

**TWO SPEECHES ON  
CONCILIATION WITH  
AMERICA, AND TWO LETTERS  
ON IRISH QUESTIONS**

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Two speeches on conciliation with America, and Two letters on Irish questions by Edmund Burke

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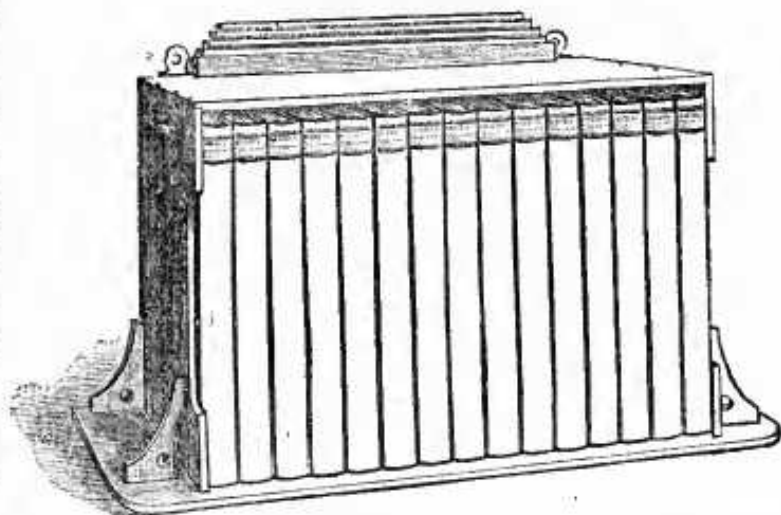
**EDMUND BURKE**

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ON  
CONCILIATION WITH AMERICA  
AND  
TWO LETTERS ON IRISH QUESTIONS

BY  
EDMUND BURKE

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HENRY MORLEY*  
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UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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In July 1765 Edmund Burke, then thirty-five years old, began his political career as secretary to the Marquis of Rockingham, who had just undertaken the formation of a Ministry. Burke presently entered Parliament as member for Wendover, through the interest of Lord Verney. The American colonies were at that time united in vigorous resistance to a Stamp Act, which involved claim and use of the right of an English Parliament to impose direct taxes on colonies that were not represented in it.

There had been indirect taxation since the days of our English Commonwealth, when the Navigation Act of 1651 required all colonial exports to England to be shipped only in American or English vessels. After the Restoration, a second Navigation Act, in 1660, ordered that most of the exports from the colonies should be shipped only to England or to an English colony, and in American or English vessels. In 1663 a third Navigation Act required that most of the imports into the colonies should be shipped only from England or an English colony, and in American or English vessels. In 1672 there were added duties upon certain enumerated articles, in passing from one colony to another. This involved the establishment of royal custom-houses and revenue officers in service of the Crown. In Massachusetts these changes were opposed: the General Court of the colony resolved "that the Acts of Navigation are an invasion of the rights and privileges of the subjects of his Majesty in this colony, they not being represented in the Parliament." In 1680 a notice of the appointment of a collector of the royal customs for New England was torn down at Boston by order of the colonial magistrates. The opposition was not effectual, and the number of revenue officers increased.

In 1696 a Board of Trade was established, consisting of a President and seven members, entitled the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations. Among other duties this body had charge of the execution of the Navigation Acts, and it was to bring the colonies more strictly under royal control. The Board of Trade proposed, therefore, in 1697, the appointment of a captain-general, with absolute power to levy and organize an army without reference to any colonial

authority. In 1698 it prohibited the export of colonial woollens even from one colony to another. In 1706 it recommended, but did not obtain, the resumption of charters still held by some of the colonies. In 1714 a Secretary of State was made chief of the Board of Trade. The Duke of Newcastle, who held this office from 1724 to 1748, supposed New England to be an island.

The operations of the Royal African Company, which had been first formed in 1618, reconstituted in 1631, and again in 1663, and which acquired wealth by the trade in slaves, were at the same time promoted. The Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, contained a contract on the part of Spain that Great Britain alone should supply her colonies with slaves; and in 1750 Great Britain received, by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, an indemnity of a hundred thousand pounds for giving up this right. When Virginia and South Carolina laid a prohibitory duty on the importation of slaves, their acts were annulled by royal command. In 1750, when the trade in slaves was made independent of this company, the reason given in the British Parliament was that "the slave trade is very advantageous to Great Britain." The colonists of the Southern States of America had therefore endeavoured in vain to check the importation of slave labour.

In 1733 the Molasses Act laid duties in the American colonies upon molasses, sugar, and rum imported from any but the British West India Islands. The agent of New York in England protested that this was "divesting the colonists of their rights as the king's natural-born subjects and Englishmen, in levying subsidies upon them against their own consent." In 1732 the American colonists were forbidden to export hats; in 1750 they were forbidden to erect mills for slitting or rolling iron, or furnaces for making steel.

In 1754 the Mutiny Act, providing for the discipline and quarters of the English army, was extended to the colonies. In 1755 the Earl of Loudoun was sent over as Governor of Virginia, and commander-in-chief over the thirteen colonies of America. Permanence of the appointment of judges was next struck at; their commissions were issued, which were to run no longer "during good behaviour," but "during the king's pleasure." New York in 1761 refused to pay the salary of a chief justice appointed, and he procured for himself from the Board of Trade a grant to be paid from the quit-rents of the province. There came claims also in 1761 for writs of assistance authorizing search for goods imported in defiance of the acts of trade.

Thus a long course of unwise policy had raised a spirit of antagonism, and much advance had been made towards the alienation of the American colonies, when there was added for the first time a direct taxation for revenue to the long series of taxations for regulation of trade. At the beginning of the year 1764 the British Parliament voted that it had a right to tax the colonies. George Grenville by the Sugar Act in 1764 laid duties upon sugar and other articles of colonial import. By the Stamp Act in 1765 he imposed in the American colonies a stamp duty, like that in England, upon business documents and newspapers.

This disregard of American feeling not only gave new force to the growing discontent, but provoked the organizing of resistance. Massachusetts proposed a Colonial Congress at New York, which first met on