Ld. North

Mar. 17 1778

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Lord North has the honour of returning the paper of Admiral Keppel to his Majesty. The Majesty last night was owing to the situation & necessity of affairs, & not to any confidence the House seems to have in the administration. Lord North declared that he would not quit his post unless his Majesty & the public were ready to fill it with an abler person, & this he thought it necessary to do in hopes that an arrangement might be made to his Majesty's satis=faction, by his continuing in place, & not throwing matters into confusion by a hasty retreat, but he does most earnestly intreat his Majesty to desist from making his continuance a necessary condition of any arrangement: as, he fears, that no Ministry can

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be found which will be able to carry this nation through its present difficulties unless the point of continuing Lord North at the head of the Treasury is given up. While Office was only vexatious & troublesome, Lord North, though always sensible of his being unequal to his Post, obeyd his Majesty's commands by remaining in the situation where his Majesty had thought proper to place him. Though he often solicited & pressed his dismission, he thought that he ought not to do any thing disagreeable to so good & gracious a Master, & therefore determined to wait till his Majesty should be pleased to release him. But the times have sadly changed their appearance & Lord North has too much reason to be afraid that a great part of our present ills is owing to the predilection which his Majesty has shewn to him, & to the perseverance with which he has continued him in Office. The present situation of affairs requires new men & able men. Lord North would feel himself highly criminal if he should permit his interests & situation to stand in the way of any arrangement which may rescue his King & country from the present impending ruin. That he may be the victim selected by any new set of men is very possible but he has so much confidence

in his own innocence & the protection of the Law that he does not fear the utmost of their resentment, & he will add, that Capital punishment itself is, in Lord North's opinion, preferable to that constant anguish of mind which he feels from the consideration that his continuance in Office is ruining his Majesty's affairs without resource. The Nation may yet be saved, but much time is not left to do it in, and it can not be saved without a change of men, & particularly, of the first Lord of the Treasury. Lord North therefore, most earnestly & humbly intreats his Majesty

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no longer to remain attach'd to that point, for, though Lord North will keep up a good countenance in public to prevent, if possible, the mischief that may arise from a contrary conduct, yet he can not continue much longer in office in any event both because he is conscious that his conti=nuance there is the ruin of the Nation, & because his former incapacity is so much aggravated by his present debility of mind that he will soon be totally unfit for the performance of any ministerial duty. In this situation, He once

more intricate that his situation may no longer be an absolute Bar to any negotiation from whence a prospect may arise of benefit to the country at this alarming crisis. The longer it is delayed, the more unreasonable will be the terms pressed upon his Majesty, because every day will add strength to those whom his Majesty may think proper to invite to his service. If L^d Chatham had been admitted when he first gave signs of a separation from L^d Rockingham, he would have submitted to more reasonable terms than at present; He will now be more reasonable than he will be a fortnight hence, & sooner or later he or some other person in the opposition must be sent to, or this Nation is undone.

Downing Street. Tuesday Nov: 17.

Ld. North
March 17th 1778
No. 1.

rel. to a new administration
– desires not to be continued
in office