

and indeed it is scarcely possible to conceive that a question can arise affecting the interests, or even the feelings, of the people, or of any considerable portion of them, which cannot, in some shape or other, be properly made the subject of examination in this Assembly. Many, no doubt of my honourable and learned friends, and indeed most of the members of this House, will desire, I dare say, to express their sentiments fully in the course of this discussion, and I wish, therefore, that I could forbear trespassing for so long a time upon the patience and attention of the committee as I fear I must do, in order to bring the matter, and every consideration fairly connected with it, plainly in view. It shall be my endeavour, however, to avoid every thing that can tend to obscure or embarrass the question, and waiving every topic that can occasion unpleasant feeling in any quarter, to place before the committee the points which they will be called upon to determine.

We are all aware that the unhappy dissensions which arose between Great Britain and her North American Colonies, when they broke out into open acts of violence in the year 1775, had necessarily the effect of dividing the great mass of the people of those colonies, during the remainder of the contest, into two classes, namely, those who preserved their allegiance and adhered to the crown, and those who forfeited their allegiance and joined the standard of revolt. At the conclusion of the contest, in the year 1783, by the treaty which was made, under the sanction of a British act of parliament previously passed for

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