

A SHORT DEFENCE

Of the last PARLIAMENT WITH A

Word of **ADVICE** to all Electors for the Ensuing.

THE People of England ought to have a due Reverence and Affection for their Representatives in Parliament, and to maintain their Honour, even when in disemper'd Times it might happen, they should act something against the Publick Good, not only because they are a part of our Constitution, but likewise that particular Part which the People have entrusted to look after and manage their Interests: For should the People desert their Representatives, they would be Felo de se, and one day run a hazard of losing that Part of their Constitution.

THIS being the Testimony of an Adversary is therefore of the greater force. That Book was written to flatter the Ambition, and serve the Interests of one great Courtier (perhaps by himself) who then thought it as much for his Turn to exalt and magnifie the Honour and Power of a House of Commons, as he has done since to depress and decry it. But however it happens, that a Truth which was then thought for his purpose, should be found so opposite to the Practices of himself and his Creatures since, it will remain an everlasting Testimony against them, that they know their Duty better then they Practise it.

No Oracle could have pronounced a Truth more momentous to England, especially at this Juncture, when there are so many Incendiaries at work to divide the People, and to inspire 'em with a mad Resolution to lift up their Hands against their own Brains, and not only to question their Power, but insolently to threaten their Representatives, an unprecedented piece of saucy Madnes; which if not duly adverted upon, may prove in time of fatal Consequence to our Constitution.

Wonderful is the Power of Truth, that could surprize a Person, that was employing so much Art to abuse all the World but one Man and his Dependants; into a Confession, which should so soon stare him in the Face, and convict him of want of Principles. However let us forgive Saul, since he has been once found among the Prophets.

When the People of England shall forget the Reverence due to their Representatives, they will at the same time make an unlucky step towards their own Ruin, and set their Representatives an ill Precedent to forget their care of them in requital. It is to be hop'd, that neither one will give, nor rother take any such unhappy Offence; tho' the usage the last House of Commons met with from some People, has given many honest Persons occasion to think, that we are not so universally right in our Heads as not to have occasion for an Act of Parliament to plant Hellebor for the use of the People: I dare Prophesie however, that their fears will prove groundless, and that the Men that have made all this uproar and bawling, are only a few whose guilt creates their Fear, and a set of Mercenary Fellows that like Indian Mourners are hired to whip and slash themselves, and lay about 'em in proportion to the Wages they expect.

The Topicks they have chosen to traduce the last House of Commons upon are these.

That they have been dilatory and backward in the Service of the Nation.

That they have prosecuted private Animosities to the Detriment of the Publick.

That they have usurp'd an Arbitrary and Tyrannical Power over the Liberties of the People.

That they did not immediately upon their first coming together Vote a Declaration of War against France and Spain, has been made the great Argument of their Indifference to the present Government, and their Inclina-

tions towards a Change. But this is a Slander as weak as malicious; for no sooner were they met, but they gave his Majesty an assurance that they would stand by, and support him and his Government, and take effectual care of the Interest and Safety of England, the Protestant Religion, and the Peace of Europe. This was carried by the whole House, and his Majesty after thanks given, having desired their Advice on a Memorial from the States General; which produc'd the next Day an Address for a sight of the Treaty between England and the States General, concluded the third of March 1677. and the sight of that another the very next Day, which was unanimously voted, and presented by the whole House, to refer to his Majesty's Wisdom and Conduct the making of Leagues and Treaties with the States General, and other such Potentates as he should think fit. Which Confidence and Heartiness to him, the King thank'd them for, and accepted as heartily. All this pass'd within a Week of the King's first Speech, and such Unanimity and Dispatch was never known in any Parliament before, upon Matters of so great Consequence. Where then lies this Criminal Delay and Backwardness?

The Party that bellow this up and down, pretend a great Veneration for the Wisdom of the King, and a meritorious Affection for his Person and Government; yet none of those whom they labour to asperse with Disaffection, would have cast such an odious Reflection upon him, as they have herein done. For they necessarily tax him either with want of Discernment, or Sincerity; since there never were stronger or frequenter Assurances given, of the mutual Confidence between a King and his Parliament, or a more satisfied and thankful Farewel Speech, than those of the last Session. What then do they mean, when they tell us the King was dissatisfy'd, or had reason to be so? He tells us the contrary of both, and perseveres in the same mind in his last Speech. Do these Persons question his Veracity, or his Judgment? One they must. What sort of Affection is it, that these People bear to the King, that will not allow him to be either Wise or Just, any longer than they and their Party have the sole Administration of Affairs under him?

Yet this is the Treatment the King receives from 'em. The King, they say, was persuaded to dissemble with the House of Commons, which is such a Blot upon his Honour and Courage, as none but that Party ever had the Villany to lay. There is no doubt but the King has been often ill advis'd, for which, perhaps, some of 'em are still accountable; but that he cou'd ever be prevail'd with to act an insincere Part with his People, is such an Imputation as none but those that have thriven by Scandal and Faction only, durst have laid upon him.

But to return to the Objection against the House of Commons. They did not forthwith Vote a Declaration of War against France and Spain. No! They had more regard to the Prerogative, and to the particular Ability of the King in these matters, then to interpose any more than their hearty Assurance of their Support and Assistance towards what he should judge requisite. But then those, that judge so early a Declaration of War necessary, arraign the King, not the Parliament, of Delay.

Yet were it (to satisfy these unreasonable Men) granted, that it lay in the Breasts of the Commons only to resolve how far a War shou'd be expedited or delay'd, the Commons are still justifiable for that delay, tho' not accountable;

When the Parliament came together, all our Allies were under the greatest Consternation imaginable, none of 'em able or willing to declare against France, except the Emperour, who without the rest, cou'd not signifie any thing to us, having neither Sea-port nor Ship, nor either of us any means of sending Succours to one another. The last War had left us low in Purse, Credit, and Invention, weary of Taxes, jaded with Projects, our Funds anticipated, and a Debt of Eighteen Millions at high Interest. These things were a good Reason why our Representatives should not precipitate the Nation into a War, before they had bethought themselves of some method to bear the Expence of it.

These



The publick Treasures were become such a riant Plunder, that those who had the Fingering of it in every Office, were so busy in filling their own Pockets, that most of 'em were regardless of publick Notice, or Scandal. They depended upon mutual Conscioufness, and Connivance, and defied all farther pursuit. These publick Depredations had long provok'd the People, who were excessively offended to see so many worthless Fellows, grow Rich out of the Spoils of the Publick. And therefore the Commons had reason, if they meant to satisfie their Principals, to enquire how their last Gifts had been husbanded, before they gave any more; and to call the unjust Stewards to Account.

But domestick Mismanagements apart, we must however have been the most rash, imprudent People in the World, had we then declar'd War. We had no other justifiable Reason than self Security, which cou'd not be endanger'd, but thro' our Neighbours the *Dutch*, who did not then think themselves in such a Condition as to declare War. They had in a manner compounded for Peace, by owning the Duke of *Anjou* to be King of *Spain*. Now if we by an over-forward Zeal, had declar'd War first, we had by so doing, made our selves *Principals* instead of *Seconds*.

The Difference we have been lately taught, when because the War was our War, we were forc'd to maintain the greatest Part of our Allies, is a sufficient Lesson: And till we happen to have as good a Reason for 'em, I hope we shall not fall into the same Measures again.

Had we so unadvisedly enter'd into a War which we were not singly able to maintain, we must either have retreated ignominiously, or have resolv'd to pay for all the Advantages, that our Confederates shou'd hope to reap from a War, upon the same Terms that we did last time, that is, to have the Honour of Treating generously without Design.

Had we been rashly engag'd before the *Dutch*. We may assure our selves, that no Conditions wou'd have been wanting from *France* to lure 'em off from us, whether to their own side, or a Neutrality only. And therefore whoever they were, that made that halt in the matter of a Declaration of War, they shew'd a great deal of Temper and Prudence. For tho' 'tis probable the State wou'd upon no Terms have been tempted to desert us, yet we could not have avoided the reproach of being the most Stupid People in the World, for trusting our Security in any other Hands than our own, while we are able to provide for it our selves; and to put the Probity of our Friends to so severe a Test, as to try whether they wou'd sell us or not.

But the King's owning the Duke of *Anjou* to be King of *Spain*, puts an end to this Argument; for that the Parliament had no Hand in, and yet it shews; that the King (who understood matters better) was not so impatient for War, as some of his pertended Friends.

I think I have shewn, that this delay of a War is no prejudice to *England*, and that if it were, that it is not chargeable upon the Parliament; whereby the first and most artificial Calumny is avoided.

The next Article, which charges 'em with private Animosities and Partialities, is in great measure answer'd in the foregoing.

That there were great Mismanagements of the publick Revenues, was certain, and the People were for some Years extremely discontented at 'em. They continually reproach'd their Parliaments with Negligence in that Point. Some honest Men in the House of Commons, constantly endeavoured a Regulation of these Abuses, but to no purpose, while some were dextrous enough to defray their own Partisans out of their Pockets.

If they have since called any of 'em to Account, it is unjust to interpret it Spleen, or private Grudge, unless it can be made appear, that the Publick had no reason to be dissatisfied with their Conduct.

The *Romans* by their exact Distribution of Reward and Punishment, made themselves the greatest People in the Universe. No Man wanted the Reward of Service, or of Dis-service. There was no ballancing of Accounts in respect to the State. He that did well was rewarded, he that did otherwise was punish'd, without respect to past Merits, which were suppos'd to have been recompenced before.

In this they were so strict, that even *Camillus* himself, (the best and greatest Man that ever they bred) cou'd not escape Justice. He was *Dictator*, had obtain'd by his own single Conduct, a great Victory, and taken a vast Booty. This, according to their Law, shou'd have been distributed among the Soldiers: But *Camillus*, who knew that the publick Treasury was indigent, by virtue of his Command, sold it all, and put it into the *Treasury*. His Army did not mutiny, but the same Men, as soon as they came home, were Citizens, and then they impeach'd him. And he notwithstanding his great Merits, (and saving not a Farthing to himself) was forc'd to fly his Country, to save his Head.

This Severity of the *Romans* was so far from being (what some People call it) Ingratitude, that it was the Preservation of their State. They allow'd no Man, upon what pretence soever, to act contrary to their Laws, or dispence with the Rights of the People.

Let those, that have rais'd such a Flame among us of late, make out either so much Merit, or so much Innocence as *Camillus*, and I will be content to vote 'em Statues at the

publick Charge, with an Inscription to testifie that they deserve the Estates, which I think yet ill gotten. Let those that by sham Purchases, and Begging have got the publick Lands into their own Hands, plead the Verruc, of *Camillus* in their own Justification, and they shall (which is a thing not usual here in *England*) be Canoniz'd for their Ministry. As for this Arbitrary and Tyrannical Power which the Commons in the last Parliament were said to have exercis'd, he that urges that against 'em, if a Commoner, makes a felonious attempt upon himself, for he endeavours to cut the Throat of his own Right, which he can only exercise by his Representatives in Parliament.

But for the satisfaction of those who have no interest in the Rights of the Commons, as being of another Order, or having sold their own Propriety; I shall take the Liberty to inform 'em; that all Original Right of Judicature is undoubtedly in the whole People, cou'd they be assembled to give their Judgment, I mean in what relates to the whole People. That the Representatives are intrusted with their Power no body questions, and consequently may do any thing that is not an Infringment of the Rights of the two other Estates.

The extraordinary exercise, of Power charg'd upon 'em is instanc'd in these particulars, That they have committed some Brib'd Electors, and their Corruptors, publick Officers that were not able or willing to give in just Accounts of what they were intrusted with, and saucy Petitioners who made it Matter of Merit to affront the Authority of the House.

Let the People chuse which of these shall be *Barabbas*, whomsoever of these they release, they will set a publick Robber free. The corrupt Elector and the bribing Candidate; are a couple of Knaves that are Stock-jobbing the whole Nation. We may be assur'd that he that buys his Election, intends to be paid for his Voice. And the unthinking Elector may assure himself, that when he contracts for his Vote, he is making a Conveyance of his own, and other Mens Freehold, Liberty and Property.

The Publick Officer that refuses, or is unable to Account; is a plunderer that has stoln more than he can tell how to excuse.

And the saucy Petitioner is either the Fool or the Knave, that some cunninger Men than himself employ to bear the disgrace, and in some measure the Punishment of their Iniquity.

If the publick Officer cheat only his Patron; if the sellers of Votes dispos'd of no Man's Liberty and Property but their own; if the saucy Petitioners went no farther than their own particular Representatives, and meddled with no more than they understood, there had been no occasion for Commitment, and neither *Keut* nor *Legion* had been in an uproar, nor one deserved the *Gate-house* as the other did *Tyburn*.

It is however to be hop'd, that our Electors will take more care that in the next Parliament we shall have no Buyers or sellers, no *Sh-----ds*, *Coat-----th*, &c. no Men that are us'd to Traffick for more than they are worth; none that countenance the affronting of Parliaments. All these Will sell us, and those that favour them will be convinc'd unless they are of the same Principle.

It is to be hop'd that these Considerations will move the Electors to bethink themselves whom to return for the next Parliament, and to exclude some begging People, that boast much of Services, by which they have got much from, and done nothing for the Publick but what they dare not own.

Our last Parliament have secur'd to us our Religion, our Liberties and Property. It is our business to take care that the next may not undo what they have done, and under pretence of Zeal for the Government, give up our Civil Rights, which some have lately attempted by voting for standing Armies, &c.

One thing all Electors are desired to take notice of, that they can't give their Vote for any Person that has a place under, or pension from the Crown, without affronting the latest and best Act of Parliament that ever they had for their own Security. By the late Act for further Limitation of the Crown, and securing the Rights and Liberties of the Subject it is provided,

That no Person who has an Office or Place of Profit under the King, or receives a Pension from the Crown, shall be capable of serving as a Member of the House of Commons.

What is the danger of a Mercenary Parliament, I suppose the people need not be told; and tho' every Man who has a place is not therefore to be call'd Mercenary, he lies however under such a Temptation as wou'd forbid a Wise-man to trust him with his all. The Parliament has wisely disabled 'em, and so particularly, that no clause in the Act is without its Restriction as to time, except this, and that of Impeachments, which sufficiently shews when they intend it should take place. If they will think of these few things, we may hope to see a wise and a courageous Parliament, and perhaps most of those very Men who took such care of us the last Session, which ought to be the Prayer of all true English-men, and good Subjects.

Next Week will be Published the History at large, of the last Parliament, &c.