



The American Revolution

Writings from the Pamphlet Debate
1764–1772

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

WRITINGS FROM THE PAMPHLET DEBATE

I: 1764–1772

Gordon S. Wood, *editor*



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Preface

“What do We Mean by the Revolution? The War? That was no part of the Revolution. It was only an Effect and Consequence of it. The Revolution was in the Minds of the People, and this was effected, from 1760 to 1775, in the course of fifteen Years before a drop of blood was drawn at Lexington. The Records of thirteen Legislatures, the Pamphlets, Newspapers in all the Colonies ought to be consulted, during that Period, to ascertain the Steps by which the public Opinion was enlightened and informed concerning the Authority of Parliament over the Colonies.”

—John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, 1815

B RITISH imperial reforms undertaken in the 1760s sparked one of the most consequential constitutional debates in Western history. Taken up between American colonists and Britons and among the colonists themselves, this debate was carried on largely in pamphlets—inexpensive booklets ranging in length from five thousand to twenty-five thousand words and printed on anywhere from ten to a hundred pages. Easy and cheap to manufacture, these pamphlets were ideal for rapid exchanges of arguments and counter-arguments. Pamphlets concerned with the American controversy from both sides of the Atlantic number well over a thousand, and they cover all of the significant issues of politics—the nature of power, liberty, representation, rights, constitutions, the division of authority between different spheres of government, and sovereignty. This Library of America volume, the first of a two-volume set, presents the most interesting and important of these works, with preference in selection for pamphlets directly in dialogue with one another. By the time the debate traced here was over, the first British empire was in tatters, and Americans had not only clarified their understanding of the limits of public power, they had prepared the way for their grand experiment in republican self-government and constitution-making.

Introduction

IN 1763 Great Britain emerged from the Seven Years War—or the French and Indian War, as the American colonists called it—as the greatest and richest empire since the fall of Rome. From the Mediterranean to Manila, from Quebec to Havana, its armies and navies had been victorious, so much so that the British public concluded that its military forces were invincible. The Peace of Paris of 1763 compelled France to cede Senegal in West Africa and Dominica, Grenada, Tobago, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the Caribbean to Britain; renounce all claims to compensation for British naval seizures during the war; destroy its fortifications at Dunkirk; return Minorca and other captured places to Britain; remove its armies from the German states of Hanover, Hesse, and Brunswick; and recognize British suzerainty over India. Most important, the treaty gave Britain undisputed dominance over the eastern half of North America. From the defeated Bourbon powers, France and Spain, Britain acquired huge expanses of territory in the New World—all of Canada, East and West Florida, and millions of fertile acres between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. At the same time France turned over to Spain New Orleans and the vast territory of Louisiana in compensation for Spain's loss of the Floridas. Thus France, the most fearsome of Britain's enemies, was entirely removed from the North American continent.

The war's end left many American colonists feeling more British, more proud of their membership in the great Protestant empire, than ever before. They had celebrated the accession of the new king George III in 1760 with more enthusiasm than most of their fellow subjects at home three thousand miles away. And “home” for many colonists was still Great Britain. Although unprofessional provincial soldiers and sometimes haughty British regulars had often clashed during the war, the overwhelming victory over the Catholic Bourbon powers and, perhaps more important, Prime Minister William Pitt's policy of reimbursing the colonists for their financial expenditures, had helped to ease much of the colonists' anger at British arrogance. Boston's liberal minister Jonathan Mayhew, who earlier had spoken out passionately against unlimited submission to the higher powers, now exulted in the outcome of the war. He, like many colonists, foresaw the growth of “a mighty empire (I do not mean an independent one) in numbers little inferior perhaps to the greatest in Europe, and in felicity to none.”

Suddenly, however, the British government was faced with the imposing task of organizing and financing this huge empire, especially the colonies and territories on the North American continent. In the aftermath of the Seven Years War British officials found themselves forced to make long-postponed decisions concerning the North American colonies, decisions that would set in motion a chain of events that ultimately shattered this grand empire and created the United States of America.

The patchwork of territories now known as the first British Empire took shape over the course of the seventeenth century without the benefit of much in the way of central planning. The Crown simply chartered private companies, or granted proprietary rights to individuals, to create colonies that would promote the public interests of the realm. But by the second half of the century the English government began trying to exert tighter control over its colonies, principally through a series of Navigation Acts designed to channel colonial trade and shipping for the benefit of the mother country. The colonists were required to purchase manufactured goods made in Britain, and they were obliged to send to Britain certain enumerated commodities—exotic staples such as tobacco, rice, furs, and sugar—to satisfy its markets before selling them elsewhere. Since commerce remained the dominant business of the empire, its power was felt mainly at the seaports.

At the same time, however, royal officials and bureaucrats had not been content simply to supervise trade. They continually sought to exert greater control over the colonial governments in order to project the king's authority deeper into colonial society. At the end of the seventeenth century the Crown began taking back most of the proprietary and corporate grants it had issued and installing royal governors responsible for enforcing the Navigation Acts and carrying out Crown instructions. By 1760 only four colonies on the North American continent had not been royalized: the proprietary colonies of Pennsylvania and Maryland, which were nonetheless still subject to all sorts of royal restrictions, and the corporate colonies of Connecticut and Rhode Island, which were deemed too small and insignificant to require restructuring. Thus by the early eighteenth century the empire had become essentially a royal empire, under the direct control of the Crown. While the navigation system had been authorized by statutes of Parliament, the administration of the empire was largely based on the Crown's prerogatives, the bundle of rights and powers adhering in the monarchy that historically gave it the authority to rule over the realm.

Undergirding these efforts was a theory of empire that held the colonies to be inferior to the mother country and that envisioned authority flowing smoothly down from the Crown through royal governors to royally commissioned justices of the peace in colonial towns and counties. To their great frustration, British bureaucrats were never able to make the actual operation of the empire fit this idealized image. There were too many diverse authorities and agencies responsible for colonial policy—a complex bureaucratic structure that reflected the ad hoc way in which the colonies had developed. The Board of Trade came closest to being a general supervisory body, but it lacked decision-making authority and shared power with several executive bodies, including the secretary of state for the Southern Department, the Treasury Department, and the Admiralty and the War Office. This hodgepodge of offices and conflicting jurisdictions bred confusion and inefficiency everywhere in the empire. Even in the empire's main business of trade regulation, the prevalence of loopholes and numerous opportunities for smuggling and corruption prevented effective enforcement of the Navigation Acts.

Of course, there was never a shortage of royal bureaucrats and sub-ministers eager to reform the ramshackle imperial structure and to expand the Crown's authority over the colonies. But enhancing crown power was difficult for the Whig aristocrats who were the king's chief ministers. As good Whigs, they were reluctant to be seen as openly supporting any enhancement of crown authority which smacked of Toryism. Ever since the struggles against the Stuart kings in the seventeenth century, Whigs had stood for liberty and the rights of the people, embodied in Parliament, in opposition to Crown power. They had triumphed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89, when James II was ousted in favor of William, the Prince of Orange, and his wife, Mary, James's Protestant daughter, and Parliament enacted a Bill of Rights that circumscribed royal authority. With the death of Mary's sister Anne in 1714, the Whig leaders had brought over the Elector of Hanover and made him King George I of Great Britain in order to preserve a Protestant succession. This broke the hereditary line and created a threat to their regime from the Stuarts in exile in France, one expressed in the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745. The Tories, as traditional defenders of crown authority and presumed supporters of the Stuart claim to the throne, were proscribed from crown offices and regarded as traitors by many Whigs. It was an odd situation: the king's government was in the hands of Whig ministers who were supposedly fearful of the very royal power they themselves were exercising. Any attempt to reform the king's empire and strengthen royal authority was sure to alarm the Whigs in Parliament and to unite the opposition to the king's government. Consequently, ministries during the reigns of the first two Hanoverian monarchs, George I and George II, usually tried to keep imperial questions out of Parliament, where they could only cause trouble.

Under these complicated circumstances the empire had been allowed to grow haphazardly, and representative assemblies in each of the colonies had continually expanded their authority. Royal governors, whose tenure was tentative and always susceptible to the vagaries of politics in London, increasingly complained that it was impossible, as one of them put it, "to preserve the king's just prerogative, as every province is endeavoring to gain from the crown by adding to their privileges." While the governors had legal authority, they lacked much of the informal influence and patronage power that would have allowed them greater control over the assemblies and their constituents. Consequently, most colonists, especially those outside of the port towns, had not experienced much royal authority and by and large had been left free to pursue their own interests.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, British politicians and officials were faced with dynamic new developments that compelled them to think in fresh ways about the empire. The British colonies—there were twenty-two of them in the Western Hemisphere in 1760—were becoming too important to be treated as casually as they had been. The irrational and inefficient working relationship between the mother country and the colonies had to change, and for several reasons.

First, owing both to immigration and impressive birth rates, the population of the North American colonies was growing faster than any other people in the Western world, doubling roughly

every twenty years. Between 1750 and 1770 the mainland colonists increased from one million more than two million, and consequently became a more important part of the greater British world. In 1700 North Americans had represented only one out of twenty of the empire's population; by 1770 the colonists had come to represent one out of five. Farsighted provincials like Benjamin Franklin were predicting that sooner or later the center of the British Empire would have to shift to America. Moreover, this growing colonial population was on the move. Confined for more than a century to a several-hundred-mile-wide strip of territory along the Atlantic coast, the colonists were now pressing westward and putting increasing pressure on the Indians on the far side of the Appalachian Mountains—a situation that required some sort of imperial action.

At the same time the colonists' economy was rapidly expanding. In the years after 1745 colonial trade with Great Britain grew dramatically and became an increasingly important segment of the English and Scottish economies. Nearly half of all English shipping was engaged in American commerce. The North American mainland was absorbing twenty-five percent of English exports and Scottish commercial involvement with the colonies was expanding even more rapidly. From 1747 to 1765 the value of colonial exports to Britain doubled from about £700,000 to £1.5 million, while the value of colonial imports from Britain grew even faster. Indeed, from the late 1740s on, Americans imported about £500,000 more in goods from Britain than they were exporting, participating in what historians have called "a consumer revolution" as more and more middling Americans began purchasing luxuries—from tea and tea sets to silk handkerchiefs and feather mattresses—that hitherto had been the preserve of aristocrats. This resulted in massive trade deficits that were counterbalanced by the extension of huge amounts of English and Scottish credit to the colonists. By 1760 colonial debts to Britain amounted to £2 million; by 1772 they had jumped to £4 million, half of which was owed by spendthrift Virginians alone. Such important commercial developments could not help but capture the attention of imperial officials. When the Earl of Halifax took over the Board of Trade in 1748, he began some piecemeal efforts at imperial reform—efforts that were interrupted by the need for colonial cooperation during the Seven Years War.

The war brought home to many officials the extent to which the colonists were violating the Navigation Acts and colonial assemblies were stymieing the prerogative powers of the governors. It was the treaty of peace in 1763 ending the Seven Years War, however, that made some sort of imperial reform imperative. The newly acquired territory had to be organized, conflicting land claims had to be sorted out, and something had to be done to keep the conflicts between land-hungry white settlers and angry Indians from exploding into open warfare. In 1763 the Crown issued a proclamation that sought to confine white settlement to the east of a hastily drawn line along the Appalachian chain. It was a crude attempt at a solution, and many colonists, including George Washington, considered it to be only temporary.

Dealing with the enormous expenses facing the British government was a much more demanding

problem. By 1763 the war debt totaled £137 million; its annual interest alone was £5 million, a huge figure when compared with an ordinary yearly British peacetime budget of £8 million. Taxpayers in England were protesting their heavy wartime burden, and there seemed little prospect of a peaceful dividend. Lord Jeffrey Amherst, commander in chief in North America, estimated that ten thousand troops would be needed to keep the peace with the Indians and the French left in Quebec and to deal with squatters, smugglers, and bandits in the newly acquired territories in the trans-Appalachian West. Since there were virtually no British inhabitants in the new acquisitions, the government could not rely on its traditional system of local militia defense and police to preserve order; royal troops and military posts in the wilderness would have to be maintained. The cost of doing this quickly climbed to over £300,000 a year.

Confronted with this wartime debt and these rising military expenses, the British government naturally looked to the North American colonies for new sources of revenue. After all, it seemed, the war had been fought in large part for their benefit. And with returning British soldiers bearing tales of American prosperity, the government presumed that the colonists could easily afford to help out the mother country in its time of need. Perhaps the navigation system could be tightened up in order to extract some revenue, and maybe some direct taxes, even a stamp duty, which some colonies themselves had occasionally used in the past as a source of revenue, could be levied on the colonists.

Even as the empire required reform the political situation in Britain was dramatically changing, marked by growing divisions among political elites and by the emergence of a new popular political movement. Perhaps the most obvious development was the accession in 1760 of a new king, George III. Unlike his grandfather, George II, and his great-grandfather, George I, this twenty-two-year-old prince was a British-born “patriot king,” determined to exert his right to rule in ways his German-born predecessors had not. The first two Hanoverian kings had been deeply indebted to the Whig oligarchies for making possible their accession to the Crown of Great Britain—a remarkable rise in stature for the electors of Hanover. Hence they allowed Whig ministers to rule without exercising much of their personal royal authority. George III was different. He wanted to appoint his own ministers, which he had every constitutional right to do, regardless of whether his choice of ministers had the support of Parliament. He even welcomed Tory gentry to his court for the first time since the Hanoverian accession.

George’s naïve determination to be his own king unsettled English politics. At the beginning of his reign the young king appointed as prime minister his tutor and friend, Lord Bute, a Scottish aristocrat who had no political strength whatsoever in Parliament. Bute, who Samuel Johnson said had “his blood full of prerogative,” lasted only a year, but in the minds of many English politicians his secret influence continued to pervade the government as George ran through a series of short-lived ministries. Not until Lord North in 1770 did George find a prime minister he liked who at the same time had the support of a majority in Parliament.

Ministerial office-holding in the 1760s could scarcely have been more chaotic and unstable.

Between 1761 and 1768 six different individuals were appointed and dismissed as secretary of state for the Southern Department for reasons that had nothing to do with American affairs. The Board of Trade, which had only three presidents between 1730 and 1760, had no fewer than six between 1760 and 1766. The twenty years following George's accession to the throne produced twice as many county elections as the two decades preceding it. And so, at the very moment the empire badly needed to be reformed, British politics were more confused and volatile than they had been at any time since George I had acceded to the throne in 1714.

Something else had changed by the 1760s. Contrary to earlier experience, the Crown's ministers now found that colonial issues were the one thing that could divide the opposition in Parliament. Inhibitions that had existed for decades against invoking parliamentary authority in formulating colonial policy now fell away. Strengthening the king's authority to run his empire was no longer feared as much as it had been in the past. A major overhaul of the empire, engineered by parliamentary means, was in the offing, and a half century of what Edmund Burke would famously call the "salutary neglect" of the colonies was coming to an end.

Gordon S. Wood

“Cato,” Thoughts on a Question of Importance Proposed to the Public, Whether Is Probable That the Immense Extent of Territory Acquired by This Nation at the Late Peace, Will Operate towards the Prosperity, or the Ruin of the Island of Great Britain? London, 1765.

The acquisition of millions of acres of territory as a result of the Peace of Paris in 1763 did not please all Englishmen. Knowing that they could not keep everything they had conquered, some Britons wanted to retain the rich sugar-producing French islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe and return to France the barren wastes of Canada. Following debates in the English press, in which Benjamin Franklin participated, the jealousy of the British sugar-producing islands and the prospect of new markets in North America for English manufactured goods convinced the government to keep Canada and return the two sugar islands to France. It was a fateful decision. Better to have given up Canada and faced again the combined frontier menace of the French and Indians, Thomas Hutchinson, the last civilian royal governor of Massachusetts, would remark in 1773. If Canada had remained in the hands of France, he declared Hutchinson with the benefit of a decade of hindsight, “none of the spirit of opposition to the Mother Country would have yet appeared.”

“Cato,” the anonymous English author of this pamphlet, wrote with a sense of deep foreboding about Britain’s immense acquisitions of what he took to be the virtually empty land of the New World. Not only anxious about the potential challenge posed by the development of trade and manufacturing in the colonies, he expressed a concern, shared by many other Britons in the 1760s and early 1770s, about the large numbers of British subjects migrating to the colonies. In some cases whole neighborhoods seemed to be pulling up stakes and sailing to America, leaving behind the depopulated countryside famously described by Oliver Goldsmith in his 1770 poem “The Deserted Village.” Indeed, some British officials even contemplated a parliamentary ban on the exodus of people to America. Dr. Samuel Johnson especially came to lament the scale of such emigration, which, he warned, would not only diminish the society of Britain but would leave the migrating settlers scattered throughout the wilds of America bereft of civilization. Although Cato’s pamphlet suggested that the flight of Britons to the New World might act as a goad to reforming British society, it also revealed that even before the American crisis erupted there existed in London a feeling that the vast extent of the colonies in the New World might turn out to be more of a curse than a blessing to the mother country.

THOUGHTS

ON

A Question of Importance

PROPOSED

To the PUBLIC,

*Whether it is probable that the Immense
Extent of Territory acquired by this
Nation at the late Peace, will operate
towards the Prosperity, or the Ruin of
the Island of Great-Britain?*

L O N D O N :

Printed and fold by J. DIXWELL, in *St. Martin's*

Lane, near Charing-Cross.

MDCCLXV.

[Price One Shilling.]

TO ————— *ESQ; MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE*
COUNTY OF —————.

SIR,

AFTER the repeated Victories gained over the Minority, it is supposed that the two Houses of Parliament, and particularly that of the Commons, which hath nothing to do as a Court of Judicature, will employ themselves in concerting Measures for promoting the Good of the Nation. You ought to lose no Time in falling about this Work; for a quiet Interval, such as you now enjoy, is very rare in Countries where there is so much Liberty as we have at present; neither can it be expected to last long. This is the best Excuse that can be made for Ministers of State doing so little for the Public Benefit among us. The Duration of their Power is so uncertain, and its Extent so limited, even while they possess it, that few Designs of general Utility can be either projected or carried in Execution while it continues.

Your present Opportunity therefore is the more precious, and I hope will not be altogether lost. It is very probable, however, that with the best Intentions in the World, you may be misled. Proposals for new Laws will probably be made and supported chiefly by those who have particular Interest in them; and this may be done with so much Plausibility as to deceive Persons of the best understanding. With great Humility, therefore, I submit the Thoughts in the following Tract to Your Consideration, and that of the Publick. They arise from Attachment to no Party, and, so far as I can perceive, to no particular Interest. They have been generated by Reading and Reflexion on the History of other Nations, and a good deal of Attention paid to the Causes of Prosperity or Decay in several Cities and Counties of this Kingdom. I have generally found, that Bodies of Men, as well as private Persons, were incessantly pursuing after Things which proved prejudicial to them, after they had attained them. And in many Cases it was easy to see, after some Years Experience, that the Prosperity of Societies had been owing, in a great Measure, to a Circumstance or two, which all the while they were groaning under, and crying out against as an intolerable Grievance.

Filled with Reflections of this Kind, I leave you to judge what were my Sentiments of the violent Clamours against the late Peace. I began to think what Dominions the King of Great Britain now had, and what use he had for any more; and was soon led into a strong Suspicion, that, instead of having too little Land, he had by far too much. Whether in prosecuting those Reflections I have carried the Matter too great a Length, I shall not say, as we are all ready to run into Extremes. But one Thing is certain, that the Basis of all Deliberation on our Connection with the Colonies abroad, ought to be *Not*—how will they bring the greatest immediate Wealth into the Coffers of a few Merchants? Or how will they bring the greatest immediate Splendor to the City of London?—*But* how will they continue to promo

the Population of the Island, and the Industry of the People of *Great Britain*?

I sincerely wish you a good Session of Parliament, and am,

SIR,

Your most obedient

Humble Servant,

CAT

Thoughts on a Question, &c.

Whether is it probable that the Immense Extent of Territory acquired by this Nation at the late Peace, will operate towards the Prosperity, or the Ruin of the Island of Great-Britain?

I HAVE proposed this Question to the Public, because, after thinking upon it a good deal in the most cool and dispassionate Manner, my own Opinion is still, in a great Measure, undetermined. Let no Man imagine it is a Political or Party Question. I believe the Ministers of State, in negotiating the late Peace, acted as wisely and sincerely as any who have been before them employed in the like Work; but the subject however at the same time to the Errors and Prejudices which are inseparable from Humanity, would not at this Moment give three Farthings, for my own particular Part, to determine which of the Parties, Majority or Minority should prevail. Neither do I think it is of any Importance to the Public, except in so far as every good Subject would wish, that His Majesty should partake a little of the Peace and Quiet which we so happily enjoy under his Government.

Having proposed the Question, no more should have been said upon it by me, were it not for the following Circumstance. Some perhaps who have given Credit to my Declaration, that it is not Politically intended, may still be so clear upon one Side, as to despise and count it Ridiculous. I shall therefore throw out a few general Reflections which have led me to look upon it, as, at least, Problematical; and I am sure if it be doubtful, no Man can deny that it is Important.

The Territory acquired is so immense, that it must make the Time of Acquisition a remarkable Æra of this Government, and produce a great Change in our Situation and Circumstances as a Society. As the smallest Member of a Natural Body affects the whole in some Degree; so every one Circumstance with regard to a Political Body, has some Influence upon every other. A Nation must accommodate itself some way or other, well or ill, to the whole Extent of its Territory. The most distant and desolate Part of the Dominions of any People, has some Relation to them, either as Benefit or Burthen; otherwise it is not their's. Hence it follows, that any Acquisition would have produced some Change; and therefore so great an Acquisition, and that made all at once, must produce a very great one.

Men have often conjectured wrong, perhaps they have seldom conjectured right, as to the Effect of great Changes in a State or Government, till they felt them by Experience. The Spanish Monarch at the Time when it got Possession of the West Indies, was one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful and flourishing in Europe. Would not any Man at that Time have been reckoned disordered in his Judgment, who should have affirmed, that the Kingdom would be the worse for that Addition; and particularly that it would become *poor* by Means of the *Gold* and *Silver* Mines? Yet do we not

know that it proved so in Fact; and that there is not now any Man of the least Political Reflection, but can explain for what Reasons it was, and behoved to be so? That solemn People believed that they should possess all Things without working, because they had plenty of Gold, which they had always hitherto seen sufficient to Purchase all Things. They only forgot, that as they could neither eat nor wear Gold, they must necessarily pay to such as would work for them, just in Proportion to the Abundance of Gold they possessed. Thus their Stock was soon exhausted, and would have been so perhaps sooner, if it had been a thousand times greater than it was. When either a Person or People are ruined by *too much* of any thing that is good in a moderate Degree, the greater the Quantity, their Ruin comes on so much the more speedily.¹

I know it will be said (and perhaps every Reader is before-hand with me in thinking it) “We have not got more Money to make us idle, but more Land, which we may have an Opportunity to improve. But I must beg leave to ask, Is any Man sure that it is not possible to get too much Land, as well as too much Money? We have now from the Gulph of Florida to the North-Pole, at least with very little Exception; how far West I really do not know. What pity is it that we did not keep the whole Island of Cuba, and by another Year’s War, take from the Spaniards all their Possessions in South-America. After we had done so, there would have remained still some more of the Globe to conquer. Is not the Lust of Conquest in a Nation as insatiable as the Lust of Gold in a Miser? And is it not much more hurtful? If any thinks otherwise, if he either thinks we have not enough, or not more than enough at present, let him explain clearly the Reasons of his Opinion, and what will be the probable Effect of the Acquisition upon the Society.

There is the greater need of Accuracy in this Matter, that I believe the Event, taking in all its Circumstances, is quite singular, the like never having happened before. Some Nations formerly have, in the Course of a few Years, conquered great Tracts of Country; but they ordinarily obtained new Subjects as well as new Ground: Whereas our late Acquisition may be justly called mere Earth. Not that though we had all that the Indians possess behind, as which we shall very soon have, it will be the same Thing; for they seem upon the Eve of either dwindling into nothing of themselves, or being exterminated by us.²

Has it not been long ago agreed upon by Persons of Reason and Observation, that it is not the Extent of a Country, but the Number of Inhabitants in proportion to its Extent, that constitutes the Strength of a Nation? If I am not mistaken, it used to be affirmed in some such Proportion as this, that supposing ten Millions of People to inhabit one Country, and the same Number to inhabit another of double the Extent, the first State would be four times as powerful as the last. Is this Maxim now found to be false? Or, on what Account is it not applicable to our Case? If we take Great-Britain and its Colonies as one Body, I do not see what should hinder it to be applied. If we take them as separate Bodies in Alliance, from which Alliance we in this Nation hitherto derived great Advantages, I acknowledge it in Part. But my Question still remains; will these endless Tracts of Ground, in futu

Times, fill this Kingdom with Inhabitants, or depopulate it?

First, let us suppose Great-Britain and its Colonies as one Society.

I am very sensible that a Situation can be supposed, and that many Nations have been in such Situation, as that occupying waste Grounds has tended to increase both their Number and Strength. It increases their Number without Question, because when the Means of Subsistence are made easy, the common People are encouraged to marry. But before it can increase their Strength, I apprehend two Conditions are essentially requisite. 1st. That the Land they have already be fully stocked, and like to continue so. If this is not the Case, the Migration is unnecessary at least, if not hurtful. 2d. There is another Condition, not so commonly thought of, necessary to a People's increasing in Strength by settling more Land. What I mean is, that there be a plain and simple Taste of Life, so that Agriculture may support them comfortably. This was the Case with the Romans in the early Times of the Republick, as well as many other antient Nations. Now it must be considered, that they had very little either of Commerce or Manufactures; so that they soon became not only full, but overstocked; and having nothing but the Fruits of their own Ground to support them, they were obliged to send Colonies abroad. These Colonies went not to seek Wealth, but Food. So simple was their Taste of Life, that in the beginning of the Roman State, a Family was decently maintained upon one Acre and a Quarter of an Acre English. When Appius Clausus left the Sabines, he brought with him to Rome five thousand Sabine Families, to each of whom the above Quantity was assigned, and that Great Man had the immense Estate of fifteen Acres given to himself. How different from the late Grants of American Lands?

Let us carefully remember therefore, that it must be Manufacture and Commerce only, which can make a People numerous and prosperous, after Elegance and Luxury have been once introduced. Now it is at least very doubtful, whether a narrow be not more favourable than an extended Territory for their Advancement. There is less Necessity either of Manufactures or Commerce in an extended Territory, because the Multitude of common People, by whose Hands National Industry must be carried on, can easily find Support without them: Whereas when they are confined to their own Bounds, those who cannot be Husbandmen, are obliged to be Artificers. I believe Experience will confirm this Observation, whether we consider the State of Mankind in antient or modern Times.

But let us now suppose our Colonies separate Bodies in Alliance with us. It will probably be thought that these Settlements growing in Numbers, in the same Manner and from the same Cause as that all new planted Colonies do, their Commerce, which is confined to us, must be of great Benefit to this Island. And no doubt if they be serviceable at all, this is the single Light in which they can be seen to us. How far they have been so hitherto, I do not enquire; but whether they will continue to be so, or not, seems to me very uncertain, for several Reasons.

1. They seem to threaten us with an Evil, not only dangerous or troublesome, but ruinous, viz. Depopulation. Settling small Colonies may do such Services as to Counterballance an inconsiderable

Loss of People; but settling vast Tracts may exhaust the Mother Country, and prove Destruction. Letting a little Blood may be not only harmless, but serviceable to the Body; and yet excessive Bleeding will kill as certainly as any Disease, to which it is liable. I shall not spend Time in enumerating the various Ways in which our Colonies drain us of People. Men of Rank or Wealth, who have obtained Grants of Lands, spare no pains to inveigle them away in Crowds to settle their several Possessions, because without People these Possessions are good for nothing. Multitudes go away of their own accord, allured by the enchanting Prospect of Wealth; and either never return at all, or return in a frail diseased State, unfit for Propagation. We suffer no inconsiderable Loss in the marching of thousands of Seamen and Soldiers, which must now be sent to all Parts of the known World, to annoy our Enemies in Time of War, and to protect our Friends in Time of Peace. If all the Men who died an untimely Death by Sickness, Famine or the Sword, in the Havannah Expedition, had been employed in some useful Occupation in Great Britain, they and their Posterity, would have been of greater Benefit to this Nation, than any two Islands in the West-Indies.

The farther Investigation of this I leave to every Reader, that he may compute the Numbers in his own Mind. Let me only observe, that in Proportion as the Number of Hands is lessened, the Price of Labour, and the first Cost of our exported Commodities must be increased; at the very same Time the Quantity of these Commodities must decrease, and the Gain upon them centering here, must be diminished by the two concurring Causes. If therefore a Trade to our foreign Plantations be highly profitable, we ought to be the more concerned, lest by driving the Matter too far, we leave next to nobody at home to trade with them. Every thing may be Evidence. Many a Gentleman has laid out so much Money in building an elegant Palace, that he has left himself no Estate on which he might possess and enjoy it.

2. The Advantage is in Danger of being lost another Way. Our Plantations are becoming so extensive, that it is probable they will speedily set up Manufactures of their own, and be our Rivals instead of our Customers. This Effect will be accelerated by the Circumstance formerly mentioned. Our Commodities will not be sufficient in Quantity for them to consume, and they will be too costly for them to purchase. That this must be the Case in some future Period, from the natural Course of Things, many Writers have confessed; but they have generally considered it as at a very great Distance, and therefore unworthy of Attention. There are however at this Time many Symptoms of it being much nearer than we apprehended.

The only Thing by which it is retarded, is, that as Land is cheap in America, and Labour dear, it is a more immediate and sure Way for a Family to get Bread by cultivating the Ground, than by fabricating Goods, which may be brought on easy Terms from Great-Britain. But this will soon be an End, both from the Numbers of People settled in Places near the Sea, and from the insatiable Avarice of the Proprietors of Land, who already begin rather to suffer their vast Possessions to lie waste, than part with them but at a very great Profit. The Truth is, I have some Suspicion that it has

been at an End in several of our Colonies for some Time, and that nothing stands in the Way but the Difficulties and Discouragements which attend the first setting up of Manufactures in every Country. Whenever Interest or Necessity therefore shall overcome these Difficulties, it is easy to foresee what an amazing and rapid Progress will be made in every Branch of Business, by an enterprizing and industrious People.

Is there not also a Confirmation of this from Experience. If any Credit may be given to our Newpapers, many Tradesmen have of late gone from different Parts of the Kingdom to America. I think it was said no less than one hundred, of one Profession, from one Place, and at one Time.³ It has also been affirmed, that several different Branches of Manufacture are already set up in New-England: And our Merchants at home (who, however little they understand of the Interest of the Public, understand their own immediate Interest well enough) are making dreadful outcries upon it. We are told it will be half a Million Sterling loss yearly to Great-Britain; and I can easily believe it will very soon be double that Sum. But what Remedy? Mention has been made of applying to Parliament to hinder the Exportation of Artificers. On which I must beg leave to ask, Will they go if it does not appear to be their Interest? And if it be their Interest, will you hinder them? Or if you would, how can you hinder them? I do not know whether the Parliament will pay any regard to these childish Complaints, or not; but I am sure that any Measures they could contrive for that purpose would be quite ineffectual.

3. I must examine another Circumstance in our Situation with regard to the Colonies; viz. Our exclusive Right to trade with them. It may be said, let them be as extensive as you please; let them set up as many Manufactures as they themselves please: Still their Trade will be valuable, and it is wholly confined to this Island, they are not permitted to carry on Business with any other Nation, but through the Medium of Great-Britain. But what signifies a Trade, if it come to be a losing Trade? And that from some of the above Considerations, it may be sooner than we are aware of. Whenever they can supply themselves, with Manufactures they will have no need of us; most of the Luxuries and Delicacies of Life they can get nearer home from one another, and are indeed a kind of World in themselves.

Besides, I strongly suspect this Circumstance of our having an exclusive Right to trade with them, will operate slowly and silently indeed, but constantly, and at last fatally, to our own Prejudice. There is much selfishness in human Nature; and it will be, nay probably it has been, a Temptation to us not to make our Manufactures as good and as cheap as possible to procure voluntary Purchasers; because we think we can send them to those who are obliged to take them. Let no Man think this a slight Circumstance, or of no Moment. Baron Montesquieu has observed, in more places than one in his Spirit of Laws, that the moral Causes of the Thriving or Decay of a Nation, viz. such as arise from the Tempers or Principles of the People, the Spirit of their Constitution, or their Situation with regard to others, are unspeakably more powerful than occasional Causes, such as War, Famine and Pestilence; or their Contraries. The Reason is plain—The Effect of those which he calls Moral Causes

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