either you are not able, or Heaven is not willing. For, why is it that you have not conquered us? Who, or what has prevented you? You have had every opportunity that you could desire, and succeeded to your utmost wish in every preparatory means. Your fleets and armies have arrived in America without an accident. No uncommon fortune hath intervened. No foreign nation hath interfered until the time which you had allotted for victory was past. The opposition either in or out of Parliament, neither disconcerted your measures, retarded or diminished your force. They only foretold your fate. Every ministerial scheme was carried with as high a hand as if the whole nation had been unanimous. Every thing wanted was asked for, and every thing asked for was granted. A greater force was not within the compass of your abilities to send, and the time you sent it was of all others the most favourable. You were then at rest with the whole world beside. You had the range of every court in Europe uncontradicted by us. You amused us with a tale of commissioners of peace, and under that disguise collected a numerous army and came almost unexpectedly upon us. The force was much greater than we looked for; and that which we had to oppose it with, was unequal in numbers, badly armed, and poorly disciplined; beside which, it was embodied only for a short time, and expired within a few months after your arrival. We had governments to form; measures to concert; an army to train, and every necessary article to import or to create. Our non-importation scheme had exhausted our stores, and your command by sea intercepted our supplies. We were a people unknown, and unconnected with the political world, and

strangers to the disposition of foreign powers. Could you possibly wish for a more favorable conjunction of circumstances? Yet all these have happened and passed away, and as it were left you with a laugh. There are likewise, events of such an original nativity as can never happen again, unless a new world should arise from the ocean.

If any thing can be a lesson to presumption, surely the circumstances of this war will have their effect. Had Britain been defeated by any European power, her pride would have drawn consolation from the importance of her conquerors; but in the present case, she is excelled by those that she affected to despise, and her own opinions, retorting upon herself, become an aggravation of her disgrace. Misfortune and experience are lost upon mankind, when they produce neither reflection nor reformation. Evils, like poisons, have their uses, and there are diseases which no other remedy can reach. It has been the crime and folly of England to suppose herself invincible, and that, without acknowledging or perceiving that a full third of her strength was drawn from the country she is now at war with. The arm of Britain has been spoken of as the arm of the Almighty, and she has lived of late as if she thought the whole world created for her diversion. Her politics, instead of civilizing, has tended to brutalize mankind, and under the vain, unmeaning title of "Defender of the Faith," she has made war like an Indian against the religion of humanity. Her cruelties in the East-Indies will never, never be forgotten, and it is somewhat remarkable that the produce of that ruined country, transported to America, should there kindle up a war to punish the destroyer. The chain is continued, though with a mysterious kind of uniformity, both in the crime and the punishment. The latter runs parallel with the former; and time and fate will give it a perfect illustration.

When information is with-held, ignorance becomes a reasonable excuse; and one would charitably hope that the people of England do not encourage cruelty from choice but from mistake. Their recluse situation, surrounded by the sea, preserves them from the calamities of war, and keeps them in the dark as to the conduct of their own armies. They see not, therefore they feel not. They tell the tale that is told them and believe it, and accustomed to no other news than their own, they receive it, stripped of its horrors and prepared for the palate of the nation, through the channel of the London Gazette. They are made to believe that their Generals and armies differ from those of other nations, and have nothing of rudeness or barbarity in them. They suppose them what they wish them to be. They feel a disgrace in thinking otherwise, and naturally encourage the belief from a partiality to themselves. There was a time when I felt the same prejudices and reasoned from the same errors; but experience, sad and painful experience has taught me better. What the conduct of former armies was I know not, but what the conduct of the present is I well know. It is low, cruel, indolent, and profligate; and had the people of America no other cause for separation than what the army has occasioned, that alone is cause enough.

The field of politics in England is far more extensive than that of news. Men have a right to reason for themselves, and though they cannot contradict the intelligence in the London Gazette, they may frame upon it what sentiments they please. But the misfortune is, that a general ignorance has prevailed over the whole nation respecting America. The Ministry

and the Minority have both been wrong. The former was always so; the latter only lately so. Politics to be executively right, must have a unity of means and time, and a defect in either overthrows the whole. The Ministry rejected the plans of the Minority while they were practicable, and joined in them when they became impracticable. From wrong measures they got into wrong time, and have now compleated the circle of absurdity by closing it upon themselves.

It was my fate to come to America a few months before the breaking out of hostilities. I found the disposition of the people such, that they might have been led by a thread and governed by a reed. Their suspicion was quick and penetrating, but their attachment to Britain was obstinate, and it was, at that time, a kind of treason to speak against it. They disliked the Ministry, but they esteemed the nation. Their ideas of grievance operated without resentment, and their single object was reconciliation. Bad as I believed the Ministry to be, I never conceived them capable of a measure so rash and wicked as the commencing of hostilities; much less did I imagine the nation would encourage it. I viewed the dispute as a kind of law-suit, in which I supposed the parties would find a way either to decide or settle it. I had no thoughts of independence or of arms. The world could not then have persuaded me that I should be either a soldier or an author. If I had any talents for either, they were buried in me, and might ever have continued so, had not the necessity of the times dragged and driven them into action. I had formed my plan of life, and conceiving myself happy, wished every body else so. But when the country, into which I had just set my foot, was set on fire about my ears it was time to stir. It was time for every man to stir. Those who had been long settled had something to defend; those who had just come had something to pursue; and the call and the concern was equal and universal. For in a country where all men were once adventurers, the difference of a few years in their arrival could make none in their right.

The breaking out of hostilities opened a new suspicion in the politics of America, which though at that time very rare, has since been proved to be very right. What I allude to is, a secret and fixt determination in the British Cabinet to annex America to the Crown of England as a conquered country. If this be taken as the object, then the whole line of conduct pursued by the Ministry, though rash in its origin, and ruinous in its consequences, is nevertheless uniform and consistent in its parts. It applies to every case and resolves every difficulty. But if taxation or any thing else be taken in its room, there is no proportion between the object and the charge. Nothing but the whole soil and property of the country can be placed as a possible equivalent against the millions which the Ministry expended. No taxes raised in America could possibly repay it. A revenue of two millions sterling a year would not discharge the sum and interest accumulated thereon, in twenty years.

Reconciliation never appear to have been the wish or the object of the administration, they looked on conquest as certain and infallible, and under that persuasion, sought to drive the Americans into what they might style a general rebellion, and then crushing them with arms in their hands, reap the rich harvest of a general confiscation, and silence them forever. The dependents at court were too numerous to be provided for in England. The

market for plunder in the East-Indies was over; and the profligacy of government required that a new mine should be opened, and that mine could be no other than America conquered and forfeited. They had no where else to go. Every other channel was drained; and extravagance, with the thirst of a drunkard, was gaping for supplies.

If the ministry deny this to have been their plan, it becomes them to explain what was their plan. For either they have abused us in coveting property they never laboured for, or they have abused you in expending an amazing sum upon an incompetent object. Taxation, as I mentioned before, could never be worth the charge of obtaining it by arms, and any kind of formal obedience which America could have made, would have weighed with the lightness of a laugh against such a load of expence. It is therefore most probable that the Ministry will at last justify their policy by their dishonesty, and openly declare, that their original design was conquest: And in this case it well becomes the people of England to consider how far the nation would have been benefited by the success.

In a general view, there are few conquests that repay the charge of making them, and mankind are pretty well convinced that it can never be worth their while to go to war for profit sake. If they are made war upon, their country invaded, or their existence at stake, it is their duty to defend and preserve themselves, but in every other light, and from every other cause, is war inglorious and detestable. But to return to the case in question —

When conquests are made of foreign countries, it is supposed that the commerce and dominion of the country which made them are extended. But this could neither be the object nor the consequence of the present war. You enjoyed the whole commerce before. It could receive no possible addition by a conquest, but on the contrary, must diminish as the inhabitants were reduced in numbers and wealth. You had the same dominion over the country which you used to have, and had no complaint to make against her for breach of any part of the contract between you or her, or contending against any established custom, commercial, political, or territorial. The country and commerce were both your own when you began to conquer, in the same manner and form as they had been your own a hundred years before. Nations have sometimes been induced to make conquests for the sake of reducing the power of their enemies, or bringing it to a balance with their own. But this could be no part of your plan. No foreign authority was claimed here, neither was any such authority suspected by you, or acknowledged, or imagined by us. What then, in the name of Heaven, could you go to war for? or what chance could you possibly have in the event, but either to hold the same country which you held before, and that in a much worse condition, or to lose with an amazing expense what you might have retained without a farthing of charge?

War never can be the interest of a trading nation, any more than quarreling can be profitable to a man in business. But to make war with those who trade with us, is like setting a bull-dog upon a customer at the shop door. The least degree of common sense shews the madness of the latter, and it will apply with the same force of conviction to the former. Piratical nations, having neither commerce or commodities of their own to lose,

may make war upon all the world, and lucratively find their account in it. But it is quite otherwise with Britain. For besides the stoppage of trade in time of war, she exposes more of her own property to be lost, than she has the chance of taking from others. Some ministerial gentlemen in Parliament have mentioned the greatness of her trade as an apology for the greatness of her loss. This is miserable politics indeed! because it ought to have been given as a reason for her not engaging in a war at first. The coast of America commands the West India trade almost as effectually as the coast of Africa does that of the Straights, and England can no more carry on the former without the consent of America, than she can the latter without a Mediterranean pass.

In whatever light the war with America is considered upon commercial principles, it is evidently the interest of the people of England not to support it; and why it has been supported so long, against the clearest demonstrations of truth and national advantage, is to me, and must be to all the reasonable world, a matter of astonishment. Perhaps it may be said that I live in America, and write this from interest. To this I reply, that my principle is universal. My attachment is to all the world, and not to any particular part, and if what I advance is right, no matter where or who it comes from. We have given the proclamation of your Commissioners a currency in our news-papers, and I have no doubt you will give this a place in yours. To oblige and be obliged is fair.

Before I dismiss this part of my address I shall mention one more circumstance in which I think the people of England have been equally mistaken; and then proceed to other matter.

There is such an idea existing in the world as that of national honor, and this, falsely understood, is oftentimes the cause of war. In a christian and philosophical sense mankind seem to have stood still at individual civilization, and to retain as nations all the original rudeness of nature. Peace, by treaty, is only a cessation of violence, not a reformation of sentiment. It is a substitute for a principle that is wanting, and ever will be wanting till the idea of national honor be rightly understood. As individuals we profess ourselves christians, but as nations we are heathens, Romans, and what not. I remember the late Admiral Saunders declaring in the House of Commons, and that in the time of peace "that the city of Madrid laid in ashes was not a sufficient atonement for the Spaniards taking off the rudder of an English sloop of war." I do not ask whether this is christianity or morality, I ask whether it is decency? whether it is proper language for a nation to use? In private life we call it by the plain name of bullying, and the elevation of rank cannot alter its character. It is I think exceedingly easy to define what ought to be understood by national honor, for that which is the best character for an individual is the best character for a nation; and wherever the latter exceeds or falls beneath the former, there is a departure from the line of true greatness.

I have thrown out this observation with a design of applying it to Great-Britain. Her idea of national honor seems devoid of that benevolence of heart, that universal expansion of philanthropy, and that triumph over the rage of vulgar prejudice, without which man is inferior to himself, and a companion of common animals. To know who she shall regard or

dislike, she asks what country they are of, what religion they profess, and what property they enjoy. Her idea of national honour seems to consist in national insult, and that to be a great people, is to be neither a christian, a philosopher, or a gentleman, but to threaten with the rudeness of a bear, and to devour with the ferocity of a lion. This perhaps may sound harsh and uncourtly, but it is too true, and the more is the pity.

I mention this only as her general character. But towards America she has observed no character at all, and destroyed by her conduct what she assumed in her title. She set out with the title of Parent or Mother Country. The association of ideas which naturally accompany this expression are filled with everything that is fond, tender, and forbearing. They have an energy peculiar to themselves, and, overlooking the accidental attachment of common affections, apply with infinite softness to the first feelings of the heart. It is a political term which every mother can feel the force of, and every child can judge of. It needs no painting of mine to set it off, for nature only can do it justice.

But has any part of your conduct to America corresponded with the title you set up? If in your general national character you are unpolished and severe, in this you are inconsistent and unnatural; and you must have exceeding false notions of national honour, to suppose that the world can admire a want of humanity, or that national honour depends on the violence of resentment, the inflexibility of temper, or the vengeance of execution.

I would willingly convince you, and that with as much temper as the times will suffer me to do, that as you opposed your own interest by quarreling with us, so likewise your national honour, rightly conceived and understood, was no ways called upon to enter into a war with America. Had you studied true greatness of heart, the first and fairest ornament of mankind, you would have acted directly contrary to all that you have done, and the world would have ascribed it to a generous cause, besides which, you had (though with the assistance of this country) secured a powerful name by the last war. You were known and dreaded abroad; and it would have been wise in you to have suffered the world to have slept undisturbed under that idea. It was to you, a force existing without expence. It produced to you all the advantages of real power; and you were stronger through the universality of that charm than any future fleets and armies may probably make you. Your greatness was so secured and interwoven with your silence that you ought never to have awakened mankind, and had nothing to do but to be quiet. Had you been true politicians you would have seen all this, and continued to draw from the magic of a name, the force and authority of a nation.

Unwise as you were in breaking the charm, you were still more unwise in the manner of doing it. Samson only told the secret, but you have performed the operation; you have shaven your own head, and wantonly thrown away the locks. America was the hair from which the charm was drawn that infatuated the world. You ought to have quarreled with no power; but with her upon no account. You had nothing to fear from any condescension you might make. You might have humoured her, even if there had been no justice in her claims, without any risk to your reputation; for Europe, fascinated by your fame, would have

ascribed it to your benevolence, and America, intoxicated by the grant, would have slumbered in her fetters.

But this method of studying the progress of the passions, in order to ascertain the probable conduct of mankind, is a philosophy in politics which those who preside at St. James's have no conception of. They know no other influence than corruption, and reckon all their probabilities from precedent. A new case is to them a new world, and while they are seeking for a parallel they get lost. The talents of Lord Mansfield can be estimated at best no higher than those of a Sophist. He understands the subtleties but not the elegance of nature; and by continually viewing mankind through the cold medium of the law, never thinks of penetrating into the warmer region of the mind. As for Lord North, it is his happiness to have in him more philosophy than sentiment, for he bears flogging like a top and sleeps the better for it. His punishment becomes his support, for while he suffers the lash for his sins, he keeps himself up by twirling about. In politics, he is a good arithmetician, and in every thing else nothing at all.

There is one circumstance which comes so much within Lord North's province as a financier, that I am surprised it should escape him, which is, the different abilities of the two countries in supporting the expence; for, strange as it may seem, England is not a match for America in this particular. By a curious kind of revolution in accounts, the people of England seem to mistake their poverty for their riches, that is, they reckon their national debt as a part of their national wealth. They make the same kind of error which a man would do, who after mortgaging his estate, should add the money borrowed, to the full value of the estate, in order to count up his worth, and in this case he would conceive that he got rich by running into debt. Just thus it is with England. The government owed at the beginning of this war One Hundred and Thirty-five millions sterling, and though the individuals to whom it was due, had a right to reckon their shares as so much private property, yet to the nation collectively it was so much poverty. There is as effectual limits to public debts as to private ones, for when once the money borrowed is so great as to require the whole yearly revenue to discharge the interest thereon, there is an end to further borrowing; in the same manner as when the interest of a man's debts amounts to the yearly income of his estate, there is an end to his credit. This is nearly the case with England, the interest of her present debt being at least equal to one half of her yearly revenue, so that out of Ten Million annually collected by taxes, she has but Five that she can call her own.

The very reverse of this was the case with America. She began the war without any debt upon her, and in order to carry it on, she neither raised money by taxes, nor borrowed it upon interest, but created it; and her situation at this time, continues so much the reverse of yours, that taxing would make her rich, whereas it would make you poor. When we shall have sunk the sum which we have created, we shall then be out of debt, be just as rich as when we began, and all the while we are doing it, shall feel no difference, because the value will rise as the quantity decreases.

There was not a country in the world so capable of bearing the expence of a war as America; not only because she was not in debt when she began, but because the country is young and capable of infinite improvement, and has an almost boundless tract of new lands in store; whereas England has got to her extent of age and growth, and has not unoccupied land or property in reserve. The one is like a young heir coming to a large improvable estate; the other like an old man whose chances are over, and his estate mortgaged for half its worth.

In the second number of the Crisis, which I find has been re-published in England, I endeavoured to set forth the impracticability of conquering America. I stated every case, that I conceived could possibly happen, and ventured to predict its consequences. As my conclusions were drawn not artfully, but naturally, they have all proved to be true. I was upon the spot; knew the politics of America, her strength and resources, and by a train of services, the best in my power to render, was honoured with the friendship of the Congress, the army and the people. I considered the cause a just one. I know and feel it a just one, and under that confidence never made my own profit or loss an object. My endeavour was to have the matter well understood on both sides, and I conceived myself tendering a general service, by setting forth to the one the impossibility of being conquered, and to the other the impossibility of conquering. Most of the arguments made use of by the Ministry for supporting the war, are the very arguments that ought to have been used against supporting it; and the plans, by which they thought to conquer, are the very plans in which they were sure to be defeated. They have taken every thing up at the wrong end. Their ignorance is astonishing, and were you in my situation you would see it. They may perhaps have your confidence, but I am persuaded that they would make very indifferent Members of Congress. I know what England is, and what America is, and from the compound of knowledge, am better enabled to judge of the issue, than what the King or any of his Ministers can be.

In this number I have endeavoured to shew the ill policy and disadvantages of the war. I believe many of my remarks are new. Those which are not so, I have studied to improve and place in a manner that may be clear and striking. Your failure is, I am persuaded, as certain as fate. America is above your reach. She is at least your equal in the world, and her Independence neither rests upon your consent, nor can it be prevented by your arms. In short, you spend your substance in vain, and impoverish yourselves without a hope.

But suppose you had conquered America, what advantages, collectively or individually, as merchants, manufacturers, or conquerors, could you have looked for? This is an object you seemed never to have attended to. Listening for the sound of victory, and led away by the frenzy of arms, you neglected to reckon either the cost or the consequences. You must all pay towards the expence; the poorest among you must bear his share, and it is both your right and your duty to weigh seriously the matter. Had America been conquered, she might have been parcelled out in grants to the favorites at court, but no share of it would have fallen to you. Your taxes would not have been lessened, because she would have been in no condition to have paid any towards your relief. We are rich by contrivance of our own,



which would have ceased as soon as you became masters. Our paper money will be of no use in England, and silver and gold we have none. In the last war you made many conquests, but were any of your taxes lessened thereby? On the contrary, were you not taxed to pay for the charge of making them, and has not the same been the case in every war?

To the Parliament I wish to address myself in a more particular manner. They appear to have supposed themselves partners in the chace, and to have hunted with the lion from an expectation of a right in the booty; but in this it is most probable they would, as legislators, have been disappointed. The case is quite a new one, and many unforeseen difficulties would have arisen thereon. The Parliament claimed a legislative right over America, and the war originated from that pretence. But the army is supposed to belong to the crown, and if America had been conquered through their means, the claim of the Legislature would have been suffocated in the conquest. Ceded, or conquered, countries are supposed to be out of the authority of Parliament. Taxation is exercised over them by prerogative and not by law. It was attempted to be done in the Grenades a few years ago, and the only reason why it was not done was because the crown had made a prior relinquishment of its claim. Therefore, Parliament have been all this while supporting measures for the establishment of their authority, in the issue of which, they would have been triumphed over by the prerogative. This might have opened a new and interesting opposition between the Parliament and the Crown. The Crown would have said that it conquered for itself, and that to conquer for Parliament was an unknown case. The Parliament might have replied, that America not being a foreign country, but a country in rebellion, could not be said to be conquered, but reduced; and thus continued their claim by disowning the term. The Crown might have rejoined, that however America might be considered at first, she became foreign at last by a declaration of Independence, and a treaty with France; and that her case being, by that treaty, put within the law of nations, was out of the law of Parliament. The Parliament might have maintained, that as their claim over America had never been surrendered, so neither could it be taken away. The Crown might have insisted, that though the claim of Parliament could not be taken away, yet being an inferior, it might be superseded; and that, whether the claim was withdrawn from the object, or the object taken from the claim, the same separation ensued; and that America being subdued after a treaty with France, was to all intents and purposes a regal conquest, and of course the sole property of the King. The Parliament, as the legal delegates of the people, might have contended against the term "inferior" and rested the case upon the antiquity of power, and this would have brought on a set of very interesting and rational questions.

First, What is the original fountain of power and honour in any country? Secondly, Whether the prerogative does not belong to the people? Thirdly, Whether there is any such thing as the English constitution? Fourthly, Of what use is the Crown to the people? Fifthly, Whether he who invented a crown was not an enemy to mankind? Sixthly, Whether it is not a shame for a man to spend a million a year and do no good for it, and whether the money might not be better applied? Seventhly, Whether such a man is not better dead than alive? Eighthly,

Whether a Congress, constituted like that of America, is not the most happy and consistent form of government in the world? — With a number of others of the same import.

In short, the contention about the dividend might have distracted the nation; for nothing is more common than to agree in the conquest and quarrel for the prize; therefore it is, perhaps, a happy circumstance that our successes have prevented the dispute.

If the Parliament had been thrown out in their claim, which it is most probable they would, the nation likewise would have been thrown out in their expectation; for as the taxes would have been laid on by the Crown without the Parliament, the revenue arising therefrom, if any could have arose, would not have gone into the Exchequer, but into the privy purse, and so far from lessening the taxes, would not even have been added to them, but served only as pocket money to the Crown. The more I reflect on this matter, the more I am satisfied at the blindness and ill policy of my countrymen, whose wisdom seems to operate without discernment, and their strength without an object.

To the great bulwark of the nation, I mean the mercantile and manufacturing part thereof, I likewise present my address. It is your interest to see America an independent country and not a conquered one. If conquered, she is ruined; and if ruined, poor; consequently the trade will be a trifle, and her credit doubtful. If independent, she flourishes, and from her flourishing must your profits arise. It matters nothing to you who governs America, if your manufactures find a consumption there. Some articles will consequently be obtained from other places, and it is right that they should; but the demand for others will encrease by the great influx of inhabitants which a state of independence and peace will occasion, and in the final event you may be enriched. The commerce of America is perfectly free, and ever will be so. She will consign away no part of it to any nation. She has not to her friends, and certainly will not to her enemies, though it is probable that your narrow minded politicians, thinking to please you thereby, may some time or other make such an unnecessary proposal. Trade flourishes best when it is free, and it is weak policy to attempt to fetter it. Her treaty with France is on the most liberal and generous principles, and the French, in their conduct towards her has proved themselves to be philosophers, politicians and gentlemen.

To the Ministry I likewise address myself. You, gentlemen, have studied the ruin of your country, from which it is not within your abilities to rescue her. Your attempts to recover her are as ridiculous as your plans which involved her are detestable. The Commissioners being about to depart, will probably bring you this, and with it my sixth number to them; and in so doing they carry back more Common Sense than they brought, and you likewise will have more than when you sent them.

Having thus addressed you severally, I conclude by addressing you collectively. It is a long lane that has no turning. A period of sixteen years of misconduct and misfortune, is certainly long enough for any one nation to suffer under; and upon a supposition that war is not declared between France and you, I beg to place a line of conduct before you that will

easily lead you out of all your troubles. It has been hinted before, and cannot be too much attended to.

Suppose America had remained unknown to Europe till the present year, and that Mr. Banks and Dr. Solander, in another voyage round the world, had made the first discovery of her, in the same condition that she is now in of arts, arms, numbers, and civilization. What I ask in that case would have been your conduct towards her, for that will point out what it ought to be now? The problems and their solutions are equal, and the right line of the one is the parallel of the other. The question takes in every circumstance that can possibly arise. It reduces politics to a simple thought, and is moreover a mode of investigation, in which, while you are studying your interest, the simplicity of the case will cheat you into good temper. You have nothing to do but to suppose that you have found America, and she appears found to your hand, and while in the joy of your heart you stand still to admire her, the path of politics rises straight before you.

Were I disposed to paint a contrast, I could easily set off what you have done in the present case against what you would have done in that case, and by justly opposing them, conclude a picture that would make you blush. But as when any of the prouder passions are hurt, it is much better philosophy to let a man slip into a good temper than to attack him in a bad one: for that reason therefore, I only state the case and leave you to reflect upon it.

To go a little back into politics, it will be found that the true interest of Britain lay in proposing and promoting the independence of America immediately after the last peace, for the expence which Britain had then incurred by defending America as HER OWN DIMINIONS, ought to have shewn her the policy and necessity of changing the stile of the country, as the best probable method of preventing future wars and expence, and the only method by which she could hold the commerce without the charge of sovereignty. Besides which, the title which she assumed, of Parent Country naturally led to, and pointed out, the propriety, wisdom and advantage of a separation; for as in private life children grow into men, and by setting up for themselves extend and secure the interest of the whole family, so in the settlement of colonies large enough to admit of maturity, the same policy should be pursued, and the same consequences would follow. Nothing hurts the affections both of parents and children so much, as living too closely connected, and keeping up the distinction too long. Domineering will not do over those, who by a progress in life, have become equal in rank to their parents, that is, when they have families of their own; and though they may conceive themselves the subjects of their advice, will not suppose them the objects of their government. I do not, by drawing this parallel, mean to admit the title of Parent Country, because, if it is due any where, it is due to Europe collectively, and the first settlers from England were driven here by persecution. I mean only to introduce the term for the sake of policy, and to show from your title the line of your interest.

When you saw the state of strength and opulence, and that by her own industry, which America arrived at, you ought to have advised her to set up for herself, and proposed an

alliance of interest with her, and in so doing you would have drawn, and that at her own expence, more real advantage, and more military supplies and assistance both of ships and men, than from any weak and wrangling government that you could exercise over her. In short, had you studied only the domestic politics of a family, you would have learned how to govern the state; but instead of this easy and natural line, you flew out into every thing which was wild and outrageous, till by following the passion and stupidity of the pilot you wrecked the vessel within sight of the shore.

Having shewn what you ought to have done, I now proceed to shew why it was not done. The caterpillar circle of the Court, had an interest to pursue distinct from, and opposed to yours, for though by the independence of America and an alliance therewith, the trade would have continued if not encreased, as in many articles neither country can go to a better market, and though by defending and protecting herself, she would have been no expense to you, and consequently your national charges would have decreased and your taxes might have been proportionably lessened thereby, yet the striking off so many places from the Court Calendar was put in opposition to the interest of the nation. The loss of thirteen governmentships with their appendages here and in England is a shocking sound in the ear of a hungry courtier. Your present King and Ministry will be the ruin of you; and you had better risk a revolution and call a Congress than be thus led on from madness to despair, and from despair to ruin. America has set you the example, and you may follow it and be free.

I now come to the last part, a war with France. This is what no man in his senses will advise you to, and all good men would wish to prevent. Whether France will declare war against you, is not for me in this place to mention or to hint even if I knew it, but it must be madness in you to do it first. The matter is come now to a full crisis, and peace is easy if willingly set about. Whatever you may think, France has behaved handsomely to you. She would have been unjust to herself to have acted otherwise than she did; and having accepted our offer of alliance, she gave you genteel notice of it. There was nothing in her conduct reserved or indelicate, and while she announced her determination to support her treaty she left you to give the first offence. America, on her part, has exhibited a character of firmness to the world. Unprepared and unarmed, without form or government she singly opposed a nation that domineered over half the globe. The greatness of the deed demands respect; and though you may feel resentment, you are compelled both to WONDER and ADMIRE.

Here I rest my arguments and finish my address. Such as it is, it is a gift, and you are welcome. It was always my design to dedicate a Crisis to you, when the time should come that would properly make it a Crisis; and when, likewise, I should catch myself in a temper to write it, and suppose you in a condition to read it. That time has now arrived, and with it, the opportunity for conveyance. For the Commissioners — poor commissioners! — having proclaimed, that "yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," have waited out the date, and, discontented with their God, are returning to their gourd. And all the harm I wish them is, that it may not wither about their ears, and that they may not make their exit in the belly of a Whale.

## COMMON SENSE.

Philadelphia, November 11, 1778.

P.S. Though in the tranquillity of my mind I have concluded with a laugh, yet I have something to mention to the Commissioners, which to them is serious and worthy their attention. Their authority is derived from an Act of Parliament which likewise describes and limits their official powers. Their commission, therefore, is only a recital, and personal investiture, of those powers, or a nomination and description of the persons who are to execute them. Had it contained any thing contrary to, or gone beyond the line of, the written law from which it is derived and by which it is bound, it would, by the English constitution, have been treason in the Crown, and the King been subject to an impeachment. He dared not, therefore, put in his commission what you have put in your proclamation, that is, he dared not have authorised you in that commission to burn and destroy, or to threaten to burn and destroy, any thing in America. You are both in the Act and in the Commission stiled Commissioners for restoring peace, and the methods for doing it are there pointed out. Your last proclamation is signed by you as Commissioners under that Act. You make Parliament the patron of its contents. Yet, in the body of it, you insert matters contrary both to the spirit and letter of the Act, and what likewise your King dared not have put in his commission to you. The state of things in England, Gentlemen, is too ticklish for you to run hazards. You are accountable to Parliament for the execution of that act according to the letter of it. Your heads may pay for breaking it, for you certainly have broke it by exceeding it. And as a friend, who would wish you to escape the paw of the lion as well as the belly of the Whale, I civilly hint to you, to keep within compass.

Sir Harry Clinton, strictly speaking, is as accountable as the rest; for though a General, he is likewise a Commissioner, acting under a superior authority. His first obedience is due to the Act; and his plea of being a General will not and cannot clear him as a Commissioner, for that would suppose the Crown, in its single capacity, to have a power of dispensing with an Act of Parliament. Your situations, Gentlemen, is nice and critical, and the more so because England is unsettled. Take heed! Remember the times of Charles the first! For Laud and Stafford fell by trusting to a hope like yours.

Having thus shown you the danger of your proclamation, I now shew you the folly of it. The means contradict your design. You threaten to lay waste in order to render America a useless acquisition of alliance to France. I reply, that the more destruction you commit (if you could do it) the more valuable to France you make that alliance. You can destroy only houses and goods; and by so doing you increase our demand upon her for materials and merchandize; for the wants of one nation, provided it has FREEDOM and CREDIT, naturally produce riches to the other; and as you can neither ruin the land nor prevent the vegetation, you would encrease the exportation of our produce in payment, which would be to her a new fund of wealth. In short, had you cast about for a plan on purpose to enrich your enemies you could not have hit upon a better.