

NEW-YORK, Nov. 12, 1773.

T O T H E

The worthy Inhabitants of the City of NEW-YORK.

EVERY good citizen will be inclined from duty as well as interest, to love his country, and to be zealous in advancing its welfare. 'Tis to the exertion of the common wisdom and power in the pursuit of a common good, that he owes the security of his life, liberty and property; and he will of course feel himself under an obligation of contributing his share to the promotion of public happiness. The man who makes the general interests of the society, of which he is a member, the prevailing object of his actions, justly merits the honourable title of a patriot. 'Tis the only ground on which a claim to so distinguished a character can be founded. An attachment to any particular branch of the community, and a zealous promotion of any men or measures, disguise them under whatever names you please, if they interfere with the good of the whole society, are not instances of patriotism. The object of this illustrious virtue, is common happiness, and to preserve this object perpetually in view, will be the study of every good citizen. For when men unite in civil society, a common interest of the whole is formed, and each member obliges himself to act jointly with the rest for this common interest. The doctrine holds with equal pertinency, when applied to the larger or more complex members of the body politic, as when applied to individuals. The good of the whole society must then also be the leading object, and an attention to this greater good, is the criterion by which the patriot is distinguished. With what countenance, then, fellow citizens, can they assume the character of patriots, who endeavour to separate (what in nature can never be disjoined) the good of particular branches of the community from the good of the community itself? Can they have any title to public spirit, who, while they are acknowledged subjects of Great-Britain, would teach you to distinguish between your own interests and hers? You love your country, and this affords you your duty, your honour; but remember that not this, or any other province, is your country, but the whole British empire. Its strength and superiority over its rival neighbours, are the strength and glory of every part of its dominions, and its injuries, the injuries of us all. On this ground let us test the pretensions of some men to patriotism.

It is needless to observe to you that the importance of modern states in the balance of Europe, depends on their commercial advantages. In this view, the consequences of obtaining a superiority in the lucrative trade of the East, have engaged the attention of every European power. So important has this branch of commerce been deem'd, that some of the ablest writers on trade have not scrupled to say, "that if any nation was able to engross it, that nation would inevitably preponderate in the balance of Europe, and bid fair to be mistress of the rest." Hence the states, which are rivals in commerce, have made it a particular object, and as a most effectual means of securing a portion in it, have instituted trading companies with peculiar privileges. The India company of France engaged the deepest policy of the subtle Richelieu, and the penetrating Colbert. Those of Great-Britain and the United Provinces, have met with similar encouragement from their respective statesmen.

The propriety of managing this commerce by trading companies, scarcely needs elucidation. Where a number of individuals carry on a branch of trade for their joint interests, their measures will be more likely to succeed from an union of design and exertion, and whether they act in the character of sellers or purchasers, they will escape those disadvantages which arise from competition. From hence it is obvious that any European power which allowed its subjects a free trade in this branch, would never be able to withstand its rivals, who acted by the united and uniform force of wealthy companies.

If then a superiority in the India commerce is of infinite importance to a commercial state,

and if a company under just regulations is the only probable medium of securing to Great-Britain her share in this branch; can any of her subjects, who profess the character of patriots, hesitate a moment in determining whether it is their duty to prefer the interest of the English company to that of its rivals? Does he not violate the obligations he is under to his country, who endeavours to traduce and injure so important and necessary an institution? I shall not, at present, consider the charges which have been brought against the company, but leave them to some other opportunity. No human institution whatsoever is totally free from imperfection and abuse; but none but weak or fraudulent minds would conclude from accidental *perfections*, that the general and natural tendency of any constitution was prejudicial. One useful consequence, however, you can draw from the virulent attack on the East-India company, that those violent partizans are enraged, not through any jealousy, as they pretend, for your liberties, but through an enmity to the company itself, which in their addresses, they have held up in the most odious colours, and loaded with the most libellous and cruel invectives.

But notwithstanding the insidious arts which have been used to bias your minds, I am convinced, that no honest man, who is fully acquainted with the infinite importance of the Company to the commercial interests of his country, and who is also sensible of his duty, as a member of society, to study its welfare, can be at a loss what course he ought to pursue.

The British Company is at this time in extreme distress, tottering on the verge of ruin. Its fall would be fatal to our trading interest. In this season of danger, the Legislature, among other methods of assistance, has granted the liberty of exporting some of that immense quantity of teas which they have on hand, free from all duties, to their fellow subjects in America. At the same time, a few of your merchants have their stores crowded with teas from the Dutch Company, the sale of which would be injur'd by the sale of the English, which is better in quality, and can be afforded at a much cheaper rate. In this dilemma, can it be a matter of doubt to a lover of his country, to an honest man, whether he should encourage the illicit trader, who crams his coffers with wealth, at the expense of the consciences of numbers of deluded dependents, and to the support and exaltation of a foreign Company, which is a rival to that of his own country; or by purchasing from the fair trader, to assist in this extremely an institution on which the commercial interest of the state so greatly depends? Is it the office of a patriot to encourage an unlawful traffic, to the prejudice of the common wealth, which a few individuals (for to the honour of our country and virtue, only a few have thus sacrificed their consciences to their pockets) will accumulate wealth, by extorting what price they please from the public for their illicit commodities; or to support the commercial interest in general of the State of which he is a member, by encouraging a trading company, whose welfare is so necessary to keep herein a balance with her neighbours? By complying with the artful schemes of the former, you do an essential injury to your country; but by supporting the latter, you will not only promote the common good, but your own particular interest also. The teas which you will receive from London are acknowledged to be superior in quality to those imported from Holland, and will be sold to you in all human probability at least a *filling* in the pound cheaper.

But it is said, that your liberticides are in danger, that if you touch a grain of the accursed English teas you are undone. A small attention to the act of Parliament, and the reason of the law, will show the fallacy of such assertions.

The end of the act is to encourage the sale of the company's teas in America; and from hence arises a presumption, that it must free them from the greatest inconveniences to such sale; which are the duties imposed on the commodity. Accordingly, the act expresses that they shall export tea to any "of the British colonies or plantations in America, or to any foreign parts, discharged from the payment of any customs or duties whatsoever; any thing in the said recited act, or any other act, to the contrary notwithstanding." The expressions here are unlimited. To say that the East-India company is liable to the payment of a duty on exportation, and yet that it is permitted to export it discharged from any customs or duties whatsoever, is as strong a contradiction as words can bear. Had it not been the intention of the legislature to include the duty so much complained of in the general exemption, it is reasonable to think we should find an express exception to limit its operation. But no such exception can be found. In the restrictive Clause, the legislature mentions no *Imports, Customs or Duties*, which are not affected by this

exemption. We therefore conclude that the company, being exempted from the payment of all customs or duties on exportation whatsoever, without exception, must be discharged of course from the duties arising from the revenue act.

The conduct of the Commissioners of the Customs will be the best comment. If they disclaim all demand of duties on its being landed and sold here, all objections drawn from theory and speculation must be vain and absurd.

But every measure of the cabal, fellow citizens! is an undoubted proof, that not your liberties, but their private interest is the object. To create an odium against the British company is the main point at which they have laboured. They have too richly experienced the fruits which may be reaped from a contraband trade, which their consciences qualify them for monopolizing, to relinquish them to others without a struggle. To liberty they can pretend no friendship. Every step they have hitherto taken has been introductive of the most fatal tyranny; a tyranny of so high a nature as not to permit a fellow citizen even to think differently from them without danger.

It is the part of every man who values the blessings of social life, to be jealous of his civil liberties; and, in order to their preservation to be watchful that no members of the community usurp a tyrannical power of transgressing the laws. No man can be in a more abject state of bondage, than he whose Reputation, Property and Life, are not under the security of law; but exposed to the discretionary violence of any part of the community.

The exercise of force, contrary to, or not authorized by law, is diametrically opposite to every idea of civil government, and introductive of the most dangerous and cruel species of slavery. Ought not therefore every good citizen, who values his liberty, to oppose the arbitrary encroachments of some men among us, who have assumed the legislative power of the colony, arrogated the privilege of decreeing what is right or wrong, and assumed the judicial and executive power of determining on the actions of any of the community, and punishing those whom they may deem offenders? Are the Legislature and the Magistracy, to be annulled, or are they to remain but empty names? Are we to know our rights by the laws, are they to be the rule of our actions; or must we regulate our conduct by, and have our civil liberties dependent on, the fluctuating and capricious decisions of a giddy cabal? Even in the purest and simplest democracy nothing is obligatory except by the consent of the majority constitutionally given. But among US the crude decrees of a small cabal, who are actuated by self interest, are to be binding on the whole community; and whoever ventures to contradict them, or even expresses a doubt of their validity and propriety, must be exposed to violence, and, unheard, without a trial, must be condemned to infamy and disgrace.

Every friend to liberty must be alarmed at such proceedings; and even the promoters of such measures should tremble, lest they kindle a civil conflagration, which, becoming unmanageable, may end in the destruction of their own property. Your own house is in danger, when your neighbour's is in flames. On points that concern us all, every man in the province has a right of judging, and whatever body of men, without being chosen representatives of the rest, presume, to determine and act for them, effectually deprive us of our liberties. While we are watchful against external attacks on our freedom, let us be on our guard, lest we become enslaved by dangerous tyrants within.

P O P L I C O L A.