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The Works of George Lord Lyttleton

Lyttelton, George <Lord>

London, 1774

Postscript.

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P O S T S C R I P T.

SINCE I wrote my letter, news is come into the country that two or three of our ships have been very lately taken by the Spaniards, one of them by a Spanish man of war, with the king's commission, on the high seas, the captain of which is now imprisoned at Cadiz; and that two sloops belonging to the South-Sea company are detained, and a guard is set upon our factory at the Havannah. If *these* are the *first-fruits* of our peace, *what will the harvest be?*

But after all, Sir, have we any peace at all? have we any thing granted us that will even bear that name? or have we been only amused by the Spaniards, till they could *get their money home*, (which we hear is hourly expected in two richly-laden ships,) and till the season should be past for us to act with advantage?

I would also beg leave to ask one question more. We were told some time ago that one of our men of war in the West-Indies had taken the Spanish register ship, but that, by orders of commodore Brown, it was immediately afterwards carried back to the latitude in which it was taken, and restored again. Did the captain who took it act *without*, or *against orders*? if he had orders *to cruise*, why was his capture *restored*? were those orders only given *for show*, to *amuse the merchants*, and *to look like action*? would it not have been right and prudent to have kept the money, that was aboard this ship, *as a pledge in our hands*, in case that peace should be refused us upon proper terms? We might have kept it justly, *as a security for the repayment of our losses*; whereas the act of the Spaniards, in detaining our effects at the Havannah, is in reality adding *a new robbery* to the past. Let me however observe, that, though *reparation*

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to our merchants is highly fit, and necessary, and what we ought to demand, it is by far the point of least importance to the nation. We are interested no doubt for them upon many accounts, but both we and they have a much greater interest in the future security of commerce being firmly established. This is the national concern, this both houses of parliament have strongly insisted on, this his majesty has promised to procure for us. If this be neglected, any present gratification will be of little advantage, and should be thought of with scorn.

L E T-