Burke

Two Speeches at Bristol

MR. BURKE'S

TWO SPEECHES

AT

BRISTOL.

[Price Six Pence.]

MR. EDMUND BURKE's

SPEECHES

AT

His ARRIVAL at BRISTOL,

AND AT

The CONCLUSION of the POLL.

THE SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

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EDITOR's ADVERTISEMENT.

WE believe there is no need of an Apology to the Publick for offering to them any genuine Speeches of Mr. Burke: the two contained in this publication undoubtedly are ſo. The general approbation they met with (as we hear) from all parties at Briſtol, perſuades us that a good Edition of them will not be unacceptable in London; which we own to be the inducement, and we hope is a juſtification, of our offering it.

We do not preſume to deſcant on the merit of theſe Speeches; but as it is no leſs new, than honourable, to find a popular candidate, at a popular election, daring to avow his diſſent to certain points that have been conſidered as very popular objects, and maintaining himſelf on the manly confidence of his own opinion; ſo, we muſt ſay, that it does great credit to the people of England, as it proves to the world, that, to inſure their confidence,

it is not neceſſary to flatter them, or to affect a ſubſerviency to their paſſions or their prejudices.

It may be neceſſary to premiſe, that at the opening of the poll the candidates were Lord Clare, Mr. Brickdale, the two laſt members; and Mr. Cruger, a conſiderable merchant at Briſtol. On the ſecond day of the poll Lord Clare declined; and a conſiderable body of gentlemen, who had wiſhed that the city of Briſtol ſhould, at this critical ſeaſon, be repreſented by ſome gentleman of tried abilities and known commercial knowledge, immediately put Mr. Burke in nomination. Some of them ſet off expreſs for London, to appriſe that gentleman of this event; but he was gone to Malton in Yorkſhire. The ſpirit and active zeal of theſe gentlemen followed him to Malton. They arrived there juſt after Mr. Burke's election for that place, and invited him to Briſtol.

Mr. Burke, as he tells us in his firſt Speech, acquainted his conſtituents with the honourable offer that was made him; and, with their conſent, he immediately ſet off for Briſtol on the Tueſday at ſix in the evening; he arrived at Briſtol at half paſt two in the afternoon on Thurſday the 13th of October, being the ſixth day of the poll.

He drove directly to the mayor's houſe, who not being at home, he proceeded to the Guild-hall, where he aſcended the huſtings, and having ſaluted the electors, the ſheriffs, and the two candidates, he repoſed himſelf for a few minutes, and then addreſſed the electors in a Speech which was received with great and univerſal applauſe and approbation.

Mr. EDMUND BURKE's

SPEECH

AT

His ARRIVAL at BRISTOL.

Mr. EDMUND BURKE's

SPEECH.

GENTLEMEN,

I AM come hither to ſolicit in perſon, that favour which my friends have hitherto endeavoured to procure for me, by the moſt obliging, and to me the moſt honourable, exertions.

I have ſo high an opinion of the great truſt which you have to confer on this occaſion; and, by long experience, ſo juſt a diffidence in my abilities, to fill it in a manner adequate even to my own ideas, that I ſhould never have ventured of myſelf to intrude into that

awful

awful ſituation. But ſince I am called upon by the deſire of ſeveral reſpectable fellow-ſubjects, as I have done at other times, I give up my fears to their wiſhes. Whatever my other deficiencies may be, I do not know what it is to be wanting to my friends.

I am not fond of attempting to raiſe public expectation by great promiſes. At this time, there is much cauſe to conſider, and very little to preſume. We ſeem to be approaching to a great criſis in our affairs, which calls for the whole wiſdom of the wiſeſt among us, without being able to aſſure ourſelves, that any wiſdom can preſerve us from many and great inconveniencies. You know I ſpeak of our unhappy conteſt with America. I confeſs, it is a matter on which I look down as from a precipice. It is difficult in itſelf, and it is rendered more intricate by a great variety of plans of conduct. I do not mean to enter into them. I will not ſuſpect a want of good intention in framing them. But however pure the intentions of their authors may have been, we all know that the event has been unfortunate. The means of recovering our affairs are not obvious. So many great queſtions of commerce, of finance, of conſtitution, and of policy, are involved in this American deliberation, that I dare engage for nothing, but that I ſhall give it, without any predilection to former opinions, or any ſiniſter bias whatſoever, the

the moſt honeſt and impartial conſideration of which I am capable. The publick has a full right to it; and this great city, a main pillar in the commercial intereſt of Great-Britain, muſt totter on its baſe by the ſlighteſt miſtake with regard to our American meaſures.

Thus much, however, I think it not amiſs to lay before you; That I am not, I hope, apt to take up or lay dwn my opinions lightly. I have held, and ever ſhall maintain, to the beſt of my power, unimpaired and undiminiſhed, the juſt, wiſe, and neceſſary conſtitutional ſuperiority of Great-Britain. This is neceſſary for America, as well as for us. I never mean to depart from it. Whatever may be loſt by it, I avow it. The forfeiture even of your favour, if by ſuch a declaration I could forfeit it, though the firſt object of my ambition, never will make me diſguiſe my ſentiments on this ſubject.

But,—I have ever had a clear opinion, and have ever held a conſtant correſpondent conduct, that this ſuperiority is conſiſtent with all the liberties a ſober and ſpirited American ought to deſire. I never mean to put any coloniſt, or any human creature, in a ſituation, not becoming a free-man. To reconcile Britiſh ſuperioty with American liberty ſhall be my great object, as far as my little faculties

extend. I am far from thinking that both, even yet, may not be preſerved.

When I firſt devoted myſelf to the public ſervice, I conſidered how I ſhould render myſelf fit for it; and this I did by endeavouring to diſcover what it was, that gave this country the rank it holds in the world. I found that our proſperity and dignity aroſe principally, if not ſolely, from two ſources; our conſtitution and commerce. Both theſe I have ſpared no ſtudy to underſtand, and no endeavour to ſupport.

The diſtinguiſhing part of our conſtitution is its liberty. To preſerve that liberty inviolate, ſeems the particular duty and proper truſt of a member of the Houſe of Commons. But the liberty, the only liberty I mean, is a liberty connected with order; that not only exiſts along with order and virtue, but which cannot exiſt at all without them. It inheres in good and ſteady government, as in its ſubſtance and vital principle.

The other ſource of our power is commerce, of which you are ſo large a part, and which cannot exiſt, no more than your liberty, without a connection with many virtues. It has ever been a very particular and a very favorite object of my ſtudy, in its principles, and in its details. I think many here are acquainted

acquainted with the truth of what I ſay. This I know, that I have ever had my houſe open, and my poor ſervices ready, for traders and manufacturers of every denomination. My favorite ambition is to have thoſe ſervices acknowledged. I now appear before you to make trial, whether my earneſt endeavors have been ſo wholly oppreſſed by the weakneſs of my abilities, as to be rendered inſignificant in the eyes of a great trading city; or whether you chuſe to give a weight to humble abilities, for the ſake of the honeſt exertions with which they are accompanied. This is my trial to-day. My induſtry is not on trial. Of my induſtry I am ſure, as far as my conſtitution of mind and body admitted.

When I was invited by many reſpectable merchants, freeholders, and freemen of this city, to offer them my ſervices, I had juſt received the honour of an election at another place, at a very great diſtance from this. I immediately opened the matter to thoſe of my worthy conſtituents who were with me, and they unanimouſly adviſed me not to decline it. They told me, that they had elected me with a view to the public ſervice; and as great queſtions relative to our commerce and colonies were imminent, that in ſuch matters I might derive authority and ſupport from the repreſentation of this great commercial city; they deſired me therefore to ſet off without delay,

delay, very well perſuaded that I never could forget my obligations to them, or to my friends, for the choice they had made of me. From that time to this inſtant I have not ſlept; and if I ſhould have the honour of being freely choſen by you, I hope I ſhall be as far from ſlumbering or ſleeping when your ſervice requires me to be awake, as I have been in coming to offer myſelf a candidate for your favour.

Mr.

Mr. EDMUND BURKE's

SPEECH

TO

The ELECTORS of BRISTOL,

On his being declared by the Sheriffs, duly elected one of the Representatives in Parliament for that City, on Thursday the 3d of November, 1774.

I cannot avoid (expressing strongly with the feelings of the gentleman who has received the same honour) that you have conferred on me. If he, who was bred and passed his whole life among you; if he, who, through the early gradations of acquaintance, friendship, and esteem, has obtained the honour, which seems of itself, naturally and almost insensibly, to meet with those, who, by

Mr. EDMUND BURKE's

SPEECH,

NOVEMBER 3, 1774.

GENTLEMEN,

I Cannot avoid ſympathizing ſtrongly with the feelings of the Gentleman who has received the ſame honour that you have conferred on me. If he, who was bred and paſſed his whole Life amongſt you; if he, who, through the eaſy gradations of acquaintance, friendſhip, and eſteem, has obtained the honour, which ſeems of itſelf, naturally and almoſt inſenſibly, to meet with thoſe, who, by

the even tenour of pleaſing manners and ſocial virtues, ſlide into the love and confidence of their fellow-citizens;—if he cannot ſpeak but with great emotion on this ſubject, ſurrounded as he is on all ſides with his old friends; you will have the goodneſs to excuſe me, if my real, unaffected embarraſſment prevents me from expreſſing my gratitude to you as I ought.

I was brought hither under the diſadvantage of being unknown, even by ſight, to any of you. No previous canvaſs was made for me. I was put in nomination after the poll was opened. I did not appear until it was far advanced. If, under all theſe accumulated diſadvantages, your good opinion has carried me to this happy point of ſucceſs; you will pardon me, if I can only ſay to you collectively, as I ſaid to you individually, ſimply and plainly, I thank you—I am obliged to you—I am not inſenſible of your kindneſs.

This is all that I am able to ſay for the ineſtimable favour you have conferred upon me. But I cannot be ſatisfied, without ſaying a little more in defence of the right you have to confer ſuch a favour. The perſon that appeared here as counſel for the Candidate, who ſo long and ſo earneſtly ſolicited your votes, thinks proper to deny, that a very great part of you have any votes to give. He fixes a ſtandard period of time in his own imagination,

not

not what the law defines, but merely what the convenience of his Client ſuggeſts, by which he would cut off, at one ſtroke, all thoſe freedoms, which are the deareſt privileges of your Corporation; which the common law authorizes: which your Magiſtrates are compelled to grant; which come duly authenticated into this Court; and are ſaved in the clereſt words, and with the moſt religious care and tenderneſs, in that very act of Parliament, which was made to regulate the Elections by Freemen, and to prevent all poſſible abuſes in making them.

I do not intend to argue the matter here. My learned Counſel has ſupported your Cauſe with his uſual Ability; the worthy Slieriffs have acted with their uſual equity, and I have no doubt, that the ſame equity, which dictates the return, will guide the final determination. I had the honour, in conjunction with many far wiſer men, to contribute a very ſmall aſſiſtance, but however ſome aſſiſtance, to the forming the Judicature which is to try ſuch queſtions. It would be unnatural in me, to doubt the Juſtice of that Court, in the trial of my own cauſe, to which I have been ſo active to give juriſdiction over every other.

I aſſure the worthy Freemen, and this Corporation, that, if the Gentleman perſeveres in the intentions, which his preſent warmth

dictates to him, I will attend their cause with diligence, and I hope with effect. For, if I know any thing of myself, it is not my own Interest in it, but my full conviction, that induces me to tell you—*I think there is not a shadow of doubt in the case.*

I do not imagine that you find me rash in declaring myself, or very forward in troubling you. From the beginning to the end of the election, I have kept silence in all matters of discussion. I have never asked a question of a voter on the other side, or supported a doubtful vote on my own. I respected the abilities of my managers; I relied on the candour of the court. I think the worthy sheriffs will bear me witness, that I have never once made an attempt to impose upon their reason, to surprize their justice, or to ruffle their temper. I stood on the hustings (except when I gave my thanks to those who favoured me with their votes) less like a Candidate, than an unconcerned Spectator of a public proceeding. But here the face of things is altered. Here is an attempt for a general *massacre* of Suffrages; an attempt, by a promiscuous carnage of *friends* and *foes*, to exterminate above two thousand votes, including *seven hundred polled for the Gentleman himself, who now complains*, and who would destroy the Friends whom he has obtained, only because he cannot obtain as many of them as he wishes.

How he will be permitted, in another place, to ſtultify and diſable himſelf, and to plead againſt his own acts, is another queſtion. The law will decide it. I ſhall only ſpeak of it as it concerns the propriety of public conduct in this city. I do not pretend to lay down rules of decorum for other Gentlemen. They are beſt judges of the mode of proceeding that will recommend them to the favour of their fellow-citizens. But I confeſs, I ſhould look rather awkward, if I had been the *very firſt to produce the new copies of freedom*, if I had perſiſted in producing them to the laſt; if I had ranſacked, with the moſt unremitting induſtry, and the moſt penetatring reſearch, the remoteſt corners of the kingdom to diſcover them; if I were then, all at once, to turn ſhort, and declare, that I had been ſporting all this while with the right of election: and that I had been drawing out a Poll, upon no ſort of rational grounds, which diſturbed the peace of my fellow-citizens for a month together—I really, for my part, ſhould appear awkward under ſuch circumſtances.

It would be ſtill more awkward in me, if I were gravely to look the ſheriffs in the face, and to tell them, they were not to determine my cauſe on my own principles; nor to make the return upon thoſe votes, upon which I had

rested my election. Such would be my appearance to the court and magistrates.

But how should I appear to the *Voters* themselves? If I had gone round to the citizens intitled to Freedom, and squeezed them by the hand—" Sir, I humbly beg your Vote—I " shall be eternally thankful—may I hope for " the honour of your support?—Well!— " come—we shall see you at the Council- " house."—If I were then to deliver them to my managers, pack them into tallies, vote them off in court, and when I heard from the Bar—" Such a one only! and such a one for " ever!—he's my man!"—" Thank you, " good Sir—Hah! my worthy friend! thank " you kindly—that's an honest fellow—how " is your good family?"—Whilst these words were hardly out of my mouth, if I should have wheeled round at once, and told them— " Get you gone, you pack of worthless fel- " lows! you have no votes—you are Usurpers! " you are intruders on the rights of real free- " men! I will have nothing to do with you! " you ought never to have been produced at " this Election, and the sheriffs ought not to " have admitted you to poll."

Gentlemen, I should make a strange figure, if my conduct had been of this sort. I am not so old an acquaintance of yours as the worthy Gentleman. Indeed I could not have

ventured

ventured on ſuch kind of freedoms with you. But I am bound, and I will endeavour, to have juſtice done to the rights of Freemen; even though I ſhould, at the ſame time, be obliged to vindicate the former * part of my antagoniſt's conduct againſt his own preſent inclinations.

I owe myſelf, in all things, to *all* the freemen of this city. My particular friends have a demand on me, that I ſhould not deceive their expectations. Never was cauſe or man ſupported with more conſtancy, more activity, more ſpirit. I have been ſupported with a zeal indeed and heartineſs in my friends, which (if their object had been at all proportioned to their endeavours) could never be ſufficiently commended. They ſupported me upon the moſt liberal principles. They wiſhed that the members for Briſtol ſhould be choſen for the City, and for their Country at large, and not for themſelves.

So far they are not diſappointed. If I poſſeſs nothing elſe, I am ſure I poſſeſs the temper that is fit for your ſervice. I know nothing of Briſtol, but by the favours I have received, and the virtues I have ſeen exerted in it.

* Mr. *Brickdale* opened his poll, it ſeems, with a tally of thoſe very kind of freemen, and voted many hundreds of them.

I ſhall

I ſhall ever retain, what I now feel, the moſt perfect and grateful attachment to my friends—and I have no enmities; no reſentment. I never can conſider fidelity to engagements, and conſtancy in friendſhips, but with the higheſt approbation; even when thoſe noble qualities are employed againſt my own pretenſions. The Gentleman, who is not fortunate as I have been in this conteſt, enjoys, in this reſpect, a conſolation full of honour both to himſelf and to his friends. They have certainly left nothing undone for his ſervice.

As for the trifling petulance, which the rage of party ſtirs up in little minds, though it ſhould ſhew itſelf even in this court, it has not made the ſlighteſt impreſſion on me. The higheſt flight of ſuch clamorous birds is winged in an inferior region of the air. We hear them, and we look upon them, juſt as you, Gentlemen, when you enjoy the ſerene air on your loſty rocks, look down upon the Gulls, that ſkim the mud of your river, when it is exhauſted of its tide.

I am ſorry I cannot conclude, without ſaying a word on a topick touched upon by my worthy Colleague. I wiſh that topick had been paſſed by; at a time when I have ſo little leiſure to diſcuſs it. But ſince he has thought proper to throw it out, I owe you a clear explanation of my poor ſentiments on that ſubject.

He

He tells you, that "the topick of Inſtructions "has occaſioned much altercation and uneaſi-"neſs in this City;" and he expreſſes himſelf (if I underſtand him rightly) in favour of the coercive authority of ſuch inſtructions.

Certainly, Gentlemen, it ought to be the happineſs and glory of a Repreſentative, to live in the ſtricteſt union, the cloſeſt correſpondence, and the moſt unreſerved communication with his conſtituents. Their wiſhes ought to have great weight with him; their opinion high reſpect; their buſineſs unremitted attention. It is his duty to ſacrifice his repoſe, his pleaſures, his ſatisfactions, to theirs; and, above all, ever, and in all caſes, to prefer their intereſt to his own. But, his unbiaſſed opinion, his mature judgement, his enlightened conſcience, he ought not to ſacrifice to you; to any man, or to any ſett of men living. Theſe he does not derive from your pleaſure; no, nor from the Law and the Conſtitution. They are a truſt from Providence, for the abuſe of which he is deeply anſwerable. Your Repreſentative owes you, not his induſtry only, but his judgement; and he betrays, inſtead of ſerving you, if he ſacrifices it to your opinion.

My worthy Colleague ſays, his Will ought to be ſubſervient to yours. If that be all, the thing is innocent. If Government were a matter

ter of Will upon any ſide, yours, without queſtion, ought to be ſuperior. But Government and Legiſlation are matters of reaſon and judgement, and not of inclination; and, what ſort of reaſon is that, in which the determination precedes the diſcuſſion; in which one ſett of men deliberate, and another decide; and where thoſe who form the concluſion are perhaps three hundred miles diſtant from thoſe who hear the arguments?

To deliver an opinion, is the right of all men; that of Conſtituents is a weighty and reſpectable opinion, which a Repreſentative ought always to rejoice to hear; and which he ought always moſt ſeriouſly to conſider. But *authoritative* inſtructions; *Mandates* iſſued, which the Member is bound blindly and implicitly to obey, to vote, and to argue for, though contrary to the cleareſt conviction of his judgement and conſcience; theſe are things utterly unknown to the laws of this land, and which ariſe from a fundamental Miſtake of the whole order and tenour of our Conſtitution.

Parliament is not a *Congreſs* of Ambaſſadors from different and hoſtile intereſts; which intereſts each muſt maintain, as an Agent and Advocate, againſt other Agents and Advocates; but Parliament is a *deliberative* Aſſembly of *one* Nation, with *one* Intereſt, that of the whole;

where, not local Purpoſes, not local Prejudices ought to guide, but the general Good, reſulting from the general Reaſon of the whole. You chuſe a Member indeed; but when you have choſen him, he is not Member of Briſtol, but he is a Member of *Parliament*. If the local Conſtituent ſhould have an Intereſt, or ſhould form an haſty Opinion, evidently oppoſite to the real good of the reſt of the Community, the Member for that place ought to be as far, as any other, from any endeavour to give it Effect. I beg pardon for ſaying ſo much on this ſubject. I have been unwillingly drawn into it; but I ſhall ever uſe a reſpectful frankneſs of communication with you. Your faithful friend, your devoted ſervant, I ſhall be to the end of my life: A flatterer you do not wiſh for. On this point of inſtructions, however, I think it ſcarcely poſſible, we ever can have any ſort of difference. Perhaps I may give you too much, rather than too little trouble.

From the firſt hour I was encouraged to court your favour to this happy day of obtaining it, I have never promiſed you any thing, but humble and perſevering endeavours to do my duty. The weight of that duty, I confeſs, makes me tremble; and whoever well conſiders what it is, of all things in the world will fly from what has the leaſt likeneſs to a poſitive and precipitate engagement. To be a good

Member

Member of Parliament, is, let me tell you, no easy task; especially at this time, when there is so strong a disposition to run into the perilous extremes of servile compliance, or wild popularity. To unite circumspection with vigour, is absolutely necessary; but it is extremely difficult. We are now Members for a rich commercial *City*; this City, however, is but a part of a rich commercial *Nation*, the Interests of which are various, multiform, and intricate. We are Members for that great *Nation*, which however is itself but part of a great *Empire*, extended by our Virtue and our Fortune to the fartheſt limits of the Eaſt and of the Weſt. All theſe wide-ſpread Intereſts muſt be conſidered; muſt be compared; muſt be reconciled if poſſible. We are Members for a *free* Country; and ſurely we all know, that the machine of a free Conſtitution is no ſimple thing; but as intricate and as delicate, as it is valuable. We are Members in a great and ancient *Monarchy*; and we muſt preſerve religiouſly, the true legal rights of the Sovereign, which form the Key-ſtone that binds together the noble and well-conſtructed Arch of our Empire and our Conſtitution. A Conſtitution made up of balanced Powers muſt ever be a critical thing. As ſuch I mean to touch that part of it which comes within my reach. I know my Inability, and I wiſh for ſupport from every Quarter. In particular I ſhall aim at the friendſhip, and ſhall cultivate the beſt

Correſpondence,

Correſpondence, of the worthy Colleague you have given me.

I trouble you no farther than once more to thank you all; you, Gentlemen, for your Favours; the Candidates for their temperate and polite behaviour; and the Sheriffs, for a Conduct which may give a Model for all who are n public Stations.

FINIS.