KING WILLIAM’S SPEECH TO
PARLIAMENT, 2 OCTOBER, 1690

His majesty ascended the throne, being adorned with his regal crown and robes (the peers being likewise in their robes), commanded the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod to give notice to the House of Commons that they attend his majesty presently, with their attendants.

While being come, his majesty made the speech following:

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My Lords and Gentlemen,

Since I last met you, I have used my best endeavours to reduce Ireland into such a condition this year as that it might be no longer a charge to England. And it has pleased God to bless my endeavours with such success that I doubt not but I should have been fully possessed of that kingdom by this time had I been enabled to go into the field as soon as I should have done, and as is more especially necessary in Ireland, where the rains are so great, and begin so early.

I think myself obliged to take notice how well the army there have behaved themselves upon all occasions, and borne great hardships with little pay, and with so much patience and willingness as could not proceed but from an affection to my service, and a zeal for the Protestant religion.

I have already made it evident how much I have preferred the satisfaction of my subjects before the most solid advantages of the crown by parting with so considerable a branch of its inheritance, and it is no less apparent that I have asked no revenue for myself but what I have readily subjected to be charged for the use of the war.

I do, at my departure, give order for all the public accounts to be made ready for use against my return, and I have commanded them to be laid before the House of Commons, by which they will see that the real want of what was necessary beyond the funds given, and the not getting in due time that for which funds were assigned, have been the principal causes why the army is in so much arrear of their pay, and the stores both for the navy and the ordnance not supplied as they ought to be.

Now, as I have neither spent my person nor my plans to do you all the good I could, so I doubt not but, if you will as cheerfully do your parts, it is in your power to make both me and yourselves happy, and the nation great. And, on the other hand it is too plain, by what the French have let you see so lately, that, if the present war be not prosecuted with vigour, no nation in the world is exposed to greater danger.

I hope, therefore, there will be no more upon that subject than to lay before you, gentlemen of the House of Commons, the state of what will be necessary for the support of the fleet and armies, which cannot possibly admit of being lessened in the year ensuing, and to recommend to you the charge of the clearing of my revenue, so as to enable me to subsist and to maintain the charge of the civil list, the revenue being so engaged that it must be only applied, after the last of November next, to pay off the debts already charged upon it; and therefore a present consideration must be had of the arrears of the army, which shall likewise be laid before you, and for all which I must desire a sufficient and timely supply.

It is further necessary to inform you that the whole support of the confederacy abroad will absolutely depend upon the speed and vigour of your proceedings in this session.

And here I must take notice, with great satisfaction, of the readiness with which my subjects of all degrees have shown, both in this city and in the several counties, by giving their assistance so cheerfully as they did, in my absence, while the French fleet was upon our coasts; and besides this so convincing mark of the good intentions of my people, I have found through all the countries where I passed, both at my going into Ireland and in my return from thence, such demonstrations of their affection, that I could have not the least doubt but I shall find the same from their representatives in parliament.

I cannot conclude without taking notice also how much the honour of the nation has been exposed by the ill conduct of our fleet in the last summer’s engagement against the French, and I think myself so much concerned to see it vindicated that I cannot rest satisfied till the example has been made of such as shall be found faulty upon their examination and trial, which was not practicable while the whole fleet was abroad, but is now put into the proper way of being done as soon as may be.

My Lords and Gentlemen,

I look upon the future well-being of this kingdom to depend upon the result of your councils and determinations at this time, and the benefit will be double by the speed of your resolutions, in so much that I hope you will agree with me in this conclusion, that whoever goes about to obstruct or divert your applications to these matters, preferably to all others, can neither be my friend nor the kingdom’s.

This being ended, his majesty withdrew, and the Commons went to their House.