

SPEECH of Mr. HASTINGS to the HOUSE of LORDS, on MONDAY the 2d Day of JUNE, 1791.

THE Evidence for the Impeachment being closed,

Mr. Hastings rose, and intreated the indulgence of their Lordships to allow him to read from his notes what he wished to offer as his defence.

Lord Kenyon, who presided in the absence of the Lord Chancellor, desired Mr. Hastings to proceed.

Mr. Hastings then, from a written paper, read to the following effect:—He hoped the proposition he was about to offer would be a means of saving their Lordships' trouble in future, and would put an end for ever to a trial unexampled in its length and in the conduct of it, and which had attracted the attention of thousands in this country, and in every part of the world. But first he deemed it justice to his Counsel to say, that the resolution which he had taken, was taken without any communication with them, and against their opinion. No man could have an higher regard for them than he had, or thought higher of their professional abilities, or could be more sensible than he was of their affectionate attachment to him; but this was a measure he took entirely upon himself; and he solemnly declared, that if he believed it possible for their Lordships to find him guilty, he would prefer that sentence to a continuation of the trial, with a chance of an acquittal in another, or perhaps in another Session after that.

He said, that his life had been spent amongst a people, one of whose maxims was, that speedy justice was better than tardy injustice. After some other circumstances mentioned in the exordium with very great force, and in very elegant language, he proceeded to reply to the accusations that had been brought against him. And first, he said, he would take the General Charges, which were, that he had desolated and ruined the Provinces committed to his care; that he had violated Treaties, oppressed and plundered the Natives, wantonly wasted the Public Money, and disobeyed the Orders of his Superiors.

Mr. Hastings said, it was a great comfort and happiness to him, that he could in a few words, refute all these General Charges upon the authority of the House of Commons, his prosecutors; for it was in proof before them, that he had raised the resources of the Government from three millions sterling a year to five; that to procure this increase, he had neither desolated nor ruined the country, for it

had still further increased since his departure. The Princes with whom he was said to have broken the public faith, all joined in bearing testimony in his favour, and to this hour professed the sincerest personal regard for him. The natives, of all ranks, countries, and sects in India, had joined as one man, in refusing to soul a charge. It was in proof before the House of Commons, that, in peace and in war, his government was more economical than that fixed by the Board of Controul for India; therefore, all these General Charges must fall to the ground in the judgment of every man who would be at the pains to enquire. But if he had done a thousand meritorious actions, and he understood some of those who had voted for his Impeachment gave him the credit of preserving India to Great Britain, he was perfectly ready to allow, that it was incumbent upon him to answer specifically to the Four Articles on which the Managers depended for his conviction.

Mr. Hastings then said, that he was confident he might trust his case to their own evidence, mutilated and garbled as it had been, notwithstanding the laudable and most unceasing attention of his Counsel to prevent such mutilations in every practicable instance.

He complained, that of thirty four witnesses whom he had originally summoned, some were dead, some returned to India, others in different parts of the kingdom, after having been wearied out by three years fruitless attendance, and that those with whom he was more immediately connected would be liable to those remarks which the Managers had taken the freedom to make upon their own witnesses, when their evidence did not answer their expectations.

Mr. Hastings also complained of the injury he sustained by an act, of which he approved as much as any man, the publicity of their Lordships proceedings; but in a case where a trial lasted such a time, and where the audience naturally came merely for the entertainment they expected, it had so happened, that in three years persons from every part of Great Britain had attended the trial, and heard the speeches of the Managers of the House of Commons—it could not occur to them to suppose, that men in the name of so great a body would venture to hazard asserting what they had not a tittle of evidence to prove; and thus his character had been blasted, as far as the Managers could effect