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P R I N C E T O N O N A G E N E R A L F A S T.

By JOHN WITHERSPOON, D.D.
President of the COLLEGE at New JERSEY.

L O N D O N :
Printed for FIELDING and WALKER,
No. 20, PATERNOSTER-ROW.
M, DCC, LXXVIII.
Price S I X P E N C E.

ADVERTISEMENT.

MANY of Dr. WITHERSPOON'S readers and friends in *South*, as well as *North* Britain, who wish well to AMERICAN LIBERTY, will be disgusted with his pleading the cause of INDEPENDENCY. But there are others, equally friends to their king and country, who heartily wish America to be independent, though they utterly disapprove the measures taken to make it so. The Reverend Dr. TUCKER, dean of Bristol, (whose loyalty none will doubt any more than his political abilities) long since urged Great Britain to give up the rebellious colonies, from a persuasion this would be to her own interest. And LORD CAMDEN, the other day in the House of Lords, expressing his desires and hopes of peace with America, declared, "that he would
" assist his Majesty's ministers in accom-
" plishing it, as far as his abilities carried
" him; and that he would not arraign
" them,

“ them, if they should not make it on
“ any other terms, than GIVING UP THE
“ SUPREMACY OF THE COUNTRY.” So
far as the following Address has a real
tendency to the honour of the crown,
and the interest of the British Empire,
(which the author mentions as one object
in pleading for American independence)
it has the good wishes of

The EDITOR.

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A D D R E S S , &c.

Countrymen and Friends,

AS soon as I had consented to the publication of the foregoing Sermon, I felt an irresistible desire to accompany it with a few words addressed to you in particular. I am certain I feel the attachment of country, as far as it is a virtuous or laudable principle; perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say—as far as it is a natural and pardonable prejudice. He who is so pleased may attribute it to this last, when I say, that I have never seen cause

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to be ashamed of the place of my birth: that since the revival of arts and letters in Europe, in the close of the fourteenth, and beginning of the fifteenth century, the natives of Scotland have not been inferior to those of any other country, for genius, erudition, military prowess, or any of those accomplishments which improve or embellish human nature. When to this it is added, that since my coming to America at an advanced period of life, the friendship of my countrymen has been as much above my expectation as desert, I hope every reader will consider what is now to be offered as the effect not only of unfeigned good-will, but of the most ardent affection.

It has given me no little uneasiness, to hear the word SCOTCH used as a term of reproach in the American controversy; which could only be upon the supposition, that strangers of that country are more universally opposed to the liberties of America, than those who were born in South-Britain or Ireland. I am sensible this has been done, in some news-papers and contemptible anonymous publications, in a manner that was neither warranted by truth, nor directed by prudence. There are many natives of Scotland in this country, whose opposition to the unjust claims of Great Britain has been as early and uniform, founded upon as rational and liberal principles, and therefore likely to be

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be as lasting, as that of any set of men whatever.

As to Great Britain itself, time has now fully discovered, that the real friends of America in any part of that kingdom were very few; and those whose friendship was disinterested, and in no degree owing to their own political factions, still fewer. The wise and valuable part of the nation were, and as yet are, in a great measure ignorant of the state of things in this country; neither is it easy for the bulk of a people to shake off their prejudices, and open their eyes upon the great principles of universal liberty. It is therefore at least very disputable, whether there is any just ground for the distinction between *Scotch* and *English* in this subject at all.

This dispute, however, I do not mean to enter upon, because it is of too little moment to find a place here. But supposing that, in some provinces especially, the natives of Scotland have been too much inclined to support the usurpations of the parent state, I will first endeavour to account for it, by assigning some of its probable causes, and then offer a few considerations, which should induce them to wipe off the aspersion entirely by a contrary conduct.

As to the first of these, I will mention what I suppose to have been the first and radical
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cause, and which gave birth to every other, of the disaffection of some of the natives of Scotland to the just privileges of America. What I have in view was, The friends of liberty, in many places of America, taking the part of, and seeming to consider themselves as in a great measure engaged in the same cause with, that very distinguished person, JOHN WILKES, Esq; of London. This was done not only in many writings and news-paper dissertations, but one or two colonies, in some of their most respectable meetings, manifested their attachment to him, and seemed to consider him as their friend and patron. Number XLV, which was the most offensive number of a worthless paper, was repeated and echoed by the most silly and ridiculous allusions to it, through every part of the country, and by many who could not tell what was signified by the term.

It will not be necessary to say much on the prudence of such a conduct, because, I suppose, those who expected Wilkes's mob would pull down the parliament house, or that there would be insurrections all over the kingdom in behalf of America, are by this time fully satisfied of their mistake. It appears now, in the clearest manner, that till very lately, those who seemed to take the part of America in the British Parliament, never did it on American principles. They either did not understand,
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or were not willing to admit the extent of our claim. Even the great Lord Chatham's bill for reconciliation, would not have been accepted here, and did not materially differ from what the ministry would have consented to. The truth is, the far greater part of the countenance given in Britain to the complaints of this country, was by those who had no other intention in it, than to use them as the engine of opposition to the ministry for the time being. It is true, some of them have now learned to reason very justly, and upon the most liberal principles; but their number is not great, and it was not the case with any one speaker or writer, whose works I have had the opportunity of perusing, till the very last stage of the quarrel.

What effect this WILKISM (if I may so speak) of many Americans may be supposed to have had upon the minds of gentlemen from Scotland, it is not difficult to explain. That gentleman and his associates thought proper to found the whole of their opposition to the then ministry, upon a contempt and hatred of the Scots nation, and, by the most illiberal methods, and the most scandalous falsehoods, to stir up a national jealousy between the Northern and Southern parts of the island. There was not a vile term, or hateful idea, which ancient vulgar animosity had ever used, though long union had made them scarcely intelligible, which

which he did not rake up, and bring into credit by writing and conversation. The consequence of this is well known. Wilkes and some others were burnt in effigy in Scotland, and it produced so strong an attachment to the king and ministry, as has not yet spent its force. In these circumstances, is it to be wondered at, that many who left Scotland within the last fifteen years, when they heard Wilkes, and those who adhered to him, extolled and celebrated by the sons of liberty, should be apt to consider it as an evidence of the same spirit? Perhaps we may go a little higher with this remark, in tracing political appearances to their source. It is generally said, that the — himself has discovered a violent rancorous personal hatred against the Americans. If this be true, and I know nothing to the contrary, it may easily be accounted for upon the same principles.

I am far from supposing that this was a good reason for any man's being cool to the American cause, which was as different from that of Wilkes as light is from darkness. It was, indeed, doing great dishonour to the noble struggle, to suppose it to have any connection with—who should be in or out of court-favour at London; and therefore it was always my opinion, that those who only railed against the king and ministry, did not carry the argu-
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ment home, nor fully understand the nature of their own plea. In order to justify the American opposition, it is not necessary to shew, that the persons in power have invaded Liberty in Britain, it is sufficient to say, that they, with the concurrence of the whole nation, have refused to suffer it to continue in the colonies.

This leads me to the second part of my design, which was to lay before you the reasons which I think should induce every lover of justice, and of mankind, not only to be a well-wisher, but a firm and stedfast friend, to America in this important contest.

It has often been said, that the present is likely to be an important æra to AMERICA: I think we may say much more: it is likely to be an important æra in the history of MANKIND. In the ancient migrations, a new country was generally settled by a small, unconnected, and ignorant band. The people and soil were alike uncultivated, and therefore they proceeded to improvement by very slow degrees; nay, many of them fell back and degenerated into a state vastly more savage than the people from whence they came. In America we see a rich and valuable soil, and an extensive country, taken possession of by the power, the learning, and the wealth of Europe. For this reason it is now exhibiting to the
world

world a scene which it never saw before. It has had a progress in improvement and population so rapid, as no political calculators have been able to ascertain. I look upon every thing that has been said upon this subject to be mere conjecture, except in such places as there has been an actual enumeration. When men say that America doubles in fifteen or twenty years, they speak by guess, and they say nothing. In some places they may be under or over the truth. But there are vast tracts of land that fill every year with inhabitants, and yet the old settled places still continue to encrease.

It is proper to observe, that the British settlements have been improved in a proportion far beyond the settlements of other European nations. To what can this be ascribed? Not to the climate; for they are of all climates. Not to the people; for they are a mixture of all nations. It must therefore be resolved singly into the degree of British liberty which they brought from home, and which pervaded more or less their several constitutions. It has been repeated to us, I know not how often, by the mercenary short-sighted writers in favour of submission to, or re-union with, Great Britain, that we have thriven very much in past times, by our dependance on the mother country, and therefore we should be loth to part.

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These writers forget that the very complaint is, that she will not suffer us to enjoy our ancient rights. Can any past experience show that we shall thrive under new impositions? I should be glad any such reasoners would attempt to prove, that we have thriven by our dependance. I conceive it is a necessary consequence, that those provinces must have thriven most which have been most dependant. But the contrary is self-evident. Those which have hitherto enjoyed the freest form of government, though greatly inferior in soil and climate, have yet outstript the others in number of people, and value of land, merely because the last were more under the influence of appointments and authority from home.

When this is the undeniable state of things, can any person of a liberal mind wish, that this great and growing country should be brought back to a state of subjection to a distant power? And can any man deny, that if they had yielded to the claims of the British parliament, they would have been no better than a parcel of tributary states; ruled by lordly tyrants, and exhausted by unfeeling pensioners, under commission of one, too distant to hear the cry of oppression, and surrounded by those who had an interest in deceiving him. It ought, therefore, in my opinion, to meet with the cordial approbation of every impartial person,

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son, as I am confident it will of posterity, that they have united for common defence, and resolved that they will be free and independent, because they cannot be the one without the other.

As this measure, long foreseen, has now taken place, I shall beg leave to say a few things upon it, in which I mean to shew,

That it was necessary——that it will be honourable and profitable——and that, in all probability, it will be no injury, but a real advantage to the island of Great Britain.

FIRST; it had become absolutely necessary. All reconciliation, but upon the footing of unconditional submission, had been positively refused by Great Britain; unless, therefore, the colonies had resolved to continue in a loose and broken state, with the name of a government which they had taken arms to oppose, the step which they have now taken could not have been avoided. Besides, things had proceeded so far, and such measures had been taken on both sides, that it had become impossible to lay down a scheme by which *they* should be sure of our dependence, and *we*, at the same time, secured in our liberties. While things continued in their ancient state, there was perhaps a power on the part of each, of which they were hardly conscious, or were afraid and unwilling to exert.

exert. But, after the encroachments had been made and resisted, to expect any thing else than a continued attempt to extend authority on the one hand, and to guard against it on the other, is to discover little knowledge of human nature. In such a situation, though every claim of America should be yielded, she would soon be either in a state of continual confusion, or absolute submission. The king of England, living in his English dominions, would not, and indeed durst not, assent to any act of an American legislature, that was, or was supposed to be, hurtful to his English subjects. This is not founded on conjecture, but experience. There is not (at least *Dean Swift* affirms it) any dependance of IRELAND upon England, except an act of the Irish parliament, that the king of England shall be king of Ireland. This last has a separate independant legislature, and in every thing else, but the above circumstance, seems to be perfectly free. Yet if any man should assert, that the one kingdom is not truly subject to the other, he would, in my opinion, know very little of the state and history of either.

SECONDLY; a state of independency will be both honourable and profitable to this country. I pass over many advantages in the way of commerce, as well as in other respects, that must necessarily accrue from it, that I may

dwell a little on the great and leading benefit, which is the foundation of all the rest.

We shall have the opportunity of forming plans of government, upon the most rational, just, and equal principles.

I confess I have always looked upon this with a kind of enthusiastic satisfaction. The case never happened before since the world began. All governments we have read of in former ages, were settled by caprice or accident, by the influence of prevailing parties or particular persons, or prescribed by a conqueror. Important improvements have indeed been forced upon some constitutions by the spirit of daring men, supported by successful insurrections. But to see a government, in large and populace countries, settled from its foundation by deliberate counsel, and directed immediately to the public good of the present and future generations, while the people are waiting for the decision, with full confidence in the wisdom and impartiality of those to whom they have committed the important trust, is certainly altogether new. We learn, indeed, from history, that small tribes, and feeble new settlements, did sometimes employ one man of eminent wisdom to prepare a system of laws for them. Even this was a wise measure, and attended with happy effects. But how vast the difference! when

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we have the experience of all ages, the history of human societies, and the well-known causes of prosperity and misery in other governments, to assist us in the choice.

The prospect of this happy circumstance, and the possibility of losing it, has filled me with anxiety for some time. So far as we have hitherto proceeded, there has been great unanimity and publick spirit. The inhabitants of every province, and persons of all denominations have vied with each other in zeal for the common interest. But was it not to be feared, that some men would acquire over-bearing influence? That human weakness and human passions would discover themselves, and prevent the finishing of what has been happily begun? In the time of the civil wars in England, had they settled a regular form of government as soon as the parliament had obtained an evident superiority, their liberties would never have been shaken, and the Revolution would have been unnecessary. But by delaying the thing too long, they were broken into parties, and bewildered in their views, and at last tamely submitted, without resistance, to that very tyranny against which they had fought with so much glory and success. For these reasons, I think that every candid and liberal mind ought to rejoice in the measures lately taken through the states of America, and particularly the late
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declaration of Independency; as it will not only give union and force to the measures of defence while they are necessary, but lay a foundation for the birth of millions, and the future improvement of a great part of the globe. I have only to observe,

THIRDLY, that I am confident the independency of America will, in the end, be to the real advantage of the island of Great Britain.

Were this even otherwise, it would be a weak argument against the claims of justice. Why should the security or prosperity of this vast country be sacrificed to the supposed interest of an inconsiderable spot? But I cannot believe, that the misery and subjection of any country on earth is necessary to the happiness of another. Blind partiality and self-interest may represent it in this light, but the opinion is delusive, the supposition is false. The success and increase of one nation is, or may be, a benefit to every other. It is seldom, indeed, that a people in general can receive and adopt these generous sentiments; they are, nevertheless, perfectly just. It is industry only, and not possessions, that makes the strength and wealth of a nation; and this is not hindered but encouraged, provoked, and rewarded, by the industry of others*.

* See *David Hume's Essay on the Jealousy of Trade.*

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But, to leave the general principle, or rather to apply it to the case of Great Britain and America, what profit has the former received from the latter? and what can it reasonably expect for the future? Only its TRADE, and such part of its trade as tends to encourage the industry, and encrease the number of the inhabitants. It will be said, they intend to raise a large clear net revenue upon us by taxation. It has been shewn by many, that all the taxes which they could raise would only serve to feed the insatiable desire of wealth in place-men and pensioners, to encrease the influence of the crown, and the corruption of the people. It was by the acquisition of numerous provinces that ROME hastened to its ruin. But even supposing it otherwise, and that, without any bad consequences among themselves, they were to acquire a great addition to their yearly revenue, for every shilling they gained by taxes, they would loose ten in the way of trade. For a trifling addition to the sums of publick money, to be applied or wasted by the ministers of state, they would have ten times the quantity distributed among useful manufacturers, the strength and glory of a state. I think this has been sometimes compared to the difference between draughts of spirituous liquors to intoxicate the head, or weaken the stomach, and cool refreshing

refreshing food to give soundness, health, and vigour, to every member of the body.

The trade then of America, as soon as peace is settled, will be as open to them as ever. But it will be said, "They have now an exclusive trade; they will then but share it among other nations." I answer, an exclusive trade is not easily preserved; and when it is preserved, the restriction is commonly more hurtful than useful. Trade is of a nice and delicate nature; it is founded upon interest; it will force its way where interest leads, and can hardly be made to go in another direction. The Spaniards have an exclusive trade, as far as they please to confine it, to their own plantations. Do they reap much benefit from it? I believe not. Has it made their own people more industrious at home? Just the contrary. Does it not, in the natural course of things, make a people less careful to work as well, and sell as cheap, as others, to procure voluntary purchasers, when they know they can send their goods to those who are obliged to take them? Does it not both tempt and enable great merchants in the capital, to import from other nations what they can export to such a forced market to advantage? By this means a considerable profit may come into the coffers of a few particular persons, while no essential service is done to the people, and the ultimate
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profit is carried to that country where the goods are produced or fabricated. It has been repeatedly said by political writers in England, that the balance of trade is against that country to every nation, excepting Portugal and their own plantations. I will not answer for the truth or universality of this assertion; but if it is true in any measure, I will venture to affirm, upon the principles of general reason, that the cause which produces it is no other, than the exclusive trade they have hitherto enjoyed to the American settlements.

But the circumstance which I apprehend will contribute most to the interest of Great Britain in American independence is, its influence in peopling and enriching this great continent.

It will certainly tend to make the American states numerous, powerful, and opulent, to a degree not easily conceived. The great and penetrating Montesquieu, in his spirit of laws, has shewn, in the clearest manner, that nothing contributes so much to the prosperity of a people, as the state of society among them, and the form of their government. A free government overcomes every obstacle, makes a desert a fruitful field, and fills a bleak and barren country with all the conveniencies of life. If so, what must be the operation of this powerful cause, upon countries which enjoy, in the highest degree, every advantage that can be de-

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rived from situation, climate, and soil? If the trade of America has hitherto been so great a benefit to England, how much more valuable may it be, when this country shall be still more highly improved, if she shall continue to enjoy it? This argument is liable to no objection, but what may arise from the loss of an exclusive trade, which I have already considered. It may be added, however, that there is not now, nor ever has been, any aversion in the Americans to the people of Great Britain; so that they may be sure of our trade if they treat us as well as others, and if otherwise they do not deserve it.

I might illustrate the argument, by stating the probable consequences of a contrary supposition. If Great Britain should prevail, or overcome the American states, and establish viceroys with absolute authority in every province, all men of spirit and lovers of freedom would certainly withdraw themselves to a corner, if such could be found, out of the reach of tyranny and oppression. The numbers of the people, at any rate, would sensibly decrease, their wealth would be speedily exhausted, and there would remain only a nominal authority over a desolate country, in return for the vast expence laid out in the conquest, and in place of a great and profitable trade by which both nations were made happy.

One of the arguments, if they may be called so, made use of against this country, and on which an obligation to obedience has been founded, is taken from the expence they have been at in blood and treasure, for our protection in former wars. This argument has often been answered in the fullest manner. But if they shall continue to urge it, how fearful to think of the obligation we shall be under after this war is finished! Then shall we owe them all the sums which they have laid out in subduing us, and all that we have spent in attempting to prevent it: all the blood which they have shed in attacking us, and all that we shall have spilt in our own defence. There is unquestionably a loss to Great Britain by the one side of the account, as well as the other; and it tends to shew, in the clearest manner, the unspeakable folly, as well as great injustice, of the promoters of this war.

Thus have I stated to you, though very briefly, the principles on which I think the American cause ought to be pleaded, and on which it ought to be espoused and supported by every lover of justice and of mankind. But though the general plea in justice were less clear than it is, there is a light in which the conduct of the opposers of it has always appeared unreasonable and ungenerous to the highest degree. That resistance to Great Britain has been

determined on, in the most resolute manner, through all the colonies, by a vast majority, is not only certain, but undeniable. In the beginning of the controversy, some writers, with an impudence hardly to be paralleled, called the fact in question, attempted to deceive the people in this country, and effectually deceived the people of England, by making them believe, that only a few factious and violent men had engaged in the contest. It is not very long since a writer had the courage to assert, that "Nine-tenths of the people of Pennsylvania were against independency." The falsehood of such representations is now manifest, and, indeed, was probably known from the beginning, by those who desired to have them believed. Taking this for granted then, for an inconsiderable minority, whether natives or strangers, to set themselves in opposition to the public councils, is contrary to reason and justice, and even to the first principles of the social life.

If there is any principle that was never controverted upon the social union, it is, That, as a body, every society must be determined by the plurality. There was a time, when it was not only just and consistent, but necessary, that every one should speak his mind freely and fully of the necessity or expediency of resisting the authority of Great Britain. But that time is over
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long ago. The measures being resolved upon, and the conflict begun, one who is barely neuter can scarce be forgiven. A secret plodding enemy must be considered as a traitor. Every person who continued among us, after the decisive resolutions formed by all the colonies, ought to be considered as pledging his faith and honour to assist in the common cause. Let me try to illustrate it by a similar case. Suppose that a ship at sea springs a leak, which exposes the whole company to the most imminent danger of perishing. Supposing a council is called of all the persons on board, to determine what port they shall endeavour to gain. Then it is not only the right, but the duty of every one, to speak his own judgment, and to press it upon others by every argument in his power. Suppose a great majority determines to push for a certain place, and to go to the pump by turns every quarter of an hour; but that two or three, or one if you please, is of opinion, that they should have gone another course, because of the wind, current, or any other circumstance, and that it would be best to change hands at the pump only every half hour. All this is well. But if, after the determination, this same gentleman, because his advice was not followed, should refuse to pump at all, should silyly alter the ship's course, or deaden her by every means in his power, or

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even should only, by continual complaints and despondent fears, discourage others on whose activity the common safety depends, I desire to know what treatment he would receive or deserve? Without doubt, he would be thrown overboard in less time than I have taken to state the case. I am not able to perceive the least difference between this supposition, and what takes place in America at the present time.

If this argument is just with respect to every inhabitant of the country, it ought to have some additional weight with those who are not natives, and whose residence is not certain, or has not been long. There is a great degree of indecency in such taking any part against what the majority of the inhabitants think to be their interest, and that of their country. Were they even wrong, their mistake should be lamented, not resisted. On the contrary, it would be the part both of generosity and justice, to support them effectually in a contest, which wisdom would have declined. We see, indeed, every day melancholy instances of a base and selfish temper operating different ways. Many, when they do not obtain what rank and honour which their pride and partiality think their due; or
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if their advice is not followed, immediately renounce the service of their country, and it may go to destruction for them. In opposition to this, let me recommend the example of the illustrious Fabius of Rome. He had given strict orders to all his officers, not to engage the enemy, but to keep at a distance. Unluckily his lieutenant-general, by his own rashness, got entangled with a part of the army under his command, and was engaged. Fabius, preferring his country's good to fame, rivalship, and safety, came immediately to his support with all expedition, and thereby gained a glorious and compleat victory.

I hope you will take in good part the above reflections, which I think contain nothing that is virulent or indecent against any man, or body of men. They are the effects of judgment and conviction. The author, as is probably known to many of you, has been personally abused in news-papers at home, for the part he has been supposed to have taken in the American cause; which was in some degree, indeed, the motive of this address. He hopes that an honest and faithful support of liberty and equal government in this part of the world, will be no just reproach to his character, either as a scholar, a minister, or a
Christian,

Christian, and that it is perfectly consistent with an undiminished regard for the country which gave him birth.

The above is faithfully submitted to your candid perusal by,

Gentlemen,

Your sincere friend,

and obedient humble servant,

The AUTHOR.

F I N I S.