

impossible to submit to a law enacted in a mode so contrary to ancient usages, to their privileges as colonists, and to their rights as English subjects. Thus, for having chosen to warn before the blow, the British government prepared in the colonies an unanimous and most determined concurrence of opinion against one of its solemn decrees ; and deprived itself of that docility resulting among the people from their intestine divisions, and the diversity of their interests.

The prime minister, Grenville, had been the author of this delay, hoping the colonies, upon advice of the bill in agitation, if they disliked the stamp duty, would have proposed some other mode of raising the sum intended to be levied by it. Accordingly, when the agents of the colonies went to pay him their respects, he informed them that he was prepared to receive, on the part of the colonies, any other proposal of a tax which would raise the sum wanted ; shrewdly insinuating, also, that it was now in their power, by consenting, to establish it as a principle, that they should be consulted before any tax whatever was imposed upon the colonies by authority of parliament. Many in England, and possibly the agents themselves, attributed this conduct of the minister to moderation ; but beyond the Atlantic it found a quite different reception, all with one voice exclaiming that this was an interested charity. For they thought, that however civil his offers, the minister would nevertheless exact, to a penny, the entire sum he desired, which in substance was saying, that willingly or otherwise, they must submit to his good pleasure ; and, consequently, his complaisance was but that of an accomplished robber. It was known that he would not be satisfied with less than three hundred thousand pounds sterling a year, the sum considered necessary for the support of the army it was resolved to maintain in the colonies for their defense. Not one of the agents was authorized to comply. Two only alledged, they were commissioned to declare that their provinces were ready to bear their proportion of the duty upon stamps, when it should be established according to ancient usages. The minister, therefore, having heard no proposal that appeared to him acceptable, resolved to pursue the design of a stamp act. Meanwhile, the fermentation in America was violent, not only among private citizens, but also among the members of public and corporate bodies ; and all were of one mind, in asserting that the parliament had no right to tax the colonies. In all places, political circles and clubs were formed ; the subject of all conversations was the fatal tax. Every day, every hour, diminished the respect and affection of the Americans towards the British nation, and increased their disposition to resist. As it hap-