

therefore, for an open conference with America. I think that there is so much affection still left in that country towards this, that barely to enter on a discussion is more than half the business. My plan is to open such a discussion. I shall therefore propose, first, An act of parliament to vest commissioners with very ample powers for this purpose. The powers must be ample; limited powers can produce no good. They must be ample, as to the persons with whom they treat, and as to the objects concerning which they treat. As to the persons the present commissioners have great powers; but the present act must be full, and clear, containing no doubt; no doubt whether they shall treat with the Congress, with rebels, with persons actually in arms; whether with a general Assembly of all the colonies, or with the Assembly of a particular colony. The only rule to guide the commissioners must be, whether the persons with whom they treat are authorized so to do. I shall therefore propose, that such persons shall be described in the most general words. There should be no etiquette; the time for that is past. As to the objects of the treaty, they should be as generally described. The commissioners should be enabled to treat on all grievances existing, or supposed to exist in the laws of the colonies, or in the statutes of this realm; on all matters, provisions or things, and on all aids and future contributions to be furnished by the colonies; for I have reason to think, from the declarations of the colonies, that they are willing to contribute their share to the public support. This will make the tie stronger between us. Those who derive an advantage from a state, ought to contribute to the burdens of it. The execution of these powers must receive the subsequent sanction of parliament; but there are some points in which the opinion of the commissioners must prevail immediately, as the granting of general and particular pardons, or a cessation of hostilities. They must have also another immediate power more great and extensive, founded on the example of an act passed in the reign of Charles II. the power of suspending acts of parliament. The colonies have demanded to be put in the situation they were in 1763. I doubt they will never be placed exactly in the same situation, but perhaps they may be placed in one not much less advantageous. The statutes since that year are many; many of them are beneficial to the colonies; many necessary for their dependence as to trade; and many ought to be repealed, all perhaps should be revised. I would give the commissioners full power to take them all into their consideration, and to suspend such as should be repealed. There is another provision, which is, perhaps, a matter of convenience only; they should have a power of appointing Governors in those colonies where his majesty was used to appoint them. I shall propose to limit the duration of this act to June 1, 1779. I was to hop here the plan would be certainly defective; defective in not offering an inducement to the colonies to treat with us. They must give up their claim of independency; but to induce them to do this, they must be certain of something fixed and decided. If it is necessary to hold out an inducement to all the colonies collectively, it is equally necessary to hold it out to each colony in particular. Though some may not renounce their independency, some may; and it will not be said, that if the commissioners cannot treat with all, they shall not treat with any. The colonies must have some other inducement than mere hopes. Before the war broke out, I offered a contributory proposition to America: I offered it before the sword was drawn. The ground upon which I made it was, that it was just the colonies should contribute to the support of government, but that their taxation by parliament occasioned jealousies in them of our attempting to throw the burden off our own shoulders upon them, and of endangering the security of their assemblies. This proposition was unfortunate; it was rendered suspicious by the supposition of a variety of cases; it was misrepresented or misunderstood, I thought it necessary to show them, that we were not fighting for taxation, for I never thought that such taxation would be very beneficial to us. The stamp was the best duty that could be laid; and even that would not have produced much, so great was the aversion to it. My intent of making this proposition was, to prevent the war, by preserving our rights, and freeing them from their jealousies. In many of the Assemblies there was an inclination to have accepted it, but they referred it to the Congress. The Congress treated it as unreasonable and insidious, and rejected it. War began, and my intention was, from the beginning, at the moment of victory, to have proposed the same proposition, in terms obviating all the misrepresentations and misunderstandings concerning it. The principal objections to it were.

I. That the colonies had a sole right of granting their own money. My proposition looked to a permanent revenue to be granted by them in the first instance. My idea was, that they should grant their own money in proportion to our grants, rising and falling with them.

II. That it was unreasonable, because the quantity was not ascertained; but their contribution was afterwards to undergo the revival of parliament. This was not my idea:—My intent was, that their proportion should be settled, and being settled, should always remain the same.

III. That it was insidious, because the ministry intended to get one colony to bid against another. I had no such intent.—The Congress might have settled what each colony should offer. I will now hold out to the colonies a cessation of the exercise of taxation, and I will not subject it to any conditions, or to the demand of any specific contribution. My proposition, therefore, is, an act of parliament, grounded on the jealousies of the exercise of the right of taxation, and on their declarations of their being willing to contribute, to take away this exercise absolutely, trusting to the negotiations of our commissioners for gaining contributions from the colonies: But I did not mean to make their grant a sine qua non, but will declare, by an act of parliament, that for the future the parliament will not tax the colonies for the purpose of raising a revenue; and in account of commerce, that the money so raised shall be appropriated to the use of the colonies. I propose this as an explicit declaration. It may be said, should not the colonies give up their claim of independency? The renunciation of that claim is implied in the act itself. It may be said also, if you give up taxation, what is there left to fight for? I never thought taxation a sufficient object for the contest, and upon this idea I made my proposition before the war begun. But I fought for the disunion of America. The Congress claimed independency. The colony of Massachusetts Bay claimed it, and a great outrage was committed on our merchants. The war has cost us more than any revenue which could have been raised from America by parliament. The contest was for supremacy. But it may be urged, that concessions in time of war, of so public a nature, are dangerous. It is the misfortune of this war, involved in so many parliamentary points, to require public steps. The state of our resources is well known. This concession cannot therefore, in this respect, be prejudicial to us. Our army and navy are great; our losses can be repaired; the necessary supplies can be raised; and our customs are not diminished. But why was not concession made before? I am willing that my past conduct should be inspected. I never proposed any tax. When I was unfortunate enough (for I will still use the word, notwithstanding the use made of it) to be placed in my present office, I thought there was a gleam of hope that the colonies would return to their duty. My maxim was to say nothing about America; neither to propose or repeal taxes; neither to advance or recede; but to remain in total silence. But when it was necessary to give the East-India company a power of selling their tea in America, I did not think it right to repeal the tax. I however diminished it. A repeal would have been of no service, for America was afraid that the East-India company would undersell their smugglers. A monopoly was also urged. They had, in fact, the commodity cheaper than they had it before. If they remitted this grievance, they were ready to make any thing a grievance. When the war was begun, I thought it necessary to accompany our forces with a pacific commission,—and the commissioners were men of abilities, men of honour, men of a pacific disposition, men trusted by America, who were the most likely to bring about a reconciliation. But this commission produced no effect, because the claims of America were so distant. When the sword was drawn, why did I not make my proposition? I own I thought that the war would soon have ended, and I should have made it, had America been reduced to unconditional submission; but misfortunes, misconduct, or a greater natural force in America than was expected, and which no man could foresee, have carried on the war to its present length. I will never own that administration has deceived the public, in wanting to delude them into measures which they thought were ineffectual. The information laid before parliament was full: Parliament had every paper necessary to found its judgment; no papers were retained but those only which, for the sake of the writers, would have been dangerous to have exposed. But the deception is, that administration said that, in their opinion, the war would soon be at an end. Our army and navy were great; Sir W. Howe's army was generally superior to Washington's; and General Burgoyne's army, when at fort Edward, was stronger than the enemy's force. Parliament knew the force sent out as well as the minister. Ministry promised that the army should be supplied. The army has been supplied. Ministry promised to raise the money necessary for the services. The money has been raised. The public therefore has been deceived by the event. It may be asked, what is likely to be the effect of this proposition? The real effect I cannot say, but it is a right thing to endeavour to bring about a peace. I do not see that any other concession can be made, without admitting the complete independency of America. But