

THE CRISIS. No. VIII.

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Addressed to the People of ENGLAND, by the Author of COMMON SENSE.

"TRUSTING, (says the king of England in his speech of November last) in the Divine Providence, and in the justice of my cause, I am firmly resolved to prosecute the war with vigor, and to make every exertion in order to compel our enemies to equitable terms of peace and accommodation." To this declaration the United States of America and the Confederated Powers of Europe, will reply, If Britain will have war, she shall have enough of it.

Five years have nearly elapsed since the commencement of hostilities, and every campaign, by a gradual decay, has lessened your ability to conquer, without producing a serious thought on your condition or your fate. Like a prodigal lingering in an habitual consumption, you feel the relicks of life and mistake them for recovery. New schemes, like new medicines, have administered fresh hopes and prolonged the disease instead of curing it. A change of Generals, like a change of physicians, served only to keep the flattery alive, and furnish new pretences for new extravagance.

"Can Britain fail?" (1) Has been proudly asked at the undertaking of every enterprize, and that "whatever she wills is fate*,"(2) has been given with the solemnity of prophetic confidence, and tho' the question has been constantly replied to by disappointment, and the prediction falsified by misfortune, yet still the insult continued, and your catalogue of national evils encreased therewith. Eager to persuade the world of her power, she considered destruction as the minister of greatness, and conceived that the glory of a nation, like that of an Indian, lay in the number of its scalps and the miseries which it inflicts.

(1) Whitehead's New Year's ode for 1776. (2) Ode at the installation of Lord North, for Chancellor of the University of Oxford.

Fire, sword and want, as far as the arms of Britain could extend them, have been spread with wanton cruelty along the coast of America; and while you, remote from the scene of suffering, had nothing to lose and as little to dread, the information reached you like a tale of antiquity, in which the distance of time defaces the conception, and changes the severest sorrows into conversable amusement.

This makes the second paper, addressed perhaps in vain, to the people of England. That advice should be taken wherever example has failed, or precept be regarded where warning is ridiculed, is like a picture of hope resting on despair: But when time shall stamp with universal currency, the facts you have long encountered with a laugh, and the irresistible evidence of accumulated losses, like the hand writing on the wall, shall add

terror to distress, you will then, in a conflict of sufferings, learn to sympathise with others by feeling for yourselves.

The triumphant appearance of the combined fleets in the channel and at your harbour's mouth, and the expedition of Captain Paul Jones on the western and eastern coasts of England and Scotland, will, by placing you in the condition of an endangered country, read to you a stronger lecture on the calamities of invasion, and bring to your minds a truer picture of promiscuous distress, than the most finished rhetoric can describe or the keenest imagination conceive.

Hitherto you have experienced the expenses, but nothing of the miseries of war. Your disappointments have been accompanied with no immediate suffering, and your losses came to you only by intelligence. Like fire at a distance you heard not even the cry; you felt not the danger, you saw not the confusion. To you every thing has been foreign but the taxes to support it. You knew not what it was to be alarmed at midnight with an armed enemy in the streets. You were strangers to the distressing scene of a family in flight, and to the thousand restless cares and tender sorrows that incessantly arose. To see women and children wandering in the severity of winter with the broken remains of a well furnished house, and seeking shelter in every crib and hut, were matters that you had no conception of. You knew not what it was to stand by and see your goods chopt for fuel, and your beds ript to pieces to make packages for plunder. The misery of others, like a tempestuous night, added to the pleasures of your own security. You even enjoyed the storm, by contemplating the difference of conditions; and that which carried sorrow into the breasts of thousands, served but to heighten in you a species of tranquil pride. — Yet these are but the fainter sufferings of war, when compared with carnage and slaughter, the miseries of a military hospital, or a town in flames.

The people of America by anticipating distress had fortified their minds against every species you could inflict. They had resolved to abandon their homes, to resign them to destruction, and to seek new settlements rather than submit. Thus familiarised to misfortune, before it arrived, they bore their portion with the less regret: The justness of their cause was a continual source of consolation, and the hope of final victory, which never left them, served to lighten the load and sweeten the cup allotted them to drink.

But when their sufferings shall become yours, and invasion be transferred upon the invaders, you will have neither their extended wilderness to fly to, their cause to comfort you, nor their hope to rest on. Distress with them was sharpened by no self-reflection. They had not brought it on themselves. On the contrary, they had by every proceeding endeavoured to avoid it, and had descended even below the mark of congressional character, to prevent a war. The national honor or the advantages of independence were matters, which at the commencement of the dispute, they had never studied, and it was only at the last moment that the measure was resolved on. Thus circumstanced, they naturally and conscientiously felt a dependence upon Providence. They had a clear pretension to it, and had they failed therein, infidelity had gained a triumph.

But your condition is the reverse of theirs. Every thing you suffer you have sought: nay, had you created mischiefs on purpose to inherit them, you could not have secured your title by a firmer deed. The world awakens with no pity at your complaints. You felt none for others; you deserve none for yourselves. Nature does not interest herself in cases like yours, but on the contrary turns from them with dislike, and abandons them to punishment. You may now present memorials to what Court you please, but so far as America is the object, none will listen. The policy of Europe and the propensity there in every mind to curb insulting ambition, and bring cruelty to judgment, are unitedly against you; and where nature and interest reinforce with each other, the compact is too intimate to be dissolved.

Make but the case of others your own, and your own theirs, and you will then have a clear idea of the whole. Had France acted towards her Colonies as you have done, you would have branded her with every epithet of abhorrence; and had you, like her, stepped in to succour a struggling people, all Europe must have echoed with your own applauses. But entangled in the passion of dispute, you see it not as you ought, and form opinions thereon which suit with no interest but your own. You wonder that America does not rise in union with you to impose on herself a portion of your taxes and reduce herself to unconditional submission. You are amazed that the Southern Powers of Europe do not assist you in conquering a country which is afterwards to be turned against themselves; and that the northern ones do not contribute to reinstate you in America, who already enjoy the market for naval stores by the separation. You seem surprised that Holland does not pour in her succors to maintain you mistress of the seas, when her own commerce is suffering by your Act of navigation, or that any country should study her own interest while yours is on the carpet.

Such excesses of passionate folly, and unjust as well as unwise resentment, have driven you on, like Pharoah, to unpitied miseries, and while the importance of the quarrel shall perpetuate your disgrace, the flag of America will carry it round the world. The natural feelings of every rational being will take against you, and wherever the story shall be told, you will have neither excuse nor consolation left. With an unsparing hand and an insatiable mind, you have havocked the world, both to gain dominion and to lose it, and while, in a frenzy of avarice and ambition, the east and west are doomed to tributary bondage, you rapidly earned destruction as the wages of a nation.

At the thoughts of a war at home every man amongst you ought to tremble. The prospect is far more dreadful there than in America. Here the party that was against the measures of the continent were in general composed of a kind of neutrals who added strength to neither army. There does not exist a being so devoid of sense and sentiment as to covet "unconditional submission," and therefore no man in America could be with you in principle. Several might from a cowardice of mind, prefer it to the hardships and dangers of opposing it; but the same disposition that gave them such a choice, unfitted them to act either for or against. But England is rent into parties, with equal shares of resolution. The principle which produced the war, divides the nation. Their animosities are in the highest

state of fermentation, and both sides by a call of the militia, are in arms. No human foresight can discern, no conclusion can be formed, what turn a war might take, if once set on foot by an invasion. She is not now in a fit disposition to make a common cause of her own affairs, and having no conquests to hope for abroad, and nothing but expenses arising at home, her every thing is staked upon a defensive combat, and the further she goes the worse she is off.

There are situations that a nation may be in, in which peace or war, abstracted from every other consideration, may be politically right or wrong. When nothing can be lost by a war, but what must be lost without it, war is then the policy of that country; and such was the situation of America at the commencement of hostilities: But when no security can be gained by a war, but what may be accomplished by a peace, the case becomes reversed, and such now is the situation of England.

That America is beyond the reach of conquest, is a fact which experience has shewn and time confirmed, and this admitted, what, I ask, is now the object of contention? If there be any honor in pursuing self-destruction with inflexible passion; if national suicide be the perfection of national glory, you may, with all the pride of criminal happiness, expire unenvied and unrivalled. — But when the tumult of war shall cease, and the tempest of present passions be succeeded by calm reflection, or when those who surviving its fury, shall inherit from you a legacy of debts and misfortunes, when the yearly revenue scarcely be able to discharge the interest of the one, and no possible remedy be left for the other; ideas, far different from the present, will arise, and embitter the remembrance of former follies. A mind disarmed of its rage, feels no pleasure in contemplating a frantic quarrel. Sickness of thought, the sure consequence of conduct like yours, leaves no ability for enjoyment, no relish for resentment; and tho' like a man in a fit, you feel not the injury of the struggle, nor distinguish between strength and disease, the weakness will nevertheless be proportioned to the violence, and the sense of pain encrease with the recovery.

To what persons or to whose system of politics you owe your present state of wretchedness is a matter of total indifference to America. They have contributed, however unwillingly, to set her above themselves, and she, in the tranquillity of conquest, resigns the enquiry. The case now is not so properly who began the war, as who continues it. That there are men in all countries to whom a state of war is a mine of wealth, is a fact never to be doubted. Characters like these naturally breed in the putrefaction of distempered times, and after fattening on the disease they perish with it, or impregnated with the stench retreat into obscurity.

But there are several erroneous notions to which you likewise owe a share of your misfortunes, and which if continued will only increase your trouble and your losses. An opinion hangs about the gentlemen of the minority, that America would relish measures under their administration, which she would not from the present cabinet. On this rock Lord Chatham would have split had he gained the helm, and several of his survivors are steering the same course. Such distinctions in the infancy of the argument had some

degree of foundation, but they now serve no other purpose than to lengthen out a war, in which the limits of a dispute, being fixt by the fate of arms, and guaranteed by treaties, are not to be changed or altered by trivial circumstances.

The Ministry and many of the minority sacrifice their time in disputing on a question with which they have nothing to do, namely, whether America shall be independent or not? Whereas the only question that can come under their determination, is, whether they will accede to it or not. They confound a military question with a political one, and undertake to supply by a vote what they lost by a battle. Say, she shall not be independant, and it will signify as much as if they voted against a decree of fate, or say that she shall, and she will be no more independant than before. Questions, which when determined, cannot be executed, serve only to shew the folly of dispute and the weakness of disputants.

From a long habit of calling America your own, you suppose her governed by the same prejudices and conceits which govern yourselves. Because you have set up a particular denomination of religion to the exclusion of all others, you imagine she must do the same, and because you, with an unsociable narrowness of mind, have cherished enmity against France and Spain, you suppose her alliance must be defective in friendship. Copying her notions of the world from you, she formerly thought as you instructed, but now feeling herself free, and the prejudice removed, she thinks and acts upon a different system. It frequently happens that in proportion as we are taught to dislike persons and countries, not knowing why, we feel an ardor of esteem upon the removal of the mistake: it seems as if something was to be made amends for, and we eagerly give in to every office of friendship, to atone for the injury of the error.

But perhaps there is something in the extent of countries, which, among the generality of people, insensibly communicates extension of the mind. The soul of an Islander, in its native State, seems bounded by the foggy confines of the water's edge, and all beyond, affords to him matters only for profit or curiosity, not for friendship. His island is to him his world, and fixt to that his every thing centers in it; while those, who are inhabitants of a continent, by casting their eye over a larger field, take in likewise a larger intellectual circuit, and thus approaching nearer to an acquaintance with the universe, their atmosphere of thought is extended, and their liberality fills a wider space. In short, our minds seem to be measured by countries when we are men, as they are by places when we are children, and until something happens to disentangle us from the prejudice, we serve under it without perceiving it.

In addition to this, it may be remarked, that men who study any universal science, the principles of which are universally known, or admitted, and applied without distinction to the common benefit of all countries, obtain thereby a larger share of philanthropy than those who only study national arts and improvements. Natural philosophy, mathematics and astronomy, carry the mind from the country to the creation, and give it a fitness suited to the extent. It was not Newton's honor, neither could it be his pride, that he was an

Englishman, but that he was a philosopher: The Heavens had liberated him from the prejudices of an island, and science had expanded his soul as boundless as his studies.