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### **Miscellaneous works Of The Late Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl Of Chesterfield**

Consisting Of Letters to his Friends, never before printed, And Various  
Other Articles

**Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope of  
Dublin, 1777**

XLVI. Speech On The Licensing Bill.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-52092](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-52092)

## XLVI.

SPEECH ON THE *LICENSING BILL*.

THE editor, being desirous of giving a specimen of lord Chesterfield's eloquence, has made choice of the three following speeches: the first in the strong nervous style of Demosthenes, the two latter in the witty, ironical manner of Tully. That he had studied with attention these great models, and endeavoured to imitate them, will not escape the notice of those, who will be at the trouble of comparing their orations with his. But his imitation is that of a man of genius and taste, who improves whatever he touches, not of that herd of retailers so justly distinguished by the name of *imitatores, servile pecus*.

The first abstract of this speech on the licensing bill, appeared in Fog's Journal, N<sup>o</sup> 5. It was incorrect and defective, especially in the part relating to the line of the poet, applied to Pompey. This gave a handle to the authors of the Gazetteer, ever on the watch on these occasions, to fall upon the noble speaker, and to refer him to Tully, to whom we owe the fullest account of this occurrence, *Ep. ad. Att. II. 19*. Their triumph was short, and the speech was published in the Magazines the very next month, probably not without the earl's consent, and thence verbatim in the debates of the house of lords, vol. V. p. 210. The following abstract from these will be sufficient to give an idea of the subject of the discourse. "The only remarkable (occurrence) of  
 " this session, which remains to be taken notice of, is  
 " contained in the proceedings upon the bill, to explain  
 " and amend so much of an act made in the twelfth year  
 " of the reign of queen Anne, entituled, *An act for*  
 " *reducing the laws relating to rogues, vagabonds, sturdy*  
 " *beggars, and vagrants, into one act of parliament: and*  
 " *for the more effectual punishing such rogues, vagabonds,*  
 " *sturdy beggars, and vagrants, and sending them whither*  
 " *they ought to be sent, as relates to common players of*  
 " *interludes.* The bill, which was passed into a law,  
 " and remains still in force, was ordered by the house  
 " of commons to be prepared and brought in on Fri-  
 " day

“ day

“ day the 20th of May, and was occasioned by a Faree  
 “ called *the golden rump*, which had been brought to  
 “ the then master \* of the theatre in Lincoln’s-inn-fields,  
 “ who, upon perusal, found it was designed as a libel  
 “ upon the government, and therefore, instead of  
 “ having it acted, he carried it to a gentleman concerned  
 “ in the administration; and he having communicated  
 “ it to some other members of the house of commons,  
 “ it was resolved to move for leave to bring in a bill  
 “ for preventing any such attempt for the future; and  
 “ the motion being complied with by that house upon  
 “ the 20th of May, 1737, the bill was brought in on  
 “ Tuesday the 24th, and passed through both houses  
 “ with such dispatch, that it was ready for the royal as-  
 “ sent by Wednesday the 8th of June, and according-  
 “ ly received the royal assent on Tuesday the 21st, when  
 “ his majesty put an end to this session of parliament.  
 “ In both houses there were long debates, and great  
 “ opposition to this bill, in every step it made; and in  
 “ the house of lords the following is the substance of  
 “ what was said by the earl of Chesterfield against  
 “ it, viz.

MY LORDS,

**T**HE bill now before you I apprehend to be of a very  
 extraordinary, a very dangerous, nature. It seems  
 designed not only as a restraint on the licentiousness of the  
 stage; but it will prove a most arbitrary restraint on the  
 liberty of the stage, and I fear, it looks yet further, I fear  
 it tends towards a restraint on the liberty of the press, which  
 will be a long stride towards the destruction of liberty itself.  
 It is not only a bill, my lords, of a very extraordinary  
 nature, but it has been brought in at a very extraordina-  
 ry season, and pushed with most extraordinary dispatch.  
 When I considered how near it was to the end of the session,  
 and how long this session had been protracted beyond the  
 usual time of the year; when I considered that this bill  
 passed through the other house with so much precipitancy,

\* One Mr. Giffard, who had removed thither with a company of  
 players, from Goodman’s-fields, where he had a theatre, which was  
 silenced by this very act.

as even to get the start of a bill which deserved all the respect, and all the dispatch, the forms of either house of parliament could admit of; it set me upon inquiring, what could be the reason for introducing this bill at so unreasonable a time, and pressing it forward in a manner so very singular and uncommon. I have made all possible inquiry; and as yet I must confess, I am at a loss to find out the great occasion. I have, it is true, learned from common report without doors, that a most seditious, a most heinous farce had been offered to one of the theatres, a farce for which the authors ought to be punished in the most exemplary manner: but what was the consequence? The master of that theatre behaved as he was in duty bound, and as common prudence directed: he not only refused to bring it upon the stage, but carried it to a certain honourable gentleman in the administration, as the surest method of having it absolutely suppressed. Could this be the occasion of introducing such an extraordinary bill, at such an extraordinary season, and pushing it in so extraordinary a manner? Surely no:—The dutiful behaviour of the players, the prudent caution they shewed upon that occasion, can never be a reason for subjecting them to such an arbitrary restraint: it is an argument in their favour, and a material one, in my opinion, against the bill. Nay farther, if we consider all circumstances, it is to me a full proof that the laws now in being are sufficient for punishing those players who shall venture to bring any seditious libel upon the stage, and consequently sufficient for deterring all the players from acting any thing that may have the least tendency towards giving a reasonable offence.

I do not, my lords, pretend to be a lawyer, I do not pretend to know perfectly the power and extent of our laws; but I have conversed with those that do, and by them I have been told, that our laws are sufficient for punishing any person that shall dare to represent upon the stage, what may appear, either by the words, or the representation, to be blasphemous, seditious, or immoral. I must own indeed, I have observed of late a remarkable licentiousness in the stage. There have but very lately been two plays acted, which one would have thought should have given the greatest offence, and yet both were suffered

suffered to be often represented without disturbance, without censure. In one \*, the author thought fit to represent the three great professions, religion, physic, and law, as inconsistent with common sense: in the other †, a most tragical story was brought upon the stage, a catastrophe too recent, too melancholy, and of too solemn a nature, to be heard of any where but from the pulpit. How these pieces came to pass unpunished, I do not know; if I am rightly informed, it was not for want of law, but for want of prosecution, without which no law can be made effectual: but if there was any neglect in this case, I am convinced it was not with a design to prepare the minds of the people, and to make them think a new law necessary.

Our stage ought certainly, my lords, to be kept within due bounds; but for this, our laws, as they stand at present, are sufficient. If our stage-players at any time exceed those bounds, they ought to be prosecuted, they may be punished: we have precedents, we have examples of persons having been punished for things less criminal than either of the two pieces I have mentioned. A new law must therefore be unnecessary, and in the present case it cannot be unnecessary without being dangerous: every unnecessary restraint on licentiousness is a fetter upon the legs, is a shackle upon the hands, of liberty. One of the greatest blessings we enjoy, one of the greatest blessings a people, my lords, can enjoy, is liberty: but every good in this life has its alloy of evil. Licentiousness is the alloy of liberty: it is an ebullition, an excrescence; it is a speck upon the eye of the political body, which I can never touch but with a gentle, with a trembling hand, lest I destroy the body, lest I injure the eye upon which it is apt to appear. If the stage becomes at any time licentious, if a play appears to be a libel upon the government, or upon any particular man, the king's courts are open, the law is sufficient for punishing the offender; and in this case the person injured has a singular advantage, he can be under no difficulty to prove who is the publisher; the players themselves are the publishers, and there can be no want of evidence to convict them.

But,

\* Pasquin, a comedy.

† King Charles I, a tragedy.

But, my lords, suppose it true, that the laws now in being are not sufficient for putting a check to, or preventing, the licentiousness of the stage; suppose it absolutely necessary some new law should be made for that purpose: yet it must be granted, that such a law ought to be maturely considered, and every clause, every sentence, nay every word of it, well weighed and examined, lest, under some of those methods presumed or pretended to be necessary for restraining licentiousness, a power should lie concealed, which might be afterwards made use of for giving a dangerous wound to liberty. Such a law ought not to be introduced at the close of a session, nor ought we, in the passing of such a law, to depart from any of the forms prescribed by our ancestors for preventing deceit and surprize. There is such a connection between licentiousness and liberty, that it is not easy to correct the one, without dangerously wounding the other; it is extremely hard to distinguish the true limit between them: like a changeable silk, we can easily see there are two different colors, but we cannot easily discover where the one ends, or where the other begins. There can be no great and immediate danger from the licentiousness of the stage: I hope it will not be pretended, that our government may, before next winter, be overturned by such licentiousness, even though our stage were at present under no sort of controul. Why then may we not delay till next session passing any law against the licentiousness of the stage? Neither our government can be altered, nor our constitution overturned, by such a delay; but by passing a law rashly and unadvisedly, our constitution may at once be destroyed, and our government rendered arbitrary. Can we then put a small, a short-lived inconvenience in the balance with perpetual slavery? Can it be supposed, that a parliament of Great Britain will so much as risk the latter, for the sake of avoiding the former?

Surely, my lords, this is not to be expected, were the licentiousness of the stage much greater than it is, were the insufficiency of our laws more obvious than can be pretended; but when we complain of the licentiousness of the stage, and the insufficiency of our laws, I fear we have more reason to complain of bad measures in our polity, and a general decay of virtue and morality among the people.

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In public as well as private life, the only way to prevent being ridiculed or censured, is to avoid all ridiculous or wicked measures, and to pursue such only as are virtuous and worthy. The people never endeavour to ridicule those they love and esteem, nor will they suffer them to be ridiculed: if any one attempts it, the ridicule returns upon the author; he makes himself only the object of public hatred and contempt. The actions or behaviour of a private man may pass unobserved, and consequently unapplauded, uncensured; but the actions of those in high stations can neither pass without notice, nor without censure or applause; and therefore an administration, without esteem, without authority among the people, let their power be ever so great, let their power be ever so arbitrary, will be ridiculed: the severest edicts, the most terrible punishments, cannot prevent it. If any man therefore thinks he has been censured, if any man thinks he has been ridiculed, upon any of our public theatres, let him examine his actions, he will find the cause: let him alter his conduct, he will find a remedy. As no man is perfect, as no man is infallible, the greatest may err, the most circumspect may be guilty of some piece of ridiculous behaviour. It is not licentiousness, it is an useful liberty always indulged the stage in a free country, that some great men may there meet with a just reproof, which none of their friends will be free enough, or rather faithful enough, to give them. Of this we have a famous instance in the Roman history. The great Pompey, after the many victories he had obtained, and the great conquests he had made, had certainly a good title to the esteem of the people of Rome: yet that great man, by some error in his conduct, became an object of general dislike; and therefore in the representation of an old play, when Diphilus, the actor, came to repeat these words, *Nostra miseria tu es Magnus*, the audience immediately applied them to Pompey, who at that time was as well known by the name Magnus, as by the name Pompey, and were so highly pleased with the satire, that, as Cicero says, they made him repeat the words a hundred times over. An account of this was immediately sent to Pompey, who, instead of resenting it as an injury, was so wise as to take it for a just reproof; he examined his conduct, he altered his measures, he regained by degrees the esteem of the people,

people, and therefore neither feared the wit, nor felt the satire, of the stage. This is an example which ought to be followed by great men in all countries. Such accidents will often happen in every free country, and many such would probably have afterwards happened at Rome, if they had continued to enjoy their liberty: but this sort of liberty on the stage came soon after, I suppose, to be called licentiousness; for we are told that Augustus, after having established his empire, restored order in Rome by restraining licentiousness. God forbid! we should in this country have order restored, or licentiousness restrained, at so dear a rate as the people of Rome paid for it to Augustus.

In the case I have mentioned, my lords, it was not the poet that wrote, for it was an old play; nor the players that acted, for they only repeated the words of the play, it was the people who pointed the satire; and the case will always be the same. When a man has the misfortune to incur the hatred or contempt of the people, when public measures are despised, the audience will apply what never was, what could not be, designed as a satire on the present times, nay, even though the people should not apply, those who are conscious of the wickedness or weakness of their conduct will take to themselves what the author never designed. A public thief is as apt to take the satire, as he is apt to take the money, which was never designed for him. We have an instance of this in the case of a famous comedian of the last age; a comedian who was not only a good poet, but an honest man, and a quiet and good subject. The famous Moliere, when he wrote his *Tartuffe*, which is certainly an excellent and a good moral comedy, did not design to satyrize any great man of that age, yet a great man in France at that time took it to himself, and fancied the author had taken him as a model for one of the principal, and one of the worst, characters in that comedy: by good luck he was not the licenser, otherwise the kingdom of France had never had the pleasure, the happiness I may say, of seeing that play acted; but, when the players first purposed to act it at Paris, he had interest enough to get it forbid. Moliere, who knew himself innocent of what was laid to his charge, complained to his patron the prince of Conti, that as his play was designed only to expose hypocrisy, and a false pretence

pretence to religion, it was very hard it should be forbid being acted, when at the same time they were suffered to expose religion itself every night publicly upon the Italian stage; to which the prince wittily answered, "It is true, Moliere, Harlequin ridicules heaven, and exposes religion, but you have done much worse,—you have ridiculed the first minister of religion."

I am as much for restraining the licentiousness of the stage, and every other sort of licentiousness, as any of your lordships can be: but, my lords, I am, I shall always be, extremely cautious and fearful of making the least encroachment upon liberty, and therefore, when a new law is proposed against licentiousness, I shall always be for considering it deliberately and maturely, before I venture to give my consent to its being passed. This is a sufficient reason for my being against passing this bill at so unseasonable a time, and in so extraordinary a manner; but I have many reasons for being against passing the bill itself, some of which I shall beg leave to explain to your lordships.

The bill, my lords, at first view, may seem to be designed only against the stage; but to me it plainly appears to point somewhere else. It is an arrow, that does but glance upon the stage; the mortal wound seems designed against the liberty of the press. By this bill you prevent a play's being acted, but you do not prevent its being printed; therefore, if a licence should be refused for its being acted, we may depend upon it, the play will be printed. It will be printed and published, my lords, with the refusal in capital letters on the title page. People are always fond of what is forbidden. *Libri prohibiti* (prohibited books) are in all countries diligently and generally sought after. It will be much easier to procure a refusal, than it ever was to procure a good house, or a good sale; therefore we may expect, that plays will be wrote on purpose to have a refusal; this will certainly procure a good house or a good sale. Thus will satires be spread and dispersed through the whole nation, and thus every man in the kingdom may, and probably will, read for six-pence, what a few only could have seen acted, and that not under the expence of half a crown? We shall then be told, What! will you allow an infamous libel to be printed and dispersed, which you would not allow to be acted? You have agreed to a law to prevent its being acted: can you refuse

fuse your assent to a law to prevent its being printed and published? I should really, my lords, be glad to hear, what excuse, what reason one could give for being against the latter, after having agreed to the former; for, I protest, I cannot suggest to myself the least shadow of an excuse. If we agree to the bill now before us, we must, perhaps, next session, agree to a bill for preventing any plays being printed without a licence. Then satires will be wrote by way of novels, secret histories, dialogues, or under some such title; and thereupon we shall be told, What! will you allow an infamous libel to be printed and dispersed, only because it does not bear the title of a play? Thus, my lords, from the precedent now before us, we shall be induced, nay we can find no reason for refusing, to lay the press under a general licence, and then we may bid adieu to the liberties of Great Britain.

But suppose, my lords, it were necessary to make a new law for restraining the licentiousness of the stage, which I am very far from granting, yet I shall never be for establishing such a power as is proposed by this bill. If poets and players are to be restrained, let them be restrained as other subjects are, by the known laws of their country: if they offend, let them be tried, as every Englishman ought to be, by God and their country; do not let us subject them to the arbitrary will and pleasure of any one man. A power lodged in the hands of one single man, to judge and determine, without any limitation, without any controul or appeal, is a sort of power unknown to our laws, inconsistent with our constitution. It is a higher, a more absolute power than we trust even to the king himself, and therefore I must think, we ought not to vest any such power in his majesty's lord chamberlain. When I say this, I am sure, I do not mean to give the least, the most distant, offence to the noble duke \* who now fills the post of lord chamberlain; his natural candor and love of justice would not, I know, permit him to exercise any power, but with the strictest regard to the rules of justice and humanity. Were we sure his successors in that high office would always be persons of such distinguished merit, even the power established by this bill could give no further alarm, than lest it should be made a precedent for intro-

\* The duke of Grafton.

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ducing other new powers of the same nature. This, indeed, is an alarm which cannot be avoided, which cannot be prevented by any hope, by any consideration; it is an alarm which I think every man must take, who has a due regard to the constitution and liberties of his country.

I shall admit, my lords, that the stage ought not, upon any occasion, to meddle with politics, and for this very reason among the rest, I am against the bill now before us. This bill will be so far from preventing the stage's meddling with politics, that, I fear, it will be the occasion of its meddling with nothing else; but then it will be a political stage *ex parte*. It will be made subservient to the politics and the schemes of the court only; the licentiousness of the stage will be encouraged instead of being restrained, but like court journalists, it will be licentious only against the patrons of liberty, and the protectors of the people: whatever man, whatever party, opposes the court in any of their most destructive schemes, will, upon the stage, be represented in the most ridiculous light the hirelings of a court can contrive. True patriotism, and love of public good, will be represented as madness or as a cloak for envy, disappointment, and malice; while the most flagitious crimes, the most extravagant vices and follies, if they are fashionable at court, will be disguised and dressed up in the habit of the most amiable virtues. This has formerly been the case in king Charles the second's days: the play-house was under a licence, what was the consequence? The playhouse retailed nothing but the politics, the vices and the follies of the court: not to expose them, no, but to recommend them, though it must be granted their politics were often as bad as their vices, and much more pernicious than their other follies. It is true the court had at that time a great deal of wit, it was then indeed full of men of true wit and great humor; but it was the more dangerous, for the courtiers did then, as thorough-paced courtiers always will do, they sacrificed their honor by making their wit and their humor subservient to the court only; and what made it still more dangerous, no man could appear upon the stage against them. We know that Dryden, the poet-laureat of that reign, always represents the cavaliers as honest, brave, merry fellows, and fine gentlemen; indeed his fine gentleman, as he generally draws him, is an atheistical, lewd, abandoned fellow, which was at that time,  
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it seems, the fashionable character at court; on the other hand he always represents the dissenters as hypocritical, dissembling rogues, or stupid senseless boobies.—When the court had a mind to fall out with the Dutch, he wrote his *Amboyna*\*, in which he represents the Dutch as a pack of avaricious, cruel, ungrateful rascals:—and when the exclusion bill was moved in parliament, he wrote his *Duke of Guiset*, in which those who were for preserving and securing the religion of their country, were exposed under the character of the duke of Guise and his party, who leagued together for excluding Henry IV. of France from the throne, on account of his religion.—The city of London too was made to feel the partial mercenary licentiousness of the stage at that time; for the citizens having at that time, as well as now, a great deal of property, they had a mind to preserve that property, and therefore they opposed some of the arbitrary measures which were then begun, but pursued more openly in the following reign; for which reason they were then always represented upon the stage as a parcel of designing knaves, dissembling hypocrites, griping usurers,—and cuckolds into the bargain.

My lords, the proper business of the stage, and that for which only it is useful, is to expose those vices and follies, which the laws cannot lay hold of, and to recommend those beauties and virtues, which ministers and courtiers seldom either imitate or reward; but by laying it under a licence, and under an arbitrary court-licence too, you will, in my opinion entirely pervert its use; for though I have the greatest esteem for that noble duke, in whose hands this power is at present designed to fall, though I have an entire confidence in his judgment and impartiality; yet I may suppose that a leaning towards the fashions of a court is sometimes hard to be avoided. It may be very difficult to make one, who is every day at court, believe that to be a vice or folly, which he sees daily practised by those he loves and esteems. By custom, even

\* This is not quite exact. The Dutch War began in 1672. The play was acted and printed in 1673.

† This was certainly a party-play, though the occasion of it may be doubted. It made its appearance in 1683, and was violently attacked by the Whigs. If lord Chesterfield had implicitly adopted the opinions of his grandfather Halifax, he would scarcely have spoken, as he does here, of the exclusion bill.

deformity itself becomes familiar, and at last agreeable. To such a person, let his natural impartiality be ever so great, that may appear to be a libel against the court, which is only a most just and a most necessary satire upon the fashionable vices and follies of the court. Courtiers, my lords, are too polite to reprove one another; the only place where they can meet with any just reproof, is a free though not a licentious stage; and as every sort of vice and folly, generally in all countries, begins at court, and from thence spreads through the country, by laying the stage under an arbitrary court-licence, instead of leaving it what it is, and always ought to be, a gentle scourge for the vices of great men and courtiers, you will make it a canal for propagating and conveying their vices and follies through the whole kingdom.

From hence, my lords, I think it must appear, that the bill now before us cannot so properly be called a bill for restraining licentiousness, as it may be called a bill for restraining the liberty of the stage, and for restraining it too in that branch which, in all countries, has been the most useful; therefore I must look upon this bill as a most dangerous encroachment upon liberty in general. Nay, farther, my lords, it is not only an encroachment upon liberty, but it is likewise an encroachment upon property. Wit, my lords, is a sort of property: it is the property of those who have it, and too often the only property they have to depend on. It is indeed but a precarious dependence. Thank God! we, my lords, have a dependence of another kind; we have a much less precarious support, and therefore cannot feel the inconveniencies of the bill now before us; but it is our duty to encourage and protect wit, whosoever's property it may be. Those gentlemen who have any such property, are all, I hope, our friends. Do not let us subject them to any unnecessary or arbitrary restraint. I must own, I cannot easily agree to the laying of any tax upon wit; but by this bill it is to be heavily taxed, it is to be excised; for, if this bill passes, it cannot be retailed in a proper way without a permit, and the lord chamberlain is to have the honor of being chief gauger, supervisor, commissioner, judge and jury. But what is still more hard, though the poor author, the proprietor I should say, cannot perhaps dine till he has found out and agreed with,

with, a purchaser; yet, before he can propose to seek for a purchaser, he must patiently submit to have his goods rummaged at this new excise-office, where they may be detained for fourteen days, and even then he may find them returned as prohibited goods, by which his chief and best market will be for ever shut against him; and that without any cause, without the least shadow of reason, either from the laws of his country, or the laws of the stage.

These hardships, this hazard, which every gentleman will be exposed to, who writes any thing for the stage, must certainly prevent every man of a generous and free spirit from attempting any thing in that way, and, as the stage has always been the proper channel for wit and humor, therefore, my lords, when I speak against this bill, I must think, I plead the cause of wit, I plead the cause of humor, I plead the cause of the British stage, and of every gentleman of taste in the kingdom. But, it is not, my lords, for the sake of wit only; even for the sake of his majesty's lord chamberlain, I must be against this bill. The noble duke who has now the honor to execute that office has, I am sure, as little inclination to disoblige as any man; but if this bill passes, he must disoblige, he may disoblige some of his most intimate friends. It is impossible to write a play, but some of the characters, or some of the satire, may be interpreted so as to point at some person or another, perhaps as some person in an eminent station. When it comes to be acted, the people will make the application, and the person against whom the application is made will think himself injured, and will at least privately resent it: at present this resentment can be directed only against the author; but when an author's play appears with my lord chamberlain's passport, every such resentment will be turned from the author, and pointed directly against the lord chamberlain, who by his stamp made the piece current. What an unthankful office are we therefore by this bill to put upon his majesty's lord chamberlain! an office which can no way contribute to his honor or profit, and such a one as must necessarily gain him a great deal of ill-will, and create him a number of enemies.

The last reason I shall trouble your lordships with, for my being against the bill, is that, in my opinion, it will in no way

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way answered the end proposed : I mean the end openly proposed, and I am sure the only end which your lordships propose. To prevent the acting of a play which has any tendency to blasphemy, immorality, sedition, or, private scandal, can signify nothing, unless you can prevent its being printed and published. On the contrary, if you prevent its being acted, and admit of its being printed, you will propagate the mischief: your prohibition will prove a bellows, which will blow up the fire you intend to extinguish. This bill can therefore be of no use for preventing either the public or the private injury intended by such a play, and consequently can be of no manner of use, unless it be designed as a precedent, as a leading step towards another for subjecting the press likewise to a licenser. For such a wicked purpose indeed it may be of great use ; and in that light it may most properly be called a step towards arbitrary power.

Let us consider, my lords, that arbitrary power has seldom or never been introduced into any country at once. It must be introduced by slow degrees, and as it were step by step, lest the people should perceive its approach. The barriers and fences of the people's liberty must be plucked up one by one, and some plausible pretences must be found for removing or hood-winking, one after another, those sentries who are posted by the constitution of a free country, for warning the people of their danger. When these preparatory steps are once made, the people may then indeed, with regret, see slavery and arbitrary power making long strides over their land, but it will be too late to think of preventing or avoiding the impending ruin. The stage, my lords, and the press are two of our out-sentries ; if we remove them, if we hood-wink them,—if we throw them in fetters, the enemy may surprize us. Therefore I must look upon the bill now before us as a step, and a most necessary step too, for introducing arbitrary power into this kingdom : it is a step so necessary, that if ever any future ambitious king, or guilty minister, should form to himself so wicked a design, he will have reason to thank us, for having done so much of the work to his hand ; but such thanks, or thanks from such a man, I am convinced, every one of your lordships would blush to receive and scorn to deserve.