

sure to assert, with great assurance, they never will recede, even admitting the continuance of hostile attempts, and that, from the rage of war, the good people of these states shall be driven to commence a treaty westward of yonder mountains. And permit me to add, Sir, as my humble opinion, the true interest of Great-Britain in the present advance of our contest, will be found in confirming our independence.

"Congress in no hour have been haughty, but to suppose that their minds are less firm in the present, than they were, when, destitute of all foreign aid, even without expectation of an alliance—when, upon a day of general public fasting and humiliation, in their house of worship and in the presence of God, they resolved, "to hold no conference or treaty with any commissioners on the part of Great-Britain, unless they shall, as a preliminary thereto, either withdraw their fleets and armies, or, in positive and express terms, acknowledge the independence of these states," would be irrational.

"At a proper time, Sir, I shall think myself highly honoured by a personal attention, and by contributing to render every part of these states agreeable to you; but until the basis of mutual confidence shall be established, I believe, Sir, neither former private friendship, nor any other consideration, can influence Congress to consent that even Governor Johnstone, a gentleman who has been so deservedly esteemed in America, shall see the country. I have but one voice, and that shall be against it. But let me intreat you, my dear Sir, do not hence conclude that I am deficient in affection to my old friends, through whose kindness I have obtained the honour of the present correspondence, or that I am not, with very great personal respect and esteem,

Sir,

Your most obedient and most humble servant,

The Hon. Geo. Johnstone, Esq;  
Philadelphia.

HENRY LAURENS.

To their Excellencies the Earl of CARLISLE, WILLIAM EDEN,  
and GEORGE JOHNSTONE, Esquires, British commissioners.

AS I have but a few moments that I can, in conscience, appropriate to a correspondence with your Excellencies, I trust this circumstance will, with you, excuse the abrupt manner in which I introduce myself, and my reflections, to your attention.

Your letter of the 9th instant to Congress, your commission, and the acts of the British parliament upon which they are grounded, are the fashionable subjects of curious enquiry, in how many points of view they are fallacious and incompetent to the object of your ostensible negotiation. Altho' Congress cannot condescend minutely to animadvert upon your propositions, as your Excellencies are empowered to hear individuals, I flatter myself, so anxious is your inclination to restore peace, that you will for a moment honour me with your attention.

In your letter of the 9th instant, Governor Johnstone signed this position. "Notwithstanding the pretended date or present form of the French offers to North America, yet it is notorious that these were made in consequence of the plans of accommodation previously concerted in Great Britain, and with a view to prevent our reconciliation, and to prolong this destructive war."

On the 5th of February, in the house of commons, Governor Johnstone also signed this position, "I have had a hint, and have good reason to believe a proposition will be made to parliament in four or five days, by administration, that may be a ground of re-union: I really do not know the particulars, nevertheless, as I learn some preliminaries have lately gone from France, I think it cannot be deemed unfriendly to either country, to give you notice of this intended proposition, THAT you may in prudence do nothing hastily with a foreign power."

The "preliminaries" mentioned by Governor Johnstone, as "lately gone from France" were at that moment at sea, with Mr. James Deane, and had been so some weeks; they were to the following purpose. "That his Most Christian Majesty was determined to acknowledge our independence, and make a treaty with us of amity and commerce. That in this treaty, no advantage would be taken of our present situation to obtain terms from us, which otherwise would not be convenient for us to agree to,

his Majesty desiring that the treaty, once made, should be durable, and our amity subsist for ever, which could not be expected, if each nation did not find its interest in the continuance as well as in the commencement of it. It was therefore his intention, that the terms of the treaty should be such, as we might be willing to agree to if our state had been long established, and in the fullness of strength and power, and such as we should approve of when that time should come. That his majesty was fixed in his determination, not only to acknowledge, but to support our independence by every means in his power. That in doing this, he might probably be soon engaged in war, with all the expenses, risk and damage usually attending it; yet he should not expect any compensation from us on that account, nor pretend that he acted wholly for our sakes, since, besides his real goodwill to us and our cause, it was manifestly the interest of France, that the power of England should be diminished by our separation from it. He should, moreover, not so much as insist, that, if he engaged in the war with England on our account, we should not make a separate peace for ourselves, whenever good and advantageous terms were offered to us. The only condition he should require and rely on would be this, that we, in no peace to be made with England, should give up our independence, and return to the obedience of that government."—These preliminaries were, by Monsieur Girard, in the name of his Most Christian Majesty, announced to the American commissioners at Paris on the 16th day of December last. And in consequence of them, the treaty of Paris, between America and France, was actually signed on the 6th of February, 1778. It is notorious that it was on the 19th day of February that Lord North introduced his propositions to parliament for a reunion with America.

From this state of facts, two points result. First, that the two positions signed by Governor Johnstone militate against each other in direct terms. Secondly, that so far were "the French offers" from being "made in consequence of the plans of accommodation concerted in Great Britain," that the latter were made in consequence only of the former; for the French offers were made on the 16th day of December. Governor Johnstone (connected with administration) on the 5th of February expressly says, he was then ignorant of any particulars of a plan of accommodation. On the 6th of February the French offers were completed by a treaty; and it was not till the 19th of February that any plan of accommodation was communicated to the British parliament.—Your Excellencies, however, do not scruple, even in your first address to Congress, to assert a position, the contrary to which is known to be the fact. I will not charge you with a designed falsity: The people will use their discretion. At any rate, this conduct on your part warns them to be upon their guard against you.

Having thus vindicated the honour of our good and great ally the king of France, permit me to touch upon your propositions to Congress.

Your Excellencies offer us a seat for our representatives in your parliament. Happily for us, we are too well acquainted with the insignificance of the Scotch representatives there, to expect that American representatives can, in the same place, possess any importance; or that America can derive any advantage from such a representation.

As an alternative, you propose to send agents to our assemblies. But as we know they would be spies upon us, and agents to purchase our voices, we will have no such characters among us.

You propose to concur in measures to discharge the debts of America. By this, as our subjection is implied, so are restrictions of some sort upon our trade; of necessity, so is a diminution of our ability to discharge our debts. We know you cannot discharge the debts of your own nation, we therefore cannot expect that you will, or even desire that you should, discharge any part of ours. We are willing and able to discharge our debts, without your concurrence or aid. Your offer therefore wears the appearance of being officious and idle.

You propose to extend every freedom to trade, that our respective interests can require.

Do we not know, that you have a natural inclination to monopolize trade? Do we not know, that your and our interest in the