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About This Title:

Vol. 1 of a 2 volume work. David Ramsay’s *History of the American Revolution* appeared in 1789 during an enthusiastic celebration of nationhood. It is the first American national history written by an American revolutionary and printed in America. Ramsay, a well-known Federalist, was an active participant in many of the events of the period and a member of the Continental Congress from South Carolina. Ramsay discusses the events and ideas of the American Revolution (from the outbreak of turbulence in the 1760s to the onset of Washington’s administration) and makes an ardent Federalist defense of the Constitution of 1787. Based on the original and authorized 1789 version, this is the first new modern edition of the work.
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Foreword

David Ramsay’s *The History of the American Revolution* appeared in 1789, during an enthusiastic celebration of American nationhood. “Nationhood,” moreover, was beginning to take on new cultural and intellectual connotations. The United States had declared its political independence more than a decade earlier, and a rising group of “cultural nationalists” was asserting that it was now time to declare cultural independence as well. The American people would never be truly autonomous otherwise. “However they may boast of Independence, and the freedom of their government,” wrote Noah Webster, lexicographer, historian, and the nationalists’ most brilliant spokesman, “yet their opinions are not sufficiently independent.” Instead of liberating themselves from the influences of English culture, as they had from England’s arms and government, the Americans were continuing to manifest “an astonishing respect for the arts and literature of their parent country, and a blind imitation of its manners.” While such “habitual respect” for England was once understandable, even laudable, it had become an impediment to creating an independent American character and therefore posed dangers for the future.¹

Cultural nationalism was almost inevitable in the aftermath of a revolution that seemed to require Americans to define not only their political identity, but their spiritual identity as well. Such nationalism manifested itself in a variety of ways in literature and the arts, science, and education. In its superficial manifestations, it testified to an American inferiority complex, consisting mainly of defensive protests against the notion, common in eighteenth-century Europe, that the New World was a physically and morally debased version of the Old, and of mushy effusions of patriotic sentiment over any product of American literature, art, or science. Thus one commentator gushed over Ramsay’s *The History of the Revolution of South-Carolina* (1785), saying that it “reflects honour on this country, and gives room for hope that her literary will in time equal her military reputation,” and Rev. James Madison enthused that the work’s “Dress is altogether American.” Another reviewer, praising *The History of the American Revolution*, observed that it is a “necessity that the history of the American revolution be written in our own country, by a person of suitable abilities, who has witnessed the incidents attendant on that great event.”² Thus did patriotism pass for culture, and Ramsay’s work obviously measured up.

On a more sophisticated level, some cultural nationalists—Ramsay among them—developed greater insight into the idea of American cultural identity. These nationalists recognized that, along with the richly deserved celebration and self-congratulation, the new nation needed a strong unifying culture. Without a culture that articulated the fundamental tenets of liberty, constitutionalism, virtue, and simplicity, the principles of the American Revolution would soon become corrupted. Such corruption could come from without, through the people’s continued reliance on English cultural values; it could also come from within, through the disintegrating forces already operating to dissolve the new nation into a multitude of disparate fragments. This realization prompted the nationalists anxiously to develop a notion of American identity that rested on two major premises: that politics, culture, and society

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were inextricably intertwined, so that a change in any one would subtly alter the others; and that culture was a significant force in shaping human consciousness, an idea which offered a powerful incentive to use literature as a means of exhortation.

Like all the historians of the Revolutionary era, Ramsay saw historical writing as a vehicle for fostering nationhood, an instrument for promoting the kind of unity, even homogeneity, that the cultural nationalists desired. Almost all the leading cultural nationalists were also political nationalists, the surest sign of which was that they saw the Constitution as the great vehicle for both creating and preserving American unity. And, although it was possible to be a nationalist culturally while opposing the Constitution for political reasons (as the historian, poet, and playwright Mercy Otis Warren made clear), Ramsay’s reasons for writing a peculiarly consensual or national history were intimately tied to his Federalist political views.

Those reasons were motivated by Ramsay’s perception that the new nation faced two sorts of danger: on the one hand, the danger of political divisions between the states and within each state, divisions which had already given rise to factions with competing economic interests; and on the other, the threat of social and cultural divisions among the people of the several states and regions, which could readily lead to insularity and hostility.

Thus, for example, he wrote in political terms about his fellow South Carolinians who put local interests ahead of national unity and opposed ratification of the Constitution. “To write, to speak, or even to think of a separation of the states is political blasphemy,” he wrote to Jedidiah Morse. “‘One Indivisible’ is my motto.” He even postponed publication of his history of the Revolution until the fate of the Constitution had been decided, for “The revolution cannot be said to be completed till that or something equivalent is established.” But Ramsay continued to fear the potential for disunity even after the Constitution had been operating for years. “We should, above all things, study to promote the union and harmony of the different states,” he cautioned in 1794. “We should consider the people of this country … as forming one whole, the interest of which should be preferred to that of every part.”

While it is impossible to separate his political from his cultural motives, Ramsay was at his best when he spoke of the importance of historical writing with his cultural concerns in mind. In fact, in his Federalist pamphlet, “An Address to the Freemen of South-Carolina (1788),” he cast one of his strongest political arguments for the Constitution in cultural terms. He called upon his fellow Carolinians to “consider the people of all the thirteen states, as a band of brethren, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, inhabiting one undivided country, and designed by heaven to be one people.” Ramsay was as sensitive as any intellectual of his era to the kinds of divisions, real and potential, that tended to separate Americans and undermine the unity he sought. Even ratification of the Constitution was less a culmination than a beginning, less a sign of unity than a foundation for it. “We are too widely disseminated over an extensive country & too much diversified by different customs & forms of government to feel as one people[,] which we are,” he confided to John Eliot in 1795. But through historical writings, such as Jeremy Belknap’s History of New Hampshire (1792), “we might become better acquainted with each
other in that intimate familiar manner which would wear away prejudices—rub off asperities & mould us into a homogenous people.” Belknap’s achievement was all the more remarkable, for Belknap had written about a single state, yet his work breathed a national spirit.\(^8\) In short, even in ostensibly local history, it was possible—indeed, necessary—to write of the nation and its character, for such writings tended to unify the people. “I long to see Dr. [Hugh] Williamson’s history of North Carolina,” Ramsay wrote to Belknap in 1795. “Indeed I wish to see a history of every state in the Union written in the stile and manner of yours & Williams’s history of Vermont. We do not know half enough of each other. Enthusiastic as I am for the Unity of our republic[,] I wish for every thing that tends to unite us as one people who know[,] esteem & love each other.”\(^9\) In 1809, Ramsay’s own *The History of South-Carolina* would join the list of nationalistic state histories.

Ramsay’s passion for unity and his fear of fragmentation prompted him to invent a national past characterized by consensus. This is not to say that Ramsay was a dissembler or deceiver who created a past out of whole cloth. It is, rather, to emphasize that for Ramsay, as for all the historians of the Revolution, historical writing was not so much an end in itself as it was a means to cultivate the political and moral consciousness of the present and future generations. Sensitive to divisions within America—political, ethnic, racial, religious, economic—Ramsay genuinely feared chaos, and his experience in both state and confederation politics led him to believe that only by generating a constellation of commonly held values and principles could the nation resist the forces that tended to pull it apart. Ramsay did not invent those values and assumptions; he drew them out of the intellectual climate of Revolutionary America and found clues to them in America’s past. But he focused upon them and molded them into the story of the new nation, so that his version of the past appeared to be inevitable. Thus, when Ramsay spoke of using history as an instrument of national unity, he meant to incite future generations to commit themselves to the principles of revolutionary republicanism.\(^10\)

Ramsay, even more than his contemporary historians, was experienced in politics, knowledgeable about world affairs, sensitive to the economic and political interests of his compatriots, and had access to a vast number of historical records. He knew that America’s past had been marked by tensions that from time to time had erupted into open conflict. Yet he purposefully created an image of the colonial past that diminished the importance of conflicts and portrayed the colonists as revolutionaries—an image of consensus, unity, and an unflagging commitment to republican principles. In short, he attempted to create a national future by inventing a consensual past—to provide an instant tradition for a revolutionary people.

Ramsay’s principal strategy was to establish a republican lineage, an unbroken succession of American generations that were strenuously committed to the principles of revolutionary republicanism from the moment of settlement in the seventeenth century. The colonists’ chief characteristic was that they formed an intellectual, even spiritual, consensus on three major principles: they were politically dedicated to an ordered liberty within the context of law and balanced, representative government; they were ethically committed to the obligations of conscience and the public good, so that social life was simple and felicitous and individual conduct marked by industry
and prudence; and they were convinced philosophically that people are free and efficacious beings who are responsible for their actions and for the consequences their actions bring about. It was this constellation of fundamental principles that constituted the American national character as Ramsay depicted it; and it was to this constellation that he pointed when he exhorted members of his own and future generations to develop cultural unity as a bulwark against division.

Again, Ramsay insisted that these principles were not new to the Revolutionary generation; the conflicts between the Americans and the British during the 1760s and '70s had merely called forth the original settlers’ character. The complex coincidence of geography, politics, social arrangements, and values in colonial America had “produced a warm love for liberty, a high sense of the rights of human nature, and a predilection for independence.” 11

“From their first settlement, the English Provinces received impressions favourable to democratic forms of government.” Colonization generally coincided with the struggles in England between Parliament and the crown, so that the issue of popular government based on consent, as contrasted with the divine rights of kings, was a current topic of debate. The colonists who emigrated to the New World consisted mainly of people who were “hostile to the claims of [monarchical] prerogative.” They “were from their first settlement in America, devoted to liberty, on English ideas, and English principles.” Crucially, these ideas were not mere abstractions. The colonists “not only conceived themselves to inherit the privileges of Englishmen, but though in a colonial situation, actually possessed them.” 12

By showing that republican principles and practices had been deeply ingrained in the people for generations, Ramsay vivified the image of a revolutionary past so far as to suggest that the colonists had been independent from the beginning. “The circumstances under which New-England was planted, would a few centuries ago have entitled them, from their first settlement, to the privileges of independence.” The colonists had set out at their own expense, with no prospects other than hard work, to build homes and plant civilization in a wilderness. They purchased their lands from “the native proprietors” and exerted themselves to reap the bounties of nature. One hardly needed John Locke to make the argument that people who expended their own labor, paid for their own lands, and voluntarily formed their own governments owed no obligations to Britain except those that “resulted from their voluntary assent” as revealed in “express or implied compact.” And those were manifestly limited. The people knew that government rested upon contracts freely entered; that taxation and representation were indissolubly joined; that they held and alienated their property only by consent; that the end of government was the happiness of the people; that the people were free to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances; and that, all proximate means failing, the people had the natural right to rebel against tyrannical rule. 13 Thus did the colonizing generation consist of proto-revolutionaries.

The colonists were not only republicans in politics, they were also dedicated to personal and social practices that conduced to individual happiness and to the public good. “The state of society in the Colonies favoured a spirit of liberty and independence,” Ramsay wrote. Here, the “inhabitants were all of one rank. Kings,
Nobles, and Bishops, were unknown to them.” The people were “unaccustomed to that distinction of ranks” which characterized European society, and they were “strongly impressed with an opinion, that all men are by nature equal.” The colonists’ religious practices “also nurtured a love for liberty.” The majority were Protestants, Ramsay noted, “and all protestantism is founded on a strong claim to natural liberty, and the right of private judgment.” There were, of course, numerous sects, but “they all agreed in the communion of liberty, and all reprobated the courtly doctrines of passive obedience, and non-resistance.” Nor were the colonists subjected to the pernicious effects of the luxury and opulence indulged in by the courts of Europe. Instead, “inured from their early years to the toils of a country life, they dwelled in the midst of rural plenty.”

Colonial American society, in short, was characterized by simplicity of manners, and habits of industry, prudence, and morality. The colonists’ experience thus “gave a cast of independence to the manners of the people” and diffused among them “the exalting sentiments” of liberty.14

Given the colonists’ ingrained political and social values and their commitment to the principles of liberty and democratic government, it was obvious that the American Revolution was not a sudden upsurge of resentment against particular acts of Parliament. Resistance and revolution were the inevitable and justifiable responses of a people long habituated to such values. “The genius of the Americans”—that is, their original “republican habits and sentiments”—had prepared them to resist encroachments on their rights and to form popular governments during the Revolutionary era. This was the final element in Ramsay’s message to future generations: confronted with arbitrary power, the colonists had established a tradition of showing the courage of their convictions, resisting inroads against their liberties, and taking responsibility for the future.15

But why should Ramsay have presented this manifestly one-dimensional image of the colonists as strenuous republicans, committed to simplicity, industry, prudence, equality, and natural rights? To some extent he actually did see them as American revolutionaries in the making, for so powerful was the “republican synthesis” in his own day that it shaped his ideas and experience and predisposed him to see all of history in its terms.16 Yet this will not entirely explain Ramsay’s over-simplifications, which seem drastic insofar as his history contains little or no intercolonial rivalry, popular uprisings against proprietary governors, political strife among competing interest groups, ethnic tensions, religious intolerances, or class divisions. Even slavery appears in Ramsay’s History as a mitigated evil, which, while manifestly wrong, at least had produced sentiments of liberty and independence among the masters.17 If for five or six generations the Americans had held the deeply ingrained political, social, moral, and philosophical principles that Ramsay described and if they had experienced a minimum of conflict, then why did Ramsay have to remind his readers of the American tradition above all else?

The answer contains three parts. First, as noted earlier, there were Ramsay’s apprehensions. He feared that disunity would rend the fabric of the new nation—indeed, that without shared assumptions, principles, and values, as well as a
federal Constitution, America might even separate into thirteen autonomous states or into two or three regional governments. In either case, it would become prey to the great European powers, even if it did not destroy itself from within.18

Second, Ramsay feared that the great tradition, particularly its powerful moral elements, had been badly damaged by the war. Throughout the war years and into the 1780s, Ramsay expressed his doubts whether the people had sufficient moral courage to make a republican experiment work. Within a year of delivering his stirring vision of an American republican future in his “Oration on the Advantages of American Independence” (1778), he wrote to William Henry Drayton that “A spirit of money-making has eaten up our patriotism.” To Benjamin Rush he added: “I most devoutly wish for peace. Our morals are more depreciated than our currency, & that is bad enough.” By 1783 he was worried that “This revolution has introduced so much anarchy that it will take half a century to eradicate the licentiousness of the people. I wish for the honor of human nature that in these last ages of the world it may appear that mankind are capable of enjoying the blessings of freedom without the extravagancies that usually accompany it.” By 1785 the theme of internal corruption had become more insistent and urgent. “I feel with you the declension of our public virtue,” he wrote to John Eliot. “Liberty which ought to produce every generous principle has not in our republics been attended with its usual concomitants. Pride[, Luxury[,] dissipation & a long train of unsuitable vices have overwhelmed our country.” And within a year he expressed the ultimate fear: “We have neither honesty nor knowledge enough for republican governments. … During the war we thought the termination of that would end all our troubles. It is now ended three years & our public situation is as bad as ever.”19 ~ ~

The third part of the answer is that historical writings, like Fourth of July orations, sermons, and “all the powers of Eloquence” had the capacity to shape thought, and thus historians, like ministers and politicians, had an obligation to use their writings “to counter-act that ruinous propensity we have for foreign superfluities & to excite us to the long neglected virtues of Industry & frugality.”20 History, in short, was a moral art. That was why Ramsay praised Belknap’s and Williams’s histories; that was why he believed that John Eliot’s Biographical Dictionary “rendered an essential service to the living by holding up so many excellent models for their imitation from the illustrious dead”; and that was why he deliberately omitted conflict and strife in the colonial past.21 Indeed, Ramsay once drew an instructive analogy between history and fiction: “Novelists take fiction & make it a vehicle of their opinions on a variety of subjects,” he observed. “I take truth & the facts of history for the same purpose.”22 Ramsay was well aware that he was using “art” in the service of history and history in the service of morality and national unity. “Had I a voice that could be heard from New Hampshire to Georgia,” he said in 1794, “it should be exerted in urging the necessity of disseminating virtue and knowledge among our citizens.” His histories represented that voice.

Ramsay’s voice was, in fact, heard all over America and over much of Europe as well.23 Between 1785, when he was thirty-six, and his death in 1815, he published three histories—two on South Carolina and The History of the American Revolution—that remain significant after two hundred years. He also wrote numerous
other works, ranging from an analysis of yellow fever and well water in Charleston, to a eulogy on the death of his friend and mentor, Benjamin Rush, to a memoir of his wife, Martha Laurens Ramsay, to two examples of that distinctively American genre, the Fourth of July oration.

Even in an age dominated by such *philosophes* as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, Ramsay is notable for his fertile and restless intellect. He entered the sophomore class of the College of New Jersey (later renamed Princeton) in 1762 and was graduated three years later at age sixteen. For the next five years he taught school in Maryland and Virginia. Deciding finally to pursue a career in medicine, he enrolled in the newly reorganized medical school of the College of Philadelphia, which boasted an excellent faculty that included the brilliant twenty-four-year-old Rush. Ramsay received his Bachelor of Physic in 1773. On Ramsay’s graduation Rush summarized the talents of his young friend, whom he esteemed as “far superior to any person we ever graduated at our college; his abilities are not only good, but great; his talents and knowledge are universal; I never saw so much strength of memory and imagination, united to so fine a judgment.”

In 1774, after practicing medicine for a year in Cecil County, Maryland, Ramsay set out for Charleston, where he made his home for the rest of his life. Charleston was then a leading Southern city, with some 12,000 inhabitants, a growing commerce, and a well-defined social hierarchy that divided whites from one another along class lines and whites from blacks along racial lines—clear evidence of the divisions in society to which he was so sensitive and which he deemphasized in his *History*. Yet within a year of his arrival, this outsider from Pennsylvania, the son of immigrants and a Presbyterian in the midst of an Anglican elite, had married Sabina Ellis, daughter of a prominent merchant, and within three years, he was elected to the South Carolina assembly. By 1778 Ramsay had a seat on the state’s prestigious privy council. He served in the Continental Congress in 1785, returned to his seat in the state assembly in 1786, served as a delegate to the convention that ratified the South Carolina state constitution in 1788. From 1791 to 1797 Ramsay was president of the state senate. His only disappointment in politics was his resounding defeat by William Loughton Smith for a seat in the first federal congress.

Neither his political nor his medical and scientific careers, however, seemed to satisfy his intellectual curiosity. Ramsay turned to historical writing, he explained to Thomas Jefferson, “when I was in confinement in St. Augustine in the year 1781 and [it] has employed my leisure hours ever since.” But Ramsay was drawn to history and to his national vision by his political experience, which convinced him that state government was, by turns, too timid and too wild to solve many of the problems that arose in the post-Revolutionary era. “There is a languor in the States that forebodes ruin,” he complained to Rush in 1786. He also noted the “temporising” of the Southern states in particular, and feared the disintegration of the United States if the Constitutional Convention did not produce “an efficient federal government.”

Politics and government were no better in South Carolina; they may have been worse:

The eight years of war in Carolina were followed by eight years of disorganization, which produced such an amount of civil distress as diminished with some their
respect for liberty and independence. Several apprehended that the same scenes which had taken place in England in the seventeenth century after a long and bloody civil war, would be acted over again in America by a fickle people who had neither the fortitude nor the wisdom to govern themselves. … Peace and liberty were found inadequate to promote public happiness without the aid of energetic government.

The state legislature either languished and did nothing or legislated too much. The best and most courageous act performed by state officials, finally, was to agree to the Constitution that would constrain some of their own power! 29

With first-hand experience of the inefficiencies and vacillations of state government and an urge to cultivate eloquence, Ramsay began writing history. He announced optimistically in his “Oration on the Advantages of American Independence” (1778) that the very presence of free, republican institutions was bound to produce an exalted literature. In an oppressive regime, “ignorance,” after all, “was better than knowledge,” whereas “Eloquence is the child of a free state.” America, he predicted, “will produce poets, orators, criticks, and historians, equal to the most celebrated of the ancient commonwealths of Greece and Italy.”30

Despite his optimism about the prospects of culture in the new nation, Ramsay soon faced a grim reality. Although he became known as America’s “Tacitus” and “Polybius,” he learned all too quickly that “the trade of an author is a very poor one in our new world.” Concerning The History of the Revolution of South-Carolina, he lamented to fellow historian William Gordon: “My advances will not be replaced till I have sold 500 copies & my debts contracted and yet unpaid will require the sale of 700 more. The edition has cost me 5,000 dollars. The printers bill is 2500 dollars. The engravings 800[,] the binding 4/ 10 a copy. In short I have no brilliant pecuniary prospects before me.”31

Yet despite the financial failure of his South Carolina history, Ramsay immersed himself in The History of the American Revolution during his tenure in the Continental Congress. Here he had access to people prominent on a national level and to an enormous archive. He predicted to Rush that “I can write the general history of the revolution with more ease than I have wrote a part of it. Indeed, I have got the facts already collected.” He had ready to hand, he said, a great many documents: “from my access to papers … and the regularity of records in the offices of Congress[,] I have been enabled to do a great deal in a little time.”32 His facts may have been substantially collected, but Ramsay made the effort to pose numerous detailed questions to several people about various aspects of the Revolution. He wrote to Rush on several occasions; to Elias Boudinot (commissary general of prisoners for the Continental Army and a member of Congress for five years); to Gouverneur Morris (member of the New York provincial congress and for four years an assistant minister of finance under Robert Morris); to Charles Thomson (secretary of the Continental Congress from 1774 to 1789); and to John Adams. He also sent his manuscript to Charles Thomson, who read it, made comments on it, and promised to circulate it among other knowledgeable readers.33
No doubt these inquiries made for a better history. But Ramsay fared almost as poorly on this work as he had on the previous one. He had problems with his printer, Robert Aitken, whose work, said Ramsay, “offends against every principle of good printing. The printing[,] the spelling[,] the ink[,] the form of the lines are in many cases execrable.” In addition, asked the outraged Ramsay, “What think you of his stopping the work on the pretence of want of money[,] though 760 dollars were advanced in the time of the work[,] the whole of which was only to cost 1200 dollars?” He also complained that he had been “cheated by booksellers & printers,” who were taking far too much of the proceeds of the sales in advertising. Ramsay was eventually reduced to barter: “If my books that are unsold could be exchanged for a copy of your state laws or of the laws of the neighboring states,” he wrote to John Eliot, “I would be most pleased. I would exchange them for any good books rather than [that] they should remain on hand.” Finally, Ramsay had to swallow the fact that his History had been pirated by John Stockdale in London. It was bad enough that “The errors & blunders of Aitkens edition are many and cannot be corrected,” he wrote to John Eliot. Worse yet, “Stockdale has printed one in London without my consent & many of the copies of Aitkens edition are yet on hand.” Ramsay had not yet seen the London edition in April 1793, nor had he “any knowledge of it till it was nearly executed.” Needless to say, he realized no profit on Stockdale’s editions or on the several that were based on it.

Ramsay’s reputation as a historian was excellent throughout his life and for decades afterwards. The History of the American Revolution has enjoyed a resurgence of interest in the last twenty-five years. The only significant dissenting voice in the last two centuries was that of Orrin Grant Libby, who showed that Ramsay had plagiarized portions of both it and The History of the Revolution of South-Carolina from the Annual Register. Each issue of the Annual Register, published continuously from 1758, contained a superb “History of Europe” section which for some years was written by Edmund Burke. This section contained a narrative of the most important events in contemporary English history. Thus, during the years between 1765 and 1783, it was filled with news of American affairs—political, military, economic. Along with the sections known as “State Papers” and “Appendix to the Chronicle,” both of which contained the texts of contemporary documents, the “History of Europe” was a comprehensive, beautifully written narrative that had the additional merit of being written from an English Whig (and, therefore, an anti-war or pro-American) standpoint. Each issue of the Annual Register went through numerous editions and circulated widely in America.

Ramsay did, in fact, lift passages verbatim from the Annual Register, though Libby certainly exaggerated in suggesting that Ramsay “plagiarized a large part” of his book on the American Revolution either from it or from William Gordon’s work. But even if all the examples are conceded, they amount to a very small part of the seven hundred pages. More important, the plagiarism has no substantial impact on its value to modern readers; there is no reason for us to agree with Libby’s conclusion that, because of the plagiarism, the History is “well-nigh worthless.”

First, scholarly citation as we know it was not an issue for eighteenth-century writers, who honored the practice, if at all, only in the most irregular and idiosyncratic
manner. Second, eighteenth-century American histories were performances, not proofs; they more nearly resemble sermons, which inspire by enunciating principles and applying them to human situations, than scientific or legal discourses, which depend for their cogency and persuasiveness on their marshalling of evidence. Finally, and most importantly, Libby’s criticism, which spoke to the advocates of “scientific” historicism at the start of the twentieth century, has become largely irrelevant to most modern readers. While we still learn factual information from some of our “ancient” histories—Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), incredibly rich with detail, leaps to mind—we do not similarly value the factual nature of Ramsay’s histories with the possible exception of *The History of South-Carolina* (1809). Hence, we are less concerned with having precise information about Ramsay’s sources.

Instead, we learn from Ramsay the interpreter of his present and his past. We learn about the intellectual predilections of the eighteenth-century historian: the values, assumptions, principles, and expectations of one who lived and wrote amidst the events he narrated. We learn from the ways in which he shaped history: his use of language, his sense of the significance of people and events, his narrative style, his use of history as propaganda, as exhortation, and as fiction. We do not, in short, rely on Ramsay to tell us what happened during the Revolution, any more than we rely on him for medical advice, which included Benjamin Rush’s recommended practice: bleeding. In most respects we know a great deal more about what happened than he did, particularly since we are now the arbiters of what is significant. We rely on Ramsay not for information, but for the ways in which he reveals the sensibility through which the events of his era were filtered.

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Bibliography

The Writings Of David Ramsay

Manuscripts

Ramsay’s papers are scattered among almost two dozen repositories. Listed below are institutions with significant holdings:

Library Company of Philadelphia
Historical Society of Pennsylvania
Library of Congress
Massachusetts Historical Society
American Philosophical Society
South Carolina Historical Society
New York Public Library

Collections


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SECONDARY SOURCES


Editor’s Note

This edition of Ramsay’s *The History of the American Revolution* is the first to reprint the original 1789 edition printed by R. Aitken and Son in Philadelphia. That was the only edition that Ramsay actually authorized. The others, including the popular London edition of 1793, printed by John Stockdale, were pirated before the promulgation of effective copyright laws.

Aitken’s and Stockdale’s editions vary only minutely. In numbering the pages, Aitken omitted page numbers 321 and 322 of the first volume, so that the text flows directly from page 320 to page 323. Stockdale did not preserve Aitken’s error; we did, in order to conform to the pagination of the first edition. Aitken also rendered page 32 of volume I as page “13.” We have corrected that error, since it has no bearing on the actual pagination and since preserving it would have no value for modern readers. Stockdale’s copy of Aitken’s edition, like the one we used here, may have contained a few illegible passages. Stockdale must have interpolated at those points and occasionally misread the text. We have stayed with the wording of the original by comparing it with another printing.

Ramsay was substantially correct about Aitken’s “execrable” printing. Aitken’s punctuation is wildly irregular and his spelling idiosyncratic. He transposed letters and abbreviated titles inconsistently and, apparently, according to some inner vision. Thus, we were faced with numerous choices. We have tried here to fulfill the ideal of remaining as faithful to the original text as possible while producing a volume that is accessible to modern readers. We have silently corrected the text where errors were obviously the result of the printer—transposed letters, misspelled words—and where to preserve the errors would have no realistic scholarly or aesthetic value. In a number of instances Ramsay’s punctuation has been modernized. Most of the time this meant removing dashes erratically placed (by today’s standards) and extraneously placed (duplicating a directly preceding or succeeding punctuation mark). In rarer instances, periods and commas were inserted or removed to correct a glaring omission or a usage that strongly clashed with modern conventions of punctuation. As already implied, our policy was to make such alterations in as conservative a manner as possible—and thus a number of the original quirks and errors, which do have the merit of preserving something of the flavor of the first edition, still reside in this one.

We have, in addition, rendered lengthy quotations in block-indented form, rather than run quotation marks down both sides of paragraphs as in the original.

We have preserved the page numbers of the original, which here appear in brackets in the text. We have also preserved Ramsay’s and Aitken’s marginalia, although we have silently corrected dates appearing in the margins where the originals were clearly erroneous and deleted some of the most redundant of the dates that were repeated. We have added an index for the convenience of modern readers and researchers. Four appendices, interspersed between chapters rather than included together at the end of
the book, have been kept in the place originally assigned to them by Ramsay and Aitken.
Acknowledgments

In addition to sharing with me his knowledge and writings on Ramsay, Arthur H. Shaffer graciously read an early version of the introduction and offered useful suggestions. I am currently reviewing Shaffer’s authoritative biography of Ramsay, the manuscript of which arrived unfortunately too late for me to borrow from as liberally as I would have liked. Upon publication, Shaffer’s biography will be as indispensable as Brunhouse’s excellent collection of sources. Linda Levy Peck proved again the value of her friendship and her keen eye for bad writing. She favored the foreword with several readings, helping me to eliminate the gaffes that no longer appear. Dan McInerney and Bruce Kahler, two former Ph.D. students, also read this material and made numerous valuable suggestions. Bill Dennis, Barbara Reynolds, and Chuck Hamilton of Liberty Fund were, as always, a delight to work with. They took a chance on publishing two early American histories—first Mercy Otis Warren’s and then David Ramsay’s—and made the experiences gratifying for me.

In preparing Ramsay’s History for publication, I had the extraordinary experience of coming full circle. At the beginning of my graduate career in 1966, I was blessed by having Page Smith as my mentor and friend; at the end of my teaching career, there was David Ramsay, whom Page introduced to me, along with his passion for the beauty and deceptive simplicity of narrative. I have always identified the two, David Ramsay and Page Smith, no doubt because Page has always exemplified for me the finest spirit of the eighteenth century. If these volumes were mine, rather than Ramsay’s, to dedicate, I would dedicate them with admiration and respect to Page Smith.

L.H.C.
Preface [To The First Edition]

The materials for the following sheets were collected in the year 1782, 1783, 1785, and 1786; in which years, as a member of Congress, I had access to all the official papers of the United States. Every letter written to Congress by General Washington, from the day he took the command of the American army till he resigned it, was carefully perused, and it’s contents noted. The same was done with the letters of other general officers, ministers of Congress, and others in public stations. It was intended to have enlarged the work by the insertion of state papers, as proofs and illustrations of my positions. This I could easily have done, and shall do at a future time, and in a separate work, if the public require it. At present I thought it prudent to publish little more than a simple narrative of events, without introducing my authorities. Several of these are already in my History of the Revolution of South-Carolina, and such as are printed may be found in the periodical publications of the day. I have endeavoured to give much original matter at a small expence. As I write about recent events, known to thousands as well as myself, proofs are at present less necessary than they will be in future.

I appeal to the actors in the great scenes which I have described for the substantial truth of my narrative. Intentional misrepresentations, I am sure there are none. If there are any from other sources, I trust they will be found in small circumstances, not affecting the substance.

October 20, 1789
CHAPTER I

Of The Settlement Of The English Colonies, And Of The Political Condition Of Their Inhabitants.

[1] The Extensive Continent which is now called America, was three hundred years ago unknown to three quarters of the globe. The efforts of Europe during the fifteenth century to find a new path to the rich countries of the East, brought on the discovery of a new world in the West. Christopher Columbus acquired this distinguished honor in the year 1492, but a later navigator Americus Vespucius who had been employed to draw maps of the new discoveries, robbed him of the credit he justly merited of having the country called by his name.

In the following year 1493, Pope Alexander the sixth, with a munificence that cost him nothing, gave the whole Continent to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. This grant was not because the country was uninhabited, but because the nations existing there were infidels; and therefore in the opinion of the infallible donor not entitled to the possession of the territory in which their Creator had placed them. This extravagant claim of a right to dispose of the countries of heathen nations, was too absurd to be universally regarded, even in that superstitious age. And in defiance of it, several European sovereigns though devoted to the See of Rome undertook and successfully prosecuted further discoveries in the Western hemisphere.

[2] Henry the seventh of England, by the exertion of an authority similar to that of Pope Alexander, granted to John Cabot and his three sons a commission, “to navigate all parts of the ocean for the purpose of discovering Islands, Countries, Regions or Provinces, either of Gentiles or Infidels, which have been hitherto unknown to all christian people, with power to set up his standard and to take possession of the same as Vassals of the crown of England.”

By virtue of this commission, Sebastian Cabot explored and took possession of a great part of the North American continent, in the name and on behalf of the king of England.

The country thus discovered by Cabot was possessed by numerous tribes or nations of people. As these had been till then unknown to all other Princes or States, they could not possibly have owed either allegiance or subjection to any foreign power on earth; they must have therefore been independent communities, and as such capable of acquiring territorial property, in the same manner as other nations. Of the various principles on which a right to soil has been founded, there is none superior to immemorial occupancy. From what time the Aborigines of America had resided therein, or from what place they migrated thither, were questions of doubtful solution, but it was certain that they had long been sole occupants of the country. In this state no European prince could derive a title to the soil from discovery, because that can
give a right only to lands and things which either have never been owned or possessed, or which after being owned or possessed have been voluntarily deserted. The right of the Indian nations to the soil in their possession was founded in nature. It was the free and liberal gift of Heaven to them, and such as no foreigner could rightfully annul. The blinded superstition of the times regarded the Deity as the partial God of christians, and not as the common father of saints and savages. The pervading influence of philosophy, reason, and truth, has since that period, given us better notions of the rights of mankind, and of the obligations of morality. These unquestionably are not confined to particular modes of faith, but extend universally to Jews and Gentiles, to Christians and Infidels.

Unfounded however as the claims of European sovereigns to American territories were, they severally proceeded to act upon them. By tacit consent they adopted as a new law of nations, that the countries which each explored should be the absolute property of the discoverer. While they thus sported with the rights of unoffending nations, they could not agree in their respective shares of the common spoil. The Portuguese and Spaniards, inflamed by the same spirit of national aggrandizement, contended for the exclusive sovereignty of what Columbus had explored. Animated by the rancour of commercial jealousy, the Dutch and Portuguese fought for the Brazils. Contrary to her genuine interests, England commenced a war in order that her contraband traders on the Mexican coast, claimed by the king of Spain might no longer be searched. No farther back than the middle of the present century, a contest concerning boundaries of American territory belonging to neither, occasioned a long and bloody war between, France and England.

Though Queen Elizabeth and James the first denied the authority of the pope of Rome to give away the country of Infidels; yet they so far adopted the fanciful distinction between the rights of heathens and the rights of christians, as to make it the foundation of their respective grants. They freely gave away what did not belong to them with no other proviso, than that “the territories and districts so granted, be not previously occupied and possessed by the subjects of any other christian prince or State.”

The first English patent which was given for the purpose of colonising the country discovered by the Cabots, was granted by Queen Elizabeth to Sir Humphry Gilbert, but this proved abortive. Soon after she licensed Walter Raleigh, “to search for heathen lands not inhabited by christian people,” and granted to him in fee all the soil “within 200 leagues of the places where his people should make their dwellings and abidings.”

Under his auspices an inconsiderable colony took possession of a part of the American coast, which now forms North-Carolina. In honor of the Virgin Queen his sovereign, he gave to the whole country the name of Virginia. These first settlers and several others who followed them, were either destroyed by the natives, removed by succeeding navigators, or died without leaving any behind to tell their melancholy story, for they were never more heard of. No permanent settlement was effected till the reign of James the first. The national ardor which sprung from the long and vigorous administration of Queen Elizabeth,
continued to produce its effects for some time after she had ceased to animate the whole. Her successor though of an indolent disposition, possessed a laudable genius for colonisation. Naturally fond of novelty, he was much pleased with a proposal made to him by some of the projectors of that age “for deducing a colony into that part of America commonly called Virginia.”

He therefore granted letters patent to Thomas Gates and his associates, by which he conferred on them “all those territories in America, which were not then possessed by other christian princes or people, and which lay between the 34th and 45th degree of north latitude.” They were divided into two companies, the first consisting of adventurers of the city of London, was called the London company, the second consisting of merchants of Plymouth and some other Western towns, was called the Plymouth company. The adventurers were empowered to transport thither as many English subjects as should willingly accompany them; and it was declared “that the colonists and their children should enjoy the same liberties as if they had remained, or were born, within the realm.”

The month of April 1607, is the epoch of the first permanent settlement on the coast of Virginia, the name then given to all that extent of country which now forms thirteen States. The emigrants took possession of a peninsula on the Northern side of James-river, and erected a town which in honor of their sovereign they called James-Town. They soon experienced the embarrassments [5] which are the usual lot of new settlers. In a few months diseases swept away one half of their number. Those who survived were greatly chagrined by the many vexations incidental to their new and forlorn situation.

In 1609, the Southern or London company surrendered their rights to the crown and obtained a new patent. There were then added to the former adventurers, many of the first nobility and gentry. To them and their successors were granted, in absolute property, the lands extending from Cape Comfort along the sea coast, southward 200 miles, from the same promontory 200 miles northward, and from the Atlantic westward to the South sea. Licence was given to transport to Virginia, all persons willing to go thither. The colonists and their posterity were declared “to be entitled to the rights of subjects, as if they had remained within the realm.” The company being thus favoured by their sovereign, were encouraged to proceed with spirit in supporting and extending their settlement, but before this was thoroughly accomplished, a great waste of the human species had taken place. Within 20 years after the foundation of James-Town was laid upwards of 9000 English subjects had, at different times, migrated thither, but diseases, famine, wars with the natives, and the other inconveniences of their new settlement, had made such havoc among these adventurers, that by the end of that period, there remained alive only about 1800 of that large number. The same and other causes continued to operate so forcibly that, notwithstanding frequent accessions from new adventurers, Virginia in 1670, sixty three years after the settlement of James-Town contained no more than 40,000 inhabitants.

Thirteen years elapsed after James-Town began to be built before any permanent establishment was effected in the Northern or second Colony. Various attempts for that purpose had failed, nor was the arduous business accomplished, till it was undertaken by men who were influenced by higher motives than the extension of agriculture or commerce.
These men had been called Puritans in England, from their earnest desires of farther [6] reformation in the established church, and particularly for their aversion to certain popish habits and ceremonies, which they deemed sinful from their having been abused to idolatry. Such was the intolerance of the times, and so violent the zeal for uniformity, that popular preachers of this sect, though men of learning and piety were suspended, deprived, imprisoned, and ruined, for their not using garments or ceremonies which their adversaries acknowledged to be indifferent. Puritanism nevertheless gained ground. On experiment it was found that no attempts are more fruitless than those which are made with the view of bringing men to think alike on the subject of religion. The leaders both of Church and State were too little acquainted with the genuine principles of policy and christianity, to apply the proper remedy for preserving peace among discords sects. Instead of granting a general liberty of conscience, compulsory methods were adopted for enforcing uniformity. An act was passed for punishing all who refused to come to church or were present at any conventicle or meeting. The punishment was imprisonment till the convicted agreed to conform, and made a declaration of his conformity. If that was not done in three months, he was to quit the realm, and go into perpetual banishment. In case, he did not depart within the time limited, or returned afterwards without a license, he was to suffer death. Such is the renitency of the human mind to all impositions on conscience, that the more the Puritans were oppressed, the more were they attached to their distinguishing opinions, and the more did their sect prevail. Several of them suffered death, in preference to purchasing an exemption from legal penalties, by doing what, in their opinion, was wrong. It was afterwards resolved to send others, who had equally persevered in their non-conformity, into banishment. Many chose to avoid these evils by voluntarily exiling themselves from their native country.

A congregation of these Puritans, under the pastoral care of Mr. John Robinson, being extremely harassed for their religious opinions, resolved to elude their persecutors by removing to Holland. They continued there [7] ten years, and by hard labor, earned a living. Though they were much esteemed and kindly received by the Hollanders, they were induced by very cogent reasons to think of a second removal. The morals of the Dutch were in their opinion too dissolute; and they were afraid that their offspring would conform to the bad examples daily before them. They had also an ardent desire of propagating religion in foreign lands, and of separating themselves from all the existing establishments in Europe, that they might have an opportunity without interruption of handing down to future ages the model of a pure church, free from the admixture of human additions. America, the colonising of which, then excited a considerable share of public attention, presented a proper theatre for this purpose. After serious and repeated addresses to Heaven for direction, they resolved to cross the Atlantic. An application on their behalf, was made to their native sovereign King James, for full liberty and freedom of conscience, but nothing more could be obtained than a promise, that he would connive at and not molest them. The hope that, when at the distance of 3000 miles, they would be out of the reach of ecclesiastical courts, induced them nevertheless to venture. They sailed 101 in number from Plymouth, in September and arrived at Cape Cod in the November following.
Before landing they formed themselves into a body politic, under
the crown of England, for the purpose of “framing just and equal
laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices,” to which forty one of their number
subscribed their names, and promised all due submission and obedience. After
landing they employed themselves in making discoveries till the 20th of December.
They then fixed on a place for settlement, which they afterwards called New-
Plymouth and purchased the soil from its native proprietors.
These adventurers were now at the commencement of a long and
dreary winter, at an immense distance from their former
habitations, on the strange coast of an uncultivated country, without a friend to
welcome their arrival, or a house to shelter them. In settling down on bare creation
they had every [8] obstacle to surmount that could prove their firmness, or try their
patience. The climate was unfavourable; the season cold and pinching. The prospect
of obtaining a supply of provisions, by cultivating the stubborn soil, required an
immensity of previous labor, and was both distant and uncertain. From the disorders
occasioned by their tedious voyage, with insufficient accommodations, together with
those brought on them by the fatigues and exertions unavoidable in a new settlement,
and the rigor of the season, they buried forty four persons, nearly one half of their
original number, within six months after their landing. Animated with a high degree
of religious fervor, they supported these various hardships with unabated resolution.
The prospect of an exemption from the tyranny of ecclesiastical courts, and of an
undisturbed liberty to worship their creator in the way that was agreeable to their
consciences, was in their estimation a sufficient counterbalance to all that they
underwent.

This handful of people laid the foundation of New-England. From them and their
subsequent associates have sprung the many thousands that have inhabited
Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode-Island. The Puritans, to
which sect these primitive emigrants belonged, were a plain, frugal, industrious
people, who were strict observers of moral and social duties. They held, that the Bible
was the sole rule both of faith and practice—that every man was bound to study it and
to judge of its meaning for himself, and to follow that line of conduct and mode of
worship, which he apprehended to be thereby required. They were also of opinion that
no churches or church officers had any power over other churches or officers, so as to
control them—that all church members had equal rights and privileges—that the
imposition of articles of faith, modes of worship, habits or ceremonies, was
subversive of natural rights and an usurpation of power, not delegated to any man or
body of men. They viewed church hierarchy, and especially the lordly pomp of
Bishops, as opposed to the pure[,] simple, and equal spirit, of christianity. Their
sufferings for non-conformity disposed them to reflect on the nature [9] and extent of
civil authority, and led to a conviction that tyranny, whether in church or state, was
contrary to nature, reason and revelation. There was a similarity between their
opinions of government, and those which they held on the subject of religion. Each
strengthened the other. Both were favourable to liberty, and hostile to all undue
exercise of authority.

It is matter of regret, that these noble principles of liberty ceased to operate on these
emigrants soon after they got power into their hands.
In the eleventh year after their settlement in America they
resolved, “that no man should be admitted to the freedom of their
body politic, but such as were members of some of their churches,” and afterwards,
“that none but such should share in the administration of civil government, or have a
voice in any election.” In a few years more, they had so far forgot their own
sufferings, as to press for uniformity in religion, and to turn persecutors, in order to
accomplish it. No better apology can be made for this inconsistent conduct, than that
the true grounds of liberty of conscience were then neither understood, nor practiced
by any sect of Christians. Nor can any more satisfactory account of so open a
dereliction of former principles be offered, than that human nature is the same in all
bodies of men, and that those who are in, and those who are out of power, insensibly
exchange opinions with each other on a change of their respective situations. These
intemperate proceedings were overruled for good. As the intolerance of England
peopled Massachusetts, so the intolerance of that Province made many emigrate from
it, and gave rise to various distant settlements, which in the course of years were
formed into other Provincial establishments. Connecticut, Rhode-Island, and New-
Hampshire, were in a great measure shoots from the old venerable trunk
Massachusetts, and their early growth was much accelerated by her impolitic zeal for
uniformity. The country which was subdivided into these four Provinces had been
called New-England ever since the year 1614. The propriety of classing them under
one general name became more evident from their being settled by the same kind of
people, who were [10] strongly connected with each other by blood, uniformity of
manners, and a similarity of religious and political sentiments. The early population of
this Northern country was rapid. The Puritans, harrassed for their non-conformity in
England, passed over to it in great numbers. In the short space of twenty years from
its first settlement 21,200 settlers arrived in 298 vessels. About the year 1640, from a
change of affairs, the emigration from Old to New-England in a great measure ceased.

Maryland was the third English colony settled in North America, but the first which
from its beginning, was erected into a Province of the empire. The first and second
colonies were many years governed by corporations, and in a manner subversive of
natural liberty, but the third was from its first settlement ruled by laws enacted in a
provincial legislature. The first emigration to Maryland consisting of about two
hundred gentlemen, chiefly of the Roman Catholic religion, sailed from England in
November, 1632, and landed near the river Potowmack in the beginning of the
subsequent year.

Calvert their leader purchased the right of the Aborigines, and
with their consent took possession of a town, which he called St.
Mary’s. He continued carefully to cultivate their friendship, and lived with them on
terms of perfect amity. The lands which had been thus ceded were planted with
facility, because they had already undergone the discipline of Indian tillage. Food was
therefore easily procured. The Roman Catholics, unhappy in their native land, and
desirous of a peaceful asylum, went over in great numbers to Maryland. Lord
Baltimore, to whom the Province had been granted, laid the foundation of its future
prosperity on the broad basis of security to property, and of freedom in religion. The
wisdom of these measures converted a dreary wilderness into a prosperous colony,
because men exert themselves in their several pursuits in proportion as they are
assured of enjoying in safety those blessings which they wish for most. Never did a
people enjoy more happiness than the inhabitants of Maryland under Cecilius the founder of the Province. While Virginia persecuted the Puritans, her [11] severity compelled many to pass over into this new Province, the Assembly of which had enacted, “that no persons, professing to believe in Christ Jesus should be molested in respect of their religion, or in the free exercise thereof.” The prudence of the one colony, acquired what the folly of the other had thrown away. Mankind then beheld a new scene on the theatre of English America. They saw in Massachusetts the Puritans persecuting various sects, and the church of England in Virginia, actuated by the same spirit, harassing those who dissented from the established religion, while the Roman Catholics of Maryland tolerated and protected the professors of all denominations. In consequence of this liberal policy, and the other prudent measures adopted by the rulers of this Province, it rapidly increased in wealth and population.

The distractions which convulsed England for 25 years preceding the restoration in 1660, left no leisure for colonising; but no sooner was Charles the Second restored to the throne of his ancestors, than it was resumed with greater spirit than ever.

Soon after that event the restored monarch granted a charter to Connecticut, which had been previously settled by a voluntary association of persons, who held the soil by an Indian title, without any authority from England. By this charter King Charles established a pure democracy. Every power, legislative, judicial and executive, was invested in the freemen of the corporation, or their delegates, and the colony was under no obligation to communicate its legislative acts to the national sovereign.

In the year following, a royal charter, with a grant of similar powers, was conferred on Rhode-Island and Providence plantations. These, like Connecticut, had been previously settled by emigrants chiefly from Massachusetts, who as an independent people had seated themselves on land fairly obtained from the native proprietors, without any authority from the parent state. This colony was originally planted on the Catholic principle, “That every man who submits peaceably to the civil authority, may [12] worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, without molestation,” and under all the changes it has undergone, there has been no departure from that broad basis of universal toleration.

In the same year a patent was granted to Lord Clarendon and others, comprehending that extent of country, which now forms the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Carolina though settled originally as one government, was about the year 1728 divided into two. Georgia was, in the year 1732, formed by George the Second into a distinct Province.

In the year 1664, King Charles the Second gave to his brother James Duke of York, a patent which included New-York and New-Jersey. These Provinces had been previously settled by Dutch Colonists, and held as territories of the United Netherlands, but they were easily reduced to the obedience of the King of England, who claimed the country by the right of prior discovery. The Duke of York in the same year, gave a deed of New-Jersey to Lord Berkely and Sir George Carteret.
Seventeen years afterwards King Charles gave to William Penn, a patent for Pennsylvania. Mr. Penn some time posterior to this, obtained a farther grant of the land on the Western side of the River Delaware, and South of Pennsylvania, which was formed into a separate Government, and is now the State of Delaware. Notwithstanding these charters Mr. Penn did not think himself invested with the right of the soil, till he had purchased it from the native proprietors. In the charter of Pennsylvania; there was no express stipulation as had been inserted in all other Colonial patents “that the Pennsylvanians and their descendants should be considered as subjects born within the realm.” But clauses were inserted, providing that “acts of Parliament concerning trade and navigation, and the customs, should be duly observed.” And it was also stipulated, [“]that no custom or other contribution should be laid on the inhabitants or their estates, unless by the consent of the Proprietary, or Governor and Assembly, or by act of Parliament in England.” The omission of the first clause, the insertion [13] of the second, and the reservation in favor of Parliament, in the last, may have been occasioned by difficulties which had then arisen about the rights of the Colonists and the power of Parliament over them. Massachusetts had before that time questioned the authority of Parliament to tax them and legislate for them. The general clause that the Colonists should retain all the privileges of Englishmen had already been made, the basis of claims against which some in the Mother Country had many objections. Perhaps the ruling powers of England were sensible, that they had previously delegated too much of independence to their Colonies, and intended to be more guarded in future, but their caution was too late. Had it been seriously intended to control the natural order of events, by the feeble force of words and clauses in a charter, the experiment ought to have been tried from the first, and not reserved for that of Pennsylvania, which was one of the last granted to the Colonies. Near a century after, Dr. Franklin, when examined at the Bar of the British House of Commons explained the matter by saying “that the inhabitants from the first settlement of the Province relied, that the Parliament never would or could by virtue of that reservation tax them, till it had qualified itself constitutionally for the exercise of such right, by admitting Representatives from the people to be taxed.”

In the rapid manner just related, was the English North American Continent parcelled out into distinct Governments. Little did the wisdom of the two preceding Centuries foresee of the consequences both good and evil, that were to result to the old world from discovering and colonising the new. When we consider the immense floods of gold and silver, which have flowed from it into Europe—the subsequent increase of industry and population, the prodigious extension of commerce, manufactures, and navigation, and the influence of the whole on manners and arts[—]we see such an accumulation of good, as leads us to rank Columbus among the greatest benefactors of the human race: but when we view the injustice done the natives, the extirpation of many of [14] their numerous nations, whose names are no more heard—the havoc made among the first settlers—the slavery of the Africans, to which America has furnished the temptation, and the many long and bloody wars which it has occasioned, we behold such a crowd of woes, as excites an apprehension, that the evil has outweighed the good.
In vain do we look among ancient nations, for examples of Colonies established on principles of policy, similar to those of the Colonies of Great-Britain. England did not, like the republics of Greece, oblige her sons to form distant communities in the wilds of the earth. Like Rome she did not give lands as a gratuity to soldiers, who became a military force for the defence of her frontiers: She did not, like Carthage, subdue the neighbouring States, in order to acquire an exclusive right to their commerce. No conquest was ever attempted over the Aborigines of America. Their right to the soil was disregarded, and their country looked upon as a waste, which was open to the occupancy and use of other nations. It was considered that settlements might be there formed for the advantage of those who should migrate thither, as well as of the Mother Country. The rights and interests of the native proprietors were, all this time, deemed of no account.

What was the extent of obligations by which Colonies planted under these circumstances, were bound to the Mother Country, is a subject of nice discussion. Whether these arose from nature and the constitution, or from compact, is a question necessarily connected with many others. While the friends of Union contended that the King of England had a property in the soil of America, by virtue of a right derived from prior discovery; and that his subjects by migrating from one part of his dominions to another, did not lessen their obligations to obey the supreme power of the nation, it was inferred, that the emigrants to English America, continued to owe the same obedience to the King and Parliament, as if they had never quitted the land of their nativity. But if as others contended, the Indians were the only lawful proprietors of the country in which their Creator had placed them, and they sold their right to emigrants who, as men, had a right to leave their native country, and as subjects, had obtained chartered permission to do so, it follows from these premises, that the obligations of the Colonists to their parent State, must have resulted more from compact, and the prospect of reciprocal advantage, than from natural obligation. The latter opinions seem to have been adopted by several of the Colonists particularly in New-England. Sundry persons of influence in that country always held, that birth was no necessary cause of subjection, for that the subject of any Prince or State, had a natural right to remove to any other State or quarter of the Globe, especially if deprived of liberty of conscience, and that, upon such removal, his subjection ceased.

The validity of charters about which the emigrants to America were universally anxious, rests upon the same foundation. If the right of the sovereigns of England to the soil of America was ideal, and contrary to natural justice, and if no one can give what is not his own, their charters were on several accounts a nullity. In the eye of reason and philosophy, they could give no right to American territory. The only validity which such grants could have, was that the grantees had from their sovereign, a permission to depart from their native country, and negotiate with the proprietors for the purchase of the soil, and thereupon to acquire a power of jurisdiction subject to his crown. These were the opinions of many of the settlers in New-England. They looked upon their charters as a voluntary compact between their sovereign and themselves, by which they were bound neither to be subject to, nor seek protection from any other Prince, nor to make any laws repugnant to those of England: but did not consider them as inferring an obligation of obedience to a Parliament, in which they were unrepresented. The prospects of advantage which the emigrants to America expected
from the protection of their native sovereign, and the prospect of aggrandizement which their native sovereign expected from [16] the extension of his empire, made the former very solicitous for charters, and the latter very ready to grant them. Neither reasoned clearly on their nature nor well understood their extent. In less than eight years 1500 miles of the sea coast were granted away, and so little did they who gave, or they who accepted of charters, understand their own transactions, that in several cases the same ground was covered by contradictory grants, and with an absurdity that can only be palliated by the ignorance of the parties, some of the grants extended to the South Sea, over a country whose breadth is yet unknown, and which to this day is unexplored.

Ideal as these charters were, they answered a temporary purpose. The colonists reposed confidence in them, and were excited to industry on their credit. They also deterred foreign European powers from disturbing them, because agreeably to the late law of nations, relative to the appropriation of newly discovered heathen countries, they inferred the protection of the sovereign who gave them. They also opposed a barrier to open and gross encroachments of the mother country on the rights of the colonists; a particular detail of these is not now necessary; some general remarks may, nevertheless, be made on the early periods of colonial history, as they cast light on the late revolution. Long before the declaration of independence, several of the colonies on different occasions, declared, that they ought not to be taxed but by their own provincial assemblies, and that they considered subjection to acts of a British parliament, in which they had no representation, as a grievance. It is also worthy of being noted, that of the 13 colonies, which have been lately formed into States, no one (Georgia excepted) was settled at the expense of government. Towards the settlement of that Southern frontier, considerable sums have at different times been granted by parliament, but the twelve more Northern provinces, have been wholly settled by private adventurers, without any advances from the national treasury. It does not appear, from existing records, that any compensation for their lands was ever made to the [17] Aborigines of America, by the crown or Parliament of England; but policy as well as justice led the colonists to purchase and pay for what they occupied. This was done in almost every settlement, and they prospered most, who by justice and kindness took the greatest pains to conciliate the good will of the natives.

It is in vain to look for well balanced constitutions in the early periods of colonial history. Till the revolution in the year 1688, a period subsequent to the settlement of the colonies, England herself can scarcely be said to have had a fixed constitution. At that eventful era the line was first drawn between the privileges of subjects, and the prerogatives of sovereigns. The legal and constitutional history of the colonies, in their early periods, therefore, affords but little instruction. It is sufficient in general to observe, that in less than eighty years from the first permanent English settlement in North America; the two original patents granted to the Plymouth and London companies were divided, and subdivided, into twelve distinct and unconnected provinces, and in fifty years more a thirteenth, by the name of Georgia, was added to the Southern extreme of previous establishments.

To each of these, after various changes, there was ultimately granted a form of government resembling, in its most essential parts, as far as local circumstances
would permit, that which was established in the parent state. A minute description of
constitutions, which no longer exist, would be both tedious and unprofitable. In
general, it may be observed, that agreeably to the spirit of the British constitution,
ample provision was made for the liberties of the inhabitants. The prerogatives of
royalty and dependence on the Mother Country, were but feebly impressed, on the
colonial forms of government. In some of the provinces the inhabitants chose their
governors, and all other public officers, and their legislatures were under little or no
controul. In others the crown delegated most of its power to particular persons, who
were also invested with the property of the soil. In those which were most
immediately dependent on the King, he exercised no higher prerogatives over the
colonists than over their fellow [18] subjects in England, and his power over the
provincial legislative assemblies, was not greater than what he was constitutionally
vested with, over the house of commons in the Mother Country. From the
acquiescence of the parent state, the spirit of her constitution and daily experience, the
colonists grew up in a belief, that their local assemblies stood in the same relation to
them, as the parliament of Great Britain, to the inhabitants of that island. The benefits
of legislation were conferred on both, only through these constitutional channels.

It is remarkable, that though the English possessions in America were far inferior in
natural riches to those which fell to the lot of other Europeans, yet the security of
property and of liberty, derived from the English constitution, gave them a
consequence to which the colonies of other powers, though settled at an earlier day,
have not yet attained. The wise and liberal policy of England towards her colonies,
during the first century and [a] half after their settlement, had a considerable influence
in exalting them to this pre-eminence. She gave them full liberty to govern
themselves, by such laws as their local legislatures thought necessary, and left their
trade open to every individual in her dominions. She also gave them the amplest
permission to pursue their respective interests in such manner, as they thought proper,
and reserved little for herself, but the benefit of their trade, and that of a political
union under the same head. The colonies, founded by other powers, experienced no
such indulgences. Portugal and Spain burdened theirs with many vexatious
regulations, gave encouragement only to what was for their own interest, and
punished whatever had a contrary tendency. France and Holland did not adopt such
oppressive maxims, but were in fact not much less rigorous and coercive. They
parted, as it were, with the propriety of their colonies to mercantile associations,
which sold to the colonists the commodities of Europe, at an enormous advance, and
took the produce of their lands, at a low price, and, at the same time, discouraged the
growth of any more than they could dispose of, at excessive profits. These oppressive
regulations were followed [19] with their natural consequences: The settlements thus
restricted advanced but slowly in population and in wealth.

The English colonies participated in that excellent form of government, with which
their parent isle was blessed, and which had raised it to an admirable height of
agriculture, commerce, and manufactures. After many struggles, it had been
acknowledged to be essential to the constitution of Great-Britain, that the people
could not be compelled to pay any taxes, nor be bound by any laws, but such as had
been granted, or enacted, with the consent of themselves, or of their representatives. It
was also one of their privileges, that they could not be affected either in their
property, their liberties or their persons, but by the unanimous consent of twelve of their peers.

From the operation of these general principles of liberty, and the wise policy of Great Britain, her American settlements increased in number, wealth, and resources, with a rapidity which surpassed all previous calculations. Neither antient nor modern history can produce an example of colonies governed with equal wisdom, or flourishing with equal rapidity. In the short space of 150 years their numbers increased to three millions, and their commerce to such a degree, as to be more than a third of that of Great Britain. They also extended their settlements 1500 miles on the sea coast, and 300 miles to the westward. Their rapid population, though partly accelerated by the influx of strangers, was principally owing to internal causes. In consequence of the equality of fortune and simplicity of manners, which prevailed among them, their inhabitants multiplied far beyond the proportion of old nations, corrupted and weakened by the vices of wealth, and above all, of vanity, than which, perhaps, there is no greater enemy to the increase of the human species.

The good effects of a wise policy and equal government, were not only discernible in raising the colonies of England to a pre-eminence over those of other European powers, but in raising some among themselves to greater importance than others. Their relative population and wealth, were by no means correspondent to their respective [20] advantages of soil and climate. From the common disproportion between the natural and artificial wealth of different countries, it seems to be a general rule, that the more nature does for any body of men, the less they are disposed to do for themselves.

The New-England Provinces, though possessed of comparatively a barren country, were improved much faster than others, which were blessed with a superior soil and milder climate. Their first settlers were animated with a high degree of that religious fervor which excites to great undertakings. They also settled their vacant lands on principles of the wisest policy. Instead of granting large tracts to individuals, they sold the soil in small farms, to those who personally cultivated the same. Instead of disseminating their inhabitants over an extensive country, they formed successive settlements, in townships of six miles square. They also made such arrangements, in these townships, as co-extended the blessings of education and of religious instruction, with their settlements. By these means industry and morality were propagated, and knowledge was generally diffused.

In proportion to their respective numbers, it is probable that no other country in the world contained more sober orderly citizens, and fewer who were profligate and abandoned. Those high crimes which are usually punished with death, were so rare in New-England, that many years have elapsed, in large populous settlements, without a single execution. Their less fertile soil disposed them to a spirit of adventure, and their victorious industry rose superior to every obstacle. In carrying on the whale fishery, they not only penetrated the deepest frozen recesses of Hudson’s Bay, and Davis’ straits: But pierced into the opposite regions of polar cold. While some of them were striking the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others pursued their gigantic game, near the shores of Brazil. While they were yet in their infancy as a political society, they
carried on this perilous business to an extent exceeding all that the perseverance of Holland, the activity of France, or the vigor of English enterprise, had ever accomplished. A spirit of liberty prompted their [21] industry, and a free constitution guarded their civil rights. The country was settled with yeomanry, who were both proprietors, and cultivators, of the soil. Luxury was estranged from their borders. Enervating wealth and pinching poverty, were both equally rare. Early marriages, and a numerous offspring, were common—thence population was rapid, and the inhabitants generally possessed that happy state of mediocrity, which favors the improvement both of mind and body.

New-York adjoined New-England, but did not increase with equal rapidity. A few by monopolizing large tracts of land, reduced many to the necessity of being tenants, or of removing to other Provinces, where land could be obtained on more favourable terms. The increase of population, in this Province, was nevertheless great, when compared with that of old countries. This appears from the following statement of their numbers at different periods. In 1756, the Province of New-York contained 83,233 whites, and in 1771, 148,124, an increase of nearly two for one, in the space of fifteen years.

Pennsylvania was at first settled under the auspices of the celebrated William Penn, who introduced a number of industrious inhabitants, chiefly of the sect of Quakers. The population of this country advanced, equally, with that, of the New-England Provinces. Among the inducements operating on foreigners to settle in Pennsylvania, was a most excellent form of provincial government, which secured the religious as well as the civil rights of its inhabitants. While the Mother Country laboured under an oppressive ecclesiastical establishment, and while partialities of the same kind, were sanctioned by law, in some of the American Provinces, perfect liberty of conscience, and an exact equality of all sects was, in every period, a part of the Constitution of Pennsylvania.

Quaker simplicity, industry, and frugality, contributed, in like manner, to the flourishing of that Province. The habits of that plain people correspond, admirably, with a new country, and with republican constitutions. Opposed to idleness and extravagance, they combined the whole [22] force of religion, with customs and laws, to exile these vices, from their society. The first Quaker settlers were soon followed by Germans, whose industry was not inferior to their own. The emigrants from other countries who settled in Pennsylvania, followed these good examples, and industry and frugality became predominant virtues, over the whole Province.

The policy of a Loan-Office was also eminently beneficial. The Proprietaries of Pennsylvania, sold their lands in small tracts, and on long credit. The purchasers were indulged with the liberty of borrowing, on interest, paper bills of credit, out of the Loan-Office, on the mortgage of their lands. Perhaps there never was an institution which contributed more to the happiness of the people, or to the flourishing of a new country, than this land Loan-Office scheme. The Province being enriched by the clear interest of its loaned paper, was thereby enabled to defray the expences of government, with moderate taxes. The industrious farmer was furnished with the means of cultivating and stocking his farm. These improvements, by increasing the
value of the land, not only established the credit of the paper, but enabled the borrower, in a few years, to pay off the original loan with the productions of the soil. The progressive improvements of Pennsylvania may be estimated from the increase of its trade. In the year 1704, that Province imported goods from the Mother Country, amounting in value only to £11,499 sterling, but in 1772, to the value of £507,909, an encrease of nearly fifty for one, in little more than half a century.

In Maryland and Virginia, a policy less favourable to population, and somewhat different from that of Pennsylvania, took place. The Church of England was incorporated with the first settlement of Virginia, and in the lapse of time, it also became the established religion of Maryland. In both these Provinces, long before the American Revolution, that church possessed a legal preeminence, and was maintained at the expence, not only of its own members, but of all other denominations. These deterred great numbers, especially of the Presbyterian [23] denomination, who had emigrated from Ireland from settling within the limits of these governments, and fomented [a] spirit of discord between those who belonged to, and those who dissented from, the established church.

In these and the other Southern Provinces, domestic slavery was common. Though it was not by law forbidden any where, yet there were comparatively few slaves any where, to the Northward of Maryland. The peaceable and benevolent religion of the Quakers, induced their united opposition to all traffic of the human race. Many individuals of other denominations, in like manner discountenanced it, but the principal ground of difference on this head between the Northern and Southern Provinces, arose, less, from religious principles, than from climate, and local circumstances. In the former, they found it to be for their interest to cultivate their lands with white men, in the latter with those of an opposite colour. The stagnant waters, and low lands, which are so frequent on the shores of Maryland and Virginia, and on the coasts, and near the rivers in the Southern Provinces, generate diseases, which are more fatal to whites than blacks. There is a physical difference in the constitution of these varieties of the human species. The latter secrete less by the kidnies, and more by the glands of the skin than the former. This greater degree of transpiration renders the blacks more tolerant of heat, than the whites. The perspirable matter, thrown off by the former, is more foetid than that of the latter. It is perhaps owing to these circumstances, that blacks enjoy better health, in warm and marshy countries, than whites.

It is certain, that a great part of the low country in several of the provinces must have remained without cultivation, if it had not been cultivated by black men. From imagined necessity, founded on the natural state of the country, domestic slavery seemed to be forced on the Southern provinces. It favored cultivation, but produced many baneful consequences. It was particularly hostile to the proper education of youth. Industry, temperance, and abstinence, virtues essential to the health and vigor of both mind and body, were with difficulty [24] practised, where the labour of slaves procured an abundance, not only of the necessaries, but of the delicacies of life, and where daily opportunities and facilities were offered, for early, excessive, and enervating indulgences. Slavery also led to the engrossing of land, in the hands of a few. It impeded the introduction of labouring freemen, and of course diminished the
capacity of the country for active defence, and at the same time endangered internal tranquility, by multiplying a species of inhabitants, who had no interest in the soil. For if a slave can have a country in the world, it must be any other in preference to that, in which he is compelled to labour for a master. Such is the force of habit, and the pliancy of human nature, that though degrading freemen to the condition of slaves, would, to many, be more intolerable than death, yet Negroes who have been born and bred in habits of slavery, are so well satisfied with their condition, that several have been known to reject proffered freedom, and as far as circumstances authorize us to judge, emancipation does not appear to be the wish of the generality of them. The peasantry of few countries enjoy as much of the comforts of life, as the slaves, who belong to good masters. Interest concurs with the finer feelings of human nature, to induce slave-holders to treat with humanity and kindness, those who are subjected to their will and power. There is frequently more happiness in kitchens than parlours, and life is often more pleasantly enjoyed by the slave, than his master. The political evils of slavery do not so much arise from the distresses it occasions to slaves, as from its diminishing the incitements to industry, and from its unhappy influence on the general state of society. Where it is common, a few grow rich, and live in ease and luxury, but the community is deprived of many of its resources for independent happiness, and depressed to a low station on the scale of national greatness. The aggregate industry of a country, in which slaves and freemen are intermixed, will always be less than where there is a number of freemen equal to both. Nothing stimulates to industry so much as interest. The man who works for another, will contrive many artifices to make [25] that work as little as possible, but he who has an immediate profit from his labor, will disregard tasks, times and seasons. In settlements where the soil is cultivated by slaves, it soon becomes unfashionable for freemen to labor, than which no greater curse can befal a country. The individuals, who by the industry of their slaves are released from the necessity of personal exertions, will be strongly tempted to many practices injurious to themselves and others. Idleness is the parent of every vice, while labor of all kinds, favours and facilitates the practice of virtue. Unhappy is that country, where necessity compels the use of slaves, and unhappy are the people, where the original decree of heaven “that man should eat his bread in the sweat of his face” is by any means whatever generally eluded.

The influence of these causes was so extensive, that though the Southern Provinces possessed the most fruitful soil and the mildest climate, yet they were far inferior to their neighbours in strength, population, industry, and aggregate wealth. This inferiority, increased or diminished, with the number of Slaves in each Province, contrasted with the number of freemen. The same observation held good between different parts of the same Province. The sea coast which, from necessity, could be cultivated only by black men, was deficient in many of the enjoyments of life, and lay at the mercy of every bold invader, while the Western Country, where cultivation was more generally carried on by freemen, though settled at a later period, sooner attained the means of self defence, and, relatively, a greater proportion of those comforts with which a cultivated country rewards its industrious inhabitants.

In the Southern Provinces, the long credit given by British merchants, was a principal source of their flourishing. The immense capitals of the merchants trading to the
North American Continent, enabled them to extend credit to the term of several years. They received a profit on their goods, and an annual interest of five per cent on the sums for which they were sold. This enabled the American merchant to extend credit to the planter, from whom he received a higher interest than he paid in Great-Britain. The planters being furnished, on credit, with slaves and every thing necessary for the cultivation of their lands, when careful and industrious, cleared so much more than the legal interest with which they were charged, that in a few years of successful planting, the difference enabled them to pay their debts and clear their capital. By the help of credit, a beneficial intercourse was established, which redounded to the benefit of both parties.

These causes eminently contributed to the prosperity of the English Provinces. Others, besides co-operating, to the same end, produced a warm love for liberty, a high sense of the rights of human nature, and a predilection for independence.

The first emigrants from England for colonising America, left the Mother Country at a time when the dread of arbitrary power was the predominant passion of the nation. Except the very modern charter of Georgia, in the year 1732, all the English Colonies obtained their charters and their greatest number of European settlers, between the years 1603 and 1688. In this period a remarkable struggle between prerogative and privilege commenced, and was carried on till it terminated in a revolution highly favourable to the liberties of the people. In the year 1621, when the English House of Commons claimed freedom of speech, “as their ancient and undoubted right, and an inheritance transmitted to them from their ancestors;” King James the First replied, “that he could not allow of their style, in mentioning their ancient and undoubted rights, but would rather have wished they had said, that their privileges were derived from the grace and permission of their sovereign.” This was the opening of a dispute which occupied the tongues, pens and swords, of the most active men in the nation, for a period of seventy years. It is remarkable that the same period is exactly coincident with the settlement of the English Colonies. James, educated in the arbitrary sentiments of the divine right of Kings, conceived his subjects to be his property, and that their privileges were [27] matters of grace and favour flowing, from his generosity. This high claim of prerogative excited opposition in support of the rights of the people. In the progress of the dispute, Charles the First, son of King James, in attempting to levy ship-money, and other revenues without consent of Parliament, involved himself in a war with his subjects, in which, after various conflicts, he was brought to the block and suffered death as an enemy to the constitution of his country. Though the monarchy was restored under Charles the Second, and transmitted to James the Second, yet the same arbitrary maxims being pursued, the nation, tenacious of its rights, invited the Prince of Orange to the sovereignty of the island, and expelled the reigning family from the throne. While these spirited exertions were made, in support of the liberties of the parent isle, the English Colonies were settled, and chiefly with inhabitants of that class of people, which was most hostile to the claims of prerogative. Every transaction in that period of English history, supported the position that the people have a right to resist their sovereign, when he invades their liberties, and to transfer the crown from one to another, when the good of the community requires it.
The English Colonists were from their first settlement in America, devoted to liberty, on English ideas, and English principles. They not only conceived themselves to inherit the privileges of Englishmen, but though in a colonial situation, actually possessed them.

After a long war between King and Parliament, and a Revolution—these were settled on the following fundamental principles.

That it was the undoubted right of English subjects, being freemen or freeholders, to give their property, only by their own consent. That the House of Commons exercised the sole right of granting the money of the people of England, because that house alone, represented them. That taxes were the free gifts of the people to their rulers. That the authority of sovereigns was to be exercised only for the good of their subjects. That it was the right of the people to meet together, and peaceably to consider of their grievances—[28] to petition for a redress of them, and finally, when intolerable grievances were unredressed, to seek relief, on the failure of petitions and remonstrances, by forcible means.

Opinions of this kind generally prevailing, produced, among the colonists, a more determined spirit of opposition to all encroachments on their rights, than would probably have taken place, had they emigrated from the Mother Country in the preceding century, when the doctrines of passive obedience, non resistance, and the divine right of kings, were generally received.

That attachment to their sovereign, which was diminished in the first emigrants to America, by being removed to a great distance from his influence was still farther diminished, in their descendants. When the American revolution commenced, the inhabitants of the colonies were for the most part, the third and fourth, and sometimes the fifth or sixth generation, from the original emigrants. In the same degree as they were removed from that parent stock, they were weaned from the partial attachment, which bound their forefathers to the place of their nativity. The affection for the Mother Country, as far as it was a natural passion, wore away in successive generations, till at last it had scarcely any existence.

That mercantile intercourse, which connects different countries, was in the early periods of the English Colonies, far short of that degree, which is necessary to perpetuate a friendly union. Had the first great colonial establishments been made in the Southern Provinces, where the suitableness of native commodities would have maintained a brisk and direct trade with England—the constant exchange of good offices between the two countries, would have been more likely to perpetuate their friendship. But as the Eastern Provinces were the first, which were thickly settled, and they did not for a long time cultivate an extensive trade with England, their descendants speedily lost the fond attachment, which their forefathers felt to their Parent State. The bulk of the people in New England knew little of the Mother Country, having only heard of her as a distant kingdom, the rulers [29] of which, had in the preceding century, persecuted and banished their ancestors to the woods of America.
The distance of America from Great Britain generated ideas, in the minds of the colonists, favourable to liberty. Three thousand miles of ocean separated them from the Mother Country. Seas rolled, and months passed, between orders, and their execution. In large governments the circulation of power is enfeebled at the extremities. This results from the nature of things, and is the eternal law of extensive or detached empire. Colonists, growing up to maturity, at such an immense distance from the seat of government, perceived the obligation of dependence much more feebly, than the inhabitants of the parent isle, who not only saw, but daily felt, the fangs of power. The wide extent and nature of the country contributed to the same effect. The natural seat of freedom is among high mountains, and pathless deserts, such as abound in the wilds of America.

The religion of the colonists also nurtured a love for liberty. They were chiefly protestants, and all protestantism is founded on a strong claim to natural liberty, and the right of private judgement. A majority of them were of that class of men, who, in England, are called Dissenters. Their tenets, being the protestantism of the protestant religion, are hostile to all interference of authority, in matters of opinion, and predispose to a jealousy for civil liberty. They who belonged to the Church of England were for the most part independents, as far as church government and hierarchy, were concerned. They used the liturgy of that church, but were without Bishops, and were strangers to those systems, which make religion an engine of state. That policy, which unites the lowest curate with the greatest metropolitan, and connects both with the sovereign, was unknown among the colonists. Their religion was their own, and neither imposed by authority, nor made subservient to political purposes. Though there was a variety of sects, they all agreed in the communion of liberty, and all reproached the courtly doctrines of passive obedience, and non-resistance. The same dispositions were fostered by the usual modes of education in the colonies. The study of law was common and fashionable. The infinity of disputes, in a new and free country, made it lucrative, and multiplied its followers. No order of men has, in all ages, been more favourable to liberty, than lawyers. Where they are not won over to the service of government, they are formidable adversaries to it. Professionally taught the rights of human nature, they keenly and quickly perceive every attack made on them. While others judge of bad principles by the actual grievances they occasion, lawyers discover them at a distance, and trace future mischiefs from gilded innovations.

The reading of those colonists who were inclined to books, generally favoured the cause of liberty. Large libraries were uncommon in the New World. Disquisitions on abstruse subjects, and curious researches into antiquity, did not accord with the genius of a people, settled in an uncultivated country, where every surrounding object impelled to action, and little leisure was left for speculation. Their books were generally small in size, and few in number: A great part of them consisted of those fashionable authors, who have defended the cause of liberty. Catos’ letters, the Independent Whig, and such productions, were common in one extreme of the colonies, while in the other, histories of the Puritans, kept alive the remembrance of the sufferings of their forefathers, and inspired a warm attachment, both to the civil and the religious rights of human nature.
In the Southern Colonies, slavery nurtured a spirit of liberty, among the free inhabitants. All masters of slaves who enjoy personal liberty will be both proud and jealous of their freedom. It is, in their opinion, not only an enjoyment, but a kind of rank and privilege. In them, the haughtiness of domination, combines with the spirit of liberty. Nothing could more effectually animate the opposition of a planter to the claims of Great-Britain, than a conviction that those claims in their extent, degraded him to a degree of dependence on his fellow subjects, equally humiliating with that which existed between his slaves and himself.

[31] The state of society in the Colonies favoured a spirit of liberty and independence. Their inhabitants were all of one rank. Kings, Nobles and Bishops, were unknown among them. From their first settlement, the English Provinces received impressions favourable to democratic forms of government. Their dependent situation forbade any inordinate ambition among their native sons, and the humility of their society, abstracted as they were from the splendor and amusements of the Old World, held forth few allurements to invite the residence of such from the Mother Country as aspired to hereditary honors. In modern Europe, the remains of the feudal system have occasioned an order of men superior to that of the commonality, but, as few of that class migrated to the Colonies, they were settled with the yeomanry. Their inhabitants, unaccustomed to that distinction of ranks, which the policy of Europe has established, were strongly impressed with an opinion, that all men are by nature equal. They could not easily be persuaded that their grants of land, or their civil rights, flowed from the munificence of Princes. Many of them had never heard of Magna Charta, and those who knew the circumstances of the remarkable period of English history, when that was obtained, did not rest their claims to liberty and property on the transactions of that important day. They looked up to Heaven as the source of their rights, and claimed, not from the promises of Kings but, from the parent of the universe. The political creed of an American Colonist was short but substantial. He believed that God made all mankind originally equal: That he endowed them with the rights of life, property, and as much liberty as was consistent with the rights of others. That he had bestowed on his vast family of the human race, the earth for their support, and that all government was a political institution between men naturally equal, not for the aggrandizement of one, or a few, but for the general happiness of the whole community. Impressed with sentiments of this kind, they grew up, from their earliest infancy, with that confidence which is well calculated to inspire a love for liberty, and a prepossession in favour of independence.

[32] In consequence of the vast extent of vacant country, every colonist was, or easily might be, a freeholder. Settled on lands of his own, he was both farmer and landlord—producing all the necessaries of life from his own grounds, he felt himself both free and independent. Each individual might hunt, fish, or fowl, without injury to his neighbours. These immunities which, in old countries, are guarded by the sanction of penal laws, and monopolized by a few, are the common privileges of all, in America. Colonists, growing up in the enjoyment of such rights, felt the restraint of law more feebly than they, who are educated in countries, where long habits have made submission familiar. The mind of man naturally relishes liberty—where from the extent of a new and unsettled country, some abridgments thereof are useless, and
others impracticable, the natural desire of freedom is strengthened, and the
independent mind revolts at the idea of subjection.

The Colonists were also preserved from the contagion of ministerial influence by their
distance from the metropolis. Remote from the seat of power and corruption, they
were not over-awed by the one, nor debauched by the other. Few were the means of
detaching individuals from the interest of the public. High offices, were neither
sufficiently numerous nor lucrative to purchase many adherents, and the most
valuable of these were conferred on natives of Britain. Every man occupied that rank
only, which his own industry, or that of his near ancestors, had procured him. Each
individual being cut off from all means of rising to importance, but by his personal
talents, was encouraged to make the most of those with which he was endowed.
Prospects of this kind excited emulation, and produced an enterprising laborious set of
men, not easily overcome by difficulties, and full of projects for bettering their
condition.

The enervating opulence of Europe had not yet reached the colonists. They were
destitute of gold and silver, but abounded in the riches of nature. A sameness of
circumstances and occupations created a great sense of equality, and disposed them to
union in any common cause, [33] from the success of which, they might expect to
partake of equal advantages.

The colonies were communities of separate independent individuals, under no general
influence, but that of their personal feelings and opinions. They were not led by
powerful families, nor by great officers, in church or state. Residing chiefly on lands
of their own, and employed in the wholesome labours of the field, they were in a great
measure strangers to luxury. Their wants were few, and among the great bulk of the
people, for the most part, supplied from their own grounds. Their enjoyments were
neither far-fetched, nor dearly purchased, and were so moderate in their kind, as to
leave both mind and body unimpaired. Inured from their early years to the toils of a
country life, they dwelled in the midst of rural plenty. Unacquainted with ideal wants,
they delighted in personal independence. Removed from the pressures of indigence,
and the indulgence of affluence, their bodies were strong, and their minds vigorous.

The great bulk of the British colonists were farmers, or planters, who were also
proprietors of the soil. The merchants, mechanics and manufacturers, taken
collectively, did not amount to one fifteenth of the whole number of inhabitants.
While the cultivators of the soil depend on nothing but heaven and their own industry,
other classes of men contract more or less of servility, from depending on the caprice
of their customers. The excess of the farmers over the collective numbers of all the
other inhabitants, gave a cast of independence to the manners of the people, and
diffused the exalting sentiments, which have always predominated among those, who
are cultivators of their own grounds. These were farther promoted by their moderate
circumstances, which deprived them of all superfluity for idleness, or effeminate
indulgence.

The provincial constitutions of the English colonies nurtured a spirit of liberty. The
King and government of Great-Britain held no patronage in America, which could
create a portion of attachment and influence, sufficient to counteract that spirit in popular assemblies, which, when left to itself, ill brooks any authority, that interferes with its own.

[34] The inhabitants of the colonies from the beginning, especially in New-England, enjoyed a government, which was but little short of being independent. They had not only the image, but the substance of the English constitution. They chose most of their magistrates, and paid them all. They had in effect the sole direction of their internal government. The chief mark of their subordination consisted in their making no laws repugnant to the laws of their Mother Country—their submitting such laws as they made to be repealed by the King, and their obeying such restrictions, as were laid on their trade, by parliament. The latter were often evaded, and with impunity. The other small checks were scarcely felt, and for a long time were in no respects injurious to their interests.

Under these favourable circumstances, colonies in the new world had advanced nearly to the magnitude of a nation, while the greatest part of Europe was almost wholly ignorant of their progress. Some arbitrary proceedings of governors, proprietary partialities, or democratical jealousies, now and then, interrupted the political calm, which generally prevailed among them, but these and other occasional impediments of their prosperity, for the most part, soon subsided. The circumstances of the country afforded but little scope for the intrigues of politicians, or the turbulence of demagogues. The colonists being but remotely affected by the bustlings of the old world, and having but few objects of ambition or contention among themselves, were absorbed in the ordinary cares of domestic life, and for a long time exempted from a great proportion of those evils, which the governed too often experience, from the passions and follies of statesmen. But all this time they were rising higher, and though not sensible of it, growing to a greater degree of political consequence.

One of the first events, which as an evidence of their increasing importance, drew on the colonies a share of public attention, was the taking of Louisbourg from France, while that country was at war with Great-Britain. This enterprize was projected by Governor Shirley, of Massachusetts, and undertaken by the sole authority of [35] the legislature of that Colony. It was carried by only a single vote to make the attempt, but after the adoption of the measure, there was an immediate union of all parties, and all were equally zealous in carrying it into execution. The expedition was committed to General Pepperell, and upwards of 5000 men were speedily raised for the service, and put under his command. This force arrived at Canso, on the 4th of April: A British marine force from the West-Indies, commanded by Commodore Warren, which arrived in the same month, acted in concert with these land forces. Their combined operations were carried on with so much judgment, that on the 17th of June the fortress capitulated.

The war in which Louisbourg was taken, was scarcely ended when another began, in which the colonies were distinguished parties. The reduction of that fortress, by colonial troops, must have given both to France and England, enlarged ideas of the value of American territory, and might have given rise to that eagerness for extending the boundaries of their respective colonies, which soon after, by a collision of claims
to the same ground, laid the foundation of a bloody war between the two nations. It is
neither possible nor necessary to decide on the rights of either to the lands about
which this contest began. It is certain that the prospects of convenience and future
advantage, had much more influence on both, than the considerations of equity. As
the contending powers considered the rights of the native inhabitants of no account, it
is not wonderful that they should not agree in settling their own. The war was brought
on in the following manner. About the year 1749, a grant of 600,000 acres of land in
the neighbourhood of the Ohio, was made out in favour of certain persons in
Westminster, London, and Virginia, who had associated under the title of the Ohio
company. At this time France was in possession of the country, on both sides of the
mouth of the Mississippi, as well as of Canada, and wished to form a communication
between these two extremities of her territories in North-America. She was therefore
alarmed at the scheme in agitation by the Ohio company [36] in as much as the land
granted to them, lay between her Northern and Southern settlements.
Remonstrances against British encroachments, as they were
called, having been made in vain by the Governor of Canada, the
French, at length, seized some British subjects who were trading among the
Twightwees, a nation of Indians near the Ohio, as intruders on the land of his most
Christian Majesty, and sent them to a fort on the South side of Lake Erie. The
Twightwees, by way of retaliation for capturing British traders, whom they deemed
their allies, seized three French traders and sent them to Pennsylvania. The French
persisting in their claims to the country on the Ohio, as part of Canada, strengthened
themselves by erecting new forts in its vicinity, and at length began to seize and
plunder every British trader, found on any part of that river. Repeated complaints of
those violences being made to the Governor of Virginia, it was at length determined
to send a suitable person to the French commandant near the Ohio, to demand the
reason of his hostile proceedings, and to insist on his evacuating a fort he had lately
built. Major Washington, being then but little more than 21 years of age, offered his
service, which was thankfully accepted. The distance to the French settlement was
more than 400 miles, and one half of the rout led through a wilderness, inhabited only
by Indians. He nevertheless set out in an uncommonly severe season, attended only by
one companion. From Winchester, he proceeded on foot, with his provisions on his
back. When he arrived and delivered his message, the French commandant refused to
comply, and claimed the country as belonging to the King his master, and declared
that he should continue to seize and send as prisoners to Canada, every Englishman
that should attempt to trade on the Ohio, or any of its branches. Before Major
Washington returned, the Virginians had sent out workmen and materials, to erect a
fort at the conflux of the Ohio, and the Monongahela. While they were engaged in this
work, the French came upon them—drove them out of the country, and erected a
regular fortification on the same spot. These spirited [37] proceedings overset the
schemes of the Ohio company, but its members both in England and America, were
too powerful to brook the disappointment. It was therefore resolved to instruct the
colonies to oppose with arms, the encroachments of the French on the British
territories, as these Western lands were called. In obedience to these instructions,
Virginia raised three hundred men, put them under the command of Colonel
Washington, and sent them on towards the Ohio.
An engagement between them and a party of French, took place,
in which the latter were defeated. On this Mr. de Villier, the

May 28, 1754
French commandant marched down with 900 men, besides Indians, and attacked the Virginians. Colonel Washington made a brave defence, behind a small unfinished intrenchment; called Fort Necessity; but at length accepted of honorable terms of capitulation.

From the eagerness discovered by both nations for these lands, it occurred to all, that a rupture between France and England, could not be far distant. It was also evident to the rulers of the latter, that the colonies would be the most convenient centre of operation, for repressing French encroachments. To draw forth their colonial resources, in an uniform system of operations, then, for the first time, became an object of public attention.

To digest a plan for this purpose, a general meeting of the Governors, and most influential members of the Provincial Assemblies, was held at Albany. The commissioners, at this Congress, were unanimously of opinion, that an union of the colonies was necessary, and they proposed a plan to the following effect, “that a grand Council should be formed of members, to be chosen by the Provincial Assemblies, which Council, together with a Governor, to be appointed by the Crown, should be authorised to make general laws, and also to raise money from all the colonies for their common defence.” The leading members of the Provincial Assemblies, were of opinion, that if this plan was adopted, they could defend themselves from the French, without any assistance from Great-Britain. This plan, when sent to England, was not acceptable to the Ministry, and in lieu thereof, they [38] proposed “that the Governors of all the colonies, attended by one or two members of their respective Councils,” which were for the most part of royal appointment, “should from time to time concert measures for the whole colonies—erect forts, and raise troops with a power to draw upon the British treasury in the first instance: but to be ultimately re-imbursed by a tax to be laid on the colonies by act of Parliament.” This was as much disrelished by the colonists, as the former plan had been by the British Ministry. The principle of some general power, operating on the whole of the colonies, was still kept in mind, though dropped for the present.

The ministerial plan laid down above, was transmitted to Governor Shirley; and by him communicated to Dr. Franklin, and his opinion thereon requested. That sagacious patriot, sent to the Governor an answer in writing, with remarks upon the proposed plan, in which by his strong reasoning powers, on the first view of the new subject, he anticipated the substance of a controversy, which for twenty years employed the tongues, pens and swords, of both countries.

The policy of repressing the encroachments of the French on the British colonies, was generally approved, both in England and America. It was therefore resolved to take effectual measures for driving them from the Ohio, and also for reducing Niagara, Crown-Point, and the other posts, which they held within the limit claimed by the King of Great-Britain.

To effect the first purpose, General Braddock was sent from Ireland to Virginia, with two regiments, and was there joined by as many more, as amounted, in the whole, to 2200 men. He was a brave man, but destitute of the other qualifications of a great
officer. His haughtiness disgusted the Americans, and his severity made him disagreeable to the regular troops. He particularly slighted the country militia, and the Virginia officers. Colonel Washington begged his permission to go before him, and scour the woods with his provincial troops, who were well acquainted with that service, but this was refused.

The General with 1400 men pushed on incautiously, till he fell into an ambuscade of French and Indians, by whom he was defeated, and mortally wounded. The regulars, as the British Troops at that time were called, were thrown into confusion, but the Provinceals more used to Indian fighting, were not so much disconcerted. They continued in an unbroken body under, Colonel Washington, and by covering the retreat of the regulars, prevented their entirely being cut off.

Notwithstanding these hostilities, war had not yet been formally declared. Previous to the adoption of that measure, Great-Britain, contrary to the usages of nations, made prisoners of 8000 French sailors. This heavy blow for a long time, crippled the naval operations of France, but at the same time, inspired her with a desire, to retaliate, whenever a proper opportunity should present itself. For two or three years, after Braddock’s defeat, the war was carried on against France, without vigor or success, but when Mr. Pitt was placed at the head of the ministry, public affairs assumed a new aspect.

Victory, every where, crowned the British arms, and, in a short time, the French were dispossessed, not only of all the British territories, on which they had encroached, but also of Quebec, the capital of their ancient Province, Canada.

In the course of this war, some of the colonies made exertions so far beyond their reasonable quota, as to merit a re-imbursement from the national treasury; but this was not universally the case. In consequence of internal disputes, together with their greater domestic security, the necessary supplies had not been raised in due time, by others, of the Provincial Assemblies. That a British Minister should depend on colony legislatures, for the execution of his plans, did not well accord with the vigorous and decisive genius of Mr. Pitt, but it was not prudent, by any innovation, to irritate the colonies, during a war, in which, from local circumstances, their exertions were peculiarly beneficial. The advantages that would result from an ability, to draw forth the resources of the colonies, by the same authority, which commanded the wealth of the Mother Country, might in these circumstances have suggested the idea of taxing the colonies by authority of the British Parliament. Mr. Pitt is said to have told Mr. Franklin, “that when the war closed, if he should be in the ministry, he would take measures to prevent the colonies from having a power to refuse or delay the supplies that might be wanted for national purposes,” but did not mention what those measures should be. As often as money or men were wanted from the colonies, a requisition was made to their legislatures. These were generally and cheerfully complied with. Their exertions with a few exceptions were great, and manifested a serious desire to carry into effect the plans of Great-Britain, for reducing the power of France.

In the prosecution of this war, the advantages which Great-Britain derived from the colonies, were severely felt by her enemies. Upwards of 400 privateers which were
fitted out of the ports of the British colonies, successfully cruised on French property. These not only ravaged the West-India islands, belonging to his most Christian Majesty, but made many captures on the coast of France. Besides distressing the French nation by privateering, the colonies furnished 23,800 men, to co-operate with the British regular forces, in North-America. They also sent powerful aids, both in men and provisions, out of their own limits, which facilitated the reduction of Martinique, and of the Havannah. The success of their privateers—the cooperation of their land forces—the convenience of their harbours, and their contiguity to the West-India islands, made the colonies great acquisitions to Britain, and formidable adversaries to France. From their growing importance, the latter had much to fear. Their continued union with Great-Britain, threatened the subversion of the commerce, and American possessions, of France.

After hostilities had raged nearly eight years—a general peace was concluded, on terms, by which France ceded Canada to Great-Britain. The Spaniards having also taken part in the war, were, at the termination of it, induced to relinquish to the same power, both East and West-Florida. This peace gave Great-Britain possession [41] of an extent of country equal in dimensions to several of the kingdoms of Europe. The possession of Canada in the North, and of the two Floridas in the South, made her almost sole mistress of the North-American Continent.

This laid a foundation for future greatness, which excited the envy and the fears of Europe. Her navy, her commerce, and her manufactures had greatly increased, when she held but a part of the Continent; and when she was bounded by the formidable powers of France and Spain. Her probable future greatness, when without a rival, and with a growing vent for her manufactures, and increasing employment for her marine, threatened to destroy that balance of power, which European sovereigns have for a long time endeavored to preserve. Kings are republicans with respect to each other, and behold with democratic jealousy, any one of their order towering above the rest. The aggrandizement of one, tends to excite the combination, or at least the wishes of many, to reduce him to the common level. From motives of this kind, a great part of Europe not long since combined against Venice; and soon after against Louis the XIVth of France. With the same suspicious eye, was the naval superiority of Great-Britain, viewed by her neighbours. They were, in general, disposed to favour any convulsion which promised a diminution of her overgrown power.

The addition to the British empire of new provinces, equal in extent to old kingdoms, not only excited the jealousy of European powers, but occasioned doubts in the minds of enlightened British politicians, whether or not, such immense acquisitions of territory would contribute to the felicity of the parent State. They saw, or thought they saw, the seeds of disunion, planted in the too widely extended empire. Power like all things human, has its limits, and there is a point beyond which the longest and sharpest sword fails of doing execution. To combine in one uniform system of Government, the extensive territory then subjected to the British sway appeared to men of reflection, a work of doubtful practicability: [42] Nor were they mistaken in their conjectures.
The seeds of discord were soon planted, and speedily grew up to the rending of the empire. The high notions of liberty and independence, which were nurtured in the colonies, by their local situation, and the state of society in the new world, were increased by the removal of hostile neighbours. The events of the war, had also given them some experience in military operations, and some confidence in their own ability. Foreseeing their future importance, from the rapid increase of their numbers, and extension of their commerce; and being extremely jealous of their rights, they readily admitted, and with pleasure indulged, ideas and sentiments which were favourable to independence. While combustible materials were daily collecting, in the new world, a spark to kindle the whole was produced in the old. Nor were there wanting those who, from a jealousy of Great-Britain, helped to fan the flame.
CHAPTER II

The Origin Of The Disputes Between Great-Britain And Her Colonies, In The Year 1764, And Its Progress Till 1773.

From the first settlement of English America, till the close of the war of 1755, the conduct of Great-Britain towards her colonies, affords an useful lesson to those who are disposed to colonisation. From that era, it is equally worthy of the attention of those who wish for the reduction of great empires to small ones. In the first period, Great-Britain regarded the provinces as instruments of commerce. Without charging herself with the care of their internal police, or seeking a revenue from them; she contented herself with a monopoly of their trade. She treated them as a judicious mother does her dutiful children.

They shared in every privilege belonging to her native sons, and but slightly felt the inconveniences of subordination. Small was the catalogue of grievances, with which even democratical jealousy charged the parent state, antecedent to the period before [43] mentioned. The following appear to have been the chief. An act of the British parliament for prohibiting the cutting down pitch and tar trees, not being within a fence or enclosure, and sundry acts which operated against colonial manufactures. By one of these, it was made illegal after the 24th of June, 1750, to erect in the colonies, any mill or other engine for slitting or rolling of iron, or any plating forge, to work with a tilt-hammer, or any furnace for making steel. By another, hatters were restrained from taking more than two apprentices at a time, or any for less than seven years, and from employing negroes in the business. The colonists were also prohibited from transporting hats, and home manufactured woolens, from one province to another. These regulations were for the most part evaded, but if carried into execution, would have been slightly inconvenient, and only to a few. The articles, the manufacturing of which, were thus prohibited, could be purchased, at a cheaper rate, from England, and the hands who made them, could be as well employed in agriculture.

Though these restrictions were a species of affront, by their implying, that the colonists had not sense enough to discover their own interest, and though they seemed calculated to crush their native talents, and to keep them in a constant state of inferiority, without any hope of arriving at those advantages, to which, by the native riches of their country, they were prompted to aspire, yet if no other grievances had been superadded, to what existed in 1763, these would have been soon forgotten, for their pressure was neither great, nor universal. The good resulting to the colonies, from their connection with Great-Britain, infinitely outweighed the evil.

Till the year 1764, the colonial regulations seemed to have no other object, but the common good of the whole empire. Exceptions, to the contrary, were few, and had no appearance of system. When the approach of the colonies to manhood, made them more capable of resisting
impositions, Great-Britain changed the ancient system, under which her colonies had long flourished. When policy would rather have dictated a relaxation of authority, she rose in her demands, and multiplied her restraints.

[44] From the conquest of Canada, in 1759, some have supposed, that France began secretly to lay schemes, for wresting those colonies from Great-Britain, which she was not able to conquer. Others alledge, that from that period, the colonists, released from all fears of dangerous neighbours, fixed their eyes on independence, and took sundry steps, preparatory to the adoption of the measure. Without recurring to either of these opinions, the known selfishness of human nature is sufficient to account for that demand on the one side, and that refusal on the other, which occasioned the revolution. It was natural for Great-Britain, to wish for an extension of her authority over the colonies, and equally so for them, on their approach to maturity, to be more impatient of subordination, and to resist every innovation, for increasing the degree of their dependence.

The sad story of colonial oppression commenced in the year 1764. Great-Britain, then, adopted new regulations, respecting her colonies, which, after disturbing the ancient harmony of the two countries, for about twelve years, terminated in a dismemberment of the empire.

These consisted in restricting their former commerce, but more especially in subjecting them to taxation, by the British Parliament. By adhering to the spirit of her navigation act, in the course of a century, the trade of Great-Britain had encreased far beyond the expectation of her most sanguine sons, but by rigidly enforcing the strict letter of the same, in a different situation of public affairs, effects, directly the reverse, were produced.

From the enterprising, commercial spirit of the colonists, the trade of America, after filling all its proper channels to the brim, swelled out on every side, overflowed its proper banks, with a rich redundance. In the cure of evils, which are closely connected with the causes of national prosperity, vulgar precaution ought not to be employed. In severely checking a contraband trade, which was only the overflowing of an extensive fair trade, the remedy was worse then the disease.

For some time before and after the termination of the war of 1755, a considerable intercourse had been carried [45] on between the British and Spanish colonies, consisting of the manufactures of Great Britain, imported by the former, and sold to the latter, by which the British colonies acquired gold and silver, and were enabled to make remittances to the Mother Country. This trade, though it did not clash with the spirit of the British navigation laws, was forbidden by their letter. On account of the advantages, which all parties, and particularly Great-Britain, reaped from this intercourse, it had long been winked at, by persons in power, but at the period beforementioned, some new regulations were adopted, by which it was almost destroyed. This was effected by armed cutters, whose commanders were enjoined to take the usual custom-house oaths, and to act in the capacity of revenue officers. So sudden a stoppage of an accustomed and beneficial commerce, by an unusually rigid execution of old laws, was a serious blow to the Northern colonies. It was their
misfortune, that though they stood in need of vast quantities of British manufactures, their country produced very little, that afforded a direct remittance, to pay for them. They were, therefore, under a necessity of seeking elsewhere, a market for their produce, and by a circuitous route, acquiring the means of supporting their credit, with the Mother Country. This they found, by trading with the Spanish and French colonies, in their neighbourhood. From them they acquired gold, silver, and valuable commodities, the ultimate profits of which, centered in Great-Britain. This intercourse gave life to business of every denomination, and established a reciprocal circulation of money and merchandize, to the benefit of all parties concerned. Why a trade, essential to the colonies, and which, so far from being detrimental, was indirectly advantageous to Great-Britain, should be so narrowly watched, and so severely restrained, could not be accounted for by the Americans, without supposing, that the rulers of Great-Britain were jealous of their adventurous commercial spirit, and of their increasing number of seamen. Their actual sufferings were great, but their apprehensions were greater.

Instead of viewing the parent state, as formerly, in the light of an affectionate [46] mother, they conceived her, as beginning to be influenced by the narrow views of an illiberal stepdame.

After the 29th of September, 1764, the trade between the British, and the French, and Spanish colonies, was in some degree legalised, but under circumstances, that brought no relief to the colonists, for it was loaded with such enormous duties, as were equivalent to a prohibition. The preamble to the act, for this purpose, was alarming. “Whereas it is just and necessary, that a revenue be raised in America, for defraying the expences, of defending, protecting, and securing the same, We, the commons, &c. towards raising the same, give, and grant unto your Majesty, the sum of” (here followed a specification of duties upon foreign clayed sugar, indigo, and coffee, of foreign produce, upon all wines, except French, upon all wrought silk, and all calicoes, and upon every gallon of melasses, and syrups, being the produce of a colony, not under the dominion of his Majesty). It was also enacted, that the monies, arising from the importation of these articles, into the colonies, should be paid into the receipt of his Majesty’s exchequer, there to be entered separate, and reserved, to be disposed of by Parliament, toward defraying the necessary expences, of defending, protecting, and securing America. Till that act passed, no act avowedly for the purpose of revenue, and with the ordinary title and recital of such, was to be found in the parliamentary statute book. The wording of it made the colonists fear, that the Parliament would go on, in charging them with such taxes, as they pleased, and for the support of such military force, as they should think proper. The act was the more disgusting, because the monies, arising from it, were ordered to be paid in specie, and regulations were adopted, against colonial paper money. To obstruct the avenues of acquiring gold and silver, and at the same time to interdict the use of paper money, appeared to the colonists as a farther evidence, that their interests were either misunderstood, or disregarded. The imposition of duties, for the purpose of raising a revenue, in America, was considered as a dangerous innovation, but the methods adopted, for securing their collection, [47] were resented as arbitrary and unconstitutional. It was enacted by Parliament, that whenever offences should be committed against the acts, which imposed them, the prosecutor might bring his action for the penalty, in the courts of admiralty, by which means the defendant lost
the advantage of being tried by a jury, and was subjected to the necessity of having his case decided upon, by a single man, a creature of the crown, whose salary was to be paid out of forfeitures, adjudged by himself; and also according to a course of law, which exempted the prosecutor from the trouble of proving his accusation, and obliged the defendant, either to evince his innocence, or to suffer. By these regulations, the guards, which the constitution had placed round property, and the fences, which the ancestors of both countries had erected, against arbitrary power, were thrown down, as far as they concerned the colonists, charged with violating the laws, for raising a revenue in America.

They who directed public affairs in Great-Britain feared, that if the collection of these duties was enforced, only in the customary way, payment would be often eluded. To obviate that disposition which the colonists discovered to screen one another, in disobeying offensive acts of parliament, regulations were adopted, bearing hard on their constitutional rights. Unwilling as the colonists were to be excluded by the imposition of enormous duties, from an accustomed and beneficial line of business; it is not wonderful that they were disposed to represent these innovations of the Mother Country, in the most unfavourable point of view. The heavy losses to which many individuals were subjected, and the general distress of the mercantile interest, in several of the oldest colonies, soured the minds of many. That the Mother Country should infringe her own constitution, to cramp the commerce of her colonies, was a fruitful subject of declamation: but these murmurings would have evaporated in words, had Great-Britain proceeded to no farther innovations. Instead of this, she adopted the novel idea of raising from the colonies, an efficient revenue, by direct internal taxes, laid by authority of her parliament.

[48] Though all the colonists disrelished, and many, from the pressure of actual sufferings, complained of the British restrictions on their manufactures and commerce, yet a great majority was disposed to submit to both. Most of them acknowledged that the exercise of these powers was incident to the sovereignty of the Mother Country, especially when guarded by an implied contract, that they were to be only used for the common benefit of the empire. It was generally allowed, that as the planting of colonies was not designed to erect an independent government, but to extend an old one, the Parent State had a right to restrain their trade in every way, which conduced to the common emolument.

They for the most part considered the Mother Country as authorised to name ports and nations, to which alone their merchandize should be carried, and with which alone they should trade: but the novel claim of taxing them without their consent, was universally reprobated, as contrary to their natural, chartered, and constitutional rights. In opposition to it, they not only alleged the general principles of liberty, but ancient usage. During the first 150 years of their existence, they had been left to tax themselves and in their own way. If there were any exceptions to this general rule, they were too inconsiderable to merit notice. In the war of 1755, the events of which were fresh in the recollection of every one, the parliament had in no instance attempted to raise either men or money in the colonies, by its own authority. As the claim of taxation on one side, and the refusal of it on the other, was the very hinge on which the revolution turned, it merits a particular discussion.
Colonies were formerly planted by warlike nations, to keep their enemies in awe, to
give vent to a surplus of inhabitants, or to discharge a number of discontented and
troublesome citizens. But in modern ages, the spirit of violence, being in some
measure sheathed in commerce, colonies have been settled, by the nations of Europe,
for the purposes of trade. These were to be attained by their raising, for the Mother
Country, such [49] commodities as she did not produce, and supplying themselves
from her with such things as they wanted. In subserviency to these views, Great-
Britain planted colonies, and made laws, obliging them to carry to her, all their
products which she wanted, and all their raw materials which she chose to work up.
Besides this restriction, she forbade them to procure manufactures from any other part
of the globe, or even the products of European countries, which could rival her,
without being first brought to her ports. By a variety of laws, she regulated their trade,
in such a manner, as was thought most conducive to their mutual advantage, and her
own particular welfare. This principle of commercial monopoly, ran through no less
than 29 acts of parliament from 1660, to 1764. In all these acts, the system of
commerce was established, as that, from which alone, their contributions to the
strength of the empire, were expected. During this whole period, a parliamentary
revenue was no part of the object of colonisation. Accordingly, in all the laws which
regarded them, the technical words of revenue laws, were avoided. Such have usually
a title purporting their being “grants,” and the words “give and grant,” usually precede
their enacting clauses. Although duties were imposed on America, by previous acts of
parliament, no one title of “giving an aid to his majesty,” or any other of the usual
titles to revenue acts, was to be found in any of them. They were intended as
regulations of trade, and not as sources of national supplies. Till the year 1764, all
stood on commercial regulation, and restraint.

While Great-Britain attended to this first system of colonisation, her American
settlements, though exposed in unknown climates, and unexplored wildernesess, grew
and flourished, and in the same proportion; the trade and riches of the Mother Country
increased. Some estimate may be made of this increase, from the following statement.
The whole export trade of England, including that to the colonies, in the year 1704,
amounted to £6,509,000 sterling: but so immensely had the colonies increased, that
the exports to them alone [50] in the year 1772, amounted to £6,022,132 sterling, and
they were yearly increasing. In the short space of 68 years, the colonies added nearly
as much to the export commerce of Great-Britain, as she had grown to by a
progressive increase of improvement in 1700 years. And this increase of colonial
trade, was not at the expense of the general trade of the kingdom, for that increased in
the same time, from six millions, to sixteen millions.

In this auspicious period, the Mother Country contented herself with exercising her
supremacy in superintending the general concerns of the colonies, and in harmonising
the commercial interest of the whole empire. To this the most of them bowed down
with such a filial submission as demonstrated that they, though not subjected to
parliamentary taxes, could be kept in due subordination, and in perfect subserviency
to the grand views of colonisation.

Immediately after the peace of Paris, 1763, a new scene was opened. The national
debt of Great-Britain, then amounted to 148 millions, for which an interest of nearly 5
millions, was annually paid. While the British minister was digesting plans for diminishing this amazing load of debt, he conceived the idea of raising a substantial revenue in the British colonies, from taxes laid by the parliament of the parent state. On the one hand it was urged that the late war originated on account of the colonies—that it was reasonable, more especially as it had terminated in a manner so favourable to their interest, that they should contribute to the defraying of the expences it had occasioned. Thus far both parties were agreed, but Great-Britain contended, that her parliament as the supreme power, was constitutionally vested with an authority to lay them on every part of the empire. This doctrine, plausible in itself, and conformable to the letter of the British constitution, when the whole dominions were represented in one assembly, was reprobated in the colonies, as contrary to the spirit of the same government, when the empire became so far extended, as to have many distinct representative assemblies. The colonists believed that the chief excellence of the [51] British constitution consisted in the right of subjects to grant, or withhold taxes, and in their having a share in enacting the laws, by which they were to be bound.

They conceived, that the superiority of the British constitution, to other forms of government was, not because their supreme council was called Parliament, but because, the people had a share in it, by appointing members, who constituted one of its constituent branches, and without whose concurrence, no law, binding on them, could be enacted. In the Mother Country, it was asserted to be essential to the unity of the empire, that the British Parliament should have a right of taxation, over every part of the royal dominions. In the colonies, it was believed, that taxation and representation were inseparable, and that they could neither be free, nor happy, if their property could be taken from them, without their consent. The common people in America reasoned on this subject, in a summary way: “If a British Parliament,” said they, “in which we are unrepresented, and over which we have no control, can take from us any part of our property, by direct taxation, they may take as much as they please, and we have no security for any thing, that remains, but a forbearance on their part, less likely to be exercised in our favour, as they lighten themselves of the burthens of government, in the same proportion, that they impose them on us.” They well knew, that communities of mankind, as well as individuals, have a strong propensity to impose on others, when they can do it with impunity, and, especially, when there is a prospect, that the imposition will be attended with advantage to themselves. The Americans, from that jealousy of their liberties, which their local situation nurtured, and which they inherited from their forefathers, viewed the exclusive right of laying taxes on themselves, free from extraneous influence, in the same light, as the British Parliament views its peculiar privilege of raising money, independent of the crown. The parent state appeared to the colonists to stand in the same relation to their local legislatures, as the monarch of Great-Britain, to the British [52] Parliament. His prerogative is limited by that palladium of the people’s liberty, the exclusive privilege of granting their own money. While this right rests in the hands of the people, their liberties are secured. In the same manner reasoned the colonists “in order to be stiled freemen, our local assemblies, elected by ourselves, must enjoy the exclusive privilege of imposing taxes upon us.” They contended, that men settled in foreign parts to better their condition, and not to submit their liberties—to continue the equals, not to become the slave of their less adventurous
fellow-citizens, and that by the novel doctrine of parliamentary power, they were
degraded from being the subjects of a King, to the low condition of being subjects of
subjects. They argued, that it was essentially involved in the idea of property, that the
possessor had such a right therein, that it was a contradiction to suppose any other
man, or body of men, possessed a right to take it from him, without his consent.
Precedents, in the history of England, justified this mode of reasoning. The love of
property strengthened it, and it had a peculiar force on the minds of colonists, 3000
miles removed from the seat of government, and growing up to maturity, in a new
world, where, from the extent of country, and the state of society, even the necessary
restraints of civil government, were impatiently born. On the other hand, the people of
Great-Britain revolted against the claims of the colonists. Educated in habits of
submission to parliamentary taxation, they conceived it to be the height of contumacy
for their colonists to refuse obedience to the power, which they had been taught to
revere. Not adverting to the common interest, which existed between the people of
Great-Britain, and their representatives, they believed, that the same right existed,
although the same community of interests was wanting. The pride of an opulent,
conquering nation, aided this mode of reasoning. “What,” said they, “shall we, who
have so lately humbled France and Spain, be dictated to by our own colonists? Shall
our subjects, educated by our care, and defended by our arms, presume to question the
rights of Parliament, to which we are obliged to submit.” [53] Reflections of this kind,
congenial to the natural vanity of the human heart, operated so extensively, that the
people of Great-Britain spoke of their colonies and of their colonists, as of a kind of
possession, annexed to their persons. The love of power, and of property, on the one
side of the Atlantic, were opposed by the same powerful passions on the other.

The disposition to tax the colonies, was also strengthened by exaggerated accounts of
their wealth. It was said, “that the American planters lived in affluence, and with
inconsiderable taxes, while the inhabitants of Great-Britain were born down, by such
oppressive burdens, as to make a bare subsistence, a matter of extreme difficulty.”
The officers who have served in America, during the late war, contributed to this
delusion. Their observations were founded on what they had seen in cities, and at a
time, when large sums were spent by government, in support of fleets and armies, and
when American commodities were in great demand. To treat with attention those,
who came to fight for them, and also to gratify their own pride, the colonists had
made a parade of their riches, by frequently and sumptuously entertaining the
gentlemen of the British army. These, judging from what they saw, without
considering the general state of the country, concurred in representing the colonists, as
very able to contribute, largely, towards defraying the common expences of the
empire.

The charters, which were supposed to contain the principles on which the colonies
were founded, became the subject of serious investigation on both sides. One clause
was found to run through the whole of them, except that which had been granted to
Mr. Penn. This was a declaration, “that the emigrants to America should enjoy the
same privileges, as if they had remained, or had been born within the realm;” but such
was the subtilty of disputants, that both parties construed this general principle, so as
to favour their respective opinions. The American patriots contended, that as English
freeholders could not be taxed, but by representatives, in chusing whom they had a
vote, neither could the colonists: But [54] it was replied, that if the colonists had remained in England, they must have been bound to pay the taxes, imposed by parliament. It was therefore inferred, that, though taxed by that authority, they lost none of the rights of native Englishmen, residing at home. The partizans of the Mother Country could see nothing in charters, but security against taxes, by royal authority. The Americans, adhering to the spirit more than to the letter, viewed their charters, as a shield, against all taxes, not imposed by representatives of their own choice. This construction they contended to be expressly recognized by the charter of Maryland. In that, King Charles bound, both himself and his successors, not to assent to any bill, subjecting the inhabitants to internal taxation, by external legislation.

The nature and extent of the connection between Great-Britain and America, was a great constitutional question, involving many interests, and the general principles of civil liberty. To decide this, recourse was in vain had to parchment authorities, made at a distant time, when neither the grantor, nor grantees, of American territory, had in contemplation, any thing like the present state of the two countries.

Great and flourishing colonies, daily increasing in numbers, and already grown to the magnitude of a nation, planted at an immense distance, and governed by constitutions, resembling that of the country, from which they sprung, were novelties in the history of the world. To combine colonies, so circumstanced, in one uniform system of government, with the parent state, required a great knowledge of mankind, and an extensive comprehension of things. It was an arduous business, far beyond the grasp of ordinary statesmen, whose minds were narrowed by the formalities of law, or the trammels of office. An original genius, unfettered with precedents, and exalted with just ideas of the rights of human nature, and the obligations of universal benevolence, might have struck out a middle line, which would have secured as much liberty to the colonies, and as great a degree of supremacy to the parent state, as their common good required: But [55] the helm of Great-Britain was not in such hands. The spirit of the British constitution on the one hand, revolted at the idea, that the British parliament should exercise the same unlimited authority over the unrepresented colonies, which it exercised over the inhabitants of Great-Britain. The colonists on the other hand did not claim a total exemption from its authority. They in general allowed the Mother Country a certain undefined prerogative over them, and acquiesced in the right of Parliament, to make many acts, binding them in many subjects of internal policy, and regulating their trade. Where parliamentary supremacy ended, and at what point colonial independency began, was not ascertained. Happy would it have been, had the question never been agitated, but much more so, had it been compromised by an amicable compact, without the horrors of a civil war.

The English colonies were originally established, not for the sake of revenue, but on the principles of a commercial monopoly. While England pursued trade and forgot revenue, her commerce increased at least fourfold. The colonies took off the manufactures of Great-Britain, and paid for them with provisions, or raw materials. They united their arms in war, their commerce and their councils in peace, without nicely investigating the terms on which the connection of the two countries depended.
A perfect calm in the political world is not long to be expected. The reciprocal happiness, both of Great-Britain and of the colonies, was too great to be of long duration. The calamities of the war of 1755, had scarcely ended, when the germ of another war was planted, which soon grew up and produced deadly fruit.

At that time sundry resolutions passed the British parliament, relative to the imposition of a stamp duty in America, which gave a general alarm. By them the right, the equity, the policy, and even the necessity of taxing the colonies was formally avowed. These resolutions being considered as the preface of a system of American revenue, were deemed an introduction of evils of much greater magnitude. They opened a prospect of oppression, [56] boundless in extent, and endless in duration. They were nevertheless not immediately followed by any legislative act. Time, and an invitation, were given to the Americans, to suggest any other mode of taxation, that might be equivalent in its produce to the stamp act: But they objected, not only to the mode, but the principle, and several of their assemblies, though in vain, petitioned against it. An American revenue was in England, a very popular measure. The cry in favour of it was so strong, as to confound and silence the voice of petitions to the contrary. The equity of compelling the Americans to contribute to the common expences of the empire, satisfied many, who, without enquiring into the policy or justice of taxing their unrepresented fellow subjects, readily assented to the measures adopted by the parliament, for this purpose. The prospect of easing their own burdens, at the expence of the colonists, dazzled the eyes of gentlemen of landed interest, so as to keep out of their view, the probable consequences of the innovation.

The omnipotence of parliament was so familiar a phrase on both sides of the Atlantic, that few in America, and still fewer in Great-Britain, were impressed in the first instance, with any idea of the illegality of taxing the colonists.

The illumination on that subject was gradual. The resolutions in favour of an American stamp act, which passed in March, 1764, met with no opposition. In the course of the year, which intervened between these resolutions, and the passing of a law grounded upon them, the subject was better understood and constitutional objections against the measure, were urged by several, both in Great-Britain and America. This astonished and chagrined the British ministry: But as the principle of taxing America, had been for some time determined upon, they were unwilling to give it up.

Impelled by partiality for a long cherished idea, Mr. Grenville brought into the house of commons his long expected bill, for laying a stamp duty in America. By this after passing through the usual forms, it was enacted, that the instruments [57] of writing which are in daily use among a commercial people, should be null and void, unless they were executed on stamped paper or parchment, charged with a duty imposed by the British parliament.

When the bill was brought in, Mr. Charles Townsend concluded a speech in its favour, with words to the following effect, “And now will these Americans, children planted by our care, nourished up by our indulgence, till they are grown to a degree of strength and opulence, and protected by our arms, will they grudge to contribute their
mite to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden which we lie under.” To which Colonel Barré replied,

They planted by your care? No, your oppressions planted them in America. They fled from tyranny to a then uncultivated and inhospitable country, where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human nature is liable; and among others to the cruelty of a savage foe the most subtle, and I will take upon me to say, the most formidable of any people upon the face of God’s earth; and yet, actuated by principles of true English liberty, they met all hardships with pleasure compared with those they suffered in their own country, from the hands of those that should have been their friends. They nourished up by your indulgence? They grew by your neglect of them. As soon as you began to care about them, that care was exercised in sending persons to rule them in one department and another, who were perhaps the deputies of deputies to some members of this house, sent to spy out their liberties, to misrepresent their actions and to prey upon them. Men, whose behaviour on many occasions, has caused the blood of those sons of liberty to recoil within them. Men promoted to the highest seats of justice, some who to my knowledge were glad by going to a foreign country, to escape being brought to the bar of a court of justice in their own. They protected by your arms? They have nobly taken up arms in your defence, have exerted a valour amidst their constant and laborious industry, for the defence of a country whose frontier was drenched in blood, while its interior parts yielded all its little savings to your emolument. And believe [58] me, remember I this day told you so, that same spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first will accompany them still: but prudence forbids me to explain myself farther. God knows, I do not at this time speak from any motives of party heat, what I deliver are the genuine sentiments of my heart. However superior to me in general knowledge and experience, the respectable body of this house may be, yet I claim to know more of America than most of you, having seen and been conversant in that country. The people I believe are as truly loyal as any subjects the King has, but a people jealous of their liberties, and who will vindicate them, if ever they should be violated: but the subject is too delicate—I will say no more.

During the debate on the bill, the supporters of it insisted much on the colonies being virtually represented in the same manner as Leeds, Halifax, and some other towns were. A recurrence to this plea was a virtual acknowledgment, that there ought not to be taxation without representation. It was replied, that the connexion between the electors and non-electors of parliament in Great-Britain, was so interwoven, from both being equally liable to pay the same common tax, as to give some security of property to the latter: but with respect to taxes laid by the British parliament, and paid by the Americans, the situation of the parties was reversed. Instead of both parties bearing a proportionable share of the same common burden, what was laid on the one, was exactly so much taken off from the other.

The bill met with no opposition in the house of Lords, and on the 22d of March, it received the royal assent.

The night after it passed, Dr. Franklin wrote to Mr. Charles Thomson. “The sun of liberty is set, you must light up the candles of industry and economy.” Mr. Thomson answered, “he was apprehensive
that other lights would be the consequence,” and foretold the opposition that shortly took place. On its being suggested from authority, that the stamp officers would not be sent from Great-Britain: but selected from among the Americans, the colony agents were desired to point out proper persons [59] for the purpose. They generally nominated their friends which affords a presumptive proof, that they supposed the act would have gone down. In this opinion they were far from being singular. That the colonists would be ultimately obliged to submit to the stamp act, was at first commonly believed, both in England and America. The framers of it, in particular, flattered themselves that the confusion which would arise upon the disuse of writings, and the insecurity of property, which would result from using any other than that required by law, would compel the colonies, however reluctant, to use the stamp paper, and consequently to pay the taxes imposed thereon. They therefore boasted that it was a law which would execute itself.

By the terms of the stamp act, it was not to take effect till the first day of November, a period of more than seven months after its passing. This give the colonists an opportunity for leisurely canvassing the new subject, and examining it fully on every side. In the first part of this interval, struck with astonishment, they lay in silent consternation, and could not determine what course to pursue. By degrees they recovered their recollection.

Virginia led the way in opposition to the stamp act. Mr. Patrick Henry brought into the house of burgesses of that colony, the following resolutions which were substantially adopted.

Resolved, That the first adventurers, settlers of this his Majesty’s colony and dominion of Virginia, brought with them and transmitted to their posterity, and all other, his Majesty’s subjects, since inhabiting in this, his Majesty’s said colony, all the liberties, privileges and immunities, that have at any time been held, enjoyed and possessed by the people of Great-Britain.

Resolved, That by two royal charters, granted by King James the first, the colonies aforesaid are declared, and entitled to all liberties, privileges, and immunities of denizens, and natural subjects, to all intents and purposes, as if they had been abiding, and born within the realm of England,

Resolved, That his Majesty’s liege people, of this, his ancient colony, have enjoyed the rights of being thus governed [60] by their own assembly, in the article of taxes, and internal police, and that the same have never been forfeited, or yielded up, but have been constantly recognized by the King and people of Britain.

Resolved, therefore, That the general assembly of this colony, together with his Majesty, or his substitutes, have, in their representative capacity, the only exclusive right and power, to lay taxes and imposts, upon the inhabitants of this colony, and that every attempt to vest such power in any other person or persons, whatsoever, than the general assembly aforesaid, is illegal, unconstitutional, and unjust, and hath a manifest tendency to destroy British, as well as American Liberty.
Resolved, That his Majesty’s liege people, the inhabitants of this colony, are not bound to yield obedience to any law, or ordinance whatever, designed to impose any taxation whatever upon them, other, than the laws or ordinances of the general assembly aforesaid.

Resolved, That any person, who shall, by speaking, or writing, assert, or maintain, that any person, or persons, other than the general assembly of this colony, have any right or power, to impose, or lay any taxation on the people here, shall be deemed an enemy to this, his Majesty’s colony.

Upon reading these resolutions, the boldness and novelty of them affected one of the members to such a degree, that he cried out, “Treason! Treason!” They were, nevertheless, well received by the people, and immediately forwarded to the other provinces. They circulated extensively, and gave a spring to all the discontented. Till they appeared, most were of opinion, that the act would be quietly adopted. Murmurs, indeed, were common, but they seemed to be such, as would soon die away. The countenance of so respectable a colony, as Virginia, confirmed the wavering, and emboldened the timid. Opposition to the stamp act, from that period, assumed a bolder face. The fire of liberty blazed forth from the press; some well judged publications set the rights of the colonists, in a plain, but strong point of view. The tongues and the pens of the well informed [61] citizens laboured in kindling the latent sparks of patriotism. The flame spread from breast to breast, till the conflagration, became general. In this business, New-England had a principal share. The inhabitants of that part of America, in particular, considered their obligations to the Mother Country for past favours, to be very inconsiderable. They were fully informed, that their forefathers were driven, by persecution, to the woods of America, and had there, without any expence to the parent state, effected a settlement on bare creation. Their resentment, for the invasion of their accustomed right of taxation, was not so much mitigated, by the recollection of late favours, as it was heightened by the tradition of grievous sufferings, to which their ancestors, by the rulers of England, had been subjected. The descendants of the exiled, persecuted, Puritans, of the last century, opposed the stamp act with the same spirit, with which their forefathers were actuated, when they set themselves against the arbitrary impositions of the House of Stuart.

The heavy burdens, which the operation of the stamp-act would have imposed on the colonists, together with the precedent it would establish of future exactions, furnished the American patriots with arguments, calculated as well to move the passions, as to convince the judgments of their fellow colonists. In great warmth they exclaimed, “If the parliament has a right to levy the stamp duties, they may, by the same authority, lay on us imposts, excises, and other taxes, without end, till their rapacity is satisfied, or our abilities are exhausted. We cannot, at future elections, displace these men, who so lavishly grant away our property. Their seats and their power are independent of us, and it will rest with their generosity, where to stop, in transferring the expences of government, from their own, to our shoulders.”

It was fortunate for the liberties of America, that News-papers were the subject of a heavy stamp duty. Printers, when uninfluenced by government, have generally
arranged themselves on the side of liberty, nor are they less remarkable for attention to the profits of their profession.

A stamp duty, which openly invaded the first, [62] and threatened a great diminution of the last, provoked their united zealous opposition. They daily presented to the public, original dissertations, tending to prove, that if the stamp-act was suffered to operate, the liberties of America, were at end, and their property virtually transferred, to their Trans-Atlantic fellow-subjects. The writers among the Americans, seriously alarmed for the fate of their country, came forward, with essays, to prove, that agreeably to the British constitution, taxation and representation were inseparable, that the only constitutional mode of raising money from the colonists, was by acts of their own legislatures, that the Crown possessed no farther power, than that of requisition, and that the parliamentary right of taxation was confined to the Mother Country, and there originated, from the natural right of man, to do what he pleased with his own, transferred by consent from the electors of Great-Britain, to those whom they chose to represent them in Parliament. They also insisted much on the mis-application of public money by the British ministry. Great pains were taken, to inform the colonists, of the large sums, annually bestowed on pensioned favorites, and for the various purposes of bribery. Their passions were inflamed, by high coloured representations of the hardship of being obliged to pay the earnings of their industry, into a British treasury, well known to be a fund for corruption.

The writers on the American side were opposed by arguments, drawn from the unity of the empire. The necessity of one supreme head, the unlimited power of Parliament, and the great numbers in the Mother Country, who, though legally disqualified, from voting at elections, were nevertheless bound to pay the taxes, imposed by the representatives of the nation. To these objections it was replied, that the very idea of subordination of parts, excluded the notion of simple undivided unity. That as England was the head, she could not be the head and the members too—that in all extensive empires, where the dead uniformity of servitude did not prevent, the subordinate parts had many local privileges and immunities—that between these privileges and the supreme [63] common authority, the line was extremely nice; but nevertheless, the supremacy of the head had an ample field of exercise, without arrogating to itself the disposal of the property of the unrepresented subordinate parts. To the assertion, that the power of Parliament was unlimited, the colonists replied, that before it could constitutionally exercise that power, it must be constitutionally formed, and that, therefore, it must at least, in one of its branches, be constituted by the people, over whom it exercised unlimited power. That with respect to Great-Britain, it was so constituted—with respect to America, it was not. They therefore inferred, that its power ought not to be the same over both countries. They argued also, that the delegation of the people was the source of power, in regard to taxation, and as that delegation was wanting in America, they concluded the right of Parliament, to grant away their property, could not exist. That the defective representation in Great-Britain, should be urged as an argument for taxing the Americans, without any representation at all, proved the encroaching nature of power. Instead of convincing the colonists of the propriety of their submission, it demonstrated the wisdom of their resistance; for, said they, “one
invasion of natural right is made the justification of another, much more injurious and oppressive."

The advocates for parliamentary taxation laid great stress on the rights, supposed to accrue to Great-Britain, on the score of her having reared up and protected the English settlements, in America, at great expence. It was, on the other hand, contended by the colonists, that in all the wars which were common to both countries, they had taken their full share, but in all their own dangers, in all the difficulties belonging separately to their situation, which did not immediately concern Great-Britain, they were left to themselves, and had to struggle through a hard infancy; and in particular, to defend themselves without any aid from the Parent State, against the numerous savages in their vicinity. That when France had made war upon them, it was not on their own account, but as appendages to Great-Britain.

That confining their trade [64] for the exclusive benefit of the Parent State, was an ample compensation for her protection, and a sufficient equivalent for their exemption from parliamentary taxation. That the taxes imposed on the inhabitants of Great-Britain, were incorporated with their manufactures, and ultimately fell on the colonists, who were the consumers.

The advocates for the stamp act, also contended that as the parliament was charged with the defence of the colonies, it ought to possess the means of defraying the expences incurred thereby. The same argument had been used by King Charles the 1st, in support of ship money; and it was now answered in the same manner, as it was by the patriots of that day. “That the people who were defended or protected, were the first to judge of and to provide the means of defraying the expences incurred on that account.” In the mean time, the minds of the Americans underwent a total transformation. Instead of their late peaceable and steady attachment to the British nation, they were dayly advancing to the opposite extreme. A new mode of displaying resentment against the friends of the stamp act, began in Massachusetts, and was followed by the other colonies.

A few gentlemen hung out, early in the morning, on the limb of a large tree, towards the entrance of Boston, two effigies, one designed for the stamp master, the other for a jack boot, with a head and horns peeping out at the top. Great numbers both from town and country came to see them. A spirit of enthusiasm was diffused among the spectators. In the evening the whole was cut down and carried in procession by the populace shouting “liberty and property forever, no stamps.” They next pulled down a new building, lately erected by Mr. Oliver, the stamp master. They then went to his house, before which they beheaded his effigy, and at the same time broke his windows. Eleven days after similar violences were repeated. The mob attacked the house of Mr. William Story, deputy register of the court of admiralty—broke his windows—forced into his dwelling house, and destroyed the books and files belonging to the said court, and ruined a great part of his furniture. They [65] next proceeded to the house of Benjamin Hallowell, comptroller of the customs, and repeated similar excesses, and drank and destroyed his liquors. They afterwards proceeded to the house of Mr. Hutchinson, and soon demolished it. They carried off his plate, furniture and apparel, and scattered or destroyed manuscripts and other curious and useful papers, which for thirty years he had been collecting. About half a dozen of the meanest of the mob
were soon after taken up and committed, but they either broke jail, or otherwise escaped all punishment. The town of Boston condemned the whole proceeding, and for some time, private gentlemen kept watch at night, to prevent further violences.

Similar disturbances broke out in the adjacent colonies, nearly about the same time. On the 27th August, the people of New-Port in Rhode-Island, exhibited three effigies intended for Messieurs Howard, Moffatt, and Johnson, in a cart with halters about their necks, and after hanging them on a gallows for some time, cut them down and burnt them, amidst the acclamations of thousands. On the day following, the people collected at the house of Mr. Martin Howard, a lawyer, who had written in defence of the right of Parliament to tax the Americans, and demolished every thing, that belonged to it. They proceeded to Dr. Moffatt’s, who, in conversation, had supported the same right, and made a similar devastation of his property.

In Connecticut they exhibited effigies in sundry places, and afterwards committed them to the flames.

In New-York, the stamp master having resigned, the stamp papers were taken into Fort George, by Lieutenant Governor Colden. The people, disliking his political sentiments, broke open his stable, took out his coach, and carried it in triumph, through the principal streets, to the gallows. On one end of this they suspended the effigy of the Lieut. Governor, having in his right hand a stamped bill of lading, and in the other a figure of the devil. After some time, they carried the apparatus to the gate of the fort, and from thence to the bowling green, under the muzzles of the guns, and burned the [66] whole amid the acclamations of many thousands. They went thence to Major James’ house, stripped it of every article, and consumed the whole, because he was a friend to the stamp act.

The next evening the mob re-assembled, and insisted upon the Lieutenant Governor delivering the stamped papers into their hands, and threatened, in case of a refusal, to take them by force. After some negotiation, it was agreed that they should be delivered to the corporation, and they were deposited in the city hall. Ten boxes of the same, which came by another conveyance, were burned.

The stamp-act was not less odious to many of the inhabitants of the British West-India islands, than to those on the continent of North America. The people of St. Kitts obliged the stamp officer, and his deputy, to resign. Barbadoes, Canada, and Halifax, submitted to the act.

When the ship, which brought the stamp papers to Philadelphia, first appeared round Gloucester point, all the vessels in the harbour hoisted their colours half mast high. The bells were rung muffled till evening, and every countenance added to the appearance of sincere mourning. A large number of people assembled, and endeavoured to procure the resignation of Mr. Hughes, the stamp distributor. He held out long, but at length found it necessary to comply.
As opportunities offered, the assemblies generally passed resolutions, asserting their exclusive right, to lay taxes on their constituents. The people, in their town meetings, instructed their representatives to oppose the stamp act. As a specimen of these, the instructions given to Thomas Forster, their representative, by the freeholders and other inhabitants of the town of Plymouth, are subjoined. In these the yeomanry of the country spoke the determined language of freemen.

After expressing the highest esteem for the British constitution, and setting forth their grievances, they proceeded as follows:

You, Sir, represent a people, who are not only descended from the first settlers of this country, but inhabit the very spot they first possessed. Here was first laid [67] the foundation of the British empire, in this part of America, which, from a very small beginning, has increased and spread, in a manner very surprising, and almost incredible, especially, when we consider, that all this has been effected, without the aid or assistance of any power on earth; that we have defended, protected and secured ourselves against the invasions and cruelty of savages, and the subtlety and inhumanity of our inveterate and natural enemies, the French; and all this without the appropriation of any tax by stamps, or stamp acts, laid upon our fellow subjects, in any part of the King’s dominions, for defraying the expence thereof. This place, Sir, was at first the asylum of liberty, and we hope, will ever be preserved sacred to it, though it was then no more than a barren wilderness, inhabited only by savage men and beasts. To this place our Fathers (whose memories be revered) possessed of the principles of liberty in their purity, disdaining slavery, fled to enjoy those privileges, which they had an undoubted right to, but were deprived of, by the hands of violence and oppression, in their native country. We, Sir, their posterity, the freeholders, and other inhabitants of this town, legally assembled for that purpose, possessed of the same sentiments, and retaining the same ardour for liberty, think it our indispensable duty, on this occasion, to express to you these our sentiments of the stamp-act, and its fatal consequences to this country, and to enjoin upon you, as you regard not only the welfare, but the very being of this people, that you (consistent with our allegiance to the King, and relation to the government of Great Britain) disregarding all proposals for that purpose, exert all your power and influence in opposition to the stamp act, at least till we hear the success of our petitions for relief. We likewise, to avoid disgracing the memories of our ancestors, as well as the reproaches of our own consciences, and the curses of posterity, recommend it to you, to obtain, if possible, in the honorable house of representatives of this province, a full and explicit assertion of our rights, and to have the same entered on their public records, that all generations yet to come, may be convinced, that we have [68] not only a just sense of our rights and liberties, but that we never, with submission to Divine Providence, will be slaves to any power on earth.

The expediency of calling a continental Congress to be composed of deputies from each of the provinces, had early occurred to the people of Massachusetts. The assembly of that province passed a resolution in favour of that measure, and fixed on New-York as the place, and the second Tuesday of October, as the time, for holding the same. Soon after, they sent circular letters to the speakers of the several assemblies, requesting their concurrence. This first advance towards continental union was seconded in South-Carolina, before
it had been agreed to by any colony to the southward of New England. The example
of this province had a considerable influence in recommending the measure to others,
who were divided in their opinions, on the propriety of it.

The assemblies of Virginia, North-Carolina, and Georgia, were prevented, by their
governors, from sending a deputation to this Congress. Twenty eight deputies from
Massachusetts, Rhode-Island, Connecticut, New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania,
Delaware, Maryland, and South-Carolina met at New-York; and after mature
deliberation agreed on a declaration of their rights, and on a statement of their
grievances. They asserted in strong terms, their exemption from all taxes, not imposed
by their own representatives. They also concurred in a petition to the King, and
memorial to the House of Lords, and a petition to the House of Commons. The
colonies that were prevented from sending their representatives to this Congress,
forwarded petitions, similar to those which were adopted by the deputies which
attended.

While a variety of legal and illegal methods were adopted to oppose the stamp act, the
first of November, on which it was to commence its operation, approached. This in
Boston was ushered in by a funeral tolling of bells. Many shops and stores were shut.
The effigies of the planners and friends of the stamp act, were carried [69] about the
streets in public derision, and then torn in pieces, by the enraged populace. It was
remarkable that though a large crowd was assembled, there was not the least violence,
or disorder.

At Portsmouth in New-Hampshire, the morning was ushered in, with tolling all the bells in town. In the course of the day, notice was given to the friends of liberty, to attend her funeral. A coffin, neatly ornamented inscribed with the word Liberty in large letters, was carried to the grave. The funeral procession began from the state house, attended with two unbraced drums. While the inhabitants who followed the coffin were in motion, minute guns were fired, and continued till the corpse arrived at the place of interment. Then an oration in favour of the deceased was pronounced. It was scarcely ended before the corpse was taken up, it having been perceived that some remains of life were left, at which the inscription was immediately altered to “Liberty revived.” The bells immediately exchanged their melancholy, for a more joyful sound, and satisfaction appeared in every countenance. The whole was conducted with decency, and without injury or insult, to any man’s person or property.

In Maryland, the effigy of the stamp master, on one side of which was written, “Tyranny” on the other “Oppression,” and across the breast, “Damn my country I’ll get money,” was carried through the streets, from the place of confinement, to the whipping post, and from thence to the pillory. After suffering many indignities, it was first hanged and than burnt.

The general aversion to the stamp act, was, by similar methods, in a variety of places, demonstrated. It is remarkable that the proceedings of the populace, on these occasions, were earned on with decorum, and regularity. They were not ebullitions of a thoughtless mob, but for the most part, planned by leading men of character and
influence, who were friends to peace and order. These, knowing well that the bulk of mankind, are more led by their senses, than by their reason, conducted the public [70] exhibitions on that principle, with a view of making the stamp act, and its friends, both ridiculous, and odious.

Though the stamp act was to have operated from the first of November; yet legal proceedings in the courts, were carried on as before. Vessels entered and departed without stamped papers. The printers boldly printed and circulated their news-papers, and found a sufficient number of readers, though they used common paper, in defiance of the act of parliament. In most departments, by common consent, business was carried on, as though no stamp act had existed. This was accompanied by spirited resolutions to risque all consequences, rather than submit to use the paper required by law. While these matters were in agitation, the colonists entered into associations against importing British manufactures, till the stamp act should be repealed. In this manner British liberty was made to operate against British tyranny. Agreeably to the free constitution of Great Britain, the subject was at liberty to buy, or not to buy, as he pleased. By suspending their future purchases on the repeal of the stamp act, the colonists made it the interest of merchants, and manufacturers, to solicit for that repeal. They had usually taken off so great a proportion of British manufactures, that the sudden stoppage of all their orders, amounting, annually, to several millions sterling, threw some thousands in the Mother Country out of employment, and induced them, from a regard to their own interest, to advocate the measures wished for by America. The petitions from the colonies were seconded by petitions from the merchants and manufacturers of Great-Britain. What the former prayed for as a matter of right, and connected with their liberties, the latter also solicited from motives of immediate advantage. In order to remedy the deficiency of British goods, the colonists betook themselves to a variety of necessary domestic manufactures. In a little time, large quantities of course and common clothes were brought to market, and these though dearer, and of a worse quality, were cheerfully preferred to similar articles, imported from Britain. That wool might not be wanting, they entered into resolutions [71] to abstain from eating lambs. Foreign elegancies were generally laid aside. The women were as exemplary as the men, in various instances of self denial. With great readiness, they refused every article of decoration for their persons, and of luxury for their tables. These restrictions, which the colonists had voluntarily imposed on themselves, were so well observed, that multitudes of artificers in England, were reduced to great distress, and some of their most flourishing manufactories, were, in a great measure, at a stand. An association was entered into by many of the sons of liberty, the name given to those who were opposed to the stamp act, by which they agreed “to march with the utmost expedition at their own proper costs and expence, with their whole force to the relief of those that should be in danger from the stamp act, or its promoters and abettors, or any thing relative to it, on account of any thing that may have been done, in opposition to its obtaining.” This was subscribed by so many in New-York and New-England, that nothing but a repeal could have prevented the immediate commencement of a civil war.

From the decided opposition to the stamp act, which had been by the colonies adopted, it became necessary for Great Britain to enforce, or to repeal it. Both
methods of proceeding had supporters. The opposers of a repeal urged arguments, drawn from the dignity of the nation, the danger of giving way to the clamours of the Americans, and the consequences of weakening parliamentary authority over the colonies. On the other hand it was evident, from the determined opposition of the colonies, that it could not be enforced without a civil war, by which, in every event, the nation must be a loser. In the course of these discussions, Dr. Franklin was examined at the bar of the House of Commons, and gave extensive information on the state of American affairs, and the impolicy of the stamp act, which contributed much to remove prejudices, and to produce a disposition that was friendly to a repeal.

Some speakers of great weight, in both houses of parliament, denied their right of taxing the colonies. The [72] most distinguished supporters of this opinion were Lord Camden, in the House of Peers, and Mr. Pitt, in the House of Commons. The former, in strong language, said, “My position is this, I repeat it, I will maintain it to my last hour. Taxation and representation are inseparable. This position is founded on the laws of nature. It is more, it is itself an eternal law of nature. For whatever is a man’s own, is absolutely his own. No man has a right to take it from him without his consent. Whoever attempts to do it, attempts an injury, whoever does it, commits a robbery.” Mr. Pitt, with an original boldness of expression, justified the colonists, in opposing the stamp-act. “You have no right,” said he, “to tax America. I rejoice, that America has resisted. Three millions of our fellow subjects so lost to every sense of virtue, as tamely to give up their liberties, would be fit instruments to make slaves of the rest.” He concluded with giving his advice, that the stamp-act be repealed absolutely, totally, and immediately, that the reason for the repeal be assigned, that it was founded on an erroneous principle. “At the same time,” said he, “let the sovereign authority of this country, over the colonies, be asserted in as strong terms as can be devised, and be made to extend to every point of legislation whatsoever; that we may bind their trade, confine their manufactures, and exercise every power, except that of taking their money out of their pockets, without their consent.” The approbation of this illustrious statesman, whose distinguished abilities had raised Great Britain to the highest pitch of renown, inspired the Americans with additional confidence, in the rectitude of their claims of exemption from parliamentary taxation, and emboldened them to farther opposition, when at a future day, as shall be hereafter related, the project of an American revenue was resumed. After much debating, and two protests in the House of Lords, and passing an act “for securing the dependence of America on Great Britain” the repeal of the stamp act was finally carried. This event gave great joy in London. Ships in the river Thames displayed their colours, and houses were illuminated all [73] over the city. It was no sooner known in America, than the colonists rescinded their resolutions, and recommenced their mercantile intercourse with the Mother Country. They presented their homespun clothes to the poor, and imported more largely than ever. The churches resounded with thanksgivings, and their public and private rejoicings knew no bounds. By letters, addresses, and other means, almost all the colonies shewed unequivocal marks of acknowledgment, and gratitude. So sudden a calm recovered after so violent a storm, is without a parallel in history. By the judicious sacrifice of one law, the parliament of Great Britain procured an acquiescence, in all that remained.
There were enlightened patriots, fully impressed with an idea, that the immoderate joy of the colonists was disproportioned to the advantage they had gained.

The stamp act, though repealed, was not repealed on American principles. The preamble assigned as the reason thereof, “That the collecting the several duties and revenues, as by the said act was directed, would be attended with many inconveniencies, and productive of consequences, dangerous to the commercial interests of these kingdoms.” Though this reason was a good one in England, it was by no means satisfactory in America. At the same time that the stamp act was repealed, the absolute, unlimited supremacy of parliament was, in words, asserted. The opposers of the repeal contended for this as essential, the friends of that measure acquiesced in it to strengthen their party, and make sure of their object. Many of both sides thought, that the dignity of Great Britain required something of the kind to counterbalance the loss of authority, that might result from her yielding to the clamours of the colonists. The act for this purpose was called the declaratory act, and was in principle more hostile to American rights, than the stamp act; for it annulled those resolutions and acts of the provincial assemblies, in which they had asserted their right to exemption from all taxes, not imposed by their own representatives; and also enacted, “That the parliament [74] had, and of right ought to have, power to bind the colonies, in all cases whatsoever.”

The bulk of the Americans, intoxicated with the advantage they had gained, overlooked this statute, which in one comprehensive sentence, not only deprived them of liberty and property, but of every right, incident to humanity. They considered it as a salvo for the honor of parliament, in repealing an act, which had so lately received their sanction, and flattered themselves it would remain a dead letter, and that although the right of taxation was in words retained, it would never be exercised. Unwilling to contend about paper claims of ideal supremacy, they returned to their habits of good humour, with the parent state.

The repeal of the stamp act, in a relative connexion with all its circumstances and consequences, was the first direct step to American independency. The claims of the two countries were not only left undecided, but a foundation was laid for their extending at a future period, to the impossibility of a compromise. Though for the present Great-Britain receded from enforcing her claim of American revenue, a numerous party, adhering to that system, reserved themselves for more favourable circumstances to enforce it; and at the same time the colonists, more enlightened on the subject, and more fully convinced of the rectitude of their claims, were encouraged to oppose it, under whatsoever form it should appear, or under whatsoever disguise it should cover itself.

Elevated with the advantage they had gained, from that day forward, instead of feeling themselves dependent on Great-Britain, they conceived that, in respect to commerce, she was dependent on them. It inspired them with such high ideas of the importance of their trade, that they considered the Mother Country to be brought under greater obligations to them, for purchasing her manufactures, than they were to her for protection and the administration of civil government. The freemen of British America, impressed with the exalting sentiments of patriotism and of liberty,
conceived it to be within their power, by future combinations, at any time to [75] convulse, if not to bankrupt the nation, from which they sprung.

Opinions of this kind were strengthened by their local situation, favouring ideas, as extensive as the unexplored continent of which they were inhabitants. While the pride of Britons revolted at the thought of their colonies refusing subjection to that parliament which they obeyed, the Americans with equal haughtiness exclaimed, “shall the petty island of Great-Britain, scarce a speck on the map of the world, controul the free citizens of the great continent of America?”

These high sounding pretensions would have been harmless, or at most, spent themselves in words, had not a ruinous policy, untaught by recent experience, called them into serious action. Though the stamp act was repealed, an American revenue was still a favourite object with many in Great-Britain. The equity and the advantage of taxing the colonists by parliamentary authority were very apparent to their understandings, but the mode of effecting it, without hazarding the public tranquility, was not so obvious. Mr. Charles Townsend, afterwards chancellor of the exchequer, pawned his credit to accomplish what many so earnestly desired. He accordingly brought into parliament a bill for granting duties in the British colonies on glass, paper, painters colours, and tea, which was afterwards enacted into a law. If the small duties imposed on these articles, had preceded the stamp act, they might have passed unobserved: but the late discussions occasioned by that act, had produced among the colonists, not only an animated conviction of their exemption from parliamentary taxation, but a jealousy of the designs of Great-Britain. The sentiments of the Americans on this subject, bore a great resemblance to those of their British countrymen of the preceding century, in the case of ship money. The amount of that tax was very moderate, little exceeding twenty thousand pounds. It was distributed upon the people with equality, and expended for the honour and advantage of the kingdom, yet all these circumstances could not reconcile the people of England to the imposition. [76] It was entirely arbitrary. “By the same right,” said they, “any other tax may be imposed.” In like manner the Americans considered these small duties, in the nature of an entering wedge, designed to make way for others, which would be greater and heavier. In a relative connection with late acts of parliament, respecting domestic manufactures and foreign commerce, laws for imposing taxes on British commodities exported to the colonies, formed a complete circle of oppression, from which there was no possibility of escaping. The colonists had been, previously, restrained from manufacturing certain articles, for their own consumption. Other acts confined them to the exclusive use of British merchandise. The addition of duties, put them wholly in the power and discretion of Great-Britain “We are not” said they,

permitted to import from any nation, other than our own parent state, and have been in some cases by her restrained from manufacturing for ourselves, and she claims a right to do so in every instance which is incompatible with her interest. To these restrictions we have hitherto submitted, but she now rises in her demands, and imposes duties on those commodities, the purchasing of which, elsewhere than at her market, her laws forbid, and the manufacturing of which for our own use, she may any moment she pleases restrain. If her right is valid to lay a small tax, it is equally so
to lay a large one, for from the nature of the case, she must be guided exclusively by her own opinions of our ability, and of the propriety of the duties she may impose. Nothing is left for us but to complain, and, pay.

They contended that there was no real difference between the principle of these new duties and the stamp act, they were both designed to raise a revenue in America, and in the same manner. The payment of the duties, imposed by the stamp act, might have been eluded by the total disuse of stamped paper, and so might the payment of these duties, by the total disuse of those articles on which they were laid, but in neither case, without great difficulty. The colonists were therefore reduced to the hard alternative of being obliged totally to disuse articles of the greatest necessity in human [77] life, or to pay a tax without their consent. The fire of opposition, which had been smothered by the repeal of the stamp act, burned afresh against the same principle of taxation, exhibited in its new form. Mr. Dickenson, of Pennsylvania, on this occasion presented to the public a series of letters signed a Farmer, proving the extreme danger which threatened the liberties of America, from their acquiescence in a precedent which might establish the claim of parliamentary taxation. They were written with great animation, and were read with uncommon avidity. Their reasoning was so convincing, that many of the candid and disinterested citizens of Great-Britain, acknowledged that the American opposition to parliamentary taxation was justifiable. The enormous sums which the stamp act would have collected, had thoroughly alarmed the colonists for their property. It was now demonstrated by several writers, especially by the Pennsylvania Farmer, that a small tax, though more specious, was equally dangerous, as it established a precedent which eventually annihilated American property. The declaratory act which at first was the subject of but a few comments, was now dilated upon, as a foundation for every species of oppression; and the small duties, lately imposed, were considered as the beginning of a train of much greater evils.

Had the colonists admitted the propriety of raising a parliamentary revenue among them, the erection of an American board of commissioners for managing it, which was about this time instituted at Boston, would have been a convenience, rather than an injury; but united as they were in sentiments, of the contrariety of that measure to their natural and constitutional rights, they illy brooked the innovation. As it was coeval with the new duties, they considered it as a certain evidence that the project of an extensive American revenue, notwithstanding the repeal of the stamp act, was still in contemplation. A dislike to British taxation naturally produced a dislike to a board which was to be instrumental in that business, and occasioned many insults to its commissioners.

[78] The revenue act of 1767 produced resolves, petitions, addresses, and remonstrances, similar to those, with which the colonists opposed the stamp act. It also gave rise to a second association for suspending farther importations of British manufactures, till these offensive duties should be taken off. Uniformity, in these measures, was promoted by a circular letter from the assembly of Massachusetts to the speakers of the other assemblies.

This stated the petitions, and representations, which they had forwarded against the late duties, and strongly pointed out the
great difficulties, that must arise to themselves and their constituents, from the
operation of acts of parliament, imposing duties on the unrepresented American
colonies, and requesting a reciprocal free communication, on public affairs. Most of
the provincial assemblies, as they had opportunities of deliberating on the subject,
approved of the proceedings of the Massachusetts assembly, and harmonised with
them in the measures, which they had adopted. In resolves, they stated their rights, in
firm but decent language, and, in petitions, they prayed for a repeal of the late acts,
which they considered as infringements on their liberties.

It is not unreasonable to suppose, that the minister, who planned these duties, hoped,
that they would be regarded as regulations of trade. He might also presume, that as
they amounted only to an inconsiderable sum, they would not give any alarm. The
circular letter of the Massachusetts assembly, which laid the foundation for united
petitions against them, gave therefore great offence. Lord Hillsborough, who had
lately been appointed Secretary of State, for the American department, wrote letters to
the governors of the respective provinces, urging them to exert their influence, to
prevent the assemblies from taking any notice of it, and he called on the
Massachusetts assembly, to rescind their proceedings on that subject. This measure
was both injudicious and irritating. To require a public body to rescind a resolution,
for sending a letter, which was already sent, answered, and acted upon, was a bad
specimen of the wisdom of the new minister. To call a vote, for sending a circular
letter to invite the assemblies of the neighbouring colonies to communicate
together in the pursuit of legal measures to obtain a redress of grievances, “a
flagitious attempt to disturb the public peace,” appeared to the colonists a very
injudicious application of harsh epithets to their constitutional right of petitioning. To
threaten a new house of Assembly with dissolution, in case of their not agreeing to
rescind an act of a former assembly, which was not executory, but executed, clashed
no less with the dictates of common sense, than the constitutional rights of British
colonists. The proposition for rescinding was negatived, by a majority of 97 to 17.
The assembly was immediately dissolved, as had been threatened. This procedure of
the new secretary was considered, by the colonists, as an attempt to suppress all
communication of sentiments between them, and to prevent their united supplications,
from reaching the royal ear. It answered no one valuable purpose, but naturally tended
to mischief.

The bad humour, which from successive irritation already too much prevailed, was
about this time wrought up to a high pitch of resentment and violence, on occasion of
the seizure of Mr. Hancock’s sloop Liberty, for not having entered all the wines she
had brought from Madeira.
The popularity of her owner, the name of the sloop, and the
general aversion to the board of commissioners, and
parliamentary taxation, concurred to inflame the minds of the people. They resented
the removal of the sloop from the wharf, as implying an apprehension of a rescue.
They used every means in their power to interrupt the officers, in the execution of
their business; and numbers swore that they would be revenged. Mr. Harrison the
collector, Mr. Hallowell the comptroller, and Mr. Irwine the inspector of imports and
exports, were so roughly handled, as to bring their lives in danger. The windows of
some of their houses were broken, and the boat of the collector was dragged through
the town, and burned on the common. Such was the temper and disposition of many of the inhabitants, that the commissioners of the customs thought [80] proper to retire on board the Romney man of war; and afterwards to Castle William. The commissioners, from the first moment of their institution, had been an eye sore to the people of Boston. This, though partly owing to their active zeal in detecting smugglers, principally arose from the association which existed in the minds of the inhabitants, between that board and an American revenue. The declaratory act of 1766, the revenue act of 1767; together with the pomp and expense of this board, so disproportionate to the small income of the present duties, conspired to convince not only the few who were benefited by smuggling, but the great body of enlightened freemen, that farther and greater impositions of parliamentary taxes were intended. In proportion as this opinion gained ground, the inhabitants became more disrespectful to the executive officers of the revenue, and more disposed, in the frenzy of patriotism, to commit outrages on their persons and property. The constant bickering that existed between them and the inhabitants, together with the steady opposition given by the latter, to the discharge of the official duties of the former, induced the commissioners and friends of an American revenue, to solicit the protection of a regular force, to be stationed at Boston. In compliance with their wishes, his Majesty ordered two regiments and some armed vessels to repair thither, for supporting and assisting the officers of the customs in the execution of their duty. This restrained the active exertion of that turbulent spirit, which since the passing of the late revenue laws had revived, but it added to the pre-existing causes thereof.

When it was reported in Boston, that one or more regiments were ordered there, a meeting of the inhabitants was called, and a committee appointed, to request the governor, to issue precepts, for convening a general assembly. He replied, “that he could not comply with their request, till he had received his Majesty’s commands for that purpose.” This answer being reported, some spirited resolutions were adopted. In particular it was voted, that the select men of Boston should write [81] to the select men of other towns, to propose, that a convention be held, of deputies from each, to meet at Faneuil hall, in Boston, on the 22d instant.

It was afterwards voted, “That as there is apprehension in the minds of many, of an approaching war with France, those inhabitants, who are not provided, be requested to furnish themselves forthwith with arms.”

Ninety six towns, and eight districts, agreed to the proposal made by the inhabitants of Boston, and appointed deputies, to attend a convention, but the town of Hatfield refused its concurrence. When the deputies met, they conducted with moderation, disclaimed all legislative authority, advised the people to pay the greatest deference to government, and to wait patiently for a redress of their grievances, from his Majesty’s wisdom and moderation. After stating to the world the causes of their meeting, and an account of their proceedings, they dissolved themselves, after a short session, and went home.

Within a day after the convention broke up, the expected regiments arrived, and were peaceably received. Hints had been thrown out by some idle people, that they should
not be permitted to come on shore. Preparations were made by the captains of the men of war in the harbour, to fire on the town, in case opposition had been made to their landing, but the crisis for an appeal to arms was not yet arrived. It was hoped by some, that the folly and rage of the Bostonians would have led them to this rash measure, and thereby have afforded an opportunity for giving them some naval and military correction, but both prudence and policy induced them to adopt a more temperate line of conduct.

While the contention was kept alive, by the successive irritations, which have been mentioned, there was, particularly in Massachusetts, a species of warfare carried on between the royal governors, and the provincial assemblies. Each watched the other with all the jealousy, which strong distrust could inspire. The latter regarded the former as instruments of power, wishing to pay their court to the Mother Country, by curbing the spirit of American freedom, and the former kept a strict eye on the latter, lest they might smooth the way to independence, at which they were charged with aiming. Lieut. Governor Hutchinson, of Massachusetts, virtually challenged the assembly to a dispute, on the ground of the controversy between the two countries. This was accepted by the latter, and the subject, discussed with all the subtilty of argument, which the ingenuity of either party could suggest.

The war of words was not confined to the colonies. While the American assemblies passed resolutions, asserting their exclusive right to tax their constituents, the parliament by resolves, asserted their unlimited supremacy in and over the colonies. While the former, in their public acts, disclaimed all views of independence, they were successively represented in parliamentary resolves, royal speeches, and addresses from Lords and commons, as being in a state of disobedience to law and government, and as having proceeded to measures subversive of the constitution, and manifesting a disposition to throw off all subordination to Great Britain.

In February 1769, both houses of parliament went one step beyond all that had preceded. They then concurred in a joint address to his majesty, in which they expressed their satisfaction in the measures his majesty had pursued—gave the strongest assurances, that they would effectually support him in such farther measures as might be found necessary, to maintain the civil magistrates in a due execution of the laws, in Massachusett’s Bay, and beseeched him to direct the governor to take the most effectual methods of procuring the fullest information, touching all treasons or misprisions of treason, committed within the government, since the 30th day of December, 1767; and to transmit the same together with the names of the persons who were most active in the commission of such offences, to one of the secretaries of state, in order that his majesty might issue a special commission for enquiring of, hearing, and determining, the said offences, within the realm of Great-Britain, pursuant to the provision of the statute of the 35th [83] of King Henry the 8th.
The latter part of this address, which proposed the bringing of delinquents from Massachusetts, to be tried at a tribunal in Great-Britain, for crimes committed in America, underwent many severe animadversions.

It was asserted to be totally inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution, for in England a man charged with a crime, had a right to be tried in the county in which his offence was supposed to have been committed. "Justice is regularly and impartially administered in our courts," said the colonists "and yet by direction of parliament, offenders are to be taken by force, together with all such persons as may be pointed out as witnesses and carried to England, there to be tried in a distant land, by a jury of strangers, and subject to all the disadvantages which result from want of friends, want of witnesses and want of money."

The house of burgesses of Virginia met, soon after official accounts of the joint address of lords and commons on this subject reached America; and in a few days after their meeting, passed resolutions expressing their exclusive right to tax their constituents, and their right to petition their sovereign for redress of grievances, and the lawfulness of procuring the concurrence of the other colonies in praying for the royal interposition, in favour of the violated rights of America: and that all trials for treason, or for any crime whatsoever, committed in that colony, ought to be before his majesty’s courts, within the said colony; and that the seizing any person residing in the said colony, suspected of any crime whatsoever, committed therein, and sending such person to places beyond the sea to be tried, was highly derogatory of the rights of British subjects.

The next day lord Botetourt the governour of Virginia, sent for the house of burgesses and addressed them as follows. "Mr. Speaker and gentlemen of the house of burgesses. I have heard of your resolves, and augur ill of their effects. You have made it my duty to dissolve you, and you are dissolved accordingly."

[84] The assembly of North-Carolina adopted resolutions, similar to those of Virginia, for which Tryon their governour dissolved them. The members of the house of burgesses in Virginia, and of the assembly of North-Carolina, after their dissolution, met as private gentlemen, chose their late speakers moderators, and adopted resolutions against importing British goods. The non-importation agreement, was in this manner forwarded by the very measures which were intended to curb the spirit of American freedom, from which it sprung. Meetings of the associators were regularly held in the various provinces. Committees were appointed to examine all vessels arriving from Britain. Censures were freely passed on such as refused to concur in these associations, and their names published in the news-papers as enemies to their country. The regular acts of the provincial assemblies were not so much respected and obeyed as the decrees of these committees, the associations were in general, as well observed as could be expected; but nevertheless there were some collusions. The fear of mobs, of public resentment and contempt, co-operating with patriotism, preponderated over private interest and convenience. One of the importing merchants of Boston, who hesitated in his compliance with the determination of the inhabitants, was waited upon by a committee of tradesmen, with an axeman and a carpenter at
their head, who informed him, “that 1000 men were waiting for his answer, and that if he refused to comply, they could not tell what might be the consequence.” He complied, and the newspapers soon after published, that he did it voluntarily.

In Boston, Lieut. Governor Hutchinson endeavoured to promote a counter association, but without effect. The friends of importation objected, that till parliament made provision for the punishment of the confederacies against importation, a counter association would answer no other purpose, than to expose the associators to popular rage.

The Bostonians, about this time, went one step farther. They reshipped goods to Great Britain, instead of storing them as formerly. This was resolved upon in a town meeting, on the information of an inhabitant, who communicated a letter he had lately received from a member of parliament, in which it was said, “that shipping back ten thousand pounds worth of goods would do more, than storing a hundred thousand.” This turned the scale, and procured a majority of votes for reshipping. Not only in this, but in many other instances, the violences of the colonists were fostered by individuals in Great Britain. A number of these were in principle with the Americans, in denying the right of parliament, to tax them, but others were more influenced by a spirit of opposition to the ministerial majority, than by a regard to the constitutional liberties of either country.

The non-importation agreement had now lasted some time, and by degrees had become general. Several of the colonial assemblies had been dissolved, or prorogued, for asserting the rights of their constituents. The royal governors, and other friends to an American revenue, were chagrined. The colonists were irritated. Good men, both in England and America, deplored these untoward events, and beheld with concern an increasing ill humour between those, who were bound by interest and affection, to be friends to each other.

In consequence of the American non-importation agreement, founded in opposition to the duties of 1767, the manufacturers of Great Britain experienced a renewal of the distresses, which followed the adoption of similar resolutions, in the year 1765, the repeal of these duties was therefore solicited by the same influence, which had procured the repeal of the stamp act. The rulers of Great Britain acted without decision. Instead of persevering in their own system of coercion or indeed in any one uniform system of colonial government, they struck out a middle line, embarrassed with the consequences, both of severity and of lenity, and which was without the complete benefits of either.

Soon after the spirited address to his Majesty, last mentioned, had passed both houses of parliament, assurances were given for [86] repealing all the duties, imposed in 1767, excepting that of three-pence per pound on tea.

Anxious on the one hand to establish parliamentary supremacy, and on the other, afraid to stem the torrent of opposition, they conceded enough to weaken the former, and yet not enough to satisfy the latter. Had Great Britain generously repealed the whole, and for ever relinquished all claim to the right, or even the exercise of the right
of taxation, the union of the two countries, might have lasted for ages. Had she
seriously determined to compel the submission of the colonies, nothing could have
been more unfriendly to this design, than her repeated concessions to their reiterated
associations. The declaratory act, and the reservation of the duty on tea, left the cause
of contention between the two countries, in full force, but the former was only a claim
on paper, and the latter might be evaded, by refusing to purchase any tea, on which
the parliamentary tax was imposed. The colonists, therefore, conceiving that their
commerce might be renewed, without establishing any precedent, injurious to their
liberties, relaxed in their associations, in every particular, except tea, and immediately
recommenced the importation of all other articles of merchandise. A political calm
once more took place. The parent state might now have closed the dispute for ever,
and honorably receded, without a formal relinquishment of her claims. Neither the
reservation of the duty on tea, by the British parliament, nor the exceptions made by
the colonists, of importing no tea, on which a duty was imposed, would, if they had
been left to their own operation, have disturbed the returning harmony of the two
countries. Without fresh irritation, their wounds might have healed, and not a scar
been left behind.

Unfortunately for the friends of union, so paltry a sum as 3 [pence for] so insignificant
an article as tea, in consequence of a combination between the British ministry and
East-India company, revived the dispute to the rending of the empire.

[87] These two abortive attempts to raise a parliamentary revenue in America, caused
a fermentation in the minds of the colonists, and gave birth to many enquiries
respecting their natural rights. Reflections and reasonings on this subject produced a
high sense of liberty, and a general conviction that there could be no security for their
property, if they were to be taxed at the discretion of a British parliament, in which
they were unrepresented, and over which they had no controul. A determination not
only to oppose this new claim of taxation, but to keep a strict watch, least it might be
established in some disguised form, took possession of their minds.

It commonly happens in the discussion of doubtful claims between States, that the
ground of the original dispute insensibly changes. When the mind is employed in
investigating one subject, others associated with it, naturally present themselves. In
the course of enquiries on the subject of parliamentary taxation, the restriction on the
trade of the colonists—the necessity that was imposed on them to purchase British
and other manufactures, loaded with their full proportion of all taxes paid by those
who made or sold them, became more generally known. While American writers were
vindicating their country from the charge of contributing nothing to the common
expences of the empire, they were led to set off to their credit, the disadvantage of
their being confined exclusively to purchase such manufactures in Britain. They
instituted calculations by which they demonstrated that the monopoly of their trade,
drew from them greater sums for the support of government, than were usually paid
by an equal number of their fellow citizens of Great-Britain; and that taxation,
superadded to such a monopoly, would leave them in a state of perfect
uncompensated slavery. The investigation of these subjects brought matters into view
which the friends of union ought to have kept out of sight. These circumstances,
together with the extensive population of the Eastern States, and their adventurous
spirit of commerce, suggested to some bold spirits that not only British taxation, but British navigation laws were unfriendly to the interests of[88] America. Speculations of this magnitude suited well with the extensive views of some capital merchants, but never would have roused the bulk of the people, had not new matter brought the dispute between the two countries to a point, in which every individual was interested.

On reviewing the conduct of the British ministry, respecting the colonies, much weakness as well as folly appears. For a succession of years there was a steady pursuit of American revenue, but great inconsistence in the projects for obtaining it. In one moment the parliament was for enforcing their laws, the next for repealing them. Doing and undoing, menacing and submitting, straining and relaxing, followed each other, in alternate succession. The object of administration, though twice relinquished as to any present efficiency, was invariably pursued, but without any unity of system.

On the 9th of May, 1769, the King in his speech to parliament, highly applauded their hearty concurrence, in maintaining the execution of the laws, in every part of his dominions. Five days after this speech, lord Hillsborough, secretary of state for the colonies, wrote to lord Botetourt, governor of Virginia:

I can take upon me to assure you, notwithstanding information to the contrary, from men, with factious and seditious views, that his Majesty’s present administration have at no time entertained a design to propose to parliament, to lay any farther taxes upon America, for the purpose of raising a revenue, and that it is at present their intention to propose the next session of parliament, to take off the duties upon glass, paper, and colours, upon consideration of such duties having been laid contrary to the true principles of commerce.

The governor was also informed, that “his Majesty relied upon his prudence and fidelity, to make such an explanation of his Majesty’s measures, as would tend to remove prejudices, and to re-establish mutual confidence and affection between the Mother Country and the colonies.” In the exact spirit of his instructions, lord Botetourt addressed the Virginia assembly as follows:

It may possibly be objected, that as his [89] Majesty’s present administration are not immortal, their successors may be inclined to attempt to undo what the present ministers shall have attempted to perform, and to that objection I can give but this answer, that it is my firm opinion, that the plan I have stated to you, will certainly take place, and that it will never be departed from; and so determined am I forever to abide by it, that I will be content to be declared infamous, if I do not to the last hour of my life, at all times, in all places, and upon all occasions, exert every power, with which I either am, or ever shall be, legally invested, in order to obtain and maintain for the continent of America, that satisfaction, which I have been authorised to promise this day, by the confidential servants of our gracious sovereign, who, to my certain knowledge, rates his honor so high, that he would rather part with his crown, than preserve it by deceit.

These assurances were received with transports of joy by the Virginians. They viewed them as pledging his Majesty for security, that the late design for raising a revenue in
America was abandoned, and never more to be resumed. The Assembly of Virginia, in answer to lord Botetourt, expressed themselves thus:

We are sure our most gracious sovereign, under whatever changes may happen in his confidential servants, will remain immutable in the ways of truth and justice, and that he is incapable of deceiving his faithful subjects; and we esteem your lordship’s information not only as warranted, but even sanctified by the royal word.

How far these solemn engagements with the Americans were observed, subsequent events will demonstrate. In a perfect reliance on them, most of the colonists returned to their ancient habits of good humour, and flattered themselves that no future parliament would undertake to give, or grant away their property.

From the royal and ministerial assurances given in favour of America, in the year 1769, and the subsequent repeal in 1770, of five sixths of the duties which had been imposed in 1767; together with the consequent renewal of the mercantile intercourse between Great-Britain [90] and the colonies: Many hoped that the contention between the two countries was finally closed. In all the provinces, excepting Massachusetts, appearances seemed to favour that opinion. Many incidents operated there to the prejudice of that harmony, which had begun, elsewhere, to return. The stationing a military force among them, was a fruitful source of uneasiness. The royal army had been brought thither, with the avowed design of enforcing submission to the Mother Country. Speeches from the throne, and addresses from both houses of parliament, had taught them to look upon the inhabitants as a factious turbulent people, who aimed at throwing off all subordination to Great-Britain. They, on the other hand were accustomed to look upon the soldiery as instruments of tyranny, sent on purpose to dragoon them out of their liberties.

Reciprocal insults soured the tempers, and mutual injuries embittered the passions, of the opposite parties: besides, some fiery spirits who thought it an indignity to have troops quartered among them, were constantly exciting the towns-people to quarrel with the soldiers.

On the second of March, a fray took place near Mr. Gray’s ropewalk, between a private soldier of the 29th regiment, and an inhabitant. The former was supported by his comrades, the latter by the rope makers, till several on both sides were involved in the consequences. On the 5th a more dreadful scene was presented. The soldiers, when under arms, were pressed upon, insulted and pelted by a mob armed with clubs, sticks, and snowballs covering stones. They were also dared to fire. In this situation, one of the soldiers who had received a blow, in resentment fired at the supposed aggressor. This was followed by a single discharge from six others. Three of the inhabitants were killed, and five were dangerously wounded. The town was immediately in commotion. Such was the temper, force, and number of the inhabitants, that nothing but an engagement to remove the troops out of the town; together with the advice of moderate men, prevented the townspeople from falling on the soldiers. The killed were buried in one vault, and in a most respectful, [91] manner to express the indignation of the inhabitants at the slaughter of their brethren, by
soldiers quartered among them, in violation of their civil liberties. Preston the captain who commanded the party, which fired on the inhabitants [was] committed to jail, and afterwards tried. The captain, and six of the men, were acquitted. Two were brought in guilty of man-slaughter. It appeared on the trial, that the soldiers were abused, insulted, threatened, and pelted, before they fired. It was also proved, that only seven guns were fired by the eight prisoners. These circumstances induced the jury to make a favourable verdict. The result of the trial reflected great honour on John Adams, and Josiah Quincy, the council for the prisoners, and also on the integrity of the jury, who ventured to give an upright verdict, in defiance of popular opinions.

The events of this tragical night, sunk deep in the minds of the people, and were made subservient to important purposes. The anniversary of it was observed with great solemnity. Eloquent orators, were successively employed to deliver an annual oration, to preserve the rememberance of it fresh in their minds. On these occasions the blessings of liberty—the horrors of slavery—the dangers of a standing army—the rights of the colonies, and a variety of such topics were presented to the public view, under their most pleasing and alarming forms. These annual orations administered fuel to the fire of liberty, and kept it burning, with an incessant flame.

The obstacles to returning harmony, which have already been mentioned, were increased, by making the governor and judges in Massachusetts, independent of the province. Formerly, they had been paid by yearly grants from the assembly, but about this time provision was made for paying their salaries by the crown. This was resented as a dangerous innovation, as an infraction of their charter, and as destroying that balance of power, which is essential to free governments. That the crown should pay the salary of the chief justice, was represented by the assembly, as a species of bribery, tending to bias his judicial determinations. They made it the foundation for impeaching Mr. Justice Oliver, before the governor, but he excepted to their proceedings, as unconstitutional. The assembly, nevertheless, gained two points. They tendered the governor more odious to the inhabitants, and increased the public respect for themselves, as the counterpart of the British house of commons, and as guardians of the rights of the people.

A personal animosity, between Lieut. Governor Hutchinson, and some distinguished patriots, in Massachusetts, contributed to perpetuate a flame of discontent in that province, after it had elsewhere visibly abated. This was worked up, in the year 1773, to a high pitch, by a singular combination of circumstances. Some letters had been written, in the course of the dispute, by governor Hutchinson, lieut. governor Oliver, and others, in Boston, to persons in power and office, in England, which contained a very unfavourable representation of the state of public affairs, and tended to shew the necessity of coercive measures, and of changing the chartered system of government, to secure the obedience of the province. These letters fell into the hands of Dr. Franklin, agent of the province, who transmitted them to Boston. The indignation and animosity, which was excited on the receipt of them, knew no bounds. The house of assembly agreed on a petition and remonstrance to his Majesty, in which they charged their governor and lieut. governor with being betrayers of their trusts, and of the people they governed, and of giving private, partial, and false information. They also
declared them enemies to the colonies, and prayed for justice against them, and for their speedy removal from their places.

These charges were carried through by a majority of 82 to 12.

This petition and remonstrance being transmitted to England, the merits of it were discussed before his Majesty’s privy council. After a hearing before that board, in which Dr. Franklin represented the province of Massachusetts, the governor and lieutenant governor were acquitted. Mr. Wedderburne, who defended the accused royal servants, in the course of his pleadings, inveighed against Dr. Franklin, in the severest language, as the fomenter of the disputes between the two countries. It [93] was no protection to this venerable sage, that being the agent of Massachusetts, he conceived it his duty to inform his constituents, of letters, written on public affairs, calculated to overturn their chartered constitution. The age, respectability, and high literary character of the subject of Mr. Wedderburn’s philippic, turned the attention of the public, on the transaction. The insult offered to one of their public agents, and especially to one, who was both the idol and ornament of his native country, sunk deep in the minds of the Americans. That a faithful servant, whom they loved, and almost adored, should be insulted, for discharging his official duty, rankled in their hearts. Dr. Franklin was also immediately dismissed from the office of deputy postmaster general, which he held under the crown. It was not only by his transmission of these letters, that he had given offence to the British ministry, but by his popular writings, in favor of America. Two pieces of his, in particular, had lately attracted a large share of public attention, and had an extensive influence on both sides of the Atlantic. The one purported to be an edict from the King of Prussia, for taxing the inhabitants of Great-Britain, as descendants of emigrants from his dominions. The other was entitled, “Rules for reducing a great empire to a small one.” In both of which he had exposed the claims of the Mother Country, and the proceedings of the British ministry, with the severity of poignant satire.

For ten years, there had now been but little intermission to the disputes between Great-Britain and her colonies. Their respective claims had never been compromised on middle ground. The calm which followed the repeal of the stamp act, was in a few months disturbed, by the revenue act of the year 1767. The tranquility which followed the repeal of five sixths of that act in the year 1770, was nothing more than a truce. The reservation of the duty on tea, made as an avowed evidence of the claims of Great-Britain to tax her colonies, kept alive the jealousy of the colonists, while at the same time the stationing of a standing army in Massachusetts—the continuance of a board of commissioners in Boston—the constituting the governors and judges of that province [94] independent of the people, were constant sources of irritation. The altercations which, at this period, were common between the royal governors and the provincial assemblies, together with numerous vindications of the claims of America, made the subject familiar to the colonists. The ground of the controversy was canvassed in every company. The more the Americans read, reasoned, and conversed on the subject, the more were they convinced of their right to the exclusive disposal of their property. This was followed by a determination to resist all encroachments on that palladium of British liberty. They were as strongly convinced of their right to refuse and resist parliamentary taxation, as the ruling powers of Great-Britain, of their right to demand and enforce their submission to it.
The claims of the two countries, being thus irreconcilably opposed to each other, the partial calm which followed the concession of parliament in 1770, was liable to disturbance, from every incident. Under such circumstances, nothing less than the most guarded conduct on both sides could prevent a renewal of the controversy. Instead of following those prudential measures which would have kept the ground of the dispute out of sight, an impolitic scheme was concerted, between the British ministry and the East-India company, which placed the claims of Great-Britain and of her colonies in hostile array against each other.
CHAPTER III

Tea Is Sent By The East India Company To America, And Is Refused, Or Destroyed, By The Colonists. Boston Port Act, &C.

In the year 1773, commenced a new era of the American controversy. To understand this in its origin, it is necessary to recur to the period, when the solitary duty on tea, was excepted from the partial repeal of the revenue act of 1767. When the duties which had been laid on glass, paper and painters colours, were taken off, a [95] respectable minority in parliament contended, that the duty on tea should also be removed. To this it was replied, “That as the Americans denied the legality of taxing them, a total repeal would be a virtual acquiescence in their claims; and that in order to preserve the rights of the Mother Country, it was necessary to retain the preamble, and at least one of the taxed articles.” It was answered, that a partial repeal would be a source of endless discontent—that the tax on tea would not defray the expenses of collecting it. The motion in favour of a total repeal, was thrown out by a great majority. As the parliament thought fit to retain the tax on tea for an evidence of their right of taxation, the Americans in like manner, to be consistent with themselves, in denying that right, discontinued the importation of that commodity. While there was no attempt to introduce tea into the colonies against this declared sense of the inhabitants, these opposing claims were in no danger of collision. In that case the Mother Country might have solaced herself, with her ideal rights, and the colonies, with their favorite opinion of a total exemption from parliamentary taxes, without disturbing the public peace. This mode of compromising the dispute, which seemed at first designed as a salvo for the honor and consistency of both parties, was, by the interference of the East-India Company, in combination with the British ministry, completely overset.

The expected revenue from tea failed, in consequence of the American association to import none, on which a duty was charged. This, though partially violated in some of the colonies, was well observed in others, and particularly in Pennsylvania, where the duty was never paid on more than one chest of that commodity. This proceeded as much from the spirit of gain as of patriotism. The merchants found means of supplying their countrymen with tea, smuggled from countries to which the power of Britain did not extend. They doubtless conceived themselves to be supporting the rights of their country, by refusing to purchase tea from Britain, but they also reflected that if they could bring the same commodity to market, free of duty, their profits would be proportionably greater.

[96] The love of gain was not peculiar to the American merchants. From the diminished exportation to the colonies, the ware-houses of the British East-India company had in them about seventeen millions of pounds of tea, for which a market could not readily be procured. The ministry and East-India company unwilling to lose, the one the expected revenue from the sale of tea in America—the other, their usual
commercial profits, agreed on a measure by which they supposed both would be secured.

The East-India company were by law authorized to export their tea free of duties to all places whatsoever. By this regulation, tea, though loaded with an exceptionable duty, would come cheaper to the colonies, than before it had been made a source of revenue: For the duty when taken off it, when exported from Great-Britain, was greater than what was to be paid on its importation into the colonies. Confident of success in finding a market for their tea, thus reduced in its price, and also of collecting a duty on its importation and sale in the colonies, the East-India company freighted several ships, with teas for the different colonies, and appointed agents for the disposal thereof. This measure united several interests in opposition to its execution. The patriotism of the Americans was corroborated by several auxiliary aids, no ways connected with the cause of liberty.

The merchants in England were alarmed at the losses that must accrue to themselves, from the exportations of the East-India company, and from the sales going through the hands of consignees. Letters were written from that country, to colonial patriots, urging that opposition to which they of themselves were prone.

The smugglers who were both numerous and powerful, could not relish a scheme which by underselling them, and taking a profitable branch of business, out of their hands, threatened a diminution of their gains. The colonists were too suspicious of the designs of Great-Britain to be imposed upon.

The cry of endangered liberty once more excited an alarm from New-Hampshire to Georgia. The first opposition [97] to the execution of the scheme adopted by the East-India company began with the American merchants. They saw a profitable branch of their trade likely to be lost, and the benefits of it to be transferred to people in Great-Britain. They felt for the wound that would be inflicted on their country’s claim of exemption from parliamentary taxation, but they felt with equal sensibility for the losses they would sustain by the diversion of the streams of commerce, into unusual channels. Though the opposition originated in the selfishness of the merchants, it did not end there. The great body of the people, from principles of the purest patriotism, were brought over to second their wishes. They considered the whole scheme, as calculated to seduce them into an acquiescence with the views of parliament, for raising an American revenue. Much pains were taken to enlighten the colonists on this subject, and to convince them of the eminent hazard to which their liberties were exposed.

The provincial patriots insisted largely on the persevering determination of the parent state to establish her claim of taxation, by compelling the sale of tea in the colonies against the solemn resolutions and declared sense of the inhabitants, and that at a time when the commercial intercourse of the two countries was renewed, and their ancient harmony fast returning. The proposed venders of the tea were represented as revenue officers, employed in the collection of an unconstitutional tax, imposed by Great-Britain. The colonists reasoned with themselves, that as the duty and the price of the commodity were inseparably blended, if the tea was sold, every purchaser would pay
a tax imposed by the British parliament, as part of the purchase money. To obviate
this evil, and to prevent the liberties of a great country from being sacrificed by
inconsiderate purchasers, sundry town meetings were held in the capitals of the
different provinces, and combinations were formed to obstruct the sales of the tea,
sent by the East-India company.

[98] The resolutions entered into by the inhabitants of Philadelphia, on October the
18th 1773, afford a good specimen of the whole—these were as follows:

1. That the disposal of their own property is the inherent right of freemen;
that there can be no property in that which another can, of right, take from us
without our consent; that the claim of parliament to tax America, is in other
words, a claim of right to levy contributions on us at pleasure.
2. That the duty imposed by parliament upon tea landed in America, is a tax
on the Americans, or levying contributions on them without their consent.
3. That the express purpose for which the tax is levied on the
Americans—namely, for the support of government, administration of justice,
and defence of his Majesty’s dominions in America, has a direct tendency to
render assemblies useless, and to introduce arbitrary government and slavery.
4. That a virtuous and steady opposition to this ministerial plan of governing
America, is absolutely necessary to preserve even the shadow of liberty, and
is a duty which every freeman in America owes to his country, to himself,
and to his posterity.
5. That the resolution lately entered into by the East-India company, to send
out their tea to America, subject to the payment of duties on its being landed
here, is an open attempt to enforce this ministerial plan, and a violent attack
upon the liberties of America.
6. That it is the duty of every American to oppose this attempt.
7. That whoever shall directly or indirectly, countenance this attempt, or in
any wise aid or abet in unloading, receiving, or vending the tea sent, or to be
sent out by the East-India company, while it remains subject to the payment
of a duty here, is an enemy to his country.
8. That a committee be immediately chosen to wait on those gentlemen, who,
it is reported, are appointed by the East-India company, to receive and sell
said tea, and request them, from a regard to their own character [99] and the
peace and good order of the city and province, immediately to resign their
appointment.

As the time approached when the arrival of the tea ships might be soon expected, such
measures were adopted as seemed most likely to prevent the landing of their cargoes.
The tea consignees, appointed by the East-India company, were in several places
compelled to relinquish their appointments, and no others could be found hardy
enough to act in their stead. The pilots in the river Delaware, were warned not to
conduct any of the tea ships into their harbour. In New-York, popular vengeance was
denounced against all who would contribute, in any measure, to forward the views of
the East-India company. The captains of the New-York and Philadelphia ships, being
apprized of the resolution of the people, and fearing the consequences of landing a
commodity, charged with an odious duty, in violation of their declared public
sentiments, concluded to return directly to Great-Britain, without making any entry at the custom house.

It was otherwise in Massachusetts. The tea ships designed for the supply of Boston, were consigned to the sons, cousins, and particular friends, of governor Hutchinson. When they were called upon to resign, they answered, “That it was out of their power.” The collector refused to give a clearance, unless the vessels were discharged of dutiable articles. The governor refused to give a pass for the vessels, unless properly qualified from the custom-house. The governor likewise requested Admiral Montague to guard the passages out of the harbour, and gave orders to suffer no vessels, coasters excepted, to pass the fortress from the town, without a pass signed by himself. From a combination of these circumstances, the return of the tea vessels from Boston, was rendered impossible. The inhabitants then, had no option, but to prevent the landing of the tea, or to suffer it to be landed, and depend on the unanimity of the people not to purchase it, or to destroy the tea, or to suffer a deep laid scheme against their sacred liberties to take effect. The first would have required incessant [100] watching by night, as well as by day, for a period of time, the duration of which no one could compute. The second would have been visionary to childishness, by suspending the liberties of a growing country, on the self denial and discretion of every tea drinker in the province. They viewed the tea as the vehicle of an unconstitutional tax, and as inseparably associated with it. To avoid the one, they resolved to destroy the other. About seventeen persons, dressed as Indians, repaired to the tea ships, broke open 342 chests of tea, and without doing any other damage, discharged their contents into the water.

Thus by the inflexibility of the governor, the issue of this business was different, at Boston, from what it was elsewhere. The whole cargoes of tea were returned from New-York and Philadelphia. That which was sent to Charleston was landed and stored, but not offered for sale. Mr. Hutchinson had repeatedly urged government, at home, to be firm and persevering, he could not therefore consistent with his honour depart from a line of conduct, he had so often and so strongly recommended to his superiors. He also believed that the inhabitants would not dare to perfect their engagements, and flattered himself that they would desist, when the critical moment arrived.

Admitting the rectitude of the American claims of exemption, from parliamentary taxation, the destruction of the tea by the Bostonians, was warranted by the great law of self preservation, for it was not possible for them, by any other means, within the compass of probability, to discharge the duty they owed to their country.

The event of this business was very different from what had been expected in England. The colonists acted with so much union and system, that there was not a single chest of any of the cargoes sent out by the East-India company, on this occasion, sold for their benefit.

Intelligence of these proceedings was, on the 7th of March 1774, communicated, in a message from the throne, to both houses of parliament. In this communication the conduct of the colonists was represented as [101] not only obstructing the commerce
of Great-Britain, but as subversive of its constitution. The message was accompanied with a number of papers, containing copies and extracts of letters, from the several royal governors and others, from which it appeared that the opposition to the sale of the tea was not peculiar to Massachusetts, but common to all the colonies. These papers were accompanied with accounts setting forth, that nothing short of parliamentary interference was capable of re-establishing order among the turbulent colonists, and that therefore decisive measures should be immediately adopted for securing the dependence of the colonies. If the right of levying taxes on the Americans was vested in the parent state, these inferences were well founded; but if it was not, their conduct in resisting an invasion of their rights was justified, not only by many examples in the history of Britain, but by the spirit of the constitution of that country which they were opposing.

By the destruction of the tea, the people of Boston had incurred the sanction of penal laws. Those in Great-Britain who wished for an opportunity to take vengeance on that town, commonly supposed by them to be the mother of sedition and rebellion, rejoiced that her inhabitants had laid themselves open to castigation.

It was well known that the throwing of the tea into the river, did not originate with the persons who were the immediate instruments of that act of violence. That the whole had been concerted at a public meeting, and was, in a qualified sense, the act of the town. The universal indignation which in Great-Britain was excited against the people of Boston, pointed out to the ministry the suitableness of the present moment for humbling them. Though the ostensible ground of complaint was nothing more than a trespass on private property, committed by private persons, yet it was well known to be part of a long digested plan of resistance to parliamentary taxation. Every measure that might be pursued on the occasion seemed to be big with the fate of the empire. To proceed in the usual forms of law, appeared to the rulers in Great-Britain to be a departure from their dignity. It was urged by the ministry that parliament, and parliament only, was capable of re-establishing tranquility among these turbulent people, and of bringing order out of confusion. To stifle all opposition from the merchants, the public papers were filled with writings which stated the impossibility of carrying on a future trade to America, if this flagrant outrage on commerce should go unpunished.

It was in vain urged by the minority that no good could arise from coercion, unless the minds of the Americans were made easy on the subject of taxation. Equally vain was a motion for a retrospect into the conduct of the ministry, which had provoked their resistance.

The parliament discovered an aversion from looking back to the original ground of the dispute, and confined themselves solely to the late misbehavior of the Americans, without any enquiry into the provoking causes thereof.

The violence of the Bostonians in destroying an article of commerce, was largely insisted upon, without any indulgence for the jealous spirit of liberty, in the descendants of Englishmen. The connexion between the tea and the unconstitutional duty imposed thereon, was overlooked, and the public mind of Great-Britain solely
fixed on the obstruction given to commerce, by the turbulent colonists. The spirit raised against the Americans became as high, and as strong, as their most inveterate enemies could desire. This was not confined to the common people, but took possession of legislators, whose unclouded minds ought to be exalted above the mists of prejudice or partiality. Such, when they consult on public affairs, should be free from the impulses of passion, for it rarely happens that resolutions adopted in anger, are founded in wisdom. The parliament in Great-Britain, transported with indignation against the people of Boston, in a fit of rage resolved to take legislative vengeance, on that devoted town.

Disregarding the forms of her own constitution by which none are to be condemned unheard, or punished without a trial, a bill was finally passed, on the 17th day [103] after it was first moved for, by which the port of Boston was virtually blocked up, for it was legally precluded from the privilege of landing and discharging, or of lading and shipping of goods, wares and merchandise. The minister who proposed this measure, stated in support of it, that the opposition to the authority of parliament, had always originated in that colony, and had always been instigated by the seditious proceedings of the town of Boston: that it was therefore necessary to make an example of that town, which by an unparalleled outrage had violated the freedom of commerce; that Great-Britain would be wanting in the protection she owed to her peaceable subjects, if she did not punish such an insult, in an exemplary manner. He therefore proposed, that the town of Boston should be obliged to pay for the tea which had been destroyed. He was farther of opinion, that making a pecuniary satisfaction for the injury committed, would not alone be sufficient, but that in addition thereto, security must be given in future, that trade may be safely carried on—property protected—laws obeyed—and duties paid. He urged, therefore that it would be proper to take away from Boston the privilege of a port, until his Majesty should be satisfied in these particulars, and publicly declare in council, on a proper certificate, of the good behaviour of the town, that he was so satisfied. Until this should happen he proposed that the custom house officers should be removed to Salem. The minister hoped that this act would execute itself, or at most, that a few frigates would secure its execution. He also hoped, that the prospect of advantage to the town of Salem, from its being made the seat of the custom house, and from the occlusion of the port of Boston, would detach them from the interest of the latter, and dispose them to support a measure, from which they had so much to expect. It was also presumed that the other colonies would leave Boston to suffer the punishment due to her demerits. The abettors of parliamentary supremacy flattered themselves that this decided conduct of Great-Britain would, forever, extinguish all opposition from the refractory colonists to the claims of [104] the Mother Country; and the apparent equity of obliging a delinquent town to make reparation for an injury occasioned by the factious spirit of its inhabitants, silenced many of the friends of America. The consequences resulting from this measure, were the reverse of what were wished for by the first, and dreaded by the last.

By the operation of the Boston port act, the preceding situation of its inhabitants, and that of the East-India company was reversed. The former had more reason to complain of the disproportionate penalty to which they were indiscriminately subjected, than the latter of that outrage on their property, for which punishment had
been inflicted. Hitherto the East-India company were the injured party, but from the passing of this act, the balance of injury was on the opposite side. If wrongs received entitled the former to reparation, the latter had a much stronger title on the same ground. For the act of seventeen or eighteen individuals, twice as many thousands were involved in one general calamity.

Both parties viewed the case on a much larger scale than that of municipal law. The people of Boston alleged, in vindication of their conduct, that the tea was a weapon aimed at their liberties, and that the same principles of self preservation which justify the breaking of the assassins sword uplifted for destruction, equally authorised the destruction of that tea which was the vehicle of an unconstitutional tax subversive of their liberties. The parliament of Great-Britain considered the act of the people of Boston, in destroying the tea, as an open defiance of that country. The demerit of the action as an offence against property, was lost, in the supposed superior demerit of treasonable intention to emancipate themselves from a state of colonial dependence. The Americans conceived the case to be intimately connected with their liberties; the inhabitants of Great-Britain with their supremacy, the former considered it as a duty they owed their country, to make a common cause with the people of Boston, the latter thought themselves under equal obligations to support the privileges of parliament.

On the third reading of the Boston port bill, a petition was presented by the lord mayor, in the name of several natives and inhabitants of North America, then residing in London. It was drawn with great force of language, and stated that “the proceedings of parliament against Boston were repugnant to every principle of law and justice, and established a precedent by which no man in America could enjoy a moment’s security.” The friends of parliamentary supremacy had long regretted the democratic constitutions of the provinces as adverse to their schemes. They saw with concern the steady opposition that was given to their measures by the American legislatures. These constitutions were planned when Great-Britain neither feared nor cared for her colonies. Not suspecting that she was laying the foundation of future states, she granted charters that gave to the people so much of the powers of government as enabled them to make not only a formidable, but a regular, constitutional, opposition, to the country from which they sprung.

Long had her rulers wished for an opportunity to revoke these charters, and to new model these governments. The present moment seemed favourable to this design. The temper of the nation was high, and the resentment against the province of Massachusetts general and violent. The late outrages in Boston furnished a tolerable pretence for the attempt. An act of the British parliament speedily followed the one for shutting up the port of Boston, entitled, an act for the better regulating the government of Massachusetts. The object of this was to alter the charter of the province in the following particulars: The council or second branch of the legislature heretofore elected by the general court, was to be from the first of August 1774, appointed by the crown. The royal governor was also by the same act, invested with the power of appointing and removing all judges of the inferior courts of common pleas—commissioners of oyer and terminer—the attorney general—provost marshal—justices—sheriffs, &c. The town meetings which were sanctioned by the
charter, were with a few exceptions expressly forbidden to be held, without the
leave of the governor or lieutenant governor in writing, expressing the special
business of said meeting, first had and obtained; and with a farther restriction, that no
matter should be treated of at these meetings, excepting the election of public officers,
and the business expressed in the leave given by the governor or lieutenant governor.
Jurymen which had been before elected by the freeholders and inhabitants of the
several towns, were to be, by this new act, all summoned and returned, by the sheriffs
of the respective counties. The whole executive government was taken out of the
hands of the people, and the nomination of all important officers vested in the king or
his governor.

This act excited a greater alarm than the port act. The one effected only the
metropolis, the other the whole province. The one had the appearance of being
merited, as it was well known that an act of violence had been committed by its
inhabitants, under the sanction of a town meeting; but the other had no stronger
justifying reason than that the proposed alterations were, in the opinion of the
parliament, become absolutely necessary, in order to the preservation of the peace and
good order of the said province. In support of this bill, the minister who brought it in
alleged, that an executive power was wanting in the country. The very people, said
he, who commit the riots are the posse comitatus in which the force of the civil power
consists. He farther urged the futility of making laws, the execution of which, under
the present form of government in Massachusetts, might be so easily evaded, and
therefore contended for a necessity to alter the whole frame of their constitution, as
far as related to its executive and judicial powers. In opposition it was urged, that the
taking away the civil constitution of a whole people, secured by a solemn charter,
upon general charges of delinquencies and defects, was a stretch of power of the most
arbitrary and dangerous nature.

By the English constitution charters were sacred, and only revokable by a due course
of law, and on a conviction of misconduct. They were solemn compacts
between the prince and the people, and without the constitutional power of either
party. The abettors of the British schemes reasoned in a summary way. Said they,
the colonies, particularly Massachusetts, by their circular letters; associations and
town meetings, have for years past thwarted all the measures of government, and are
meditating independency. This turbulent spirit of theirs is fostered by their
constitution, which invests them with too much power to be consistent with their state
of subordination. Let us therefore lay the axe at the root—new model their charter,
and lop off those privileges which they have abused.

When the human mind is agitated with passion it rarely discerns its own interest, and
but faintly foresees consequences. Had the parliament stopped short with the Boston
port act, the motives to union and to make a common cause with that metropolis,
would have been feeble, perhaps ineffectual to have roused the other provinces; but
the arbitrary mutilation of the important privileges contained in a solemn charter,
without a trial—without a hearing, by the will of parliament, convinced the most
moderate that the cause of Massachusetts was the cause of all the provinces.
It readily occurred to those who guided the helm of Great-Britain, that riots would probably take place, in attempting the execution of the acts just mentioned. They also discerned that such was the temper of the people, that trials for murders committed in suppressing riots, if held in Massachusetts, would seldom terminate in favour of the parties, who were engaged on the side of government. To make their system compleat, it was necessary to go one step farther, and to screen their active friends from the apprehended partiality of such trials. It was therefore provided by law, that if any person was indicted for murder, or for any capital offence committed in aiding magistracy, that the governor might send the person so indicted to another colony, or to Great-Britain to be tried. This law was the subject of severe comments. It was considered as an act of indemnity to those who should [108] embrace their hands in the blood of their fellow citizens. It was asked how the relations of a murdered man could effectually prosecute, if they must go three thousand miles to attend that business. It was contended that the act by stopping the usual course of justice, would probably give rise to assassinations and dark revenge among individuals, and encourage all kinds of lawless violence. The charge of partiality was retorted. For said they, “If a party spirit against the authority of Great-Britain would condemn an active officer in Massachusetts as a murderer, the same party spirit for preserving the authority of Great-Britain, would, in that country, acquit a murderer as a spirited performer of his duty.”] The case of captain Preston was also quoted as a proof of the impartial administration of justice in Massachusetts.

The same Natives of America who had petitioned against the Boston port bill, presented a second one against these two bills. With uncommon energy of language, they pointed out many constitutional objections against them, and concluded with fervently beseeching, “that the parliament would not, by passing them, reduce their countrymen to an abject state of misery and humiliation, or drive them to the last resource of despair.” The lords of the minority entered also a protest against the passing of each of these bills.

It was fortunate for the people of Boston, and those who wished to promote a combination of the colonies against Great-Britain, that these three several laws passed nearly at the same time. They were presented in quick progression, either in the form of bills or of acts, to the consideration of the inflamed Americans, and produced effects on their minds, infinitely greater than could have been expected from either, especially from the Boston port act alone.

When the fire of indignation, excited by the first, was burning, intelligence of these other acts, operated like fuel, and made it flame out with increasing vehemence. The three laws were considered as forming a complete system of tyranny, from the operation of which, there was no chance of making a peaceable escape.

[109] “By the first,” said they, “the property of unoffending thousands is arbitrarily taken away, for the act of a few individuals; by the second our chartered liberties are annihilated; and by the third, our lives may be destroyed with impunity. Property, liberty, and life, are all sacrificed on the altar of ministerial vengeance.” This mode of reasoning was not peculiar to Massachusetts. These three acts of parliament, contrary to the expectation of those who planned them, became a cement of a firm union
among the colonies, from New-Hampshire to Georgia. They now openly said, “our
charters and other rights and immunities must depend on the pleasure of parliament.”
They were sensible that they had all concurred, more or less, in the same line of
opposition which had provoked these severe statutes against Massachusetts; and they
believed that vengeance, though delayed, was not remitted, and that the only favour
the least culpable could expect, was to be the last that would be devoured. The friends
of the colonies contended, that these laws were in direct contradiction to the letter,
and the spirit of the British constitution. Their opposers could support them on no
stronger grounds than those of political necessity and expedience. They
acknowledged them to be contrary to the established mode of proceeding, but
defended them as tending ultimately to preserve the constitution, from the meditated
independency of the colonies.

Such was the temper of the people in England, that the acts hitherto passed were
popular. A general opinion had gone forth in the Mother Country, that the people of
Massachusetts, by their violent opposition to government, had drawn on themselves
merited correction.

The parliament did not stop here, but proceeded one step farther, which inflamed their
enemies in America, and lost them friends in Great-Britain. The general clamor in the
provinces was, that the proceedings in the parliament were arbitrary, and
unconstitutional. Before they completed their memorable session in the beginning of
the year 1774, they passed an act respecting the government of Quebec, which in the
opinion of their friends merited these appellations. By this act the government of that
province was made to extend southward to the Ohio, and westward to the banks
of the Mississippi, and northward, to the boundary of the Hudson’s Bay company.
The principal objects of the act were to form a legislative council, for all the affairs of
the province, except taxation, which council should be appointed by the crown; the
office to be held during pleasure, and his Majesty’s Roman Catholic subjects to be
entitled to a place therein—to establish the French laws, and a trial without jury, in
civil cases, and the English laws, with a trial by jury, in criminal—to secure to the
Roman Catholic clergy, except the regulars, the legal enjoyment of their estates, and
their tythes, from all who were of their own religion. Not only the spirit but the letter
of this act were so contrary to the English constitution, that it diminished the
popularity of the measures which had been formed against the Americans.

Among the more southern colonists, it was conceived that its evident object was to
make the inhabitants of Canada fit instruments, in the hands of power, to reduce them
to a state of slavery.

They well remembered the embarrassments occasioned to them in the late war
between France and England, by the French inhabitants of Canada—they supposed
that the British administration meant, at this time, to use these people in the same line
of attack, for their subjugation. As Great-Britain had new modelled the chartered
government of Massachusetts, and claimed an authority so to do in every province,
the colonists were apprehensive, that in the plenitude of her power, she would impose
on each of them, in their turns, a constitution similar to what she had projected, for the
province of Canada.
They foresaw, or thought they foresaw, the annihilation of their ancient assemblies, and their whole legislative business transferred to creatures of the crown. The legal parliamentary right to a maintenance conferred on the clergy of the Roman Catholic religion, gave great offence to many in England, but the political consequences expected to result from it, were most dreaded by the colonists.

[111] They viewed the whole act as an evidence that hostilities were intended against them, and that part of it which respected religion, as calculated to make Roman Catholicks subservient to the purposes of military coercion.

The session of parliament which passed these memorable acts, had stretched far into summer. As it drew near a close, the most sanguine expectations were indulged, that from the resolution and great unanimity of parliament on all American questions, the submission of the colonies would be immediate, and their future obedience and tranquility effectually secured. The triumphs and congratulations of the friends of the ministry, were unusually great.

In passing the acts which have been just mentioned, dissentients in favour of America, were unusually few. The ministerial majority, believing that the refractory colonists depended chiefly on the countenance of their English abettors, were of opinion, that as soon as they received intelligence of the decrease of their friends, and of the decisive conduct of parliament, they would acquiesce in the will of Great-Britain—the fame and grandeur of the nation was such, that it was never imagined they would seriously dare to contend with so formidable a people. The late triumphs of Great-Britain had made such an impression on her rulers, that they believed the Americans, on seeing the ancient spirit of the nation revive, would not risque a trial of prowess with those fleets and armies, which the combined force of France and Spain, were unable to resist. By an impious confidence in their superior strength, they precipitated the nation into rash measures, from the dire effects of which, the world may learn a useful lesson.
CHAPTER IV

Proceedings Of The Colonies In 1774, In Consequence Of The Boston Port Act, Viz.

The winter which followed the destruction of the tea in Boston, was an anxious one to those of the colonists who were given to reflection. Many conjectures were formed about the line of conduct, Great-Britain would probably adopt, for the support of her dignity. The fears of the most timid were more than realized by the news of the Boston port bill.

This arrived on the 10th of May, and its operation was to commence the first of the next month. Various town meetings were called to deliberate on the state of public affairs. On the 13th of May, the town of Boston passed the following vote.

That it is the opinion of this town, that if the other colonies come into a joint resolution to stop all importation from Great-Britain and the West-Indies, till the act for blocking up this harbour be repealed, the same will prove the salvation of North-America, and her liberties. On the other hand if they continue their exports and imports, there is high reason to fear that fraud, power, and the most odious oppression, will rise triumphant over justice, right, social happiness, and freedom. And moreover that this vote, be transmitted by the moderator, to all our sister colonies, in the name and behalf of this town.

Copies of this vote were transmitted to each of the colonies. The opposition to Great-Britain, had hitherto called forth the pens of the ingenious, and in some instances imposed the self denial of non-importation agreements: but the bulk of the people, had little to do with the dispute. The spirited conduct of the people of Boston, in destroying the tea, and the alarming precedents set by Great-Britain, in consequence thereof, brought subjects into discussion, with which every peasant and day labourer was concerned.

The patriots who had hitherto guided the helm, knew well, that if the other colonies did not support the people of Boston, they must be crushed, and it was equally obvious, that in their coercion a precedent, injurious to liberty, would be established. It was therefore the interest of Boston to draw in the other colonies. It was also the interest of the patriots in all the colonies, to bring over the bulk of the people, to adopt such efficient measures as were likely to extricate the inhabitants of Boston from the unhappy situation in which they were involved. To effect these purposes much prudence as well as patriotism was necessary. The other provinces were but remotely affected by the fate of Massachusetts. They were happy, and had no cause, on their own account, to oppose the government of Great-Britain. That a people so circumstanced, should take part with a distressed neighbour, at the risque of incurring the resentment of the Mother Country, did not accord with the selfish maxims by which states, as well as individuals, are usually governed. The ruled are, for the most
part, prone to suffer as long as evils are tolerable, and in general they must feel before they are roused to contend with their oppressors; but the Americans acted on a contrary principle.

They commenced an opposition to Great-Britain, and ultimately engaged in a defensive war, on speculation. They were not so much moved by oppression actually felt, as by a conviction that a foundation was laid, and a precedent about to be established for future oppressions. To convince the bulk of the people, that they had an interest in foregoing a present good, and submitting to a present evil, in order to obtain a future greater good, and to avoid a future greater evil, was the task assigned to the colonial patriots. But it called for the exertion of their utmost abilities. They effected it in a great measure, by means of the press. Pamphlets, essays, addresses and newspaper dissertations were daily presented to the public, proving that Massachusetts was suffering in the common cause, and that interest and policy, as well as good neighbourhood, required the united exertions of all the colonies, in support of that much injured province. It was inculcated on the people, that if the ministerial schemes were suffered to take effect in Massachusetts, the other colonies must expect the loss of their charters, and that a new government would be imposed upon them, like that projected for Quebec. The king and parliament held no patronage in America, sufficient to oppose this torrent. The few who ventured to write in their favour found a difficulty in communicating their sentiments to the public. [114] No pensions or preferments awaited their exertions. Neglect and contempt were their usual portion, but popularity, consequence, and fame, were the rewards of those who stepped forward in the cause of liberty. In order to interest the great body of people, the few who were at the helm, disclaimed any thing more decisive, than convening the inhabitants, and taking their sense on what was proper to be done. In the mean time great pains were taken to prepare them for the adoption of vigorous measures.

The words whigs and tories, for want of better, were now introduced, as the distinguishing names of parties. By the former, were meant those who were for making a common cause with Boston, and supporting the colonies in their opposition to the claims of parliament. By the latter those who were at least so far favourers of Great-Britain, that they wished, either that no measures, or only palliative measures, should be adopted in opposition to her schemes.

These parties were so nearly balanced in New-York, that nothing more was agreed to at the first meeting of the inhabitants, than a recommendation to call a Congress.

At Philadelphia the patriots had a delicate part to act. The government of the colony being proprietary, a multitude of officers connected with that interest, had much to fear from convulsions, and nothing to expect from a revolution. A still greater body of people called Quakers, denied the lawfulness of war, and therefore could not adopt such measures for the support of Boston, as naturally tended to produce an event so adverse to their system of religion.

The citizens of Boston, not only sent forward their public letter, to the citizens of Philadelphia; but accompanied it with private communications to individuals of known patriotism and influence, in which they stated the impossibility of their
standing alone, against the torrent of ministerial vengeance, and the indispensable necessity, that the leading colony of Pennsylvania, should afford them its support and countenance. The advocates in Philadelphia, for making a common cause [115] with Boston, were fully sensible of the state of parties in Pennsylvania. They saw the dispute with Great-Britain, brought to a crisis, and a new scene opening, which required exertions different from any heretofore made. The success of these they well knew, depended on the wisdom with which they were planned, and the union of the whole people, in carrying them into execution.

They saw the propriety of proceeding with the greatest circumspection; and therefore resolved at their first meeting, on nothing more than to call a general meeting of the inhabitants, on the next evening.

At this second meeting the patriots had so much moderation and policy, as to urge nothing decisive, contenting themselves with taking the sense of the inhabitants, simply on the propriety of sending an answer to the public letter from Boston. This was universally approved. The letter agreed upon was firm but temperate.

They acknowledged the difficulty of offering advice on the present occasion, sympathized with the people of Boston in their distress, and observed that all lenient measures, for their relief, should be first tried. That if the making restitution for the tea destroyed, would put an end to the unhappy controversy, and leave the people of Boston upon their ancient footing of constitutional liberty, it could not admit of a doubt what part they should act. But that it was not the value of the tea, it was the indefeasible right of giving and granting their own money, which was the matter in consideration. That it was the common cause of America; and therefore necessary in their opinion, that a congress of deputies from the several colonies should be convened to devise means for restoring harmony between Great-Britain and the colonies, and preventing matters from coming to extremities. Till this could be brought about, they recommended firmness, prudence, and moderation to the immediate sufferers, assuring them, that the people of Pennsylvania would continue to evince a firm adherence to the cause of American liberty.

In order to awaken the attention of the people, a series of letters was published well calculated to rouse [116] them to a sense of their danger, and point out the fatal consequences of the late acts of parliament. Every newspaper teemed with dissertations in favour of liberty—with debates of the members of parliament, especially with the speeches of the favourers of America, and the protests of the dissenting lords. The latter had a particular effect on the colonists, and were considered by them as irrefragable proofs, that the late acts against Massachusetts were unconstitutional and arbitrary.

The minds of the people being thus prepared, the friends of liberty promoted a petition to the governor, for convening the assembly. This they knew would not be granted, and that the refusal of it, would smooth the way for calling the inhabitants together.

The governor having refused to call the assembly, a general meeting of the inhabitants was requested. About 8000 met and adopted sundry spirited resolutions. In these they declared, that the Boston port act
was unconstitutional—that it was expedient to convene a continental congress—to appoint a committee for the city and county of Philadelphia, to correspond with their sister colonies and the several counties of Pennsylvania, and to invest that committee with power, to determine on the best mode for collecting the sense of the province, and appointing deputies to attend a general congress.

Under the sanction of this last resolve, the committee appointed for that purpose, wrote a circular letter to all the counties of the Province, requesting them to appoint deputies to a general meeting, proposed to be held on the 15th of July, part of this letter was in the following words:

We would not offer such an affront to the well known public spirit of Pennsylvanians, as to question your zeal on the present occasion. Our very existence in the rank of freemen, and the security of all that ought to be dear to us, evidently depends on our conducting this great cause to its proper issue, by firmness, wisdom, and magnanimity. It is with pleasure we assure you, that all the colonies from South-Carolina to New-Hampshire, are animated with one spirit, in the common cause, and consider that as the proper crisis for having our differences with the Mother Country [117] brought to some certain issue, and our liberties fixed upon a permanent foundation, this desirable end can only be accomplished by a free communication of sentiments, and a sincere and fervent regard for the interests of our common country.

The several counties readily complied with the request of the inhabitants of Philadelphia, and appointed deputies, who met at the time appointed, and passed sundry resolves, in which they repudiated the late acts of parliament—expressed their sympathy with Boston, as suffering in the common cause—approved of holding a congress, and declared their willingness to make any sacrifices that might be recommended by a congress, for securing their liberties.

Thus, without tumult, disorder, or divided counsels, the whole province of Pennsylvania was, by prudent management and temperate proceedings, brought into the opposition with its whole weight and influence. This is the more remarkable as it is probable, that if the sentiments of individuals had been separately taken, there would have been a majority against involving themselves in the consequences of taking part with the destroyers of the tea, at Boston.

While these proceedings were carrying on in Pennsylvania, three of the most distinguished patriots of Philadelphia, under color of an excursion of pleasure, made a tour throughout the province, in order to discover the real sentiments of the common people. They were well apprized of the consequences of taking the lead in a dispute which every day became more serious, unless they could depend on being supported by the yeomanry of the country. By freely associating and conversing with many of every class and denomination; they found them unanimous in that fundamental principle of the American controversy, “That the parliament of Great-Britain had no right to tax them.” From their general determination on this subject, a favourable prognostic was formed, of a successful opposition to the claims of Great-Britain.

In Virginia the house of burgesses on the 26th of May, 1774, resolved, that the first of June, the day on which [118] the operation of the Boston port bill was to commence,
should be set apart by the members as a day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, “devoutly to implore the divine interposition, for averting the heavy calamities which threatened destruction to their civil rights, and the evils of a civil war—to give them one heart and one mind, to oppose by all just and proper means, every injury to American rights.” On the publication of this resolution, the royal governor, the Earl of Dunmore dissolved them. The members notwithstanding their dissolution, met in their private capacities, and signed an agreement, in which, among other things, they declared, “that an attack made on one of their sister colonies, to compel submission to arbitrary taxes, was an attack made on all British America, and threatened ruin to the rights of all, unless the united wisdom of the whole be applied.”

In South-Carolina the vote of the town of Boston of the 13th of May, being presented to a number of the leading citizens in Charleston, it was unanimously agreed to call a meeting of the inhabitants.

That this might be as general as possible, letters were sent to every parish and district in the province, and the people were invited to attend, either personally, or by their representatives at a general meeting of the inhabitants. A large number assembled, in which were some, from almost every part of the province. The proceedings of the parliament against the province of Massachusetts were distinctly related to this convention. Without one dissenting voice, they passed sundry resolutions, expressive of their rights, and of their sympathy with the people of Boston. They also chose five delegates to represent them in a continental Congress, and invested them “with full powers, and authority, in behalf of them and their constituents, to concert, agree to, and effectually to prosecute such legal measures as in their opinion, and the opinion of the other members, would be most likely to obtain a redress of American grievances.”

The events of this time may be transmitted to posterity, but the agitation of the public mind can never be fully comprehended, but by those who were witnesses of it.

[119] In the counties and towns of the several provinces, as well as in the cities, the people assembled and passed resolutions, expressive of their rights, and of their detestation of the late American acts of parliament. These had an instantaneous effect on the minds of thousands. Not only the young and impetuous, but the aged and temperate, joined in pronouncing them to be unconstitutional and oppressive. They viewed them as deadly weapons aimed at the vitals of that liberty, which they adored; as rendering abortive the generous pains taken by their forefathers, to procure for them in a new world, the quiet enjoyment of their rights. They were the subjects of their meditation when alone, and of their conversation when in company.

Within little more than a month, after the news of the Boston port bill reached America, it was communicated from state to state, and a flame was kindled, in almost every breast, through the widely extended provinces.

In order to understand the mode by which this flame was spread with such rapidity over so great an extent of country, it is necessary to observe, that the several colonies
were divided into counties, and these again subdivided into districts, distinguished by the names of towns, townships, precincts, hundreds or parishes. In New-England the subdivisions which are called towns, were by law, bodies corporate—had their regular meetings, and might be occasionally convened by their proper officers. The advantages derived from these meetings, by uniting the whole body of the people in the measures taken to oppose the stamp act, induced other provinces to follow the example. Accordingly under the association which was formed to oppose the revenue act of 1767, committees were established not only in the capitals of every province, but also in most of the subordinate districts. Great-Britain, without designing it, had by her two preceding attempts at American revenue, taught her colonies not only the advantages, but the means of union. The system of committees, which prevailed in 1765, and also in 1767, was revived in 1774. By them there was a quick transmission of intelligence from the capital towns through the subordinate districts to the whole body of the people, and a union of counsels and measures was effected among widely disseminated inhabitants.

It is perhaps impossible for human wisdom, to contrive any system more subservient to these purposes, than such a reciprocal exchange of intelligence, by committees. From the want of such a communication with each other, and consequently of union among themselves, many states have lost their liberties, and more have been unsuccessful in their attempts to regain them, after they have been lost.

What the eloquence and talents of Demosthenes could not effect among the states of Greece, might have been effected by the simple device of committees of correspondence. The few have been enabled to keep the many in subjection in every age, from the want of union among the latter. Several of the provinces of Spain complained of oppression under Charles the 5th, and in transports of rage took arms against him; but they never consulted or communicated with each other. They resisted separately, and were therefore separately subdued.

The colonists sympathizing with their distressed brethren in Massachusetts, felt themselves called upon, to do something for their relief; but to determine on what was proper to be done, did not so obviously occur. It was a natural idea, that for harmonising their measures, a Congress of deputies from each province should be convened. This early occurred to all, and being agreed to by all, was the means of procuring union and concert among inhabitants, removed several hundred miles from each other. In times less animated, various questions about the place and legality of their meeting, and about the extent of their power, would have produced a great diversity of sentiments; but on this occasion, by the special agency of providence, there was the same universal bent of inclination in the great body of the people. A sense of common danger, extinguished selfish passions. The public attention was fixed on the great cause of liberty. Local attachments and partialities, were sacrificed on the altar of patriotism.

There were not wanting moderate men, who would have been willing to pay for the tea destroyed, if that would have put an end to the controversy, for it was not the value of the tea nor of the tax, but the indefeasible right of giving and granting their money, for which the colonists contended. The act of parliament was so cautiously
worded, as to prevent the opening of the port of Boston, even though the East-India company had been reimbursed for all damages, “until it was made [to] appear to his majesty in council, that peace and obedience to the laws were so far restored in the town of Boston, that the trade of Great-Britain might be safely carried on there and his majesty’s customs duly collected.” The latter part of this limitation, “the due collection of his majesty’s customs,” was understood to comprehend submission to the late revenue laws. It was therefore inferred, that payment for the tea destroyed, would produce no certain relief, unless they were willing to give operation to the law, for raising a revenue on future importations of that commodity, and also to acquiesce in the late mutilation of their charter. As it was deliberately resolved, never to submit to either the most lukewarm of well informed patriots, possessing the public confidence, neither advised nor wished for the adoption of that measure. A few in Boston, who were known to be in the royal interest, proposed a resolution for that purpose, but they met with no support. Of the many who joined the British in the course of the war, there was scarcely an individual to be found in this early stage of the contrivance, who advocated the right of parliamentary taxation. There were doubtless many timid persons, who fearing the power of Britain, would rather have submitted to her encroachments, than risque the vengeance of her arms, but such for the most part suppressed their sentiments. Zeal for liberty, being immediately rewarded with applause, the patriots had every inducement to come forward, and avow their principles; but there was something so unpopular in appearing to be influenced by timidity, interest or excessive caution, when essential interests were attacked, that such persons shunned public notice, and sought the shade of retirement.

[122 ] In the three first months, which followed the shutting up of the port of Boston, the inhabitants of the colonies in hundreds of small circles, as well as in their provincial assemblies and congresses, expressed their abhorrence of the late proceedings of the British parliament against Massachusetts—their concurrence in the proposed measure of appointing deputies for a general congress, and their willingness to do and suffer whatever should be judged conducive to the establishment of their liberties.

A patriotic flame, created and diffused by the contagion of sympathy, was communicated to so many breasts, and reflected from such a variety of objects, as to become too intense to be resisted.

While the combination of the other colonies to support Boston, was gaining strength, new matter of dissention daily took place in Massachusetts. The resolution for shutting the port of Boston, was no sooner taken, than it was determined to order a military force to that town. General Gage, the commander in chief of the royal forces in North-America, was also sent thither, in the additional capacity of Governor of Massachusetts. He arrived in Boston on the third day after the inhabitants received the first intelligence of the Boston port bill. Though the people were irritated by that measure, and though their republican jealousy was hurt by the combination of the civil and military character in one person, yet the general was received with all the honours which had been usually paid to his predecessors. Soon after his arrival, two regiments of foot, with a detachment of artillery and some cannon, were landed in
Boston. These troops were by degrees re-inforced, with others from Ireland, New-York, Halifax and Quebec.

The governor announced that he had the king’s particular command, for holding the general court at Salem, after the first of June. When that eventful day arrived, the act for shutting up the port of Boston commenced its operation. It was devoutly kept at Williamsburgh, as a day of fasting and humiliation. In Philadelphia it was solemnized with every manifestation of public calamity and grief. The inhabitants shut up their houses. After [123] divine service a stillness reigned over the city, which exhibited an appearance of the deepest distress.

In Boston a new scene opened on the inhabitants. Hitherto, that town had been the seat of commerce and of plenty. The immense business carried on therein, afforded a comfortable subsistence to many thousands. The necessary—the useful, and even some of the elegant arts were cultivated among them. The citizens were polite and hospitable. In this happy state they were sentenced on the short notice of twenty one days, to a total deprivation of all means of subsisting. The blow reached every person. The rents of the landholders, either ceased or were greatly diminished. The immense property in stores and wharfs, was rendered comparatively useless. Labourers, artifices and others, employed in the numerous occupations created by an extensive trade, partook in the general calamity. They who depended on a regular income, flowing from previous acquisitions of property, as well as they who with the sweat of their brow, earned their daily subsistence, were equally deprived of the means of support; and the chief difference between them, was that the distresses of the former were rendered more intolerable by the recollection of past enjoyments. All these inconveniences and hardships, were born with a passive, but inflexible fortitude. Their determination to persist in the same line of conduct, which had been the occasion of their suffering was unabated.

The authors and advisers of the resolution for destroying the tea, were in the town, and still retained their popularity and influence. The execrations of the inhabitants fell not on them, but on the British parliament. Their countrymen acquitted them of all selfish designs, and believed that in their opposition to the measures of Great-Britain, they were actuated by an honest zeal for constitutional liberty. The sufferers in Boston had the consolation of sympathy from the other colonists. Contributions were raised in all quarters for their relief. Letters and addresses came to them from corporate bodies, town meetings and provincial conventions, applauding their conduct, and exhorting them to perseverance.

[124] The people of Marblehead, who by their proximity were likely to reap advantage from the distresses of Boston, generously offered the merchants thereof, the use of their harbour, wharfs, warehouses, and also their personal attendance on the lading or unlading of their goods free of all expence.

The inhabitants of Salem in an address to governor Gage, concluded with these remarkable words,
By shutting up the port of Boston, some imagine that the course of trade might be
turned hither, and to our benefit: But nature in the formation of our harbour, forbid,
our becoming rivals in commerce with that convenient mart; and were it otherwise,
we must be dead to every idea of justice, lost to all feelings of humanity, could we
indulge one thought to seize on wealth, and raise our fortunes on the ruins of our
suffering neighbours.

The Massachusetts general court met at Salem, according to adjournment, on the 7th
of June. Several of the popular leaders took, in a private way, the sense of the
members on what was proper to be done. Finding they were able to carry such
measures as the public exigencies required, they prepared resolves and moved for
their adoption. But before they went on the latter business, their door was shut.

One member nevertheless contrived means of sending information to governor Gage
of what was doing. His secretary was sent off to dissolve the general court, but was
refused admission. As he could obtain no entrance, he read the proclamation at the
door, and immediately after in council, and thus dissolved the general court. The
house while sitting with their doors shut, appointed five of the most respectable
inhabitants as their committee, to meet committees from other provinces, that might
be convened the first of September at Philadelphia—voted them 75 pounds sterling
each, and recommended to the several towns and districts to raise the said sum by
equitable proportions. By these means the designs of the governor were disappointed.
His situation in every respect was truly disagreeable. It was his duty to forward the
execution of laws which were universally execrated. Zeal for [125] his master’s
service, prompted him to endeavour that they should be earned into full effect, but his
progress was retarded by obstacles from every quarter. He had to transact his official
business with a people who possessed a high sense of liberty, and were uncommonly
ingenious in evading disagreeable acts of parliament. It was a part of his duty to
prevent the calling of the town meetings after the first of August, 1774. These
meetings were nevertheless held. On his proposing to exert authority for the
dispersion of the people, he was told by the select men, that they had not offended
against the act of parliament, for that only prohibited the calling of town meetings,
and that no such call had been made: A former constitutional meeting before the first
of August, having only adjourned themselves from time to time. Other evasions,
equally founded on the letter, of even the late obnoxious laws, were practised.

As the summer advanced, the people of Massachusetts received stronger proofs of
support from the neighbouring provinces. They were therefore encouraged to farther
opposition. The inhabitants of the colonies, at this time, with regard to political
opinions, might be divided into three classes; of these, one was for rushing
precipitately into extremities. They were for immediately stopping all trade, and could
not even brook the delay of waiting till the proposed continental congress should
meet. Another party, equally respectable, both as to character, property, and
patriotism, was more moderate, but not less firm. These were averse to the adoption
of any violent resolutions, till all others were ineffectually tried. They wished that a
clear statement of their rights, claims, and grievances, should precede every other
measure. A third class disapproved of what was generally going on. A few from
principle, and a persuasion that they ought to submit to the Mother Country; some
from the love of ease, others from self-interest, but the bulk from fear of the mischievous consequences likely to follow: All these latter classes, for the most part, lay still, while the friends of liberty acted with spirit. If they, or any of them, ventured to oppose popular measures, they [126] were not supported, and therefore declined farther efforts. The resentment of the people was so strong against them, that they sought for peace by remaining quiet. The same indecision that made them willing to submit to Great-Britain, made them apparently acquiesce in popular measures which they disapproved. The spirited part of the community, being on the side of liberty, the patriots had the appearance of unanimity; though many either kept at a distance from public meetings, or voted against their own opinion, to secure themselves from resentment, and promote their present ease and interest.

Under the influence of those who were for the immediate adoption of efficacious measures, an agreement by the name of the solemn league and covenant, was adopted by numbers. The subscribers of this, bound themselves to suspend all commercial intercourse with Great-Britain, until the late obnoxious laws were repealed, and the colony of Massachusetts restored to its chartered rights.

General Gage published a proclamation, in which he stiled this solemn league and covenant, “An unlawful, hostile, and traitorous combination.” And all magistrates were charged, to apprehend and secure for trial, such as should have any agency in publishing or subscribing the same, or any similar covenant. This proclamation had no other effect, than to exercise the pens of the lawyers, in shewing that the association did not come within the description of legal treason, and that therefore the governor’s proclamation was not warranted by the principles of the constitution.

The late law, for regulating the government of the provinces, arrived near the beginning of August, and was accompanied with a list of 36 new counsellors, appointed by the crown, and in a mode, variant from that prescribed by the charter. Several of these in the first instance, declined an acceptance of the appointment. Those, who accepted of it, were every where declared to be enemies to their country. The new judges were rendered incapable of proceeding in their official duty. Upon opening the courts, the juries refused to be sworn, or to act in any manner, either under them, or in conformity to the late [127] regulations. In some places, the people assembled, and filled the court-houses and avenues to them in such a manner, that neither the judges, nor their officers could obtain entrance; and upon the sheriff’s commanding them, to make way for the court, they answered, “That they knew no court independent of the ancient laws of their country, and to none other would they submit.”

In imitation of his royal master, governor Gage issued a proclamation “for the encouragement of piety and virtue, and for the prevention and punishing vice, prophaneness and immorality.” In this proclamation, hypocrisy was inserted as one of the immoralities against which the people were warned. This was considered by the inhabitants, who had often been ridiculed for their strict attention to the forms of religion, to be a studied insult, and as such was more resented than an actual injury. It greatly added to the inflammation which had already taken place in their minds.
The proceedings and apparent dispositions of the people, together with the military preparations which were daily made through the province, induced general Gage to fortify that neck of land which joins Boston to the continent.

He also seized upon the powder which was lodged in the arsenal at Charlestown.

This excited a most violent and universal ferment. Several thousands of the people assembled at Cambridge, and it was with difficulty they were restrained from marching directly to Boston, to demand a delivery of the powder, with a resolution in case of refusal to attack the troops.

The people thus assembled, proceeded to lieutenant governor Oliver’s house, and to the houses of several of the new counsellors, and obliged them to resign, and to declare that they would no more act under the laws lately enacted. In the confusion of these transactions a rumor went abroad, that the royal fleet and troops were firing upon the town of Boston. This was probably designed by the popular leaders, on purpose to ascertain what aid they might expect from the country in case of extremities. The result exceeded their most sanguine expectations. [128] In less than twenty four hours, there were upwards of 30,000 men in arms, and marching towards the capital. Other risings of the people took place in different parts of the colony, and their violence was such, that in a short time the new counsellors, the commissioners of the customs, and all who had taken an active part in favour of Great-Britain, were obliged to skreen themselves in Boston. The new seat of government at Salem was abandoned, and all the officers connected with the revenue were obliged to consult their safety, by taking up their residence in a place which an act of parliament had proscribed from all trade.

About this time, delegates from every town and district in the county of Suffolk, of which Boston is the county town, had a meeting, at which they prefaced a number of spirited resolutions, containing a detail of the particulars of their intended opposition to the late acts of parliament, with a general declaration, “That no obedience was due from the province to either, or any part of the said acts, but that they should be rejected as the attempts of a wicked administration to enslave America.” The resolves of this meeting were sent on to Philadelphia, for the information and opinion of the Congress, which, as shall be hereafter related, had met there about this time.

The people of Massachusetts rightly judged, that from the decision of congress on these resolutions, they would be enabled to determine what support they might expect. Notwithstanding present appearances they feared that the other colonies, who were no more than remotely concerned, would not hazard the consequences of making a common cause with them, should subsequent events make it necessary to repel force by force. The decision of Congress exceeded their expectations. They “most thoroughly approved the wisdom and fortitude with which opposition to wicked ministerial measures had been hitherto conducted in Massachusetts, and recommended to them perseverance in the same firm and temperate conduct as expressed in the resolutions of the delegates from the county of Suffolk.”

By this approbation and advice, the [129] people of Massachusetts were encouraged to resistance, and the other
colonies became bound to support them. The former, more in need of a bridle than a spur, proceeded as they had begun, but with additional confidence.

Governor Gage had issued writs for holding a general assembly at Salem; but subsequent events, and the heat and violence which every where prevailed, made him think it expedient to counteract the writs by a proclamation for suspending the meeting of the members. The legality of a proclamation for that purpose was denied, and in defiance thereof 90 of the newly elected members met at the time and place appointed. They soon after resolved themselves into a provincial congress, and adjourned to Concord, about 20 miles from Charlestown. On their meeting there, they chose Mr. Hancock president, and proceeded to business. One of their first acts was to appoint a committee to wait on the governor, with a remonstrance, in which they apologized for their meeting, from the distressed state of the colony; complained of their grievances, and, after stating their apprehensions, from the hostile preparations on Boston neck, concluded with an earnest request, “That he would desist from the construction of the fortress at the entrance into Boston, and restore that pass to its natural state.” The governor found some difficulty in giving them an answer, as they were not, in his opinion, a legal body, but the necessity of the times over-ruled his scruples. He replied, by expressing his indignation at the supposition, “That the lives, liberties or property of any people, except enemies, could be in danger, from English troops.” He reminded them, that while they complained of alterations made in their charter, by acts of parliament, they were by their own acts subverting it altogether. He therefore warned them of the rocks they were upon; and to desist from such illegal and unconstitutional proceedings. The governor’s admonitions were unavailing. The provincial congress appointed a committee to draw up a plan for the immediate defence of the province. It was resolved to inlist a number of the inhabitants under the name of minute men, who were to be under obligations to turn out at a [130] minute’s warning. Jedediah Pribble, Artemas Ward and Seth Pomeroy, were elected general officers to command those minute men and the militia, in case they should be called out to action. A committee of safety, and a committee of supplies were appointed. These consisted of different persons and were intended for different purposes. The first were invested with an authority to assemble the militia when they thought proper, and were to recommend to the committee of supplies the purchase of such articles as the public exigencies required; the last were limited to the small sum of £15,627.15s. sterl. which was all the money at first voted to oppose the power and riches of Great Britain. Under this authority, and with these means, the committees of safety and of supplies, acting in concert, laid in a quantity of stores, partly at Worcester and partly at Concord.

The same congress met again, and soon after resolved to get in readiness twelve thousand men to act on any given emergency; and that a fourth part of the militia should be inlisted as minute men, and receive pay. John Thomas and William Heath were appointed general officers. They also sent persons to New-Hampshire, Rhode-Island and Connecticut, to inform them of the steps they had taken and to request their co-operation in making up an army of 20,000 men. Committees from these several colonies met with a committee from the provincial congress of Massachusetts, and settled their plans. The proper period of commencing opposition to general Gage’s troops, was determined to be whenever they marched out with their baggage, ammunition and artillery. The aid of the clergy
was called in upon this occasion, and a circular letter was addressed to each of the
several ministers in the province, requesting their assistance “in avoiding the dreadful
slavery with which they were threatened.”

As the winter approached, general Gage ordered barracks for his troops to be erected,
but such was the superior influence of the popular leaders, that on their
recommendation the workmen desisted from fulfilling the general’s wishes, though
the money for their labour would have been paid by the crown.

An application to New-York was equally unsuccessful, [131] and it was with difficulty that the troops could be furnished with
winter lodgings. Similar obstructions were thrown in the way of getting winter
covering for the soldiery. The merchants of New-York on being applied to, answered,
“That they would never supply any article for the benefit of men who were sent as
enemies to the country.” The inhabitants of Massachusetts encouraged the desertion
of the soldiers; and acted systematically in preventing their obtaining any other
supplies but necessary provisions. The farmers were discouraged from selling them straw, timber, boards and such like articles of convenience. Straw, when purchased
for their service, was frequently burnt. Vessels, with bricks intended for their use,
were sunk, and carts with wood were overturned, and the king’s property by one
contrivance or other, was daily destroyed.

A proclamation had been issued by the king, prohibiting the exportation of military
stores from Britain, which reached America in the latter end of the year 1774.
On receiving intelligence thereof, in Rhode-Island, the people
seized upon and removed from the public battery about 40 pieces
of cannon; and the assembly passed resolutions for obtaining arms and military stores
by every means, and also for raising and arming the inhabitants: soon after 400 men
beset his majesty’s castle at Portsmouth. They sustained a fire from three four-
pounders and small arms, but before they could be ready for a second fire, the
assailants stormed the fort, and secured and confined the garrison till they broke open
the powder house, and took the powder away. The powder being secured, the garrison
was released from confinement.

Throughout this whole season, civil government, legislation, judicial proceedings and
commercial regulations were in Massachusetts, to all appearance, annihilated. The
provincial Congress exercised all the semblance of government which existed. From
their coincidence, with the prevailing disposition, of the people, their resolutions had
the weight and efficacy of laws.
Under the simple stile of recommendation, they organized the
militia, made ordinances respecting public monies and such
farther regulations [132] as were necessary for preserving order, and for defending
themselves against the British troops.

In this crisis it seemed to be the sense of the inhabitants of Massachusetts to wait
events. They dreaded every evil that could flow from resistance, less than the
operation of the late acts of parliament, but at the same time were averse to be the
aggressors in bringing on a civil war. They chose to submit to a suspension of regular
government, in preference to permitting the streams of justice to flow in the channel
prescribed by the late acts of parliament, or to conducting them forcibly in the old
one, sanctioned by their charter. From the extinction of the old, and the rejection of
the new constitution, all regular government was for several months abolished. Some
hundred thousands of people, were in a state of nature without legislation, magistrates
or executive officers: there was nevertheless a surprising degree of order. Men of the
purest morals were among the most active opposers of Great-Britain. While municipal
laws ceased to operate, the laws of reason, morality and religion, bound the people to
each other as a social band, and preserved as great a degree of a decorum as had at
any time prevailed. Even those who were opposed to the proceedings of the populace
when they were prudent and moderate, for the most part enjoyed safety both at home
and abroad.

Though there were no civil officers, there was an abundance of military ones. These
were chosen by the people, but exercised more authority than any who had been
honoured with commissions from the governor. The inhabitants in every place
devoted themselves to arms. Handling the musket, and training, were the fashionable
amusements of the men, while the women by their presence, encouraged them to
proceed. The sound of drums and fifes was to be heard in all directions. The young
and the old were fired with a martial spirit. On experiment it was found, that to force
on the inhabitants, a form of government, to which they were totally averse, was not
within the fancied omnipotence of parliament.

During these transactions in Massachusetts effectual [133] measures had been taken by the colonies for convening a
continental Congress, though there was no one entitled to lead in this business, yet in
consequence of the general impulse on the public mind, from a sense of common
danger, not only the measure itself, but the time and place of meeting, were with
surprising unanimity agreed upon. The colonies though formerly agitated with local
prejudices, jealousies and aversions, were led to assemble together in a general diet,
and to feel their weight and importance in a common union. Within four months from
the day on which the first intelligence of the Boston port bill reached America, the
deputies of eleven provinces had convened in Philadelphia, and in four days more, by
the arrival of delegates from North-Carolina, there was a complete representation of
twelve colonies, containing three millions of people, disseminated over 260,000
square miles of territory. Some of the delegates were appointed by the constitutional
assemblies[;] in other provinces, where they were embarrassed by royal governors,
the appointments were made in voluntary meetings of the people. Perhaps there never
was a body of delegates more faithful to the interest of their constituents than the
Congress of 1774. The public voice elevated none to a seat in that august assembly,
but such as in addition to considerable abilities, possessed that ascendancy over the
minds of their fellow citizens, which can neither be acquired by birth nor purchased
by wealth. The instructions given to these deputies were various, but in general they
contained strong professions of loyalty, and of constitutional dependence on the
Mother Country: the framers of them acknowledged the prerogatives of the crown,
and disclaimed every wish of separation from the Parent State. On the other hand,
they were firm in declaring that they were entitled to all the rights of British born
subjects, and that the late acts respecting Massachusetts were unconstitutional and oppressive.

They particularly stated their grievances, and for the most part concurred in authorising their deputies to concert and agree to such measures in behalf of their constituents [134], as in their joint opinion would be most likely to obtain a redress of American grievances, ascertain American rights, on constitutional principles, and establish union and harmony between Great-Britain and the colonies. Of the various instructions, on this occasion, those which were drawn up by a convention of delegates, from every county in the province of Pennsylvania, and presented by them in a body to the constitutional assembly, were the most precise and determinate. By these it appears, that the Pennsylvanians were disposed to submit to the acts of navigation, as they then stood, and also to settle a certain annual revenue on his majesty, his heirs and successors, subject to the control of parliament, and to satisfy all damages done to the East-India company, provided their grievances were redressed, and an amicable compact was settled, which, by establishing American rights in the manner of a new Magna Charta, would have precluded future disputes.

Of the whole number of deputies, which formed the Continental Congress, of 1774, one half were lawyers. Gentlemen of that profession had acquired the confidence of the inhabitants by their exertions in the common cause. The previous measures in the respective provinces had been planned and carried into effect, more by lawyers than by any other order of men. Professionally taught the rights of the people, they were among the foremost to decry every attack made on their liberties. Bred in the habits of public speaking, they made a distinguished figure in the meetings of the people, and were particularly able to explain to them the tendency of the late acts of parliament. Exerting their abilities and influence in the cause of their country, they were rewarded with its confidence.

On the meeting of Congress, they chose Peyton Randolph their president, and Charles Thomson their secretary. They agreed as one of the rules of their doing business, that no entry should be made on their journals of any propositions discussed before them, to which they did not finally assent.

This august body, to which all the colonies looked up [135] for wisdom and direction, had scarcely convened, when a dispute arose about the mode of conducting business, which alarmed the friends of union. It was contended by some, that the votes of the small provinces should not count as much as those of the larger ones. This was argued with some warmth and invidious comparisons were made between the extensive dominion of Virginia, and the small colonies of Delaware and Rhode-Island. The impossibility of fixing the comparative weight of each province, from the want of proper materials, induced Congress to resolve, that each should have one equal vote. The mode of conducting business being settled, two committees were appointed. One, to state the rights of the colonies, the several instances in which these rights had been violated, and the means most proper to be pursued for obtaining a restoration of them; the other, to examine and report the several statutes which affected the trade and manufactures of the colonies. The first
committee were farther instructed to confine themselves to the consideration of such rights as had been infringed since the year 1763.

Congress soon after their meeting, agreed upon a declaration of their rights, by which it was among other things declared, that the inhabitants of the English colonies in North-America, by the immutable laws of nature, the principles of the English constitution, and the several charters or compacts, were entitled to life, liberty and property; and that they had never ceded to any sovereign power whatever, a right to dispose of either, without their consent.

That their ancestors, who first settled the colonies were entitled to all the rights, liberties and immunities of free and natural born subjects within the realm of England, and that by their migrating to America, they by no means forfeited, surrendered or lost any of those rights; that the foundation of English liberty, and of all free government was, a right in the people to participate in their legislative council, and that as the English colonists were not, and could not be properly represented in the British parliament, they were entitled to a free and exclusive power of legislation in their [136] several provincial legislatures, in all cases of taxation and internal polity, subject only to the negative of their sovereign.

They then run the line, between the supremacy of parliament, and the independency of the colonial legislatures by provisoés and restrictions, expressed in the following words.

But from the necessity of the case, and a regard to the mutual interests of both countries, we cheerfully consent to the operation of such acts of the British parliament, as are bona fide, restrained to the regulation of our external commerce, for the purpose of securing the commercial advantages of the whole empire to the Mother Country, and the commercial benefits of its respective members, excluding every idea of taxation; internal and external for raising a revenue on the subjects in America without their consent.

This was the very hinge of the controversy. The absolute unlimited supremacy of the British parliament, both in legislation and taxation, was contended for on one side; while on the other, no farther authority was conceded than such a limited legislation, with regard to external commerce, as would combine the interest of the whole empire. In government, as well as in religion, there are mysteries from the close investigation of which little advantage can be expected. From the unity of the empire it was necessary, that some acts should extend over the whole. From the local situation of the colonies it was equally reasonable that their legislatures should at least in some matters be independent. Where the supremacy of the first ended and the independency of the last began, was to the best informed a puzzling question. Happy would it have been for both countries, had the discussion of this doubtful point never been attempted.

Congress also resolved, that the colonists were entitled to the common law of England, and more especially to the privilege of being tried by their peers of the vicinage. That they were entitled to the benefit of such of the English statutes as existed at the time of their colonization, and which they had found to be applicable to
their local circumstances, and also to the immunities and privileges granted and
confirmed to them by royal charters or secured [137] by provincial laws.
That they had a right peaceably to assemble, consider of their
1774 grievances, and petition the king; that the keeping a standing army in the colonies, without the consent of the legislature of the colony where the army was kept, was against law. That it was indispensably necessary to good government, and rendered essential by the English constitution, that the constituent branches of the legislature be independent of each other, and that therefore, the exercise of legislative power, in several colonies by a council, appointed during pleasure by the crown, was unconstitutional, dangerous and destructive to the freedom of American legislation. All of these liberties, Congress in behalf of themselves and their constituents, claimed, demanded and insisted upon as their indubitable rights, which could not be legally taken from them, altered or abridged by any power whatever, without their consent. Congress then resolved, that sundry acts, which had been passed in the reign of George the Third, were infringements and violations of the rights of the colonists, and that the repeal of them was essentially necessary, in order to restore harmony between Great-Britain and the colonies. The acts complained of, were as follow: The several acts of 4 George III. ch. 15 and ch. 34; 5 Geo. III. ch. 25; 6 Geo. III. ch. 52; 7 Geo. III. ch. 41 and ch. 46; 8 Geo. III. ch. 22 which imposed duties for the purpose of raising a revenue in America, extended the power of the admiralty courts beyond their ancient limits, deprived the American subject of trial by jury, authorized the judges certificate to indemnify the prosecutor from damages, that he might otherwise be liable to requiring oppressive security from a claimant of ships and goods seized before he was allowed to defend his property.

Also 12 Geo. III. ch. 24 entitled, “An act for the better securing his majesty’s dock yards, magazines, ships, ammunition and stores,” which declares a new offence in America, and deprives the American subject of a constitutional trial by jury of the vicinage, by authorizing the trial of any person charged with the committing any offence described in the said act out of the realm, to be indicted [138] and tried for the same in any shire or county within the realm.

Also the three acts passed in the last session of parliament for stopping the port and blocking up the harbour of Boston, for altering the charter and government of Massachusetts Bay, and that which is entitled, “An act for the better administration of justice, &c.”

Also the act passed in the same session, for establishing the Roman Catholic religion in the province of Quebec, abolishing the equitable system of English laws, and erecting a tyranny there to the great danger (from so total a dissimilarity of religion, law and government) of the neighbouring British colonies, by the assistance of whose blood and treasure the said country had been conquered from France.

Also the act passed in the same session, for the better providing suitable quarters for officers and soldiers in his majesty’s service in North-America.
Also that the keeping a standing army in several of these colonies in time of peace, without the consent of the legislature of that colony in which such army was kept, was against law.

Congress declared, that they could not submit to these grievous acts and measures. In hopes that their fellow subjects in Great-Britain would restore the colonies to that state in which both countries found happiness and prosperity, they resolved for the present only to pursue the following peaceable measures: 1st, To enter into a non-importation, non-consumption and non-exportation agreement or association; 2d, To prepare an address to the people of Great-Britain, and a memorial to the inhabitants of British America; and 3dly, to prepare a loyal address to his majesty.

By the association they bound themselves and their constituents, from and after the 1st day of December next, not to import into British America, from Great-Britain or Ireland, any goods, wares or merchandize, whatsoever; not to purchase any slave, imported after the said first day of December; not to purchase or use any tea, imported on account of the East-India company, or [139] any on which a duty hath been or shall be paid; and from and after the first day of the next ensuing March, neither to purchase or use any East-India tea whatever. That they would not after the tenth day of the next September, if their grievances were not previously redressed, export any commodity whatsoever, to Great-Britain, Ireland or the West-Indies, except rice to Europe. That the merchants should, as soon as possible, write to their correspondents in Great-Britain and Ireland, not to ship any goods to them on any pretence whatever; and if any merchant there, should ship any goods for America, in order to contravene the non-importation agreement, they would not afterwards have any commercial connexion with such merchant; that such as were owners of vessels, should give positive orders to their captains and masters, not to receive on board their vessels, any goods prohibited by the said non-importation agreement; that they would use their endeavors to improve the breed of sheep and increase their numbers to the greatest extent; that they would encourage frugality, oeconomy and industry, and promote agriculture, arts and American manufactures; that they would discountenance and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, and that on the death of relations or friends, they would wear no other mourning than a small piece of black crape or ribbon; that such as were venders of goods, should not take any advantage of the scarcity so as to raise their prices; that if any person should import goods after the first day of December, and before the first day of February, then next ensuing, the same ought to be immediately reshipped or delivered up to a committee to be stored or sold: in the last case, all the clear profits to be applied towards the relief of the inhabitants of Boston; and that if any goods should be imported after the first day of February, then next ensuing, they should be sent back without breaking any of the packages; that committees be chosen in every county, city and town, to observe the conduct of all persons touching the association, and to publish in gazettes, the names of the violaters of it, as foes to the rights of British America; that the committees of correspondence [140] in the respective colonies frequently inspect the entries of their custom houses, and inform each other from time to time of the true state thereof; that all manufactures of America should be sold at reasonable prices; and no advantages be taken of a future scarcity of goods; and lastly, that they would have no dealings or
intercourse whatever, with any province or colony of North-America, which should not accede to, or should violate the aforesaid associations.

These several resolutions, they bound themselves and their constituents, by the sacred ties of virtue, honour and love of their country, to observe till their grievances were redressed.

In their address to the people of Great-Britain they complimented them for having at every hazard maintained their independence, and transmitted the rights of man and the blessings of liberty to their posterity, and requested them not to be surprised, that they who were descended from the same common ancestors, should refuse to surrender their rights, liberties and constitution. They proceeded to state their rights and their grievances, and to vindicate themselves from the charges of being seditious, impatient of government and desirous of independency. They summed up their wishes in the following words, “Place us in the same situation that we were, at the close of the last war, and our former harmony will be restored.”

In the memorial of Congress to the inhabitants of the British colonies, they recapitulated the proceedings of Great-Britain against them, since the year 1763, in order to impress them with a belief, that a deliberate system was formed for abridging their liberties. They then proceeded to state the measures they had adopted to counteract this system, and gave the reasons which induced them to adopt the same. They encouraged them to submit to the inconveniences of non-importation and non-exportation by desiring them “to weigh in the opposite balance the endless miseries, they and their descendants must endure from an established arbitrary power.” They concluded with informing them “that the schemes agitated against the colonies, had been so conducted as to render it prudent [141] to extend their views to mournful events, and to be in all respects prepared for every contingency.”

In the petition of Congress to the king, they begged leave to lay their grievances before the throne. After a particular enumeration of these, they observed that they wholly arose from a destructive system of colony administration, adopted since the conclusion of the last war. They assured his majesty that they had made such provision for defraying the charges of the administration of justice, and the support of civil government, as had been judged just and suitable to their respective circumstances, and that for the defence, protection and security of the colonies, their militia would be fully sufficient in time of peace, and in case of war they were ready and willing, when constitutionally required, to exert their most strenuous efforts in granting supplies and raising forces. They said, “we ask but for peace, liberty and safety. We wish not a diminution of the prerogative, nor do we solicit the grant of any new right in our favour. Your royal authority over us, and our connexion with Great-Britain, we shall always carefully and zealously endeavour to support and maintain.” They then solicited for a redress of their grievances, which they had enumerated, and appealing to that Being, who searches thoroughly the hearts of his creatures, they solemnly professed, “that their counsels had been influenced by no other motives, than a dread of impending destruction.” They concluded with imploring his majesty, “for the honor of Almighty God, for his own glory, for the interests of his family, for
the safety of his kingdoms and dominions, that as the loving father of his whole people, connected by the same bonds of law, loyalty, faith and blood, though dwelling in various countries, he would not suffer the transcendent relation formed by these ties, to be farther violated by uncertain expectation of effects, that if attained never could compensate for the calamities through which they must be gained.”

The Congress also addressed the French inhabitants of Canada. In this they stated the right they had on becoming English subjects, to the benefits of the English [142] constitution. They explained what these rights were, and pointed out the difference between the constitution imposed on them by act of parliament, and that to which as British subjects they were entitled. They introduced their countryman Montesquieu, as reprobating their parliamentary constitution, and exhorting them to join their fellow colonists in support of their common rights. They earnestly invited them to join with the other colonies in one social compact, formed on the generous principles of equal liberty, and to this end recommended, that they would chuse delegates to represent them in Congress.

All these addresses were written with uncommon ability. Coming from the heart, they were calculated to move it. Inspired by a love of liberty, and roused by a sense of common danger, the patriots of that day spoke, wrote and acted, with an animation unknown in times of public tranquility; but it was not so much on the probable effect of these addresses, that Congress founded their hopes of obtaining a redress of their grievances, as on the consequences which they expected from the operation of their non-importation, and non-exportation agreement. The success that had followed the adoption of a measure similar to the former, in two preceding instances, had encouraged the colonists to expect much from a repetition of it. They indulged, in extravagant opinions of the importance of their trade to Great-Britain. The measure of a non-exportation of their commodities was a new expedient, and from that, even more was expected than from the non-importation agreement. They supposed that it would produce such extensive distress among the merchants and manufacturers of Great-Britain, and especially among the inhabitants of the British West-India islands, as would induce their general co-operation in procuring a redress of American grievances. Events proved that young nations, like young people, are prone to over rate their own importance.

Congress having finished all this important business, in less than eight weeks, dissolved themselves, after giving their opinion, “that another Congress should be held on the 10th of May next ensuing at Philadelphia, unless [143] the redress of their grievances should be previously obtained,” and recommended “to all the colonies to chuse deputies as soon as possible, to be ready to attend at that time and place, should events make their meeting necessary.”

On the publication of the proceedings of Congress, the people obtained that information which they desired. Zealous to do something for their country, they patiently waited for the decision of that body, to whose direction they had resigned
themselves. Their determinations were no sooner known, than they were cheerfully obeyed. Though their power was only advisory, yet their recommendations were more generally and more effectually carried into execution, than the laws of the best regulated states. Every individual felt his liberties endangered, and was impressed with an idea, that his safety consisted in union. A common interest in warding off a common danger, proved a powerful incentive to the most implicit submission; provincial congresses and subordinate committees were everywhere instituted. The resolutions of the Continental Congress, were sanctioned with the universal approbation of these new representative bodies, and institutions were formed under their direction to carry them into effect.

The regular constitutional assemblies also gave their assent to the measures recommended. The assembly of New-York, was the only legislature which withheld its approbation. Their metropolis had long been head quarters of the British army in the colonies, and many of their best families were connected with people of influence in Great-Britain. The unequal distribution of their land, fostered an aristocratic spirit. From the operation of these and other causes, the party for royal government, was both more numerous and respectable in New-York, than in any of the other colonies.

The assembly of Pennsylvania, though composed of a majority of Quakers, or of those who were friendly to their interests, was the first legal body of representatives that ratified unanimously the acts of the general Congress. They not only voted their approbation of what that body had done, but appointed members to represent them in the new Congress, proposed to be held on the 10th day of May next ensuing, and took sundry steps to put the province in a posture of defence.

To relieve the distresses of the people of Boston, liberal collections were made throughout the colonies, and forwarded for the supply of their immediate necessities. Domestic manufactures were encouraged, that the wants of the inhabitants from the non-importation agreement might be diminished, and the greatest zeal was discovered by a large majority of the people, to comply with the determinations of these new made representative bodies. In this manner, while the forms of the old government subsisted, a new and independent authority was virtually established. It was so universally the sense of the people, that the public good required a compliance with the recommendations of Congress, that any man who discovered an anxiety about the continuance of trade and business, was considered as a selfish individual, preferring private interest to the good of his country. Under the influence of these principles, the intemperate zeal of the populace, transported them frequently so far beyond the limits of moderation, as to apply singular punishments to particular persons, who contravened the general sense of the community.

The British ministry were not less disappointed than mortified at this unexpected combination of the colonies. They had flattered themselves with a belief, that the malcontents in Boston were a small party headed by a few factious men, and that the majority of the inhabitants would arrange themselves on the side of government, as soon as they found Great-Britain determined to support her authority, and should even Massachusetts take part with its offending capital, they could not believe that the
other colonies would make a common cause in supporting so intemperate a colony: but should even that expectation fail, they conceived that their association must be founded on principles so adverse to the interests and feelings of individuals, that it could not be of long duration.

They were encouraged in these ill founded opinions by [145] the recollection that the colonies were frequently quarrelling about boundaries, clashing in interest, differing in policy, manners, customs, forms of government and religion, and under the influence of a variety of local prejudices, jealousies and aversions. They also remembered the obstacles which prevented the colonies from acting together, in the execution of schemes, planned for their own defence, in the late war against the French and Indians. The failure of the expected cooperation of the colonies in one uniform system at that time, was not only urged by the British ministry, as a reason for parliamentary control over the whole, but flattered them with a delusive hope, that they never could be brought to combine their counsels and their arms. Perhaps the colonists apprehended more danger from British encroachments on their liberties, than from French encroachment on Indian territories, in their neighbourhood: or more probably the time to part being come, the Governor of the Universe, by a secret influence on their minds, disposed them to union. From whatever cause it proceeded, it is certain, that a disposition to do, to suffer, and to accommodate, spread from breast to breast, and from colony to colony, beyond the reach of human calculation. It seemed as though one mind inspired the whole. The merchants put far behind them the gains of trade, and cheerfully submitted to a total stoppage of business, in obedience to the recommendations of men, invested with no legislative powers. The cultivators of the soil, with great unanimity assented to the determination, that the hard earned produce of their farms, should remain unshipped, although in case of a free exportation, many would have been eager to have purchased it from them, at advanced prices. The sons and daughters of ease, renounced imported conveniences, and voluntarily engaged to eat, drink, and wear, only such articles as their country afforded. These sacrifices were made, not from the pressure of present distress, but on the generous principle of sympathy, with an invaded sister colony, and the prudent policy of guarding against a precedent which might, in a future day, operate against their liberties.

[146] This season of universal distress, exhibited a striking proof, how practicable it is for mankind to sacrifice ease, pleasure, and interest, when the mind is strongly excited by its passions. In the midst of their sufferings, cheerfulness appeared in the face of all the people. They counted every thing cheap in comparison with liberty, and readily gave up whatever tended to endanger it. A noble strain of generosity and mutual support was generally excited. A great and powerful diffusion of public spirit took place. The animation of the times, raised the actors in these scenes above themselves, and excited them to deeds of self denial, which the interested prudence of calmer seasons can scarcely credit.
CHAPTER V

Transactions In Great-Britain, In Consequence Of The Proceedings Of Congress, In 1774.

Some time before the proceedings of Congress reached England, it was justly apprehended that a non-importation agreement would be one of the measures they would adopt. The ministry apprehending that this event, by distressing the trading and manufacturing towns, might influence votes against the court, in the election of a new parliament, which was of course to come on in the succeeding year, suddenly dissolved the parliament, and immediately ordered a new one to be chosen. It was their design to have the whole business of elections over, before the inconveniences of a non-importation agreement could be felt. The nation was thus surprised into an election without knowing that the late American acts, had driven the colonies into a firm combination, to support, and make a common cause, with the people of Massachusetts. A new parliament was returned, which met in thirty-four days after the proceedings of Congress were first published in Philadelphia, and before they were known in Great-Britain.

This, for the most part consisted, either of the former members, or of those who held similar sentiments.

[147] On the 30th of November, the king in his speech to his new parliament informed them,

that a most daring spirit of resistance and disobedience to the laws, unhappily prevailed in the province of Massachusetts, and had broke forth in fresh violences of a very criminal nature, and that these proceedings had been countenanced and encouraged in his other colonies, and unwarrantable attempts had been made to obstruct the commerce of his kingdoms by unlawful combinations, and that he had taken such measures, and given such orders as he judged most proper and effectual, for carrying into execution the laws which were passed in the last session of the late parliament, relative to the province of Massachusetts.

An address which was proposed in the house of commons in answer to this speech, produced a warm debate. The minister was reminded of the great effects he had predicted from the late American acts. “They were to humble that whole continent, without further trouble, and the punishment of Boston, was to strike so universal a panic on all the colonies, that it would be totally abandoned, and instead of obtaining relief, a dread of the same fate would awe the other provinces to a most respectful submission.” An address re-echoing the royal speech, was nevertheless carried by a great majority. A similar address was carried, after a spirited debate, in the upper house, but the lords Richmond, Portland, Rockingham, Stamford, Stanhope, Torrington, Ponsonby, Wycombe and Camden, entered a protest against it, which concluded with these remarkable words.
Whatever may be the mischievous designs, or the inconsiderate temerity which leads others to this desperate course, we wish to be known as persons who have disapproved of measures so injurious in their past effects, and future tendency, and who are not in haste, without enquiry or information, to commit ourselves in declarations, which may precipitate our country into all the calamities of a civil war.

Soon after the meeting of the new parliament, the proceedings of the Congress reached Great-Britain.

The first impression made by them, was in favour of America. Administration seemed to be staggered, and their opposers triumphed, in the eventual truth of their prediction, that an universal confederacy to resist Great-Britain, would be the consequence of the late American acts. The secretary of state, after a days perusal, during which a council was held, said that the petition of Congress to the King, was a decent and proper one. He also cheerfully undertook to present it, and afterwards reported, that his majesty was pleased very graciously to receive it, and to promise to lay it before his two houses of parliament. From these favourable circumstances, the sanguine friends of America, concluded that it was intended to make the petition, the foundation of a change of measures, but these hopes were of short duration.

The warmer partisans of administration, placed so much confidence in the efficacy of the measures, they had lately taken to bring the Americans to obedience, that they regarded the boldest resolutions of Congress, as the idle clamors of an unruly multitude, which proper exertions on the part of Great-Britain would speedily silence. So much had been asserted and contradicted by both parties, that the bulk of the people could form no certain opinion, on the subject.

The parliament adjourned for the christmas holidays, without coming to any decision on American affairs. As soon as they met in January, a number of papers, containing information, were laid before them. These were mostly letters from governors, and other servants of his majesty, which detailed the opposition of the colonists, in language calculated to give a bad impression of their past conduct, and an alarming one of their future intentions.

It was a circumstance unfavourable to the lovers of peace, that the rulers of Great-Britain received almost the whole of their American intelligence from those, who had an interest in deceiving them. Governors, judges, revenue-officers, and other royal servants, being both appointed and paid by Great-Britain, fancied that zeal for the interest of that country, would be the most likely way to ensure their farther promotion. They were therefore, in their official dispatches, to government, often tempted to abuse the colonists, with a view of magnifying their own watchfulness and recommending themselves to Great-Britain. The plain, simple language of truth, was not acceptable to courtly ears. Ministers received and caressed those, and those only, whose representations coincided with their own views and wishes. They who contended that by the spirit of the English constitution British subjects, residing on one side of the Atlantic, were entitled to equal privileges with
those who resided on the other, were unnoticed, while the abettors of ministerial measures were heard with attention.

In this hour of national infatuation lord Chatham, after a long retirement, resumed his seat in the house of lords, and exerted his unrivalled eloquence, in sundry attempts to dissuade his countrymen from attempting to subdue the Americans by force of arms. The native dignity of his superior genius, and the recollection of his important services, entitled him to distinguished notice. His language, voice, and gesture, were calculated to force conviction on his hearers. Though venerable for his age, he spoke with the fire of youth. He introduced himself with some general observations on the importance of the American quarrel. He enlarged on the dangerous events that were coming on the nation, in consequence of the present dispute. He arraigned the conduct of ministers with great severity, and reprobated their whole system of American politics, and moved that an humble address, be presented to his majesty, most humbly to advise and beseech him to dispatch orders to general Gage, to remove his majesty’s forces from the town of Boston. His lordship supported this motion in a pathetic animated speech, but it was rejected by a great majority. From this and other circumstances it soon became evident, that the Americans could expect no more favour from the new parliament, than they had experienced from the late one.

A majority in both houses was against them, and resolved to compel them to obedience; but a respectable minority in their favour was strongly seconded by petitions from the merchants and manufacturers, throughout the kingdom, and particularly by those of London and Bristol. As these were well apprised of the consequences that must follow from a prosecution of coercive measures, and deeply interested in the event, they made uncommon exertions to prevent their adoption. They circumstantially pointed out the various evils that would result from them, and faithfully warned their countrymen of the danger, to which their commercial interests were exposed.

When the petition from the merchants of London was read in the house of commons, it was moved to refer it to the committee appointed to take into consideration the American papers; but it was moved by way of amendment on the ministerial side, that it should be referred to a separate committee, to meet on the 27th, the day succeeding that appointed for the consideration of American papers. This, though a dishonorable evasion, was carried by a majority of more than two to one.

A similar fate attended the petitions from Bristol, Glasgow, Norwich, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Woolverhampton, Dudley, and some other places. These on their being presented, were in like manner consigned to what the opposition humorously termed, the committee of oblivion.

About the same time a petition was offered from Mr. Bollan, Dr. Franklin, and Mr. Lee, stating that they were authorized by Congress to present their petition to the king, which his majesty had referred to that house, and that they were enabled to throw great light on the subject, and praying to be heard at the bar, in support of the said petition. The friends of the ministry allledged, that as Congress was not a legal body, nothing could be received from them. It was in vain replied, that the Congress,
however illegal as to other purposes, was sufficiently legal for present- ing a petition, and that as it was signed by the individual members of Congress, it might be received as a petition from individuals. That the signers of it were persons of great influence in America, and it was the right of all subjects to have their petitions heard.

[151] In the course of the debate on Lord Chatham’s motion for addressing his majesty to withdraw his troops from Boston, it had been observed by some lords in administration, that it was common and easy to censure their measures, but those who did so, proposed nothing better. Lord Chatham answered, that he should not be one of those idle censurers, that he had thought long and closely upon the subject, and purpos ed soon to lay before their lordships the result of his meditations, in a plan for healing the differences between Great-Britain and the colonies, and for restoring peace to the empire. When he had matured his plan, he introduced it into the house, in the form of a bill for settling the troubles in America. In this he proposed that the colonists should make a full acknowledgement of the supremacy of the legislature, and the superintending power of the British parliament. The bill did not absolutely decide on the right of taxation, but partly as a matter of grace, and partly as a compromise, declared and enacted, “that no tollage tax, or other charge, should be levied in America, except by common consent in their provincial assemblies.” It asserted the right of the king to send a legal army to any part of his dominions at all times, but declared, “that no military force could ever be lawfully employed to violate or destroy the just rights of the people.” It also legalised the holding a Congress in the ensuing May for the double purpose “of recognising the supreme legislative authority, and superintending power of parliament over the colonies, and for making a free grant to the king, his heirs and successors, of a certain and perpetual revenue, subject to the disposition of parliament, and applicable to the alleviation of the national debt.” On these conditions the bill proposed, “to restrain the powers of the admiralty courts to their ancient limits, and suspended for a limited time, those acts which had been complained of by Congress.” It proposed to place the judges in America on the same footing, as to the holding of their salaries and offices, with those in England, and secured to the colonies all the privileges, franchises, and immunities, granted by their several charters and constitutions.

His lordship introduced this [152] plan with a speech, in which he explained and supported every part of it. When he sat down, lord Dartmouth rose and said, “it contained matter of such magnitude as to require consideration, and therefore hoped, that the noble Earl did not expect their lordships to decide upon it by an immediate vote, but would be willing it should lie on the table for consideration.” Lord Chatham answered, “that he expected no more,” but lord Sandwich rose, and in a petulant speech opposed its being received at all, and gave his opinion, “that it ought immediately to be rejected with the contempt it deserved. That he could not believe it to be the production of any British peer—that it appeared to him rather the work of some American,” and turning his face towards Dr. Franklin, who was leaning on the bar, said, “he fancied he had in his eye the person who drew it up, one of the bitterest and most mischievous enemies this country had ever known.” This turned the eyes of many lords on the insulted American, who, with that self command, which is peculiar to great minds, kept his countenance unmoved. Several
other lords of the administration gave their sentiments also, for rejecting lord Chatham’s conciliatory bill, urging that it not only gave a sanction to the traiterous proceedings of the Congress already held, but legalised their future meeting. They enlarged on the rebellious temper and hostile disposition of the Americans, and said, “that, though the duty on tea was the pretence, the restrictions on their commerce, and the hopes of throwing them off, were the real motives of their disobedience, and that to concede now, would be to give up the point forever.”

The Dukes of Richmond and Manchester, lord Camden, lord Lyttleton and others, were for receiving lord Chatham’s conciliatory bill—some from approbation of its principles, but others only from a regard to the character and dignity of the house.

Lord Dartmouth who, from indecision rarely had any will or judgment of his own, and who with dispositions for the best measures, could be easily prevailed upon to join in support of the worst, finding the opposition from [153] his coadjutors in administration unexpectedly strong, turned round and gave his voice with them for immediately rejecting the plan; lord Chatham, in reply to lord Sandwich, declared,

the bill proposed by him to be entirely his own, but he made no scruple to declare, that if he were the first minister of the country, and had the care of settling this momentous business, he should not be ashamed of publicly calling to his assistance a person so perfectly acquainted with the whole of the American affairs as the gentleman alluded to, and so injuriously reflected upon [(Dr. Franklin)]. One whom all Europe held in high estimation for his knowledge and wisdom, and ranked with her Boyles and her Newtons—who was an honour, not only to the English nation, but to human nature.

The plan proposed by lord Chatham was rejected, by a majority of 64 to 32, and without being admitted to lie on the table. That a bill on so important a subject, offered by one of the first men of the age, and who, as prime minister of the nation, had but a few years before taken up Great-Britain when in the lowest despondency, and conducted her to victory and glory, through a war with two of the most powerful kingdoms of Europe, should be rejected without any consideration, or even a second reading, was not only a breach of decency, but a departure from that propriety of conduct which should mark the proceedings of a branch of the national legislature. It could not but strike every thinking American, that such legislators, influenced by passion, prejudice, and party spirit, many of whom were totally ignorant of the subject, and who would not give themselves an opportunity by a second reading, or farther consideration, to inform themselves better, were very unfit to exercise unlimited supremacy over three millions of virtuous, sensible people, inhabiting the other side of the globe.

On the day after the rejection of lord Chatham’s bill, a petition was presented to the house of commons, from the planters of the sugar colonies residing in Great-Britain, and the merchants of London trading to the colonies.

In this they stated, that the British property in [154] the West-India islands amounted to upwards of 30 millions, and that a
further property of many millions was employed in the commerce created by the said
islands, and that the profits and produce of these immense capitals which ultimately
centered in Great-Britain, would be deranged and endangered by the continuance of
the American troubles. The petitioners were on the 16th of the next month admitted to
a hearing, when Mr. Glover, as their agent, ably demonstrated the folly and danger of
persevering in the contest, but without any effect. The immediate coercion of the
colonies was resolved upon, and the ministry would not suffer themselves to be
diverted from its execution. They were confident of success, if they could once bring
the controversy to the decision of arms. They expected more from conquest than they
could promise themselves by negotiation or compromise. The free constitutions of the
colonies and their rapid progress in population, were beheld with a jealous eye, as the
natural means of independence. They conceived the most effectual method of
retaining them long, would be to reduce them soon. They hoped to be able to
extinguish remonstrance and debate by such a speedy and decisive conquest, as would
give them an opportunity to new model the colonial constitutions, on such principles
as would have prevented future altercations on the subject of their chartered rights.
Every representation that tended to retard or obstruct the coercion of the colonies, was
therefore considered as tending only to prolong the controversy. Confident of victory,
and believing that nothing short of it would restore the peace of the empire, the
ministry turned a deaf ear to all petitions and representations. They even presumed
that the petitioners, when they found Great-Britain determined on war, would assist in
carrying it on with vigour, in order to expedite the settlement of the dispute.
They took it for granted, that when the petitioning towns were

The determination of ministers to persevere was also forwarded by hopes of the
defection of New-York from her sister colonies. They flattered themselves, that when
one link of the continental chain gave way, it would be easy to make an impression on
the disjointed extremities.

Every attempt to close the breach which had been opened by the former parliament,
having failed, and the ministry having made up their minds on the mode of
proceeding with the colonists, their proposed plan was briefly unfolded. This was to
send a greater force to America, and to bring in a temporary act to put a stop to all the
foreign trade of the New England colonies, till they should make proper submissions
and acknowledgments. An address to his majesty was at the same time moved for, to
“beseech him to take the most effectual measures, to enforce due obedience to the
laws and authority of the supreme legislature.”

Truly critical was that moment to the union of the empire. A new parliament might,
without the charge of inconsistency, have repealed acts, passed by a former one,
which had been found inconvenient on experiment; but pride and passion, under the
specious names of national dignity and zeal for the supremacy of parliament, induced
the adoption of measures, for immediately compelling the submission of the colonies.
The repeal of a few acts of parliament would, at this time, have satisfied America. Though she had been extending her claims, yet she was still willing that Great-Britain should monopolize her trade, and that the parliament should regulate it for the common benefit of the empire; nor was she disposed to abridge his majesty of any of his usual prerogatives. This authority was sufficient for the Mother Country to retain the colonists in a profitable state of subordination, and yet not so much as to be inconsistent with their claims, or the security of their most important interests. Britain viewed the matter in a different light.

To recede at this time, would be to acknowledge, that the ministry had hitherto been in the [156] wrong, a concession rarely made by private persons, but more rarely still by men in public stations. The leading members in parliament, not distinguishing the opposition of freemen to unconstitutional innovations, from the turbulence of licentious mobs breaking over the bounds of law and constitution, supposed that to redress grievances, was to renounce sovereignty. This inference, in some degree, resulted from the broad basis which they had assigned to the claims of the Mother Country. If, as was contended, on the part of Great-Britain, they had a right to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever, and the power of parliament over them was absolute and unlimited, they were precluded from rescinding any act of theirs, however oppressive, when demanded as a matter of right. They were too highly impressed with ideas of their unlimited authority to repeal any of their laws, on the principle, that they had not a constitutional power to enact them, and too unwise to adopt the same measure on the ground of political expediency. Unfortunately for both countries, two opinions were generally believed, neither of which was perhaps true in its utmost extent, and one of which was most assuredly false. The ministry and parliament of England proceeded on the idea, that the claims of the colonists amounted to absolute independence, and that a fixed resolution to renounce the sovereignty of Great-Britain was concealed, under the specious pretext of a redress of grievances. The Americans on the other hand, were equally confident that the Mother Country not only harboured designs unfriendly to their interests, but seriously intended to introduce arbitrary government. Jealousies of each other were reciprocally indulged to the destruction of all confidence, and to the final dismemberment of the empire.

In discussing the measures proposed by the minister for the coercion of the colonies, the whole ground of the American controversy was traversed. The comparative merits of concession and coercion were placed in every point of view. Some of the minority in both houses of parliament, pointed out the dangers that would attend a war with America—the likelihood of the interference of [157] other powers—the probability of losing, and the impossibility of gaining any thing more than was already possessed. On the other hand, the friends of the ministry asserted that the Americans had been long aiming at independence—that they were magnifying pretended grievances to cover a premeditated revolt—that it was the business and duty of Englishmen, at every hazard to prevent its completion, and to bring them back to a rememberance that their present greatness was owing to the Mother Country; and that even their existence had been purchased at an immense expence of British blood and treasure. They acknowledged the danger to be great, but said “it must be encountered; that every day’s delay increased the evil, and that it would be base and cowardly to shift off for the present
an unavoidable contest, which must fall with accumulated weight on the heads of their posterity.” The danger of foreign interference was denied, and it was contended that an appearance of vigorous measures, with a farther reinforcement of troops at Boston, would be sufficient to quell the disturbances; and it was urged, that the friends of government were both strong and numerous, and only waited for proper support, and favourable circumstances, to declare themselves.

After long and warm debates, and one or two protests, the ministerial plans were carried by great majorities. In consequence thereof, on the 9th of February, 1775, a joint address, from both lords and commons, was presented to his majesty, in which they returned thanks for the communication of the papers relative to the state of the British colonies in America, and gave it as their opinion, that a rebellion actually existed in the province of Massachusetts, and beseeched his majesty that he would take the most effectual measures to enforce due obedience to the laws and authority of the supreme legislature, and begged in the most solemn manner to assure his majesty that it was their fixed resolution, at the hazard of their lives and properties, to stand by his majesty against all rebellious attempts, in the maintenance of the just rights of his majesty, and the two houses of parliament.

[158]
The lords, Richmond, Craven, Archer, Abergaveny, Rockingham, Wycombe, Courtenay, Torrington, Ponsonby, Cholmondeley, Abingdon, Rutland, Camden, Effingham, Stanhope, Scarborough, Fitzwilliam and Tankerville, protested against this address, as founded on no proper parliamentary information, being introduced by refusing to suffer the presentation of petitions against it (though it be the undoubted right of the subject to present the same)—as following the rejection of every mode of conciliation—as holding out no substantial offer of redress of grievances, and as promising support to those ministers who had inflamed America, and grossly misconducted the affairs of Great-Britain.

By the address, against which this protest was entered, the parliament of Great-Britain passed the Rubicon. In former periods, it might be alledged that the claims of the colonies were undefined, and that their unanimous resolution to defend them was unknown; but after a free representation from twelve provinces had stated their rights, and pledged themselves to each other to support them, and their determinations were known, a resolution that a rebellion actually existed, and that at the hazard of their lives and properties, they would stand by his majesty against all rebellious attempts, was a virtual declaration of war. Both parties were now bound in consequence of their own acts, to submit their controversy to the decision of arms. Issue was joined by the approbation Congress had given to the Suffolk resolves, and by this subsequent joint address of both houses of parliament to his majesty. It is probable that neither party, in the beginning, intended to go thus far, but by the inscrutable operations of providence, each was permitted to adopt such measures as not only rent the empire, but involved them both, with their own consent, in all the calamities of a long and bloody war. The answer from the throne to the joint address of parliament, contained
assurances of taking the most speedy and effectual measures for enforcing due obedience to the laws, and authority of the supreme legislature. This answer was accompanied with a message to the commons, in [159] which they were informed that some augmentation to the forces by sea and land would be necessary. An augmentation of 4383 men to the land forces, and of 2000 seamen, to be employed for the ensuing year, was accordingly asked for, and carried without difficulty. By the first it was stated, that the force at Boston would be ten thousand men, a number supposed to be sufficient for enforcing the laws. Other schemes, in addition to a military force, were thought advisable for promoting the projected coercion of the colonies. With this view a punishment was proposed, so universal in its operation, that it was expected the inhabitants of the New-England colonies, to obtain a ridance of its heavy pressure, would interest themselves in procuring a general submission to parliament. Lord North moved for leave to bring in a bill to restrain the trade and commerce of the provinces of Massachusetts Bay, and New-Hampshire, the colonies of Connecticut and Rhode-Island, and Providence Plantations in North-America, to Great-Britain, Ireland, and the British islands in the West-Indies, and to prohibit such provinces and colonies from carrying on any fishery on the banks of Newfoundland, or other places therein to be mentioned, under certain conditions, and for a limited time. The motion for this bill was supported, by declaring that as the Americans had refused to trade with the Mother Country, they ought not to be permitted to trade with any other. It was known that the New-England colonies earned on a circuitous trade and fishing, on the banks of Newfoundland, to a great extent. To cut them off from this resource, they were legislatively forbidden to fish, or to carry on foreign trade. It was presumed that the wants of a large body of people, deprived of employment, would create a clamor in favour of reconciliation.

The British ministry expected to excite the same temper in the unemployed New-England men, that Congress meant to raise by the non-importation agreement, among the British merchants and manufacturers. The motion for this bill brought into view, the whole of the American controversy. The opposers of it said, that its cruelty [160] exceeded the examples of hostile rigour with avowed enemies; for that in the most dangerous wars, the fishing craft was universally spared—they desired the proposer of the bill to recollect, that he had often spoken of the multitude of friends he had in those provinces, and that now he confounded the innocent with the guilty—friends with enemies, and involved his own partizans in one common ruin with his opposers. They alledged farther, that the bill would operate against the people of Great-Britain, as the people of New England were in debt to them, and had no other means of paying that debt, but through the fishery, and the circuitous trade dependent on it. It was observed, that the fishermen being cut off from employment must turn soldiers, and that therefore while they were provoking the Americans to resistance by one set of acts, they were furnishing them with the means of recruiting an army by another. The favourers of the bill denied the charge of severity, alledging that the colonists could not complain of any distress the bill might bring on them, as they not only deserved it, but had set the example, that they had entered into lawful combinations to ruin the merchants and manufacturers of Great-Britain. It was said,
that if any foreign power had offered a similar insult or injury, the whole nation would have demanded satisfaction. They contended that it was a bill of humanity and mercy; for, said they, the colonists have incurred all the penalties of rebellion, and are liable to the severest military execution. Instead of inflicting the extent of what they deserved, the bill only proposes to bring them to their senses, by restricting their trade. They urged farther that the measure was necessary, for said they, “the Americans have frequently imposed on us, by threatening to withdraw their trade, hoping through mercantile influence to bend the legislature to their demands—that this was the third time they had thrown the commerce of Great-Britain into a state of confusion. That both colonies and commerce were better lost than preserved on such terms.” They added farther, that they must either relinquish their connexion with America, or fix it on such a basis as would prevent [161] a return of these evils. They admitted the bill to be coercive, but said, “That the coercion which put the speediest end to the dispute, was eventually the most merciful.”

In the progress of the bill, a petition from the merchants and traders of London, who were interested in the American commerce, was presented against it. They were heard by their agent, Mr. David Barclay, and a variety of witnesses were examined before the house. In the course of their evidence it appeared that in the year 1764, the four provinces of New-England employed in their several fisheries no less than 45,880 ton of shipping, and 6002 men; and that the produce of their fisheries that year, in foreign markets, amounted to 322,220£. 16s. sterling. It also appeared that the fisheries had very much increased since that time—that all the materials used in them, except salt, and the timber of which the vessels were built, were purchased from Great-Britain; and that the net proceeds of the whole were remitted thither. All this information was disregarded.

After much opposition in both houses, and a protest in the house of lords, the bill was, by a great majority, finally ratified. So intent was the ministry and parliament on the coercion of the colonists, that every other interest was sacrificed to its accomplishment. They conceived the question between the two countries to be simply whether they should abandon their claims, and at once give up all the advantages arising from sovereignty and commerce, or resort to violent measures for their security.

Since the year 1769, when a secretary of state officially disclaimed all views of an American revenue, little mention had been made of that subject, but the decided majority which voted with the ministry on this occasion, emboldened lord North once more to present it to the view of his countrymen; he therefore brought into parliament a scheme which had the double recommendation of holding forth the semblance of conciliation, and the prospect of an easement of British taxes, by a productive revenue from the colonies. This was a resolution which passed on the 20th of February.

[162] Resolved, That when the governor, council, and assembly, or general court, of any of his majesty’s provinces or colonies in America, shall propose to make provision according to the condition, circumstances, and situations of such province or colony, for contributing their proportion for the
common defence, (such proportion to be raised under the authority of the general
court or general assembly of such province or colony, and disposable by parliament)
and shall engage to make provision also for the support of the civil government, and
the administration of justice in such province or colony, it will be proper, if such
proposal shall be approved by his majesty and the two houses of parliament, and for
so long as such provision shall be made accordingly, to forbear, in respect of such
province or colony, to levy any duty, tax, or assessment, except only such duties as it
may be expedient to continue to levy or to impose for the regulation of commerce, the
net produce of the duties last mentioned, to be carried to the account of such province
or colony respectively.

This was introduced by the minister in a long speech, in which he asserted that it
would be an infallible touch stone to try the Americans; “if” said he, “their opposition
is only founded on the principles which they pretend, they must agree with this
proposal, but if they have designs in contemplation different from those they avow,
their refusal will convict them of duplicity.” The oppositions to the minister’s motion
originated among those who had supported him in previous questions. They objected
to the proposal that in effect it was an acknowledgment of something grievous in the
idea of taxing America by parliament, and that it was therefore a departure from their
own principles. They contended that it was improper to make concessions to rebels
with arms in their hands, or to enter into any measures for a settlement with the
Americans, in which they did not, as a preliminary, acknowledge the supremacy of
parliament.

The minister was likely to be deserted by some of his partizans,
till others explained the consistency of the scheme with their
former declarations. [163] It was asked, “what shall parliament lose by acceding to
this resolution? Not the right of taxing America, for this is most expressly reserved.
Not the profitable exercise of this right, for it proposed to enforce the only essential
part of taxation, by compelling the Americans to raise not only what they, but what
we, think reasonable. We are not going to war for trifles and a vain point of honor, but
for substantial revenue.” The minister farther declared, that he did not expect his
proposal to be generally relished by the Americans. But said he, if it does no good
in the colonies, it will do good here, it will unite the people of England, by holding
out to them a distinct object of revenue. He added farther, as it tends to unite England,
it is likely to disunite America, for if only one province accepts the offer, their
confederacy, which only makes them formidable, will be broken.

The opposers of ministry attacked the proposition with the combined force of wit and
argument. They animadverted on the inconsistency of holding forth the same
resolution as a measure of concession, and as an assertion of authority. They
remarked that hitherto it had been constantly denied that they had any contest about
an American revenue—that the whole had been a dispute about obedience to trade-
laws, and the general legislative authority of parliament, but now ministers suddenly
changed their language, and proposed to interest the nation—console the
manufacturers and animate the soldiery, by persuading them that it is not a contest for
empty honour, but for the acquisition of a substantial revenue. It was said that the
Americans would be as effectually taxed, without their consent, by being compelled
to pay a gross sum, as by an aggregate of small duties to the same amount. That this
scheme of taxation exceeded in oppression any that the rapacity of mankind had hitherto devised. In other cases a specific sum was demanded, and the people might reasonably presume that the remainder was their own; but here they were wholly in the dark as to the extent of the demand.

This proposition, however for conciliation, though illy [164] relished by many of the friends of ministry, was carried on a division of 274 to 88. On its transmission to the colonies, it did not produce the effects of disunion expected from it. It was unanimously rejected. The reason for this cannot be expressed better than in the act of Congress on that subject, which after a recital of the said conciliatory motion, proceeded in the following words,

The Congress took the said resolution into consideration, and are thereupon of opinion,

That the colonies of America are entitled to the sole and exclusive privilege of giving and granting their own money. That this involves a right of deliberating whether they will make any gift, for what purposes it shall be made, and what shall be its amount; and that it is a high breach of this privilege for any body of men, extraneous to their Constitutions, to prescribe the purposes for which money shall be levied on them, to take to themselves the authority of judging of their conditions, circumstances, and situations, and of determining the amount of the contribution to be levied.

That as the colonies possess a right of appropriating their gifts, so are they entitled at all times to enquire into their application, to see that they be not wasted among the venal and corrupt for the purpose of undermining the civil rights of the givers, nor yet be diverted to the support of standing armies, inconsistent with their freedom and subversive of their quiet. To propose therefore, as this resolution does, that the monies given by the colonies shall be subject to the disposal of parliament alone, is to propose that they shall relinquish this right of enquiry, and put it in the power of others to render their gifts ruinous, in proportion as they are liberal.

That this privilege of giving, or of withholding our monies, is an important barrier against the undue exertion of prerogative, which, if left altogether without controul, may be exercised to our great oppression; and all history shews how efficacious is its intercession for redress of grievances, and re-establishment of rights, and how improvident it would be to part with so powerful a mediator.

We are of opinion that the proposition contained in [165] this resolution is unreasonable and insidious: Unreasonable, because, if we declare we accede to it, we declare without reservation, we will purchase the favour of parliament, not knowing at the same time at what price they will please to estimate their favour; it is insidious, because, individual colonies, having bid and bidden again, till they find the avidity of the seller too great for all their powers to satisfy, are then to return into opposition, divided from their sister colonies whom the minister will have previously detached by a grant of easier terms, or by an artful procrastination of a definitive answer.
That the suspension of the exercise of their pretended power of taxation being expressly made commensurate with the continuance of our gifts, these must be perpetual to make that so. Whereas no experience has shewn that a gift of perpetual revenue secures a perpetual return of duty or of kind disposition. On the contrary, the parliament itself, wisely attentive to this observation, are in the established practice of granting their supplies from year to year only.

Desirous, and determined as we are to consider, in the most dispassionate view, every seeming advance towards a reconciliation made by the British parliament, let our brethren of Britain reflect what would have been the sacrifice to men of free spirits had even fair terms been proffered, as these insidious proposals were, with circumstances of insult and defiance. A proposition to give our money; accompanied with large fleets and armies, seems addressed to our fears rather than to our freedom. With what patience would Britons have received articles of treaty from any power on earth when born on the point of a bayonet by military Plenipotentiaries?

We think the attempt unnecessary to raise upon us by force or by threats our proportional contributions to the common defence, when all know, and themselves acknowledge, we have fully contributed, whenever called upon to do so in the character of freemen.

We are of opinion it is not just that the colonies should be required to oblige themselves to other contributions, while Great-Britain possesses a Monopoly of their trade. [166]

This of itself lays them under heavy contribution. To demand, therefore, additional aids in the form of a tax, is to demand the double of their equal proportion, if we are to contribute equally with the other parts of the empire, let us equally with them, enjoy free commerce with the whole world. But while the restrictions on our trade shut to us the resources of wealth, is it just we should bear all other burthens, equally with those to whom every resource is open?

We conceive that the British parliament has no right to intermeddle with our provisions for the support of civil government, or administration of justice. The provisions we have made are such as please ourselves, and are agreeable to our own circumstances: They answer the substantial purposes of government and of justice, and other purposes than these should not be answered. We do not mean that our people shall be burthened with oppressive taxes, to provide sinecures for the idle or the wicked, under colour of providing for a civil list. While parliament pursue their plan of civil government within their own jurisdiction, we also hope to pursue ours without molestation.

We are of opinion the proposition is altogether unsatisfactory; because it imports only a suspension of the mode, not a renunciation of the pretended right to tax us: Because too it does not propose to repeal the several acts of parliament, passed for the purposes of restraining the trade, and altering the form of government of one of our colonies; extending the boundaries and changing the government of Quebec; enlarging the jurisdiction of the courts of admiralty and vice-admiralty; taking from us the rights of a trial by jury of the vicinage, in cases affecting both life and property;
transporting us into other countries to be tried for criminal offences; exempting by
mock-trial the murderers of colonists from punishment; and quartering soldiers on us
in times of profound peace. Nor do they renounce the power of suspending our own
legislatures, and for legislating for us themselves, in all cases whatsoever. On the
contrary, to shew they mean no discontinuance of injury, they pass acts, at the very
[167] time of holding out this proposition, for restraining the commerce and fisheries
of the provinces of New-England, and for interdicting the trade of other colonies with
all foreign nations, and with each other. This proves unequivocally they mean not to
relinquish the exercise of indiscriminate legislation over us.

Upon the whole, this proposition seems to have been held up to the world, to deceive
it into a belief that there was nothing in dispute between us but the mode of levying
taxes; and that the parliament having now been so good as to give up this, the colonies
are unreasonable if not perfectly satisfied: whereas, in truth, our adversaries still claim
a right of demanding ad libitum, and of taxing us themselves to the full amount of their
demand, if we do comply with it. This leaves us without any thing we can call
property. But, what is of more importance, and what in this proposal they keep out of
sight, as if no such point was now in contest between us, they claim a right to alter our
charters and establish laws, and leave us without any security for our lives or liberties.
The proposition seems also to have been calculated more particularly to lull into fatal
security, our well affected fellow subjects on the other side of the water, till time
should be given for the operation of those arms, which a British minister pronounced
would instantaneously reduce the “cowardly” sons of America to unreserved
submission. But when the world reflects, how inadequate to justice are these vaunted
terms; when it attends to the rapid and bold succession of injuries, which, during a
course of eleven years, have been aimed at these colonies; when it reviews the pacific
and respectful expostulations, which, during that whole time, were the sole arms we
opposed to them; when it observes that our complaints were either not heard at all, or
were answered with new and accumulated injuries; when it recollects that the minister
himself on an early occasion declared, “that he would never treat with America, till he
had brought her to his feet,” and that an avowed partisan of ministry has more lately
denounced against us the dreadful sentence “delenda est Carthago,” that this was
done [168] in presence of a British senate, and being unreproved by them, must be taken to be their own sentiment, (especially as the
purpose has already in part been carried into execution, by their
treatment of Boston and burning of Charlestown); when it considers the great
Armaments with which they have invaded us, and the circumstances of cruelty with
which these have commenced and prosecuted hostilities; when these things, we say,
are laid together and attentively considered, can the world be deceived into an opinion
that we are unreasonable, or can it hesitate to believe with us, that nothing but our
own exertions may defeat the ministerial sentence of death or abject submission.

Other plans for conciliation with the colonies, founded on principles very different
from those which were the basis of lord North’s conciliatory motion, were brought
forward in the house of commons, but without receiving its approbation.
The most remarkable of these was proposed by Mr. Edmund
Burke, in a speech which for strength of argument, extent of
information, and sublimity of language, would bear a comparison with the most

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finished performance that ancient or modern times have produced. In his introduction to this admirable speech, he examined and explained the natural and accidental circumstances of the colonies, with respect to situation, resources, number, population, commerce, fisheries and agriculture, and from those considerations shewed their importance. He then enquired into their unconquerable spirit of freedom; and he traced it to its original sources; from these circumstances he inferred the line of policy which should be pursued with regard to America—he shewed that all proper plans of government must be adapted to the feelings, established habits, and received opinions of the people. On these principles he reprobated all plans of governing the colonies by force; and proposed as the ground work of his plan, that the colonists should be admitted to an interest in the constitution.

He then went into an historical detail of the manner in which British privileges had been extended to Ireland, Wales, and the counties palatine of Chester and Durham—the [169] state of confusion previously to that event—and the happy consequences which followed it. He contended that a communication to the members of an interest in the constitution, was the great ruling principle of British government. He therefore proposed to go back to the old policy for governing the colonies. He was for a parliamentary acknowledgment of the legal competency of the colony assemblies for the support of their government in peace, and for public aids in time of war—and of the futility of parliamentary taxation as a method of supply. He stated that much had been given in the old way of colonial grant, that from the year 1748 to 1763, the journals of the house of commons repeatedly acknowledged that the colonies not only gave, but gave to satiety; and that from the time in which parliamentary imposition had superseded the free gifts of the provinces, there was much discontent, but little revenue. He therefore moved six resolutions affirmative of these facts, and grounded on them resolutions for repealing the acts complained of by the Americans, trusting to the liberality of their future voluntary contributions. This plan of conciliation, which promised immediate peace to the whole empire, and a lasting obedience of the colonies, though recommended by the charms of the most persuasive eloquence, and supported by the most convincing arguments, was by a great majority rejected.

Mr. D. Hartley, not discouraged by the negative which had been given to Mr. Burke’s scheme, came forward with another for the same purpose. This proposed that a letter of requisition should be sent to the colonies by a secretary of state, on a motion from the house for a contribution to the expences of the whole empire. He meant to leave to the provincial assemblies the right to judge of the expedience of the grant—its amount and application. In confidence that the colonies would give freely when called on in this constitutional way, he moved to suspend the acts complained of by the Americans. This was also rejected. Another plan which shall be more particularly explained was digested in private by Dr. Franklin, on the part of the Americans, and Dr. Fothergill and David [170] Barclay on behalf of the British ministry.

There appeared a disposition to concede some thing considerable on both sides, but the whole came to nothing, in consequence of an inflexible determination to refuse a repeal of the act of parliament for altering the chartered government of Massachusetts; Dr. Franklin agreed, that the tea destroyed should be paid for—the British ministers, that the Boston port act should be repealed,
but the latter contended, “that the late Massachusetts acts being real amendments of their constitution, must for that reason be continued as well as to be a standing example of the power of parliament.” On the other hand it was declared by Dr. Franklin, “that while the parliament claimed and exercised a power of internal legislation for the colonies, and of altering American constitutions at pleasure, there could be no agreement, as that would render the Americans unsafe in every privilege they enjoyed, and would leave them nothing in which they could be secure.”

This obstinate adherence to support parliament in a power of altering the laws and charters of the provinces, particularly to enforce their late laws for new modelling the chartered constitution of Massachusetts, was the fatal rock by dashing on which the empire broke in twain; for every other point, in dispute between the two countries, seemed in a fair way for an amicable compromise.

The fishery bill was speedily followed by another, for restraining the trade and commerce of the colonies and provinces of New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and South-Carolina: The reasons assigned for this were the same with those offered for the other. These provinces had adopted the continental association. The British minister thought it proper, that as they had voluntarily interdicted themselves from trade with Great-Britain, Ireland, and the West-Indies, they should be restrained from it with all other parts of the world. He contended that the inhabitants of the colonies might render this act a dead letter, by relinquishing their own resolutions, as then they would meet with no restraint in carrying on trade in its ancient legal channel.

It is remarkable, that three of the associated colonies, viz. New-York, Delaware and North-Carolina, were omitted in this restraining bill. Whatever might be the view of the British ministry for this discrimination, it was considered in the colonies as calculated to promote disunion among them. It is certain, that the colonies which were exempted from its operation, might have reaped a golden harvest from the exemption in their favour, had they been disposed to avail themselves of it. But such was the temper of the times, that a renunciation of immediate advantage in favour of the public was fashionable. The selfish passions which in seasons of peace are too often the cause of quarrels, were hushed by the pressure of common danger. The exempted colonies spurned the proffered favour, and submitted to the restraints imposed on their less favoured neighbours, so as to be equal sharers of their fate. The indulgence granted to New-York, in being kept out of this restraining bill, was considered by some as a premium for her superior loyalty. Her assembly had refused to approve the proceedings of the Congress, and had, in some other instances, discovered less warmth than the neighbouring legislatures. Much was expected from her moderation. At the very time the British parliament was framing the restraining acts just mentioned, the constitutional assembly of New-York petitioned the British parliament for a redress of their grievances. Great stress had been laid on the circumstance that Congress was not a legal assembly, and the want of constitutional sanction had been assigned as a reason for the neglect with which their petition had been treated. Much praise had been lavished on the colony of New-York for its moderation, and occasion had been taken, from their refusing to approve the proceedings of the Congress to represent the
resolutions and claims of that body to be more the ebullitions of incendiaries, than the sober sentiments of the temperate citizens.

It was both unexpected and confounding to those who supported these opinions, that the representation and remonstrance of the very loyal assembly of New-York stated, “that an exemption from internal taxation, and the exclusive right of providing for their own civil government, and the administration of justice in [172] the colony, were esteemed by them as their undoubted and unalienable rights.”

A motion being made in the house of commons for bringing up this representation and remonstrance of the assembly of New-York, it was amended on the suggestion of lord North, by adding, “in which the assembly claim to themselves rights derogatory to, and inconsistent with the legislative authority of parliament, as declared by the declaratory act.” The question, so amended, being put, it passed in the negative. The fate of this representation extinguished the hopes of those moderate persons, both in the parent state and the colonies, who flattered themselves that the disputes subsisting between the two countries might be accommodated by the mediation of the constitutional assemblies. Two conclusions were drawn from this transaction, both of which were unfriendly to a reconciliation. The decided language with which the loyal assembly of New-York claimed exemption from parliamentary taxation, proved to the people of Great-Britain that the colonists, however they might differ in modes of opposition, or in degrees of warmth, were nevertheless, united in that fundamental principle. The rejection of their representation proved that nothing more was to be expected from proceeding in the constitutional channel of the legal assemblies, than from the new system of a continental Congress. Solid revenue and unlimited supremacy were the objects of Great-Britain, and exemption from parliamentary taxation that of the most moderate of the colonies. So wide were the claims of the two countries from each other, that to reconcile them on any middle ground seemed to be impossible.
APPENDIX NO. I

Some Special Transactions Of Dr. Franklin In London, In Behalf Of America.

While the breach between Great-Britain and the colonies, was daily increasing, the enlightened and liberal, who loved peace, and the extension of human happiness, saw with regret the approaching horrors of a civil war, and wished to avert them. With these views Dr. Fothergill, Mr. David Barclay and Dr. Franklin, held sundry conferences in London on American affairs. The two former were English gentlemen of most amiable characters, and highly esteemed by the British ministry. The last was by birth an American, but a citizen of the world, who loved and was beloved by all good men. He was also agent for several of the colonies. At one of their conferences held at the house of Dr. Fothergill on the 4th December, 1774, before the proceedings of Congress had reached England—a paper drawn up by the last, at the request of the two first, was submitted to their joint consideration, which with a few additions proposed and agreed to by common consent was as follows.

Hints for conversation upon the subjects of terms, that might probably produce a durable union between Britain and the colonies.

1st. The tea destroyed to be paid for.

2d. The tea duty act to be repealed, and all the duties that have been received upon it to be repaid into the treasuries of the several provinces from which they have been collected.

3d. The acts of navigation to be all re-enacted in the colonies.

4th. A naval officer to be appointed by the crown to see that these acts are observed.

5th. All the acts restraining manufactories in the colonies to be reconsidered.

6th. All duties arising on the acts for regulating trade with the colonies to be for the public use of the respective colonies and paid into their treasuries.

The collectors and custom house officers to be appointed by each governor and not sent from England.

7th. In consideration of the Americans maintaining their own peace establishment, and the monopoly Britain is to have of their commerce, no requisition is to be made from them in time of peace.
8th. No troops to enter and quarter in any colony, but with the consent of its legislature.

9th. In time of war on requisition by the king with consent of parliament, every colony shall raise money by the following rules in proportion, viz. If Britain on account of the war, raises three shillings in the pound to its land tax, then the colonies to add to their last general provincial peace tax, a sum equal to one fourth part thereof, and if Britain on the same account pays four shillings in the pound, then the colonies to add to their last peace tax, a sum equal to the half thereof, which additional tax is to be granted to his majesty, and to be employed in raising and paying men for land or sea service, and furnishing provisions, transports, or for such other purposes as the king shall require and direct, and though no colony may contribute less, each may add as much by voluntary grant as it shall think proper.

10th. Castle William to be restored to the province of Massachusetts Bay, and no fortress to be built by the crown in any province, but with the consent of its legislature.

11th. The late Massachusetts and Quebec acts to be repealed, and a free government granted to Canada.

12th. All judges to be appointed during good behavior, with equally permanent salaries to be paid out of the province revenues by appointment of the assemblies, or if the judges are to be appointed during the pleasure of the crown, let the salaries be during the pleasure of the assemblies as heretofore.

13th. Governors to be supported by the assemblies of each province.

14th. If Britain will give up her monopoly of the American commerce, then the aid above mentioned to be given in time of peace, as well as in time of war.

15th. The extension of the act of Henry the 8th, concerning treasons to the colonies to be formally disowned by parliament.

16th. The American admiralty courts to be reduced to the same powers they have in England, and the acts establishing them to be re-enacted in America.

17th. All power of internal legislation in the colonies to be disclaimed by parliament.

On reading this paper a second time, Dr. Franklin gave his reasons at length for each article. Some of his reasons were as follows.

On the first article he observed, that when the tea was destroyed at Boston, Great-Britain had a right to reparation, and would certainly have had it on demand, as was the case when injuries were done by mobs in the time of the stamp act, or she might have a right to return an equal injury if she rather chose to do that; but Great-Britain could not have a right both to reparation and to return an equal injury, much less had she a right to return the injury ten or twenty fold, as she had done by blocking up the
port of Boston. All which extra injury ought to be repaired by Great-Britain. That therefore if paying for the tea was agreed to, as an article fit to be proposed, it was merely from a desire of peace, and in compliance with the opinions of Dr. Fothergill and David Barclay, expressed at their first meeting; that this was indispensible, that the dignity of Great-Britain required it, and that if this was agreed to, every thing else would be easy.

On the second, it was observed that the tea duty act should be repealed as having never answered any good purpose, as having been the cause of the present mischief, and never likely to be executed. That the act being considered as unconstitutional by the Americans, and what parliament had no right to enact they must consider all the money extorted by it as so much wrongfully taken, and of which therefore restitution ought to be made, and the rather as it would furnish a fund out of which the tea destroyed would be best defrayed.

On the third and fourth articles it was observed, that the Americans were frequently charged with views of abolishing the navigation act, but that in truth those parts of it, which were of most importance to Britain, as tending to increase its naval strength, were as acceptable to the colonists as they could be to the inhabitants of the Parent State, since they wished to employ their own ships in preference to those of foreigners, and they had no desire to see foreign ships enter their ports. That it would prevent disputes if they were re-enacted in the colonies, as that would demonstrate their consent to them, and then if all the duties arising on them were to be collected by officers appointed and paid in the respective governments, and the produce paid into their treasuries, the acts would be better and more faithfully executed, and at much less expence, and a great source of misunderstanding between the two countries removed—that the extension of the admiralty jurisdiction so much complained of would then no longer be necessary.

In support of the 7th article it was observed, that if every distinct part of the king’s dominions supported its own government in time of peace, it was all that could justly be required of it. That all the other confederated colonies had done so from their beginning, that their taxes for that purpose were very considerable, that new countries had many expences which old ones were free from, the work being done to their land by their ancestors, such as making roads and bridges, erecting churches, courthouses, forts, quays and other public buildings, founding schools and places of education, hospitals and almshouses—that the voluntary subscriptions and legal taxes for such purposes taken together amounted to more than was paid by equal estates in Great-Britain; that it would be best not to take money from the Americans as a contribution to its public expence in time of peace, first for that just so much less would be got from them in commerce, and secondly, that coming into the hands of British ministers accustomed to prodigality of public money, it would be squandered and dissipated without answering any general good purposes. That on the whole it would be best for both countries, that no aids should be asked from the colonies in time of peace, [177] that it would then be their interest to grant bountifully, and exert themselves, in time of war, the sooner to put an end to it.
In support of the 8th article, it was said, that if the king could bring into any one part of his dominions troops raised in any other part of them, without the consent of the legislature of the part to which they were brought, he might bring armies raised in America to England without the consent of parliament.

The 9th article was drawn in compliance with an idea of Dr. Fothergill, that the British government would probably not be satisfied with the promise of voluntary grants in time of war from the American assemblies, of which the quantity must be uncertain, that therefore it would be best to proportion them in some way to the shilling in the pound raised in England.

In support of the 10th article, was urged the injustice of seizing that fortress which had been built at an immense charge by the province, for the defence of their port against national enemies, and turning it into a citadel for aweing the town, restraining their trade, blocking up their port, and depriving them of their privileges. That a great deal had been said of their injustice in destroying the tea, but here was a much greater injustice uncompensated, that castle having cost the province £300,000.

In support of the 11th article, it was said, that as the Americans had assisted in the conquest of Canada, at a great expence of blood and treasure, they had some right to be considered in the settlement of it; that the establishing an arbitrary government on the bank of their settlements would be dangerous to them all. That as to amending the Massachusetts government, though it might be shewn that every one of these pretended amendments were real mischiefs, yet, that as charters were compacts between two parties, the king and the people, no alteration could be made in them even for the better, but by the consent of both parties; that the parliamentary claim and exercise of power to alter American charters, had rendered all their constitutions uncertain and set them [178] quite afloat.

That by this claim of altering laws and charters at will they deprived the colonists of all rights and privileges whatever, but what they should hold at their pleasure. That this was a situation they could not be in and must risque life and every thing rather than submit to it.

The 12th article was explained by stating the former situation of the judges in most of the colonies, viz. that they were appointed by the crown and paid by the assemblies, that the appointment being during the pleasure of the crown, the salary had been during the pleasure of the assembly; that when it was urged against the assemblies that their making judges dependent on them for their salaries, was aiming at an undue influence over the courts of justice, the assemblies usually replied, that making them dependent on the crown for continuance in their places was also retaining an undue influence over those courts, and that one undue influence was a proper balance for another; but that whenever the crown would consent to the appointment of judges only during good behaviour, the assemblies would at the same time grant their salaries to be permanent during their continuance in office; that instead of agreeing to this equitable offer the crown now claimed to make the judges in the colonies dependant on its favour for place, as well as salary, and both to be continued at its pleasure. This the colonies must oppose as inequitable, as putting both the weights into one of the scales of justice.
In favour of the 123th it was urged that the governors sent to the colonies were often men of no estate or principle, who came merely to make fortunes, and had no natural regard for the country they were to govern. That to make them quite independent of the people, was to make them careless of their conduct, and giving a loose to their rapacious and oppressive dispositions. That the dependence of the governors on the people for their salaries could never operate to the prejudice of the king’s service, or to the disadvantage of Britain, since each governor was bound by a particular set of instructions which he had given surety to observe, and all the laws he assented to were subject to be repealed by the crown. That the payment of the salaries by the people was more satisfactory to them, and was productive of a good understanding between governors and governed, and that therefore the innovations lately made at Boston and New-York, should be laid aside.

The 14th article was expunged on the representation of Dr. Fothergill and David Barclay, that the monopoly of the American commerce would never be given up, and that the proposing of it would only give offence, without answering any good purpose.

The 15th article was readily agreed to.

The 16th was thought to be of little consequence, if the duties were given to the colony treasuries.

The 17th it was thought could hardly be obtained, but it was supported by Dr. Franklin, alleging that without it, any compact made with the Americans, might be evaded by acts of the British parliament, restraining the intermediate proceedings, which were necessary for carrying it into effect.

This paper of hints was communicated to lord Dartmouth by Dr. Fothergill, who also stated the arguments which in conversation had been offered in support of them. When objections were made to them, as being humiliating to Great-Britain Dr. Fothergill replied “that she had been unjust, and ought to bear the consequences, and alter her conduct—that the pill might be bitter, but it would be salutary and must be swallowed; that sooner or later these or similar measures must be followed, or the empire would be divided and ruined.”

These hints were handed about amongst ministers, and conferences were held on them. The result was on the 4th of February 1775 communicated to Dr. Franklin, in the presence of Dr. Fothergill and David Barclay, which as far as concerned the leading articles, was as follows:

1. The first article was approved.

2. The second agreed to so far as related to the tea act, but repayment of the duties that had been collected, was refused.

3. The third not approved, as it implied a deficiency of power in the parliament that made the acts. [180]
4. The fourth approved.

5. The fifth agreed to, but with a reserve that no change prejudicial to Britain was to be expected.

6. The sixth agreed to, so far as related to the appropriation of the duties, but the appointment of the officers and of their salaries to remain as at present.

7. The seventh relating to aids in time of war, agreed to.

8. The eighth relating to troops, was inadmissible.

9. The ninth could be agreed to with this difference, that no proportion should be observed with regard to preceding taxes, but each colony should give at pleasure.

10. The tenth agreed to as to the restitution of Castle William, but the restriction on the crown in building fortresses refused.

11. The eleventh refused absolutely, except as to the Boston port bill which would be repealed, and the Quebec act might be so far amended, as to reduce that province to its ancient limits. The other Massachusetts acts being real amendments of their constitution, must for that reason be continued, as well as to be a standing example of the power of parliament.

12. The twelfth agreed to, that the judges should be appointed during good behaviour, on the assemblies providing permanent salaries, such as the Crown should approve of.

13. The thirteenth agreed to, provided the assemblies make provision, as in the preceding article.

15. The fifteenth agreed to.

16. The sixteenth agreed to, supposing the duties paid to the colony treasuries.

17. The seventeenth inadmissible.

At this interview the conversation was shortened by Dr. Franklin’s observing, that while the parliament claimed and exercised a power of internal legislation for the colonies, and of altering American constitutions, at pleasure, there could be no agreement, as that would render the Americans unsafe in every privilege they enjoyed, [181] and would leave them nothing, in which they could be secure. It being hinted how necessary an agreement was for America, since it was so easy for Britain to burn all her seaport towns, Dr. Franklin replied,

that the chief part of his little property consisted of houses in such towns, that they might make bonfires of them whenever they pleased. That the fear of losing them would never alter his resolution of resisting to the last extremity, that claim of parliament, and that it behoved Great-Britain to take care what mischief she did to
America, for that sooner or later she would certainly be obliged to make good all
damages with interest.

On the 16th of February, 1775, the three before mentioned gentlemen met, when a
paper was produced by David Barclay entitled, “A plan which it is believed would
produce a permanent union between Great-Britain and her colonies.” This, in the
first article, proposed a repeal of the tea act, on payment being made for the tea
destroyed. Dr. Franklin agreed to the first part, but contended that all the other
Massachusetts acts should also be repealed, but this was deemed inadmissible. Dr.
Franklin declared that the people of Massachusetts would suffer all the hazards and
mischiefs of war, rather than admit the alteration of their charters and laws, by
parliament. He was for securing the unity of the empire, by recognising the sanctity of
charters, and by leaving the provinces to govern themselves, in their internal
concerns, but the British ministry could not brook the idea of relinquishing their claim
to internal legislation for the colonies, and especially to alter and amend their charters.
The first was for communicating the vital principles of liberty to the provinces, but
the latter though disposed to redress a few of their existing grievances, would by no
means consent to a repeal of the late act of parliament, for altering the chartered
government of Massachusetts, and least of all to renounce all claim to future
amendments of charters, or of internal legislation for the colonies.

Dr. Franklin laboured hard to prevent the breach from becoming irreparable, and candidly stated the outlines of a compact
which he supposed would procure a durable union of the two countries, but his well
meant endeavors proved abortive, and in the mean time he was abused as the
fomenter of those disturbances which he was anxiously endeavouring to prevent. That
the ministry might have some opening to proceed upon, and some salvo for their
personal honor, he was disposed to engage, that pecuniary compensation should be
made for the tea destroyed, but he would not give up essential liberty, for the purpose
of procuring temporary safety. Finding the ministry bent on war, unless the colonists
would hold their rights, liberties and charters at the discretion of a British
parliament, and well knowing that his countrymen would hazard every thing, rather
than consent to terms so degrading as well as inconsistent with the spirit of the British
constitution, he quitted Great-Britain in March 1775, and returned to Philadelphia. Dr.
Fothergill, his worthy coadjutor in the great business of peace, wrote to him on the
evening before he left London. “That whatever specious pretences were offered, they
were all hollow, and that to get a larger field on which to fatten a herd of worthless
parasites, was all that was intended.” With this conviction founded on personal
observations, as well as the testimony of his esteemed friend, who in the course of his
daily visits among the great, in the practice of his profession, had an opportunity of
knowing their undisguised sentiments, Dr. Franklin joined his countrymen, and
exerted his great abilities in conducting them through a war he had in vain laboured to
prevent.
CHAPTER VI

Consequences In America, Resulting From The Preceding Transactions Of Parliament; And Of The Commencement Of Hostilities.

The year 1774 terminated in America, with an expectation that a few months would bring them a redress of their grievances; but the probability of that event daily diminished. The colonists had indulged themselves in an expectation that the people of Great-Britain, from a consideration of the dangers and difficulties of a war with their colonies, would in their election have preferred those who were friends to peace and a reconciliation; but when they were convinced of the fallacy of these hopes, they turned their attention to the means of self defence. It had been the resolution of many never to submit to the operation of the late acts of parliament. Their number daily increased, and in the same proportion that Great-Britain determined to enforce, did they determine to oppose. Intelligence of the rejection of lord Chatham’s bill, of the address of both houses of parliament to the king of the 9th of February, and of the fishery bill, all arrived among the colonists, about the same time, and diminished what remained of their first hopes of a speedy accommodation. The fishery bill excited a variety of emotions. The obvious tendency of it was to starve thousands. The severity of it did not strike an Englishman, for he viewed it as a merited correction for great provincial offences; but it appeared in the blackest colours to an American, who felt no consciousness of guilt, and who fancied that heaven approved his zeal in defence of liberty. It alienated the affections of the colonists, and produced in the breasts of thousands, a hatred of Great-Britain.

The penal acts of parliament in 1774, were all levelled against Massachusetts, but the fishery bill extended to New-Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode-Island. The reasons assigned for this by lord North were, that they had aided and abetted their offending neighbours, and were so near to them that the intentions of parliament would be frustrated, unless they were in like manner comprehended in the proposed restraints. The extension of this penal statute to three additional provinces, operated powerfully in favour of union, and convinced the most moderate, of the increasing necessity for all the provinces to make a common cause of their opposition. Whatever might be the designs of parliament, their acts had a natural tendency to enlarge the demands of the Americans, and to cement their confederacy, by firm principles of union. At first they only claimed exemption from internal taxation, but by the combination of the East-India company and the British ministry, an external tax was made to answer all the purposes of a direct internal tax. They therefore in consistence with their own principles, were constrained to deny the right of taxing in any form for a supply. Nothing could more contribute to make the colonists deny the parliamentary claim of internal legislation, than the manner in which it was exercised, in depriving them of their charters, and passing an act relative
to trials, which promised indemnity to murderers. This convinced them that an opposition to so injurious a claim was essentially necessary to their security. But they still admitted the power of parliament to bind their trade. This was conceded by Congress but a few months before an act passed that they should have no foreign trade, nor be allowed to fish on their own coasts. The British ministry by their successive acts, impelled the colonists to believe, that while the Mother Country retained any authority over them, that authority would, in some shape or other, be exerted so as to answer all the purposes of a power to tax. While Great-Britain stretched that portion of controlling supremacy which the colonists were disposed to allow her, to such an extent as covered oppression equally grievous with that which they would not allow, the way was fast opening for a total renunciation of her sovereignty. The coercive measures adopted by the Parent State, produced a disposition in the colonies to extend their claims, and the extension of their claims produced an increasing disposition in Great-Britain to coerce them still more. The jealousy of liberty on one side, and the desire of supremacy on the other, were reciprocally cause and effect; and urged both parties, the one to rise in their demands, and the other to enforce submission. In the contest between Great-Britain and her colonies, there had been a fatal progression from small to greater grounds of dissention. The trifling tax of 3d per pound on tea, roused the jealous inhabitants of Boston to throw 340 chests of it into the ocean. [185] This provoked the British parliament to shut up their port, and to new model their charter. Statutes so unconstitutional and alarming, excited a combination in twelve of the colonies, to stop all trade with Great-Britain, Ireland, and the West-Indies. Their combination gave birth to the restraining acts of parliament, by which nine of the colonies were interdicted all other trade but that from which they had voluntarily excluded themselves; and four of these nine were farther devoted to famine, by being forbidden to fish on their coasts. Each new resolution on the one side, and new act on the other, reciprocally gave birth to something from the opposite party, that was more irritating or oppressive, than what had preceded.

The beginning of strife between the Parent State and her colonies, was like the letting out of waters. From inconsiderable causes love was changed into suspicion that gradually ripened into ill will, and soon ended in hostility. Prudence, policy, and reciprocal interest, urged the expediency of concession; but pride, false honour, and misconceived dignity, drew in an opposite direction. Undecided claims and doubtful rights, which under the influence of wisdom and humility might have been easily compromised, imperceptibly widened into an irreconcileable breach. Hatred at length took the place of kind affections, and the calamities of war were substituted, in lieu of the benefits of commerce.

From the year 1768, in which a military force had been stationed in Boston, there was a constant succession of insulting words, looks, and gestures. The inhabitants were exasperated against the soldiers, and they against the inhabitants. The former looked on the latter as the instruments of tyranny, and the latter on the former as seditious rioters, or fraudulent smugglers. In this irritable state, every incident however trifling, made a sensible impression. The citizens apprehended constant danger from an armed force, in whose power they were; the soldiers on the other hand, considered
themselves as in the midst of enemies, and exposed to attacks from within and from without. 

In proportion [186] as the breach between Great-Britain and her colonies widened, the distrust and animosity between the people and the army increased. From the latter end of 1774, hostile appearances daily threatened that the flames of war would be kindled from the collision of such inflammable materials. Whate’er was done by either party by way of precaution, for the purposes of self defence, was construed by the other as preparatory to an intended attack. Each disclaimed all intentions of commencing hostilities, but reciprocally manifested suspicion of the others sincerity. As far as was practicable without an open rupture, the plans of the one were respectively thwarted by the other. From every appearance it became daily more evident that arms must ultimately decide the contest. To suffer an army that was soon expected to be an enemy, quietly to fortify themselves, when the inhabitants were both able and willing to cut them off, appeared to some warm spirits the height of folly; but the prudence and moderation of others, and especially the advice and recommendation of Congress, restrained their impetuosity. It was a fortunate circumstance for the colonies that the royal army was posted in New-England. The people of that northern country have their passions more under the command of reason and interest, than in the southern latitudes, where a warmer sun excites a greater degree of irascibility. One rash offensive action against the royal forces at this early period, though successful, might have done great mischief to the cause of America. It would have lost them European friends, and weakened the disposition of the other colonies to assist them. The patient and the politic New-England men, fully sensible of their situation, submitted to many insults, and bridled their resentment. In civil wars or revolutions it is a matter of much consequence who strikes the first blow. The compassion of the world is in favour of the attacked, and the displeasure of good men on those who are the first to imbrue their hands in human blood. For the space of nine months after the arrival of general Gage, the behaviour of the people of Boston is particularly worthy of imitation, by those who wish to [187] overturn established governments. They conducted their opposition with exquisite address. They avoided every kind of outrage and violence, preserved peace and good order among themselves, successfully engaged the other colonies to make a common cause with them, and counteracted general Gage so effectually as to prevent his doing any thing for his royal master, while by patience and moderation they skreened themselves from censure. Though resolved to bear as long as prudence and policy dictated, they were all the time preparing for the last extremity. They were furnishing themselves with arms and ammunition, and training their militia.

Provisions were also collected and stored in different places, particularly at Concord, about 20 miles from Boston. General Gage, though zealous for his royal master’s interest, discovered a prevailing desire after a peaceable accommodation. He wished to prevent hostilities by depriving the inhabitants of the means necessary for carrying them on. With this view he determined to destroy the stores which he knew were collected for the support of a provincial army. Wishing to accomplish this without bloodshed, he took every precaution to effect it by surprise, and without alarming the country.
At eleven o’clock at night 800 grenadiers and light infantry, the flower of the royal army, embarked at the Common, landed at Phipps’s farm, and marched for Concord, under the command of lieutenant colonel Smith. Neither the secrecy with which this expedition was planned—the privacy with which the troops marched out, nor an order that no one inhabitant should leave Boston, were sufficient to prevent intelligence from being sent to the country militia, of what was going on. About two in the morning 130 of the Lexington militia had assembled to oppose them, but the air being chilly and intelligence respecting the regulars uncertain, they were dismissed, with orders to appear again at beat of drum. They collected a second time to the number of 70, between 4 and 5 o’clock in the morning, and the British regulars soon after made their appearance. Major Pitcairn, who led the advanced corps, rode up to them and called out, “Disperse you [188] rebels, throw down your arms and disperse.” They still continued in a body, on which he advanced nearer—discharged his pistol—and ordered his soldiers to fire. This was done with a huzza. A dispersion of the militia was the consequence, but the firing of the regulars was nevertheless continued. Individuals finding they were fired upon, though dispersing, returned the fire. Three or four of the militia were killed on the green. A few more were shot after they had begun to disperse. The royal detachment proceeded on to Concord, and executed their commission. They disabled two 24 pounders—threw 500 lb. of ball into rivers and wells, and broke in pieces about 60 barrels of flour. Mr. John Butterick of Concord, major of a minute regiment, not knowing what had passed at Lexington, ordered his men not to give the first fire, that they might not be the aggressors. Upon his approaching near the regulars, they fired, and killed captain Isaac Davis, and one private of the provincial minute men. The fire was returned, and a skirmish ensued. The king’s troops having done their business, began their retreat towards Boston. This was conducted with expedition, for the adjacent inhabitants had assembled in arms, and began to attack them in every direction. In their return to Lexington they were exceedingly annoyed, both by those who pressed on their rear, and others who pouring in from all sides, fired from behind stone walls, and such like coverts, which supplied the place of lines and redoubts. At Lexington the regulars were joined by a detachment of 900 men, under lord Piercy, which had been sent out by general Gage to support lieutenant colonel Smith. This reinforcement having two pieces of cannon awed the provincials, and kept them at a greater distance, but they continued a constant, though irregular and scattering fire, which did great execution. The close firing from behind the walls by good marksmen, put the regular troops in no small confusion, but they nevertheless kept up a brisk retreating fire on the militia and minute men. A little after sunset the regulars reached Bunkers-hill, worn down with excessive fatigue, having marched that day between thirty and forty miles. On [189] the next day they crossed Charlestown ferry, and returned to Boston.

There never were more than 400 provincials engaged at one time, and often not so many. As some tired and gave out, others came up and took their places. There was scarcely any discipline observed among them. Officers and privates fired when they were ready, and saw a royal uniform without waiting for the word of command. Their knowledge of the country enabled them to gain opportunities by crossing fields and
fences, and to act as flanking parties against the king’s troops who kept to the main road.

The regulars had 65 killed, 180 wounded, and 28 made prisoners. Of the provincials 50 were killed, and 38 wounded and missing.

As arms were to decide the controversy, it was fortunate for the Americans that the first blood was drawn in New-England. The inhabitants of that country are so connected with each other by descent, manners, religion, politics, and a general equality, that the killing of a single individual interested the whole, and made them consider it as a common cause. The blood of those who were killed at Lexington and Concord proved the firm cement of an extensive union.

To prevent the people within Boston from co-operating with their countrymen without in case of an assault which was now daily expected, General Gage agreed with a committee of the town, that upon the inhabitants lodging their arms in Faneuil-hall or any other convenient place, under the care of the selectmen, all such inhabitants as were inclined, might depart from the town, with their families and effects. In five days after the ratification of this agreement, the inhabitants had lodged 1778 fire arms, 634 pistols, 273 bayonets and 38 blunderbusses. The agreement was well observed in the beginning, but after a short time obstructions were thrown in the way of its final completion, on the plea that persons who went from Boston to bring in the goods of those who chose to continue within the town, were not properly treated. Congress remonstrated on the infraction of [190] the agreement, but without effect. The general, on a farther consideration of the consequences of moving the whigs out of Boston, evaded it in a manner not consistent with good faith. He was in some measure compelled to adopt this dishonourable measure, from the clamor of the tories, who alleged that none but enemies to the British government were disposed to remove, and that when they were all safe with their families and effects, the town would be set on fire. To prevent the provincials from obtaining supplies which they much wanted, a quibble was made on the meaning of the word effects, which was construed by the general as not including merchandize. By this construction, unwarranted by every rule of genuine interpretation, many who quitted the town were deprived of their usual resources for a support. Passports were not universally refused, but were given out very slowly, and the business was so conducted that families were divided—wives were separated from their husbands, children from their parents, and the aged and infirm from their relations and friends. The general discovered a disinclination to part with the women and children, thinking that, on their account, the provincials would be restrained from making an assault on the town. The select-men gave repeated assurances that the inhabitants had delivered up their arms, but as a cover for violating the agreement, general Gage issued a proclamation, in which he asserted that he had full proof to the contrary. A few might have secreted some favourite arms, but nearly all the training arms were delivered up. On this flimsy pretence the general sacrificed his honour, to policy and the clamors of the tories. Contrary to good faith he detained many, though fairly entitled by agreement to go out, and when he admitted the departure of others he would not allow them to remove their families and effects.
The provincial congress of Massachusetts, which was in session at the time of the Lexington battle, dispatched an account of it to Great-Britain, accompanied with many depositions, to prove that the British troops were the aggressors. They also made an address to the inhabitants [191] of Great-Britain, in which, after complaining of their sufferings, they say, “these have not yet detached us from our royal sovereign; we profess to be his loyal and dutiful subjects, and though hardly dealt with, as we have been, are still ready with our lives and fortunes, to defend his person, crown, and dignity. Nevertheless, to the persecution and tyranny of his evil ministry, we will not tamely submit. Appealing to heaven for the justice of our cause, we determine to die or be free.” From the commencement of hostilities, the dispute between Great-Britain and the colonies took a new direction.

Intelligence that the British troops had marched out of Boston into the country on some hostile purpose, being forwarded by expresses from one committee to another, great bodies of the militia, not only from Massachusetts but the adjacent colonies, grasped their arms and marched to oppose them. The colonies were in such a state of irritability, that the least shock in any part was, by a powerful and sympathetic affection, instantaneously felt throughout the whole. The Americans who fell were revered by their countrymen, as martyrs who had died in the cause of liberty. Resentment against the British burned more strongly than ever. Martial rage took possession of the breasts of thousands. Combinations were formed and associations subscribed, binding the inhabitants to one another by the sacred ties of honour, religion, and love of country, to do whatever their public bodies directed for the preservation of their liberties. Hitherto the Americans had no regular army. From principles of policy they cautiously avoided that measure, least they might subject themselves to the charge of being aggressors. All their military regulations were carried on by their militia, and under the old established laws of the land. For the defence of the colonies, the inhabitants had been, from their early years, enrolled in companies, and taught the use of arms. The laws for this purpose had never been better observed than for some months previous to the Lexington battle. These military arrangements, which had been previously adopted for defending the colonies from hostile French and Indians, [192] were on this occasion turned against the troops of the Parent State. Forts, magazines, and arsenals, by the constitution of the country, were in the keeping of his majesty. Immediately after the Lexington battle, these were for the most part taken possession of throughout the colonies, by parties of the provincial militia. Ticonderoga, in which was a small royal garrison, was surprised and taken by adventurers from different states. Public money which had been collected in consequence of previous grants, was also seized for common services. Before the commencement of hostilities these measures would have been condemned by the moderate even among the Americans, but that event justified a bolder line of opposition than had been adopted. Sundry citizens having been put to death by British troops, self preservation dictated measures which, if adopted under other circumstances, would have disunited the colonists. One of the most important of this kind was the raising an army. Men of warm tempers, whose courage exceeded their prudence, had for months urged the necessity of raising troops; but they were restrained by the more moderate, who wished that the colonies might avoid extremities, or at least that they might not lead in
bringing them on. The provincial congress of Massachusetts being in session at the
time the battle of Lexington was fought, voted that “an army of 30,000 men be
immediately raised, that 13,600 be of their own province, and that a letter and
delegate be sent to the several colonies of New-Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode
Island.” In consequence of this vote, the business of recruiting was begun, and in a
short time a provincial army was paraded in the vicinity of Boston, which though far
below what had been voted by the provincial congress, was much superior in numbers
to the royal army. The command of this force was given to general Ward.

Had the British troops confined themselves to Boston, as before
the 18th of April, the assembling an American army, though only
for the purpose of observation and defence, would have appeared in the nature of a
challenge, and would have made many less willing to support [193] the people of
Massachusetts, but after the British had commenced hostilities the same measure was
adopted without subjecting the authors of it to censure, and without giving offence or
hazarding the union. The Lexington battle not only furnished the Americans with a
justifying apology for raising an army, but inspired them with ideas of their own
prowess. Amidst the most animated declarations of sacrificing fortune, and risquing
life itself for the security of American rights, a secret sigh would frequently escape
from the breasts of her most determined friends, for fear that they could not stand
before the bravery and discipline of British troops. Hoary sages would shake their
heads and say, “Your cause is good and I wish you success, but I fear that your
undisciplined valour must be overcome, in the unequal contest. After a few thousands
of you have fallen, the provinces must ultimately bow to that power which has so
repeatedly humbled France and Spain.” So confident were the British of their
superiority in arms, that they seemed desirous that the contest might be brought to a
military decision. Some of the distinguished speakers in parliament had publicly
asserted that the natives of America had nothing of the soldier in them, and that they
were in no respect qualified to face a British army. European philosophers had
published theories, setting forth that not only vegetables and beasts, but that even men
degenerated in the western hemisphere. Departing from the spirit of true philosophy,
they overlooked the state of society in a new world, and charged a comparative
inferiority, on every production that was American. The colonists themselves had
imbibed opinions from their forefathers, that no people on earth were equal to those
with whom they were about to contend. Impressed with high ideas of British
superiority, and dissident of themselves, their best informed citizens, though willing
to run all risks, feared the consequence of an appeal to arms. The success that
attended their first military enterprize, in some degree banished these suggestions.
Perhaps in no subsequent battle did the Americans appear to greater advantage than in
their first essay at Lexington.

It is almost without parallel [194] in military history, for the
yeomanry of the country to come forward in a single disjointed
manner, without order, and for the most part without officers, and by an irregular fire
to put to flight troops equal in discipline to any in the world. In opposition to the bold
assertions, of some, and the desponding fears of others, experience proved that
Americans might effectually resist British troops. The dissident grew bold in their
country’s cause, and indulged in cheerfal hopes that heaven would finally crown their
labours with success.
Soon after the Lexington battle, and in consequence of that event, not only the arms,
ammunition, forts and fortifications in the colonies were secured for the use of the
 provincials, but regular forces were raised, and money struck for their support. These
military arrangements were not confined to the New-England states, but were general
throughout the colonies. The determination of the king and parliament to enforce
submission to their acts, and the news of the Lexington battle, came to the distant
 provinces nearly about the same time. It was supposed by many that the latter was in
consequence of the former, and that general Gage had recent orders to proceed
immediately to subdue the refractory colonists.

From a variety of circumstances the Americans had good reason to conclude that
hostilities would soon be carried on vigorously in Massachusetts, and also to
apprehend that, sooner or later, each province would be the theatre of war. “The more
speedily therefore said they, we are prepared for that event, the better chance we have
for defending ourselves.” Previous to this period, or rather to the 19th of April 1775,
the dispute had been carried on by the pen, or at most by associations and legislative
acts; but from this time forward it was conducted by the sword. The crisis was arrived
when the colonies had no alternative, but either to submit to the mercy, or to resist the
power of Great-Britain. An unconquerable love of liberty could not brook the idea of
submission, while reason more temperate in her decisions, suggested to the people
their insufficiency to make effectual opposition.

They were fully apprized of the power [195] of Britain—they knew that her fleets covered the ocean, and that her flag had
waved in triumph through the four quarters of the globe; but the animated language of
the time was, “It is better to die freemen, than to live slaves.” Though the justice of
their cause, and the inspiration of liberty gave, in the opinion of disinterested judges a
superiority to the writings of Americans, yet in the latter mode of conducting their
opposition, the candid among themselves acknowledged an inferiority. Their form of
government was deficient in that decision, dispatch, and coercion, which are
necessary to military operations.

Europeans, from their being generally unacquainted with fire arms are less easily
taught the use of them than Americans, who are from their youth familiar with these
instruments of war; yet on other accounts they are more susceptible of military habits.
The proportion of necessitous men in the new world is small to that in the old.

To procure subsistence is a powerful motive with an European to enlist, and the
prospect of losing it makes him afraid to neglect his duty; but these incitements to the
punctual discharge of military services, are wanting in America. In old countries the
distinction of ranks and the submission of inferiors to superiors, generally takes place,
but in the new world an extreme sense of liberty and equality indisposes to that
implicit obedience which is the soul of an army. The same causes which nurtured a
spirit of independence in the colonies, were hostile to their military arrangements. It
was not only from the different state of society in the two countries, but from a variety
of local causes, that the Americans were not able to contend in arms, on equal terms,
with their Parent State. From the first settlement of the British colonies, agriculture
and commerce, but especially the former, had been the favourite pursuits of their
inhabitants. War was a business abhorrent from their usual habits of life. They had
never engaged in it from their own motion, nor in any other mode than as appendages to British troops, and under British establishments. By these means the military spirit of the colonies had no opportunity of expanding itself.

At the commencement of hostilities, the British troops possessed a knowledge of the science and discipline of war, which could be acquired only by a long series of application, and substantial establishments. Their equipments, their artillery, and every other part of their apparatus for war approached perfection. To these important circumstances was added a high national spirit of pride, which had been greatly augmented by their successes in their last contest with France and Spain. On the other hand the Americans were undisciplined, without experienced officers, and without the shadow of military establishments. In the wars which had been previously carried on, in or near the colonies, the provincials had been, by their respective legislatures, frequently added to the British troops, but the pride of the latter would not consider the former, who were without uniformity of dress, or the pertness of military airs, to be their equals. The provincial troops were therefore for the most part, assigned to services which, though laborious, were not honourable.

The ignorance of British generals commanding in the woods of America, sometimes involved them in difficulties from which they had been more than once relieved by the superior local knowledge of the colonial troops. These services were soon forgotten, and the moment the troops who performed them could be spared, they were disbanded. Such like obstacles had hitherto depressed military talents in America, but they were now overcome by the ardor of the people.

In the year 1775, a martial spirit pervaded all ranks of men in the colonies. They believed their liberties to be in danger, and were generally disposed to risque their lives for their establishment. Their ignorance of the military art, prevented their weighing the chances of war with that exactness of calculation which, if indulged, might have damped their hopes. They conceived that there was little more to do than fight manfully for their country. They consoled themselves with the idea, that though their first attempt might be unsuccessful; their numbers would admit of a repetition of the experiment, till the invaders were finally exterminated.

Not considering that in modern war the longest purse decides oftener than the longest sword, they feared not the wealth of Britain. They both expected and wished that the whole dispute would be speedily settled in a few decisive engagements. Elevated with the love of liberty, and buoyed above the fear of consequences, by an ardent military enthusiasm, unabated by calculations about the extent, duration, or probable issue of the war, the people of America seconded the voice of their rulers, in an appeal to heaven for the vindication of their rights. At the time the colonies adopted these spirited resolutions, they possessed not a single ship of war, nor so much as an armed vessel of any kind. It had often been suggested that their seaport towns lay at the mercy of the navy of Great-Britain; this was both known and believed, but disregarded. The love of property was absorbed in the love of liberty. The animated votaries of the equal rights of human nature, consoled themselves with the idea that though their whole sea coast should be laid in ashes, they could retire to the western wilderness, and enjoy the luxury of being free; on this occasion it was observed in Congress by Christopher Gadsden, one
of the South-Carolina delegates, “Our houses being constructed of brick, stone, and wood, though destroyed may be rebuilt, but liberty once gone is lost forever.”

The sober discretion of the present age will more readily censure than admire, but can more easily admire than imitate the fervid zeal of the patriots of 1775, who in idea sacrificed property in the cause of liberty, with the ease that they now sacrifice almost every other consideration for the acquisition of property.

The revenues of Britain were immense, and her people were habituated to the payment of large sums in every form which contributions to government have assumed; but the American colonies possess neither money nor funds, nor were their people accustomed to taxes equal to the exigences of war. The contest having begun about taxation, to have raised money by taxes for carrying it on, would have been impolitic.

The temper of the times precluded the necessity of attempting the dangerous [198] expedient, for such was the enthusiasm of the day, that the colonists gave up both their personal services and their property to the public, on the vague promises that they should at a future time be reimbursed. Without enquiring into the solidity of funds, or the precise period of payment, the resources of the country were commanded on general assurances, that all expences of the war should ultimately be equalised. The Parent State abounded with experienced statesmen and officers, but the dependent form of government exercised in the colonies, precluded their citizens from gaining that practical knowledge which is acquired from being at the head of public departments. There were very few in the colonies who understood the business of providing for an army, and still fewer who had experience and knowledge to direct its operations. The disposition of the finances of the country, and the most effectual mode of drawing forth its resources, were subjects with which scarce any of the inhabitants were acquainted. Arms and ammunition were almost wholly deficient; and though the country abounded with the materials of which they are manufactured, yet there was neither time nor artists enough to supply an army with the means of defence. The country was destitute both of fortifications and engineers. Amidst so many discouragements there were some flattering circumstances. The war could not be carried on by Great-Britain, but to a great disadvantage, and at an immense expence. It was easy for ministers at St. James’s to plan campaigns, but hard was the fate of the officer from whom the execution of them in the woods of America was expected. The country was so extensive, and abounded so much with defiles; that by evacuating and retreating, the Americans though they could not conquer, yet might save themselves from being conquered. The authors of the acts of parliament for restraining the trade of the colonies, were most excellent recruiting officers for the Congress. They imposed a necessity on thousands to become soldiers. All other business being suspended, the whole resources of the country were applied in supporting an army.

Though [199] the colonists were without discipline, they possessed native valour. Though they had neither gold nor silver, they possessed a mine in the enthusiasm of their people. Paper for upwards of two years produced to them more solid advantages than Spain derived from her superabounding precious metals. Though they had no ships to protect their trade or their towns, they had simplicity enough to live without the former, and enthusiasm
enough to risque the latter, rather than submit to the power of Britain. They believed their cause to be just, and that heaven approved their exertions in defence of their rights. Zeal originating from such motives, supplied the place of discipline, and inspired a confidence and military ardor which overleaped all difficulties.

Resistance being resolved upon by Americans—the pulpit—the press—the bench and the bar, severally labour'd to unite and encourage them. The clergy of New-England were a numerous, learned and respectable body, who had a great ascendancy over the minds of their hearers. They connected religion and patriotism, and in their sermons and prayers, represented the cause of America as the cause of heaven. The synod of New-York and Philadelphia, also sent forth a pastoral letter, which was publicly read in their churches. This earnestly recommended such sentiments and conduct as were suitable to their situation. Writers and printers followed in the rear of the preachers, and next to them had the greatest hand in animating their countrymen. Gentlemen of the bench and of the bar denied the charge of rebellion, and justified the resistance of the colonists. A destination founded on law, between the king and his ministry, was introduced. The former, it was contended, could do no wrong. The crime of treason was charged on the latter, for using the royal name to varnish their own unconstitutional measures. The phrase of a ministerial war became common, and was used as a medium for reconciling resistance with allegiance.

Coeval with the resolutions for organizing an army, was one appointing the 20th day of July, 1775, a day of public humiliation, fasting and prayer to Almighty God, [200] [“]to bless their rightful sovereign king George, and to inspire him with wisdom to discern and pursue the true interest of his subjects; and that the British nation might be influenced to regard the things that belonged to her peace, before they were hid from her eyes—that the colonies might be ever under the care and protection of a kind providence, and be prospered in all their interests—that America might soon behold a gracious interposition of heaven, for the redress of her many grievances; the restoration of her invaded rights, a reconciliation with the Parent State, on terms constitutional and honourable to both.” The forces which had been collected in Massachusetts, were stationed in convenient places for guarding the country from farther excursions of the regulars from Boston. Breast works were also erected in different places for the same purpose. While both parties were attempting to carry off stock from the several islands with which the bay of Boston is agreeably diversified, sundry skirmishes took place. These were of real service to the Americans. They habituated them to danger, and perhaps much of the courage of old soldiers, is derived from an experimental conviction, that the chance of escaping unhurt from engagements is much greater than young recruits suppose.

About the latter end of May a great part of the reinforcements ordered from Great-Britain, arrived at Boston.

Three British generals, Howe, Burgoyne and Clinton, whose behaviour in the preceding war had gained them great reputation, also arrived about the same time. General Gage, thus reinforced, prepared for acting with more decision, but before he proceeded to extremities he conceived it due to ancient forms to issue a proclamation, holding forth to the inhabitants the alternative of peace or war.
He therefore offered pardon in the king’s name to all who should
forthwith lay down their arms, and return to their respective
occupations and peaceable duties, excepting only from the benefit of that pardon
“Samuel Adams, and John Hancock, whose offences were said to be of too flagitious
a nature to admit of any other consideration than that of condign punishment.”
He also [201] proclaimed that not only the persons above named
and excepted, but also their adherents, associates, and
correspondents, should be deemed guilty of treason and rebellion, and treated
accordingly. By this proclamation it was also declared “that as the courts of judicature
were shut, martial law should take place, till a due course of justice should be re-
established.” It was supposed that this proclamation was a prelude to hostilities, and
preparations were accordingly made by the Americans. A considerable height, by the
name of Bunkers-hill, just at the entrance of the peninsula of Charlestown, was so
situated as to make the possession of it a matter of great consequence, to either of the
contending parties.
Orders were therefore issued by the provincial commanders that
a detachment of a thousand men should intrench upon this
height. By some mistake Breed’s-hill, high and large like the other, but situated nearer
Boston, was marked out for the intrenchments, instead of Bunkers-hill. The
provincials proceeded to Breed’s-hill and worked with so much diligence, that
between midnight and the dawn of the morning, they had thrown up a small redoubt
about 8 rods square. They kept such a profound silence that they were not heard by
the British, on board their vessels, though very near. These having derived their first
information of what was going on from the sight of the work near completion, began
an incessant firing upon them. The provincials bore this with firmness, and though
they were only young soldiers continued to labour till they had thrown up a small
breastwork, extending from the east side of the redoubt to the bottom of the hill. As
this eminence overlooked Boston general Gage thought it necessary to drive the
provincials from it.
About noon therefore he detached major general Howe and brig.
general Pigot, with the flower of his army, consisting of four
battalions, ten companies of the grenadiers and ten of light infantry, with a proportion
of field artillery, to effect this business. These troops landed at Moreton’s point, and
formed after landing, but remained in that position till they were reinforced by a
second detachment of light infantry and grenadier companies, a battalion of land
forces and a battalion of marines, [202] making in the whole nearly 3000 men.
While the troops who first landed were waiting for this
reinforcement, the provincials for their farther security, pulled up
some adjoining post and rail fences, and set them down in two parallel lines at a small
distance from each other, and filled the space between with hay, which having been
lately mowed, remained on the adjacent ground.

The king’s troops formed in two lines, and advanced slowly, to give their artillery
time to demolish the American works. While the British were advancing to the attack,
they received orders to burn Charlestown. This was not done because they were fired
upon from the houses in that town, but from the military policy of depriving enemies
of a cover in their approaches. In a short time this ancient town, consisting of about
500 buildings, chiefly of wood, was in one great blaze. The lofty steeple of the
meeting house formed a pyramid of fire above the rest, and struck the astonished eyes of numerous beholders with a magnificent but awful spectacle. In Boston the heights of every kind were covered with the citizens, and such of the king’s troops as were not on duty. The hills around the adjacent country which afforded a safe and distinct view, were occupied by the inhabitants of the country.

Thousands, both within and without Boston, were anxious spectators of the bloody scene. The honour of British troops beat high in the breasts of many, while others with a keener sensibility, felt for the liberties of a great and growing country. The British moved on but slowly, which gave the provincials a better opportunity for taking aim. The latter in general reserved themselves till their adversaries were within ten or twelve rods, but then began a furious discharge of small arms. The stream of the American fire was so incessant, and did so great execution that the king’s troops retreated in disorder and precipitation. Their officers rallied them and pushed them forward with their swords, but they returned to the attack with great reluctance. The Americans again reserved their fire till their adversaries were near, and then put them a second time to flight. General Howe and the officers redoubled their exertions, and were again [203] successful, though the soldiers discovered a great aversion to going on. By this time the powder of the Americans began so far to fail that they were not able to keep up the same brisk fire as before. The British also brought some cannon to bear which raked the inside of the breast work from end to end. The fire from the ships, batteries, and field artillery was redoubled—the soldiers in the rear were goaded on by their officers. The redoubt was attacked on three sides at once. Under these circumstances a retreat from it was ordered, but the provincials delayed, and made resistance with their discharged muskets as if they had been clubs, so long that the king’s troops who easily mounted the works had half filled the redoubt before it was given up to them.

While these operations were going on at the breast work and redoubt, the British light infantry were attempting to force the left point of the former, that they might take the American line in flank. Though they exhibited the most undaunted courage, they met with an opposition which called for its greatest exertions. The provincials here, in like manner, reserved their fire till their adversaries were near, and then poured it upon the light infantry, with such an incessant stream, and in so true a direction as mowed down their ranks. The engagement was kept up on both sides with great resolution. The persevering exertions of the king’s troops could not compel the Americans to retreat, till they observed that their main body had left the hill. This, when begun, exposed them to new danger, for it could not be effected but by marching over Charlestown neck, every part of which was raked by the shot of the Glasgow man of war, and of two floating batteries. The incessant fire kept up across this neck prevented any considerable reinforcement from joining their countrymen who were engaged; but the few who fell on their retreat, over the same ground proved, that the apprehensions of those provincial officers who declined passing over to succour their companions, were without any solid foundation.

The number of Americans engaged, amounted only to 1500.
It was apprehended that the conquerors would [204] push the advantage they had gained, and march immediately to American head quarters at Cambridge, but they advanced no farther than Bunker’s-hill. There they threw up works for their own security. The provincials did the same on Prospect-hill in front of them. Both were guarding against an attack, and both were in a bad condition to receive one. The loss of the peninsula depressed the spirits of the Americans, and their great loss of men produced the same effect on the British. There have been few battles in modern wars, in which all circumstances considered, there was a greater destruction of men than in this short engagement. The loss of the British, as acknowledged by general Gage, amounted to 1054. Nineteen commissioned officers were killed, and 70 more were wounded. The battle of Quebec in 1759, which gave Great-Britain the province of Canada, was not so destructive to British officers as this affair of a slight intrenchment, the work only of a few hours. That the officers suffered so much, must be imputed to their being aimed at. None of the provincials in this engagement were riflemen, but they were all good marksmen. The whole of their previous military knowledge had been derived, from hunting, and the ordinary amusements of sportsmen. The dexterity which by long habit they had acquired in hitting beasts, birds, and marks, was fatally applied to the destruction of British officers. From their fall much confusion was expected. They were therefore particularly singled out. Most of those who were near the person of general Howe were either killed or wounded, but the general, though he greatly exposed himself, was unhurt. The light infantry and grenadiers lost three-fourths of their men. Of one company not more than five, and of another, not more than fourteen escaped. The unexpected resistance of the Americans was such as wiped away the reproaches of cowardice, which had been cast on them by their enemies in Britain. The spirited conduct of the British officers merited and obtained great applause, but the provincials were justly entitled to a large portion of the same, for having made the utmost exertions of their adversaries necessary to dislodge them [205] from lines, which were the work only of a single night.

The Americans lost five pieces of cannon. Their killed amounted to 139. Their wounded and missing to 314. Thirty of the former fell into the hands of the conquerors. They particularly regretted the death of general Warren. To the purest patriotism and most undaunted bravery, he added the virtues of domestic life, the eloquence of an accomplished orator, and the wisdom of an able statesman. Nothing but a regard to the liberty of his country induced him to oppose the measures of government. He aimed not at a separation from, but a coalition with the Mother Country. He took an active part in defence of his country, not that he might be applauded and rewarded for a patriotic spirit, but because he was, in the best sense of the word, a real patriot. Having no interested or personal views to answer the friends of liberty, confided in his integrity. The soundness of his judgment, and his abilities as a public speaker, enabled him to make a distinguished figure in public councils, but his intrepidity and active zeal, induced his countrymen to place him in the military line. Within four days after he was appointed a major general, he fell a noble sacrifice to a cause which he had espoused from the purest principles. Like Hambden he lived and like Hambden he died, universally beloved and universally regretted. His many virtues were celebrated in an elegant eulogium written by Dr. Rush, in language equal
to the illustrious subject. The burning of Charlestown, though a place of great trade did not discourage the provincials. It excited resentment and execration, but not any disposition to submit. Such was the high toned state of the public mind, and so great the indifference for property when put in competition with liberty, that military conflagrations, though they distressed and impoverished, had no tendency to subdue the colonists. They might answer in the old world, but were not calculated for the new, where the war was undertaken, not for a change of masters, but for securing essential rights. The action at Breed’s-hill, or Bunker’s-hill, as it has been commonly called, produced many and very important consequences. It taught the British so much respect for Americans intrenched behind works, that their subsequent operations were retarded with a caution that wasted away a whole campaign, to very little purpose. It added to the confidence the Americans began to have in their own abilities, but inferences, very injurious to the future interests of America, were drawn from the good conduct of the new troops on that memorable day. It inspired some of the leading members of Congress, with such high ideas of what might be done by militia, or men engaged for a short term of enlistment, that it was long before they assented to the establishment of a permanent army. Not distinguishing the continued exertions of an army through a series of years, from the gallant efforts of the yeomanry of the country, led directly to action, they were slow in admitting the necessity of permanent troops. They conceived the country might be defended by the occasional exertions of her sons, without the expence and danger of an army engaged for the war. In the progress of hostilities, as will appear in the sequel, the militia lost much of their first ardor, while leading men in the councils of America, trusting to its continuance, neglected the proper time of recruiting for a series of years. From the want of perseverance in the militia, and the want of a disciplined standing army, the cause for which arms were at first taken up, was more than once brought to the brink of destruction.
CHAPTER VII

The Second Congress Meets And Organises A Regular Continental Army—Makes Sundry Public Addresses, And Petitions The King, &C. Transactions In Massachusetts.

It has already been mentioned, that Congress previous to its dissolution, on the 26th of October, 1774, recommended to the colonies, to chuse members for another to meet on the tenth of May 1775, unless the redress of their grievances was previously obtained. A circular letter had been addressed by lord Dartmouth, to the several colonial governors, requesting their interference to prevent the meeting of this second Congress: but ministerial requisitions had lost their influence, delegates were elected not only for the twelve colonies that were before represented, but also for the parish of St. John’s in Georgia, and in July following, for the whole province. The time of the meeting of this second Congress was fixed at so distant a day, that an opportunity might be afforded for obtaining information of the plans adopted by the British parliament in the winter of 1774, 1775. Had these been favourable, the delegates would either not have met, or dispersed after a short session, but as the resolution was then fixed to compel the submission of the colonies, and hostilities had already commenced, the meeting of Congress on the tenth of May, which was at first eventual, became fixed.

On their meeting, they chose Peyton Randolph for their President, and Charles Thomson for their secretary. On the next day Mr. Hancock laid before them a variety of depositions, proving that the king’s troops were the aggressors in the late battle at Lexington, together with sundry papers relative to the great events which had lately taken place in Massachusetts: Whereupon Congress resolved itself into a committee of the whole, to take into consideration the state of America. They proceeded in the same line of moderation and firmness, which marked the acts of their predecessors in the past year.

The city and county of New-York having applied to Congress for advice, how they should conduct themselves with regard to the troops expected to land there, they were advised “to act on the defensive so long as might be consistent with their safety—to permit the troops to remain in the barracks, so long as they behaved peaceably, but not to suffer fortifications to be erected, or any steps to be taken for cutting off the communication between the town and country.” Congress also resolved, “That exportation to all parts of British America, which had not adopted their association, should immediately cease;” and that, “no provision of any kind, or other necessaries be furnished to the British fisheries on the American coasts.” And that no bill of exchange, draught, or order, of any officer in the British army or navy, their agents or contractors, be received or
negociated, or any money supplied them, by any person in America—that no provisions or necessaries of any kind, be furnished or supplied, to or for the use of the British army or navy, in the colony of Massachusetts Bay—that no vessel employed in transporting British troops to America, or from one part of North-America to another, or warlike stores or provisions for said troops, be freighted or furnished with provisions or any necessaries.

These resolutions may be considered as the counterpart of the British acts for restraining the commerce, and prohibiting the fisheries of the colonies. They were calculated to bring distress on the British islands in the West-Indies, whose chief dependence for subsistence, was on the importation of provision from the American continent. They also occasioned new difficulties in the support of the British army and fisheries. The colonists were so much indebted to Great-Britain, that government bills for the most part found among them a ready market. A war in the colonies was therefore made subservient to commerce, by increasing the sources of remittance. This enabled the Mother Country, in a great degree, to supply her troops without shipping money out of the kingdom. From the operation of these resolutions, advantages of this nature were not only cut off, but the supply of the British army rendered both precarious and expensive. In consequence of the interdiction of the American fisheries, great profits were expected by British adventurers in that line. Such frequently found it most convenient to obtain supplies in America for carrying on their fisheries; but as Great-Britain had deprived the colonists of all benefits from that quarter, they now in their turn, interdicted all supplies from being furnished to British fishermen. To obviate this unexpected embarrassment, several of the vessels employed in this business, were obliged to return home, to bring out provisions for their associates. These restrictive resolutions, were not so much the effect of resentment as of policy.

The colonists conceived, that [209] by distressing the British commerce, they would encrease the number of those who would interest themselves in their behalf.

The new Congress had convened but a few days when their venerable president Peyton Randolph, was under a necessity of returning home. On his departure John Hancock was unanimously chosen his successor. The objects of deliberation presented to this new Congress were, if possible, more important than those which in the preceding year, had engaged the attention of their predecessors. The colonists had now experienced the inefficacy of those measures, from which relief had been formerly obtained. They found a new parliament disposed to run all risques in enforcing their submission. They also understood that administration was united against them, and its members firmly established in their places. Hostilities were commenced. Reinforcements had arrived, and more were daily expected. Added to this, they had information that their adversaries had taken measures to secure the friendship and co-operation of the Indians; and also of the Canadians.

The coercion of the colonies being resolved upon, and their conquest supposed to be inevitable, the British ministry judged that it would be for the interest of both countries to proceed in that vigorous course, which bid fairest for the speediest
attainment of their object. They hoped by pressing the colonists on all quarters, to intimidate opposition, and ultimately to lessen the effusion of human blood.

In this awful crisis Congress had but a choice of difficulties. The New-England states had already organized an army and blockaded general Gage. To desert them would have been contrary to plighted faith and to sound policy. To support them would make the war general, and involve all the provinces in one general promiscuous state of hostility. The resolution of the people in favour of the latter was fixed, and only wanted public sanction for its operation.

Congress therefore resolved, “that for the express purpose of defending and securing the colonies, and preserving them in safety, against [210] all attempts to carry the late acts of a parliament into execution, by force of arms, they be immediately put in a state of defence; but as they wished for a restoration of the harmony formerly subsisting between the Mother Country and the colonies, to the promotion of this most desirable reconciliation, an humble and dutiful petition be presented to his majesty.” To resist and to petition were coeval resolutions. As freemen they could not tamely submit, but as loyal subjects, wishing for peace as far as was compatible with their rights, they once more, in the character of petitioners, humbly stated their grievances to the common father of the empire. To dissuade the Canadians from co-operating with the British, they again addressed them, representing the pernicious tendency of the Quebec act, and apologizing for their taking Ticonderoga and Crown-Point, as measures which were dictated by the great law of self preservation. About the same time Congress took measures for warding off the danger that threatened their frontier inhabitants from Indians. Commissioners to treat with them were appointed, and a supply of goods for their use was ordered. A talk was also prepared by Congress, and transmitted to them, in which the controversy between Great-Britain and her colonies was explained, in a familiar Indian style. They were told that they had no concern in the family quarrel, and were urged by the ties of ancient friendship and a common birth place, to remain at home, keep their hatchet buried deep, and to join neither side.

The novel situation of Massachusetts made it necessary for the ruling powers of that province to ask the advice of Congress on a very interesting subject, “The taking up and exercising the powers of civil government.” For many months they had been kept together in tolerable peace and order by the force of ancient habits, under the simple style of recommendation and advice from popular bodies, invested with no legislative authority. But as war now raged in their borders, and a numerous army was actually raised, some more efficient form of government became necessary.

At this early day it neither [211] comported with the wishes nor the designs of the colonists to erect forms of government independent of Great-Britain, Congress therefore recommended only such regulations as were immediately necessary, and these were conformed as near as possible to the spirit and substance of the charter, and were only to last till a governor of his majesty’s appointment would consent to govern the colony according to its charter.

On the same principles of necessity, another assumption of new powers became unavoidable. The great intercourse that daily took place throughout the colonies,
pointed out the propriety of establishing a general post-office. This was accordingly
done, and Dr. Franklin, who had by royal authority been dismissed from a similar
employment about three years before, was appointed by his country, the head of the
new department.

While Congress was making arrangements for their proposed continental army, it was
thought expedient once more to address the inhabitants of Great-Britain, and to
publish to the world a declaration setting forth their reasons for taking up arms—to
address the speaker and gentlemen of the assembly of Jamaica, and the inhabitants of
Ireland, and also to prefer a second humble petition to the king. In their address to the
inhabitants of Great-Britain, they again vindicated themselves from the charge of
aiming at independency, professed their willingness to submit to the several acts of
trade and navigation which were passed before the year 1763, recapitulated their
reasons for rejecting lord North’s conciliatory motion—stated the hardships they
suffered from the operations of the royal army in Boston, and insinuated the danger
the inhabitants of Britain would be in of losing their freedom, in case their American
brethren were subdued.

In their declaration, setting forth the causes and necessity of their taking up arms, they
enumerated the injuries they had received, and the methods taken by the British
ministry to compel their submission, and then said,

“We are reduced to the alternative of choosing an unconditional

submission to the tyranny of irritated ministers, or [212]

resistance by force. The latter is our choice. We have counted the cost of this contest,

and find nothing so dreadful as voluntary slavery.” They asserted “that foreign
assistance was undoubtedly attainable.” This was not founded on any private
information, but was an opinion derived from their knowledge of the principles of
policy, by which states usually regulate their conduct towards each other.

In their address to the speaker and gentlemen of the assembly of Jamaica, they dilated
on the arbitrary systems of the British ministry, and informed them that in order to
obtain a redress of their grievances, they had appealed to the justice, humanity, and
interest of Great-Britain. They stated, that to make their schemes of non-importation
and non-exportation produce the desired effects, they were obliged to extend them to
the islands. “From that necessity, and from that alone, said they, our conduct has
proceeded.” They concluded with saying, “the peculiar situation of your island forbids
your assistance, but we have your good wishes—from the good wishes of the friends
of liberty and mankind we shall always derive consolation.”

In their address to the people of Ireland they recapitulated their grievances, stated
their humble petitions, and the neglect with which they had been treated. “In defence
of our persons and properties under actual violations, said they, we have taken up
arms. When that violence shall be removed, and hostilities cease on the part of the
aggressors, they shall cease on our part also.”

These several addresses were executed in a masterly manner, and were well
calculated to make friends to the colonies. But their petition to the king, which was
drawn up at the same time, produced more solid advantages in favour of the American
cause, than any other of their productions. This was in a great measure carried through Congress by Mr. Dickinson. Several members, judging from the violence with which parliament proceeded against the colonies, were of opinion that farther petitions were nugatory; but this worthy citizen, a friend to both countries, and devoted to a reconciliation on [213] constitutional principles, urged the expediency and policy of trying once more the effect of an humble, decent, and firm petition, to the common head of the empire. The high opinion that was conceived of his patriotism and abilities, induced the members to assent to the measure, though they generally conceived it to be labour lost. The petition agreed upon was the work of Mr. Dickinson’s pen. In this, among other things, it was stated, that notwithstanding their sufferings, they had retained too high a regard for the kingdom from which they derived their origin, to request such a reconciliation as might in any manner be inconsistent with her dignity and welfare. Attached to his majesty’s person, family, and government, with all the devotion that principle and affection can inspire, connected with Great-Britain by the strongest ties that can unite society, and deploiring every event that tended in any degree to weaken them, they not only most fervently desired the former harmony between her and the colonies to be restored, but that a concord might be established between them, upon so firm a basis as to perpetuate its blessings, uninterrupted by any future dissentions, to succeeding generations, in both countries. They therefore beseeched that his majesty would be pleased to direct some mode by which the united applications of his faithful colonists to the throne, in pursuance of their common councils, might be improved into a happy and permanent reconciliation.

By this last clause Congress meant that the Mother Country should propose a plan for establishing by compact, something like Magna Charta for the colonies. They did not aim at a total exemption from the control of parliament, nor were they unwilling to contribute in their own way, to the expences of government; but they feared the horrors of war less than submission to unlimited parliamentary supremacy. They wished for an amicable compact, in which doubtful, undefined points, should be ascertained so as to secure that proportion of authority and liberty which would be for the general good of the whole empire. They fancied themselves in the condition of the barons at Runnymede; but with this difference, that in [214] addition to opposing the king, they had also to oppose the parliament. This difference was more nominal than real, for in the latter case the king and parliament stood precisely in the same relation to the people of America, which subsisted in the former between the king and people of England. In both, popular leaders were contending with the sovereign for the privileges of subjects. This well meant petition was presented on September 1st, 1775, by Mr. Penn and Mr. Lee, and on the 4th lord Dartmouth informed them, “that to it no answer would be given.” This slight contributed not a little to the union and perseverance of the colonists. When pressed by the calamities of war, a doubt would sometimes arise in the minds of scrupulous persons, that they had been too hasty in their opposition to their protecting Parent State. To such it was usual to present the second petition of Congress to the king, observing thereon, that all the blood and all the guilt of the war, must be charged on British, and not on American counsels.
Though the colonists were accused in a speech from the throne, as meaning only, “to amuse by vague expressions of attachment to the Parent State, and the strongest protestations of loyalty to their king, while they were preparing for a general revolt, and that their rebellious war was manifestly carried on for the purpose of establishing an independent empire.” Yet at that time, and for months after, a redress of grievances was their ultimate aim. Conscious of this intention, and assenting in the sincerity of their souls to the submissive language of their petition, they illy brooked the contempt with which their joint supplication was treated, and still worse, that they should be charged from the throne with studied duplicity. Nothing contributes more to the success of revolutions than moderation. Intemperate zealots overshoot themselves, and soon spend their force, while the calm and dispassionate persevere to the end. The bulk of the people in civil commotions are influenced to a choice of sides, by the general complexion of the measures adopted by the respective parties. When these appear to be dictated by justice and prudence, and to be uninfluenced by passion, ambition or avarice, they are disposed to favour them. Such was the effect of this second petition, through a long and trying war, in which men of serious reflection were often called upon to examine the rectitude of their conduct.

Though the refusal of an answer to this renewed application of Congress to the king, was censured by numbers in Great-Britain, as well as in the colonies, yet the partisans of ministry varnished the measure as proper and expedient. They contended that the petition, as it contained no offers of submission, was unavailing, as a ground work of negociation. Nothing was farther from the thoughts of Congress than such concessions as were expected in Great-Britain. They conceived themselves to be more sinned against than sinning. They claimed a redress of grievances as a matter of right, but were persuaded that concessions for this purpose were acts of justice and not of humiliation, and therefore could not be disgraceful to those by whom they were made. To prevent future altercations they wished for an amicable compact to ascertain the extent of parliamentary supremacy. The Mother Country wished for absolute submission to her authority, the colonists for a repeal of every act that imposed taxes, or that interfered in their internal legislation. The ministry of England being determined not to repeal these acts, and the Congress equally determined not to submit to them, the claims of the two countries were so wide of each other as to afford no reasonable ground to expect a compromise. It was therefore concluded, that any notice taken of the petition would only afford an opportunity for the colonies to prepare themselves for the last extremity.

A military opposition to the armies of Great-Britain being resolved upon by the colonies, it became an object of consequence to fix on a proper person to conduct that opposition. Many of the colonists had titles of high rank in the militia, and several had seen something of real service, in the late war between France and England; but there was no individual of such superior military experience as to entitle him to a decided pre-eminence, or even to qualify him, on that ground, to contend on equal terms with the British masters of the art of war. In elevating one man, by the free voice of an invaded country, to the command of thousands of his equal fellow citizens, no consideration was regarded but the interest
of the community. To bind the uninvaded provinces more closely to the common cause, policy directed the views of Congress to the south.

Among the southern colonies Virginia, for numbers, wealth, and influence, stood pre-eminent. To attach so respectable a colony to the aid of Massachusetts, by selecting a commander in chief from that quarter, was not less warranted by the great military genius of one of her distinguished citizens, than dictated by sound policy. George Washington was, by an unanimous vote appointed, commander in chief of all the forces raised, or to be raised, for the defence of the colonies. It was a fortunate circumstance attending his election, that it was accompanied with no competition, and followed by no envy. That same general impulse on the public mind, which led the colonists to agree in many other particulars, pointed to as the most proper person for presiding over the military arrangements of America. Not only Congress but the inhabitants in the east and the west, in the north and, the south, as well before as at the time of embodying a continental army were in a great degree unanimous in his favour. An attempt to draw the character of this truly great man would look like flattery. Posterity will doubtless do it justice. His actions, especially now, while fresh in remembrance, are his ampest panegyric. Suffice it, in his life time, only to particularise those qualities, which being more common, may be mentioned without offending the delicate sensibility of the most modest of men.

General Washington was born on the 11th of February 1732. His education was such as favoured the production of a solid mind and a vigorous body. Mountain air, abundant exercise in the open country—the wholesome toils of the chase, and the delightful scenes of rural life, expanded his limbs to an unusual but graceful and well proportioned size. His youth was spent in the acquisition of useful knowledge, and pursuits, tending to the improvement of his fortune, or the benefit of his country. Fitted more for active, than for speculative life, he devoted the greater proportion of his time to the latter, but this was amply compensated by his being frequently in such situations, as called forth the powers of his mind, and strengthened them by repeated exercise. Early in life, in obedience to his country’s call, he entered the military line, and began his career of fame in opposing that power in concert with whose troops, he acquired his last and most distinguished honours. He was with general Braddock in 1755, when that unfortunate officer from an excess of bravery, chose rather to sacrifice his army than retreat from an unseen foe. The remains of that unfortunate corpse were brought off the field of battle chiefly by the address and good conduct of colonel Washington. After the peace of Paris 1763, he retired to his estate, and with great industry and success pursued the arts of peaceful life. When the proceedings of the British parliament alarmed the colonists with apprehensions that a blow was levelled at their liberties, he again came forward into public view, and was appointed a delegate to the Congress, which met in September 1774. Possessed of a large proportion of common sense directed by a sound judgment, he was better fitted for the exalted station to which he was called, than many others who to a greater brilliancy of parts frequently add the eccentricity of original genius. Engaged in the busy scenes of life, he knew human nature, and the most proper method of accomplishing proposed objects. His passions were subdued and kept in subjection to reason. His soul superior to party spirit, to prejudice and illiberal views,
moved according to the impulses it received from an honest heart, a good understanding, common sense, and a sound judgment. He was habituated to view things on every side, to consider them in all relations, and to trace the possible and probable consequences of proposed measures. Much addicted to close thinking, his mind was constantly employed. By frequent exercise, his understanding and judgment expanded so as to be able to discern truth, and to know what was proper to be done in the most difficult conjunctures.

Soon after general Washington was appointed commander in chief of the American army. Four major generals, one adjutant general, with the rank of a brigadier, and eight brigadiers general were appointed in subordination to him which were as follows.

1st. Major General Artemas Ward
2d. Charles Lee
3d. Philip Schuyler
4th. Israel Putnam
Adjutant General Horatio Gates

The 8 Brigadiers were

1st. Seth Pomeroy
2d. Richard Montgomery
3d. David Wooster
4th. William Heath
5th. Joseph Spencer
6th. John Thomas
7th. John Sullivan
8th. Nathaniel Greene

General Washington replied to the president of Congress, announcing his appointment in the following words.

Mr. President,

Though I am truly sensible of the high honour done me in this appointment, yet, I feel great distress from a consciousness, that my abilities and military experience may not be equal to the extensive and important trust: however as the Congress desire it, I will enter upon the momentous duty, and exert every power I possess in their service, and for support of the glorious cause. I beg they will accept my most cordial thanks for this distinguished testimony of their approbation.

But, lest some unlucky event should happen unfavourable to my reputation, I beg it may be remembered by every gentleman in the room, that I this day declare with the utmost sincerity, I do not think myself equal to the command I am honoured with.
As to pay sir, I beg leave to assure the Congress, that as no pecuniary consideration could have tempted me to accept this arduous employment, at the expense of my domestic ease and happiness, I do not wish to make any profit from it. I will keep an exact account of my expenses. Those I doubt not they will discharge, and that is all I desire.

A special commission was drawn up and presented to him, and at the same time an unanimous resolution was adopted by Congress, “That they would maintain and assist him, and adhere to him with their lives and fortunes in the cause of American liberty.” Instructions were also given him for his government, by which after reciting various particulars he was directed, “to destroy or make prisoners of all persons who now are, or who hereafter shall appear in arms against the good people of the colonies;” but the whole was summed up in authorizing him “to order and dispose of the army under his command as might be most advantageous for obtaining the end for which it had been raised, making it his special care in discharge of the great trust committed to him, that the liberties of America received no detriment.”

About the same time twelve companies of riflemen were ordered to be raised in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. The men to the amount of 1430 were procured and forwarded with great expedition. They had to march from 4 to 700 miles, and yet the whole business was completed and they joined the American army at Cambridge, in less than two months from the day on which the first resolution for raising them was agreed to.

Coeval with the resolution for raising an army, was another for emitting a sum not exceeding two millions of Spanish milled dollars in bills of credit for the defence of America, and the colonies were pledged for the redemption of them. This sum was increased from time to time by farther emissions. The colonies having neither money nor revenues at their command, were forced to adopt this expedient, the only one which was in their power for supporting an army.

No one delegate [220] opposed the measure. So great had been the credit of the former emissions of paper in the greater part of the colonies, that very few at that time foresaw or apprehended the consequences of unfunded paper emissions, but had all the consequences which resulted from this measure in the course of the war been foreseen, it must notwithstanding have been adopted, for it was a less evil, that there should be a general wreck of property, than that the essential rights and liberties of a growing country should be lost. A happy ignorance of future events combined with the ardor of the times, prevented many reflections on this subject, and gave credit and circulation to these bills of credit.

General Washington soon after his appointment to the command of the American army set out for the camp at Cambridge. On his way thither, he received an address from the provincial congress of New-York, in which they expressed their joy at his appointment. They also said, “we have the fullest assurances that whenever this important contest shall be decided by that fondest wish of each American soul, an accommodation with our Mother Country, you will cheerfully resign the important
deposit committed into your hands, and re-assume the character of our worthiest citizen.["] The general after declaring his gratitude for the regard shewn him, added,

Be assured that every exertion of my worthy colleagues and myself, will be extended to the re-establishment of peace and harmony between the Mother Country and these colonies. As to the fatal but necessary operations of war, when we assumed the soldier, we did not lay aside the citizen, and we shall most sincerely rejoice with you in that happy hour, when the re-establishment of American liberty, on the most firm and solid foundations shall enable us to return to our private stations, in the bosom of a free, peaceful, and happy country.

The general on his way to camp was treated with the highest honours in every place through which he passed. Large detachments of volunteers composed of private gentlemen turned out to escort him. A committee from the Massachusetts Congress received him about 100 miles [221] from Boston, and conducted him to the army. He was soon after addressed by the Congress of that colony in the most affectionate manner, in his answer he said,

Gentlemen, your kind congratulations on my appointment and arrival, demand my warmest acknowledgements, and will ever be retained in grateful remembrance. In exchanging the enjoyments of domestic life for the duties of my present honourable but arduous station, I only emulate the virtue and public spirit of the whole province of Massachusetts, which, with a firmness and patriotism without example, has sacrificed all the comforts of social and political life, in support of the rights of mankind and the welfare of our common country. My highest ambition is to be the happy instrument of vindicating these rights, and to see this devoted province again restored to peace, liberty and safety.

When general Washington arrived at Cambridge, he was received with the joyful acclamations of the American army. At the head of his troops he published a declaration, previously drawn up by Congress, in the nature of a manifesto, setting forth the reasons for taking up arms. In this, after enumerating various grievances of the colonies, and vindicating them from a premeditated design of establishing independent states, it was added,

In our own native land, in defence of the freedom which is our birthright, and which we ever enjoyed till the late violation of it—for the protection of our property, acquired solely by the industry of our forefathers and ourselves, against violence actually offered, we have taken up arms, we shall lay them down when hostilities shall cease on the part of the aggressors, and all danger of their being renewed shall be removed, and not before.

When general Washington joined the American army, he found the British intrenched on Bunker’s-hill, having also three floating batteries in Mystic river, and a twenty gun ship below the ferry, between Boston and Charlestown. They had also a battery on Copse’s hill, and were strongly fortified on the neck.
The Americans were intrenched at Winter-hill, Prospect-hill, and Roxbury, communicating with one another by small posts, over a distance of ten miles. There were also parties stationed in several towns along the sea coast. They had neither engineers to plan suitable works, nor sufficient tools for their erection.

In the American camp was collected a large body of men, but without those conveniencies which ancient establishments have introduced for the comfort of regular armies. Instead of tents, sails now rendered useless by the obstructions of commerce, were applied for their covering; but even of them, there was not a sufficiency. The American soldiers having joined the camp in all that variety of clothing which they used in their daily labour, were without uniformity of dress. To abolish provincial distinctions, the hunting shirt was introduced. They were also without those heads of departments in the line of commissaries or quarter masters, which are necessary for the regular and economical supply of armies. The troops from Connecticut had proper officers appointed to procure them supplies, but they who came from the other colonies were not so well furnished. Individuals brought to camp their own provisions on their own horses. In some parts committees of supplies were appointed, who purchased necessaries at public expence, sent them on to camp, and distributed them to such as were in want, without any regularity or system; the country afforded provisions, and nothing more was wanting to supply the army than proper systems for their collection and distribution. Other articles, though equally necessary, were almost wholly deficient, and could not be procured but with difficulty. On the 4th of August the whole stock of powder in the American camp, and in the public magazines of the four New-England provinces, would make but little more than nine rounds a man. The continental army remained in this destitute condition for a fortnight or more. This was generally known among themselves, and was also communicated to the British, by a deserter, but they suspecting a plot would not believe it. A supply of a few tons was sent on to them from the committee of Elizabeth-town, but this was done privately, lest the adjacent inhabitants, who were equally destitute should stop it for their own use.

The public rulers in Massachusetts issued a recommendation to the inhabitants, not to fire a gun at beast, bird or mark, in order that they might husband their little stock for the more necessary purpose of shooting men. A supply of several thousand pounds weight of powder, was soon after obtained from Africa in exchange for New-England rum. This was managed with so much address, that every ounce for sale in the British forts on the African coasts, was purchased up and brought off for the use of the Americans.

Embarrassments from various quarters occurred in the formation of a continental army. The appointment of general officers made by Congress, was not satisfactory. Enterprising leaders had come forward with their followers on the commencement of hostilities, without scrupulous attention to rank. When these were all blended together, it was impossible to assign to every officer the station which his services merited, or his vanity demanded. Materials for a good army were collected. The husbandmen who flew to arms were active, zealous, and of unquestionable courage, but to introduce discipline and subordination, among free men who were habituated to think for themselves, was an arduous labour.
The want of system and of union, under proper heads, pervaded every department. From the circumstance that the persons employed in providing necessaries for the army were unconnected with each other, much waste and unnecessary delays were occasioned. The troops of the different colonies came into service under variant establishments—some were enlisted with the express condition of choosing their officers. The rations promised by the local legislatures varied both as to quantity, quality and price. To form one uniform mass of these discordant materials, and to subject the licentiousness of independent freemen to the control of military discipline, was a delicate and difficult business.

The continental army put under the command of general Washington, amounted to about 14,500 men. These had been so judiciously stationed round Boston, as to confine the British to the town, and to exclude them from the forage and provisions which the adjacent country and islands in Boston-bay afforded. This force was thrown into three grand divisions. General Ward commanded the right wing at Roxbury. General Lee the left at Prospect-hill, and the centre was commanded by general Washington. In arranging the army, the military skill of adjutant-general Gates was of great service. Method and punctuality were introduced. The officers and privates were taught to know their respective places, and to have the mechanism and movements as well as the name of an army.

When some effectual pains had been taken to discipline the army, it was found that the term for which enlistments had taken place, was on the point of expiring. The troops from Connecticut and Rhode-Island were only engaged till the 1st day of December 1775, and no part of the army longer than the first day of January 1776. Such mistaken apprehensions respecting the future conduct of Great-Britain prevailed, that many thought the assumption of a determined spirit of resistance would lead to a redress of all their grievances.

Towards the close of the year, general Gage sailed for England, and the command devolved on general Howe.

The Massachusetts assembly and continental Congress both resolved, to fit out armed vessels to cruise on the American coast, for the purpose of interrupting warlike stores and supplies designed for the use of the British army. The object was at first limited, but as the prospect of accommodation vanished, it was extended to all British property afloat on the high seas. The Americans were difflent of their ability to do any thing on water in opposition to the greatest naval power in the world, but from a combination of circumstances, their first attempts were successful.

The Lee privateer, captain Manly, took the brig Nancy, an ordnance ship from Woolwich, containing a large brass mortar, several pieces of brass cannon, a large quantity of arms and ammunition, with all manner of tools, [225] utensils and machines, necessary for camps and artillery. Had Congress sent an order for supplies, they could not have made
out a list of articles more suitable to their situation, than what was thus providentially
thrown into their hands.

In about 9 days after three ships, with various stores for the
British army, and a brig from Antigua with rum, were taken by
capt. Manly. Before five days more had elapsed, several other store ships were
captured. By these means the distresses of the British troops, in Boston, were
increased, and supplies for the continental army were procured. Naval captures, being
unexpected, were matter of triumph to the Americans, and of surprize to the British.
The latter scarcely believed that the former would oppose them by land with a regular
army, but never suspected that a people, so unfurnished as they were with many
things necessary for arming vessels, would presume to attempt any thing on water. A
spirit of enterprize, invigorated by patriotic zeal, prompted the hardy New
Englandmen to undertake the hazardous business, and their success encouraged them
to proceed.

Before the close of the year, Congress determined to build 5
vessels of 32 guns, 5 of 28, and 3 of 24. While the Americans
were fitting out armed vessels, and before they had made any captures, an event took
place which would have disposed a less determined people to desist from provoking
the vengeance of the British navy. This was the burning of Falmouth in the northern
parts of Massachusetts.

Captain Mowat, in the Canceaux of sixteen guns, destroyed 139
houses and 278 stores, and other buildings in that town.

This spread an alarm on the coast, but produced no disposition to submit, many
moved from the sea ports with their families and effects, but no solicitations were
preferred for the obtaining of British protection.

In a few days after the burning of Falmouth, the old south meeting house in Boston,
was taken into possession by the British, and destined for a riding school, and the
service of the light dragoons. These proceedings produced, in the minds of the
colonists, a more determined spirit of resistance, and a more general aversion to
Great-Britain.
CHAPTER VIII

Ticonderoga Taken, And Canada Invaded.

It early occurred to many, that if the sword decided the controversy between Great-Britain and her colonies, the possession of Ticonderoga would be essential to the security of the latter. Situated on a promontory, formed at the junction of the waters of lake George and lake Champlain, it is the key of all communication between New-York and Canada. Messrs. Deane, Wooster, Parsons, Stevens, and others of Connecticut, planned a scheme for obtaining possession of this valuable post. Having procured a loan of 1800 dollars of public money, and provided a sufficient quantity of powder and ball, they set off for Bennington, to obtain the co-operation of colonel Allen of that place. Two hundred and seventy men, mostly of that brave and hardy people, who are called green mountain boys, were speedily collected at Castleton, which was fixed on as the place of rendezvous. At this place colonel Arnold, who, though attended only with a servant, was prosecuting the same object, unexpectedly joined them. He had been early chosen a captain of a volunteer company, by the inhabitants of New-Haven, among whom he resided. As soon as he received news of the Lexington battle, he marched off with his company for the vicinity of Boston, and arrived there, though 150 miles distant, in a few days. Immediately after his arrival he waited on the Massachusetts committee of safety, and informed them, that there were at Ticonderoga many pieces of cannon and a great quantity of valuable stores, and that the fort was in a ruinous condition, and garrisoned only by about 40 men. They appointed him a colonel, and commissioned him to raise 400 men, and to take Ticonderoga. The leaders of the party which had previously rendezvoused at Castleton, admitted colonel Arnold to join them, and it was agreed that colonel Allen should be the commander in chief of the expedition, and that colonel Arnold should be his assistant. They proceeded without delay, and arrived in the night at lake Champlain, opposite to Ticonderoga. [227] Allen and Arnold crossed over with 83 men, and landed near the garrison. They contended who should go in first, but it was at last agreed that they should both go in together. They advanced abreast, and entered the fort at the dawning of day. A sentry snapped his piece at one of them, and then retreated through the covered way to the parade. The Americans followed and immediately drew up. The commander surprised in his bed, was called upon to surrender the fort. He asked, by what authority? Colonel Allen replied, “I demand it in the name of the great Jehovah, and the Continental Congress.” No resistance was made, and the fort with its valuable stores, and forty-eight prisoners, fell into the hands of the Americans. The boats had been sent back for the remainder of the men, but the business was done before they got over. Colonel Seth Warner was sent off with a party to take possession of Crown-point, where a serjeant and 12 men performed garrison duty. This was speedily effected. The next object, calling for the
attention of the Americans, was to obtain the command of lake Champlain, but to accomplish this, it was necessary for them to get possession of a sloop of war, lying at St. John’s, at the northern extremity of the lake. With the view of capturing this sloop it was agreed to man and arm a schooner lying at South Bay, and that Arnold should command her, and that Allen should command some batteaux on the same expedition. A favourable wind carried the schooner a-head of the batteaux, and colonel Arnold got immediate possession of the sloop by surprise. The wind again favouring him, he returned with his prize to Ticonderoga, and rejoined colonel Allen. The latter soon went home, and the former with a number of men agreed to remain there in garrison. In this rapid manner the possession of Ticonderoga, and the command of lake Champlain was obtained, without any loss, by a few determined men. Intelligence of these events was in a few days communicated to Congress, which met for the first time, at 10 o’clock of the same day, in the morning of which, Ticonderoga was taken. They rejoiced in the spirit of enterprise, displayed by their [228] countrymen, but feared the charge of being aggressors, or of doing anything to widen the breach between Great-Britain and the colonies; for an accommodation was at that time, nearly their unanimous wish. They therefore recommended to the committees of the cities and counties of New-York and Albany, to cause the cannon and stores to be removed from Ticonderoga to the south end of lake George, and to take an exact inventory of them, “in order that they might be safely returned when the restoration of the former harmony between Great-Britain and the colonies, so ardently wished for by the latter, should render it prudent and consistent with the overruling law of self-preservation.”

Colonel Arnold having begun his military career with a series of successes, was urged by his native impetuosity to project more extensive operations. He wrote a letter to Congress, strongly urging an expedition into Canada, and offering with 2000 men to reduce the whole province. In his ardent zeal to oppose Great-Britain, he had advised the adoption of offensive war, even before Congress had organised an army or appointed a single military officer. His importunity was at last successful, as shall hereafter be related, but not till two months had elapsed, subsequent to his first proposition of conducting an expedition against Canada. Such was the increasing fervor of the public mind in 1775, that what, in the early part of the year, was deemed violent and dangerous, was in its progress pronounced both moderate and expedient.

Sir Guy Carleton, the king’s governor in Canada no sooner heard that the Americans had surprised Ticonderoga and Crown-point, and obtained the command of lake Champlain, than he planned a scheme for their recovery. Having only a few regular troops under his command, he endeavored to induce the Canadians and Indians to cooperate with him, but they both declined. He established martial law that he might compel the inhabitants to take arms. They declared themselves ready to defend the province, but refused to march out of it, or to commence hostilities on their neighbors. Colonel Johnston had, on the same occasion, repeated conferences with the [229] Indians, and endeavored to influence them to take up the hatchet, but they steadily refused. In order to gain their cooperation he invited them to feast on a Bostonian, and to drink his blood. This, in the Indian style, meant no more than to partake of a roasted ox and a pipe of wine, at a
public entertainment, which was given on design to influence them to co-operate with the British troops. The colonial patriots, affected to understand it in its literal sense. It furnished, in their mode of explication, a convenient handle for operating on the passions of the people.

These exertions in Canada, which were principally made with a view to recover Ticonderoga, Crown-point, and the command of lake Champlain, induced Congress to believe that a formidable invasion of their northwestern frontier was intended, from that quarter. The evident tendency of the Quebec act favoured this opinion. Believing it to be the fixed purpose of the British ministry to attack the united colonies on that side, they conceived that they would be inexcusable if they neglected the proper means for warding off so terrible a blow. They were also sensible that the only practicable plan to effect this purpose, was to make a vigorous attack upon Canada, while it was unable to resist the unexpected impression. Their success at Ticonderoga and Crown-point, had already paved the way for this bold enterprize, and had broken down the fences which guarded the entrance into that province. On the other hand, they were sensible that by taking this step, they changed at once the whole nature of the war. From defensive it became offensive, and subjected them to the imputation of being the aggressors. They were well aware that several who had espoused their cause in Britain, would probably be offended at this measure, and charge them with heightening the mischiefs occasioned by the dispute. They knew that the principles of resistance, as far as they had hitherto acted upon them, were abetted by a considerable party even in Great-Britain; and that to forfeit their good opinion, might be of great disservice. Considerations of this kind made them weigh well the important step before [230] they ventured upon it.

They on the other hand reflected that the eloquence of the minority in parliament, and the petitions and remonstrances of the merchants in Great-Britain, had produced no solid advantages in their favour; and that they had no chance of relief, but from the smiles of heaven on their own endeavors. The danger was pressing. War was not only inevitable, but already begun. To wait till they were attacked by a formidable force at their backs, in the very instant when their utmost exertions would be requisite, perhaps insufficient, to protect their cities and sea coast against an invasion from Britain, would be the summit of folly. The laws of war and of nations justified the forestalling of an enemy. The colonists argued that to prevent known hostile intentions, was a matter of self defence; they were also sensible they had already gone such lengths as could only be vindicated by arms; and that if a certain degree of success did not attend their resistance, they would be at the mercy of an irritated government, and their moderation in the single instance of Canada, would be an unavailing plea for indulgence. They were also encouraged to proceed, by certain information that the French inhabitants of Canada, except the noblesse and the clergy, were as much discontented with their present system of government as even the British settlers. It seemed therefore probable, that they would consider the provincials, rather as friends than as enemies. The invasion of that province was therefore determined upon, if found practicable, and not disagreeable to the Canadians.

Congress had committed the management of their military arrangements, in this northern department, to general Schuyler and general Montgomery. While the former
remained at Albany, to attend an Indian treaty, the latter was sent forward to
Ticonderoga, with a body of troops from New-York and New-England. Soon after
reaching Ticonderoga, he made a movement down Lake Champlain. General Schuyler
overtook him at Cape le Motte; from thence they moved on to Isle aux Noix.

About this time general Schuyler addressed the inhabitants
informing them, “that the only views of [231] Congress were to
restore to them those rights which every subject of the British empire, of whatever
religious sentiments he may be, is entitled to; and that in the execution of these truths
he had received the most positive orders to cherish every Canadian, and every friend
to the cause of liberty, and sacredly to guard their property.”
The Americans, about 1000 in number, effected a landing at St.
John’s, which being the first British post in Canada, lies only 115
miles to the northward of Ticonderoga. The British piquets were driven into the fort.
The environs were then reconnoitered, and the fortifications were found to be much
stronger than had been suspected. This induced the calling of a council of war, which
recommended a retreat to Isle aux Noix, twelve miles south of St. John’s, to throw a
boom across the channel, and to erect works for its defence. Soon after this event, an
extreme bad state of health induced general Schuyler to retire to Ticonderoga, and the
command devolved on general Montgomery.

This enterprising officer in a few days returned to the vicinity of St. John’s, and
opened a battery against it. Ammunition was so scarce, that the siege could not be
carried on with any prospect of speedy success. The general detached a small body of
troops, to attempt the reduction of fort Chamblee, only six miles distant. Success
attended this enterprize. By its surrender six tons of gun powder were obtained, which
enabled the general to prosecute the siege of St. John’s with vigor. The garrison,
though straitened for provisions, persevered in defending themselves with unabating
fortitude. While general Montgomery was prosecuting this siege, the governor of the
province collected, at Montreal, about 800 men chiefly militia and Indians. He
endeavored to cross the river St. Lawrence, with this force, and to land at Lonqueil,
intending to proceed thence to attack the besiegers, but colonel Warner with 300
green mountain boys, and a four pounder, prevented the execution of the design. The
governor’s party was suffered to come near the shore, but was then fired upon with
such effect as to make them retire after sustaining great loss.

[232] An account of this affair being communicated to the garrison in St. John’s,
major Preston, the commanding officer surrendered, on receiving honorable terms of
capitulation. By these it was agreed, that the garrison should march out with the
honors of war, that the officers and privates should ground their arms on the
plain—the officers keep their side arms and their fire arms, be reserved for them, and
that the people of the garrison should retain their effects. About 500 regulars and 100
Canadians became prisoners to the provincials. They also acquired 39 pieces of
cannon, seven mortars, and two howitzers, and about 800 stand of arms. Among the
cannon were many brass field pieces, an article of which the Americans were nearly
destitute.

While the siege of St. John’s was pending, colonel Allen, who was returning with
about 80 men from a tour on which he had been sent by his general, was captured by
the British near Montreal, loaded with irons, and in that condition sent to England.
Major Brown proposed that colonel Allen should return to Lonqueil, procure canoes,
and cross the river St. Lawrence, a little to the north of Montreal, while he with a
force of about 200 men crossed a little to the south of it. The former crossed in the
night, but the latter by some means failed on his part. Colonel Allen found himself the
next morning unsupported, and exposed to immediate danger, but nevertheless
concluded on maintaining his ground. General Carleton, knowing his weakness,
Marched out against him with a superior force. The colonel defended himself with his
wonted bravery, but being deserted by several of his party, and having lost fifteen of
his men, he was compelled to surrender with the remainder amounting to 38.

After the reduction of St. John’s, general Montgomery proceeded towards Montreal.
The few British forces there, unable to stand their ground, repaired for safety on board
the shipping in hopes of escaping down the river, but they were prevented by colonel
Easton, who was stationed at the point of Sorel river, with a number of continental
troops, some cannon, and an armed gondola. [233]
General Prescott, who was on board with several officers, and
about 120 privates, having no chance of escape, submitted to be
prisoners on terms of capitulation. Eleven sail of vessels, with all their contents,
consisting of ammunition, provision, and entrenching tools, became the property of
the provincials. Governor Carleton, was about this time conveyed in a boat with
muffled paddles, by a secret way to the Three Rivers, and from thence to Quebec in a
few days.

When Montreal was evacuated by the troops, the inhabitants applied to general
Montgomery for capitulation. He informed them, that as they were defenseless, they
could not expect such a concession, but he engaged upon his honour to maintain the
individuals and religious communities of the city, in the peaceable enjoyment of their
property, and the free exercise of their religion. In all his transactions, he spoke,
wrote, and acted, with dignity and propriety, and in particular treated the inhabitants
with liberality and politeness.

Montreal which at this time surrendered to the provincials carried on an extensive
trade, and contained many of those articles, which from the operation of the
resolutions of Congress, could not be imported into any of the united colonies. From
these stores the American soldiers, who had hitherto suffered from the want of
suitable clothing, obtained a plentiful supply.

General Montgomery, after leaving some troops in Montreal, and sending
detachments into different parts of the province to encourage the Canadians, and to
forward provisions, advanced towards the capital. His little army arrived with
expedition before Quebec. Success had hitherto crowned every attempt of general
Montgomery, but notwithstanding, his situation was very embarrassing. Much to be
pitied is the officer, who having been bred to arms, in the strict discipline of regular
armies, is afterwards called to command men who carry with them the spirit of
freedom into the field.
The greater part of the Americans, officers as well as soldiers,
having never seen any service, were ignorant of their duty, and
but feebly impressed with the military ideas of union, subordination [234] and discipline. The army was continental in name and pay, but in no other respect. Not only the troops of different colonies conceived themselves independent of each other, but in some instances the different regiments of the same colony, were backward to submit to the orders of officers in a higher grade of another line. They were also soon tired of a military life. Novelty and the first impulse of passion had led them to camp; but the approaching cold season, together with the fatigues and dangers incident to war, induced a general wish to relinquish the service. Though by the terms of their enlistment, they were to be discharged in a few weeks, they could not brook an absence from their homes for that short space of time. The ideas of liberty and independence, which roused the colonists to oppose the claims of Great-Britain, operated against that implicit obedience which is necessary to a well regulated army.

Even in European states, where long habits have established submission to superiors as a primary duty of the common people, the difficulty of governing recruits, when first led to the field from civil occupations, is great; but to exercise discipline over freemen, accustomed to act only from the impulse of their own minds, required not only a knowledge of human nature, but an accommodating spirit, and a degree of patience which is rarely found among officers of regular armies. The troops under the immediate command of general Montgomery, were from their usual habits, averse to the ideas of subordination, and had suddenly passed from domestic ease, to the numberless wants and distresses which are incident to marches through strange and desert countries. Every difficulty was increased by the short term for which they were enlisted. To secure the affections of the Canadians, it was necessary for the American general to restrain the appetites, and control the licentiousness of his soldiery, while the appearance of military harshness was dangerous, lest their good will might be forfeited. In this choice of difficulties, the genius of Montgomery surmounted many obstacles.

During his short but glorious [235 ] career, he conducted with so much prudence, as to make it doubtful whether we ought to admire most the goodness of the man, or the address of the general.

About the same time that Canada was invaded, in the usual route from New-York, a considerable detachment from the American army at Cambridge, was conducted into that royal province by a new and unexpected passage. Colonel Arnold, who successfully conducted this bold undertaking, thereby acquired the name of the American Hannibal. He was detached with a thousand men, from Cambridge to penetrate into Canada, by ascending the river Kennebeck, and descending by the Chaundiere to the river St. Lawrence. Great were the difficulties these troops had to encounter in marching by an unexplored route, 300 miles through an uninhabited country. In ascending the Kennebeck, they were constantly obliged to work upwards against an impetuous current. They were often compelled by cataracts or other impediments, to land and to haul their batteaux up rapid streams, and over falls of rivers. Nor was their march by land more eligible than this passage by water. They had deep swamps, thick woods, difficult mountains, and craggy precipices alternatively to encounter. At some places they had to cut their way for miles together through forests so embarrassed, that their progress was only four or five miles a day. The constant fatigue caused
many men to fall sick. One third of the number which set out, were from want of necessaries obliged to return; the others proceeded with unabated fortitude and constancy. Provisions grew at length so scarce, that some of the men ate their dogs, cartouch boxes, breeches and shoes. When they were an hundred miles from any habitation or prospect of a supply their whole store was divided, which yielded four pints of flour for each man. After they had baked and eaten their last morsel, they had thirty miles to travel before they could expect any farther supply. The men bore up under these complicated distresses with the greatest fortitude. They gloried in the hope of completing a march which would rival the fame of similar expeditions undertaken by the heroes of antiquity. [236]

Having spent thirty one days in traversing a hideous wilderness, without ever seeing anything human, they at length reached the inhabited parts of Canada. They were there well received, and supplied with every thing necessary for their comfort. The Canadians were struck with amazement when they saw this armed force emerging from the wilderness. It had never entered their conceptions that it was possible for human beings to traverse such immense wilds. The most pointed instructions had been given to this corps, to conciliate the affections of the Canadians. It was particularly enjoined upon them, if the son of lord Chatham, then an officer in one of the British regiments in that province, should fall into their hands, to treat him with all possible attention, in return for the great exertions of his father in behalf of American liberty. A manifesto subscribed by general Washington, which had been sent from Cambridge with this detachment, was circulated among the inhabitants of Canada. In this they were invited to arrange themselves under the standard of general liberty; and they were informed that the American army was sent into the province, not to plunder but to protect them.

While general Montgomery lay at Montreal, colonel Arnold arrived at Point Levy, opposite to Quebec. Such was the consternation of the garrison and inhabitants at his unexpected appearance, that had not the river intervened, an immediate attack in the first surprize and confusion, might have been successful. The bold enterprise of one American army marching through the wilderness, at a time when success was crowning every undertaking of another invading in a different direction, struck terror into the breasts of those Canadians who were unfriendly to the designs of Congress. The embarrassments of the garrison were increased by the absence of sir Guy Carleton. That gallant officer, on hearing of Montgomery’s invasion, prepared to oppose him in the extremes of the province. While he was collecting a force to attack invaders in one direction, a different corps, emerging out of the depths of an unexplored wilderness, suddenly appeared from another.

In a few days after colonel Arnold [237] had arrived at Point Levy, he crossed the river St. Lawrence, but his chance of succeeding by a coup de main was in that short space greatly diminished. The critical moment was past. The panic occasioned by his first appearance had abated, and solid preparations for the defence of the town were adopted. The inhabitants, both English and Canadians as soon as danger pressed, united for their common defence. Alarmed for their property, they were, at their own request, embodied for its security. The sailors were taken from the shipping in the harbour, and put to the batteries on shore. As colonel Arnold had no artillery, after parading some days on the heights near
Quebec, he drew off his troops, intending nothing more until the arrival of
Montgomery, than to cut off supplies from entering the garrison.

So favourable were the prospects of the united colonies at this period, that general
Montgomery set on foot a regiment of Canadians, to be in the pay of Congress. James
Livingston, a native of New York, who had long resided in Canada, was appointed to
the command thereof, and several recruits were engaged for the term of twelve
months. The inhabitants on both sides of the river St. Laurence, were very friendly.
Expresses in the employ of the Americans, went without molestation, backwards and
forwards, between Montreal and Quebec. Many individuals performed signal services
in favour of the invading army. Among a considerable number Mr. Price stands
conspicuous, who advanced 5000£. in specie, for their use.

Various causes had contributed to attach the inhabitants of Canada, especially those of
the inferior classes, to the interest of Congress, and to alienate their affections from
the government of Great-Britain. The contest was for liberty, and there is something
in that sound, captivating to the mind of man in a state of original simplicity. It was
for the colonies, and Canada was also a colony. The objects of the war were therefore
supposed to be for their common advantage. The form of government lately imposed
on them by act of parliament, was far from being so free as the constitutions of the
other [238] colonies, and was in many respects particularly oppressive.
The common people had no representative share in enacting the
laws by which they were to be governed, and were subjected to
the arbitrary will of persons, over whom they had no constitutional control.
Distinctions so degrading were not unobserved by the native Canadians, but were
more obvious to those who had known the privileges enjoyed in the neighbouring
provinces. Several individuals educated in New-England and New-York, with the
high ideas of liberty inspired by their free constitutions, had in the interval between
the peace of Paris 1763, and the commencement of the American war, migrated into
Canada. Such, sensibly felt the difference between the governments they had left, and
the arbitrary constitution imposed on them, and both from principle and affection,
earnestly persuaded the Canadians to make a common cause with the United
Colonies.

Though motives of this kind induced the peasantry of the country to espouse the
interest of Congress, yet sundry individuals, and some whole orders of men, threw the
weight of their influence into the opposite scale. The legal privileges which the
Roman Catholic clergy enjoyed, made them averse to a change, lest they should be
endangered by a more intimate connection with their protestant neighbours. They
used their influence in the next world, as an engine to operate on the movements of
the present. They refused absolution to such of their flocks as abetted the Americans.
This interdiction of the joys of heaven, by those who were supposed to hold the keys
of it, operated powerfully on the opinions and practices of the superstitious multitude.
The seigneurs had also immunities unknown in the other colonies. Such is the
fondness for power in every human breast, that revolutions are rarely favoured by any
order of men who have reason to apprehend that their future situation will, in case of a
change, be less pre-eminent than before. The sagacious general Montgomery, no less
a man of the world than an officer, discovered great address in accommodating himself to these clashing interests.
Though he knew the part the popish clergy had acted in opposition [239] to him, yet he conducted towards them as if totally ignorant of the matter; and treated them and their religion with great respect and attention. As far as he was authorised to promise, he engaged that their ecclesiastical property should be secured, and the free exercise of their religion continued. To all he held forth the flattering idea of calling a convention of representatives, freely chosen, to institute by its own will, such a form of government as they approved. While the great mind of this illustrious man, was meditating schemes of liberty and happiness, a military force was collecting and training to oppose him, which in a short time put a period to his valuable life.

At the time the Americans were before Montreal, general Carleton, as has been related, escaped through their hands, and got safe to Quebec. His presence was itself a garrison. The confidence reposed in his talents, inspired the men under his command to make the most determined resistance. Soon after his arrival he issued a proclamation, setting forth, “That all persons liable to do militia duty, and residing in Quebec, who refused to arm in conjunction with the royal army, should in four days quit Quebec with their families, and withdraw themselves from the limits of the district by the first of December, on pain of being treated afterwards as spies or rebels.” All who were unwilling to co-operate with the British army, being thus disposed of, the remaining inhabitants, though unused to arms, became in a little time so far acquainted with them as to be very useful in defending the town. They supported fatigues and submitted to command with a patience and cheerfulness, that could not be exceeded by men familiarized to the hardships and subordination of a military life.

General Montgomery having effected at Point aux Trembles, a junction with colonel Arnold, commenced the siege of Quebec.
Upon his arrival before the town, he wrote a letter to the British governor, recommending an immediate surrender, to prevent the dreadful consequences of a storm.
Though the flag which conveyed this letter was fired upon, and all communication refused, [240] general Montgomery found other means to convey a letter of the same tenor into the garrison, but the inflexible firmness of the governor could not be moved either by threats or dangers. The Americans soon after commenced a bombardment with five small mortars, but with very little effect. In a few days general Montgomery opened a six gun battery, at the distance of seven hundred yards from the walls, but his metal was too light to make any impression.

The news of general Montgomery’s success in Canada had filled the colonies with expectations, that the conquest of Quebec would soon add fresh lustre to his already brilliant fame. He knew well the consequences of popular disappointment, and was besides of opinion that unless something decisive was immediately done, the benefit of his previous acquisitions would in a great degree be lost to the American cause. On both accounts, he was strongly impelled to make every exertion for satisfying the
expectations and promoting the interest of a people, who had honoured him with so
great a share of their confidence. The government of Great-Britain, in the extensive
province of Canada, was at that time reduced to the single town of Quebec. The
astonished world saw peaceable colonists suddenly transformed into soldiers, and
these marching through unexplored wildernesses, and extending themselves by
conquests, in the first moment after they had assumed the profession of arms.
Towards the end of the year, the tide of fortune began to turn. Dissentions broke out
between colonel Arnold and some of his officers, threatening the annihilation of
discipline. The continental currency had no circulation in Canada, and all the hard
money furnished for the expedition, was nearly expended. Difficulties of every kind
were daily increasing. The extremities of fatigue were constantly to be encountered.
The American general had not a sufficient number of men to make the proper reliefs
in the daily labours they underwent; and that inconsiderable number, worn down with
toil, was constantly exposed to the severities of a Canada winter.
The period for which a great part of his men had enlisted, being
on the point of expiration, [241] he apprehended that they who
were entitled to it, would insist on their discharge. On the other hand, he saw no
prospect of staggering the resolution of the garrison. They were well supplied with
every thing necessary for their defence, and were daily acquiring additional firmness.
The extremity of winter was fast approaching. From these combined circumstances,
general Montgomery was impressed with a conviction, that the siege should either be
raised, or brought to a summary termination. To storm the place was the only feasible
method of effecting the latter purpose. But this was an undertaking, in which success
was but barely possible. Great minds are seldom exact calculators of danger. Nor do
they minutely attend to the difficulties which obstruct the attainment of their objects.
Fortune, in contempt of the pride of man, has ever had an influence in the success or
failure of military enterprises. Some of the greatest achievements, of that kind, have
owed their success to a noble contempt of common forms.

The upper part of Quebec was surrounded with very strong works, and the access
from the lower town was excessively difficult, from its almost perpendicular
steepness. General Montgomery, from a native intrepidity, and an ardent thirst for
glory, overlooked all these dangers, and resolved at once either to carry the place or
perish in the attempt. Trusting much to his good fortune—confiding in the bravery of
his troops, and their readiness to follow whithersoever he should lead; and depending
somewhat on the extensiveness of the works, he determined to attempt the town by
escalade.

The garrison of Quebec at this time consisted of about 1520 men, of which 800 were
militia, and 450 were seamen, belonging to the king’s frigates, or merchant ships in
the harbour. The rest were marines, regulars, or colonel Maclean’s new raised
emigrants. The American army consisted of about 800 men. Some had been left at
Montreal, and near a third of Arnold’s detachment, as has been related, had returned
to Cambridge.

General Montgomery having divided this little force into four detachments, ordered
two feints to be made [242] against the upper town, one by colonel Livingston, at the
head of the Canadians against St. John’s gate; and the other by major Brown, against
cape Diamond, reserving to himself and colonel Arnold the two principal attacks, against the lower town. At five o’clock in the morning general Montgomery advanced against the lower town. He passed the first barrier, and was just opening to attack the second, when he was killed, together with his aid de camp, captain John M’Pherson, captain Cheesman, and some others. This so dispirited the men that colonel Campbell, on whom the command devolved, thought proper to draw them off. In the mean time colonel Arnold, at the head of about 350 men, passed through St. Roques, and approached near a two gun battery, without being discovered. This he attacked, and though it was well defended, carried it, but with considerable loss. In this attack colonel Arnold received a wound, which made it necessary to carry him off the field of battle. His party nevertheless continued the assault, and pushing on, made themselves masters of a second barrier. These brave men sustained the force of the whole garrison for three hours, but finding themselves hemmed in, and without hopes either of success, relief or retreat, they yielded to numbers, and the advantageous situation of their adversaries. The loss of the Americans in killed and wounded, was about 100, and 300 were taken prisoners. Among the slain were captain Kendricks, lieutenant Humphries, and lieutenant Cooper. The behaviour of the provincial troops was such as might have silenced those who had reproached them for being deficient in courage. The most experienced veterans could not have exceeded the firmness they displayed in their last attack. The issue of this assault relieved the garrison of Quebec from all apprehensions for its safety. The provincials were so much weakened, as to be scarcely equal to their own defence. However, colonel Arnold had the boldness to encamp within three miles of the town, and had the address, even with his reduced numbers, to impede the conveyance of refreshments and provisions into the garrison. His situation was extremely difficult. He was at an immense distance from those parts where effectual assistance could be expected. On his first entrance into the province, he had experienced much kind treatment from the inhabitants. The Canadians, besides being fickle in their resolutions, are apt to be biassed by success. Their disposition to aid the Americans, became therefore daily more precarious. It was even difficult to keep the provincial troops from returning to their respective homes. Their sufferings were great. While their adversaries were comfortably housed in Quebec, they were exposed in the open air to the extreme rigour of the season. The severity of a Canada winter was far beyond any thing with which they were acquainted. The snow lay above four feet deep on a level.

This deliverance of Quebec may be considered as a proof how much may be done by one man for the preservation of a country. It also proves that soldiers may in a short time be formed out of the mass of citizens.

The conflict being over, the ill will which had subsisted, during the siege, between the royal and provincial troops gave way to sentiments of humanity. The Americans, who surrendered, were treated with kindness. Ample provisions were made for their wounded, and no unnecessary severity shewn to any. Few men have ever fallen in battle, so much regretted by both sides, as general Montgomery. His many amiable qualities had procured him an uncommon share of private affection, and his great abilities an equal proportion of public esteem. Being a sincere lover of liberty, he had
engaged in the American cause from principle, and quitted the enjoyment of an easy fortune, and the highest domestic felicity, to take an active share in the fatigues and dangers of a war, instituted for the defence of the community of which he was an adopted member. His well known character was almost equally esteemed by the friends and foes of the side which he had espoused. In America he was celebrated as a martyr to the liberties of mankind; in Great-Britain as a misguided, good man, sacrificing to what he supposed to be the rights of his country. His name was mentioned in parliament with singular respect.

Some of the most powerful speakers in that illustrious assembly, displayed their eloquence in sounding his praise and lamenting his fate. Those in particular who had been his fellow soldiers in the late war, expatiated on his many virtues. The minister himself acknowledged his worth, while he reprobated the cause for which he fell. He concluded an involuntary panegyric, by saying, “Curse on his virtues, they have undone his country.”

Though the invasion of Canada was finally unsuccessful, yet the advantages which the Americans gained in the months of September and October, gave fresh spirits to their army and people. The boldness of the enterprise, might have taught Great-Britain the folly of persisting in the design of subjugating America. But instead of preserving the union, and restoring the peace of the empire by repealing a few of her laws, she from mistaken dignity, resolved on a more vigorous prosecution of the war.
CHAPTER IX

Transactions In Virginia, The Carolinas, Georgia, And The General State Of Public Affairs In The Colonies.

It has already been mentioned, that the colonists from the rising of Congress in October 1774, and particularly after the Lexington battle, were attentive to the training their militia, and making the necessary preparations for their defence.

The effects of their arrangements, for this purpose, varied with circumstances.

Where there were no royal troops, and where ordinary prudence was observed, the public peace was undisturbed. In other cases, the intemperate zeal of governors, and the imprudent warmth of the people, anticipated the calamities of war before its proper time. Virginia, though there was not a single British soldier within its limits, was, by the indiscretion of its governor, lord Dunmore, involved, for several months, in difficulties, but little short of those to which the inhabitants of Massachusetts were subjected.

His lordship was but illy fitted to be at the helm in this tempestuous season. His passions predominated over his understanding, and precipitated him into measures injurious both to the people whom he governed, and to the interest of his royal master. The Virginians from the earliest stages of the controversy, had been in the foremost line of opposition to the claims of Great-Britain, but at the same time treated lord Dunmore with the attention that was due to his station. In common with the other provinces they had taken effectual measures to prepare their militia for the purposes of defence.

While they were pursuing this object, his lordship engaged a party belonging to a royal vessel in James’ river, to convey some public powder from a magazine in Williamsburg on board their ship. The value or quantity of the powder was inconsiderable, but the circumstances attending its removal begat suspicions that lord Dunmore meant to deprive the inhabitants of the means of defence. They were therefore alarmed, and assembled with arms to demand its restitution. By the interposition of the mayor and corporation of Williamsburg, extremities were prevented. Reports were soon after spread that a second attempt to rob the magazine was intended. The inhabitants again took arms, and instituted nightly patroles, with a determined resolution to protect it. The governor was irritated at these commotions, and in the warmth of his temper threatened to set up the royal standard–franchise the negroes, and arm them against their masters. This irritated, but did not intimidate. Several public meetings were held in the different counties, in all of which the removal of the powder from the magazine, and the governor’s threats, were severely condemned. Some of the gentlemen of Hanover and the neighbouring counties assembled in arms, under the conduct of Mr. Patrick Henry, and marched towards Williamsburg, with an avowed design to obtain restitution of the powder, and to take measures for securing the public treasury. This ended in a negotiation, by
which it was agreed that payment for the powder, by [246] the receiver general of the colony, should be accepted in lieu of restitution; and that upon the engagement of the inhabitants of Williamsburg to guard both the treasury and the magazine, the armed parties should return to their habitations.

The alarm of this affair induced lord Dunmore to send his lady and family on board the Fowey man of war in James’ river. About the same time his lordship, with the assistance of a detachment of marines, fortified his palace and surrounded it with artillery. He soon after issued a proclamation, in which Mr. Henry and his associates were charged with rebellious practices, and the present commotions were attributed to a desire in the people of changing the established form of government. Several meetings were held in the neighbouring counties, in which the conduct of Mr. Henry and of his associates was applauded, and resolutions were adopted, that at every risque he and they should be indemnified. About this time copies of some letters from governor Dunmore to the minister of the American department were made public. These in the opinion of the Virginians contained unfair and unjust representations of facts, and also of their temper and disposition. Many severe things were said on both sides, and fame as usual, magnified or misrepresented whatever was said or done. One distrust begat another. Every thing tended to produce a spirit of discontent, and the fever of the public mind daily increased.

In this state of disorder the governor convened the general assembly. The leading motive for this unexpected measure, was to procure their approbation and acceptance of the terms of the conciliatory motion agreed to in parliament, on the 20th of the preceding February. His lordship introduced this to their consideration, in a long and plausible speech. In a few days they presented their address in answer, in which, among other grounds of rejection they stated that, “the proposed plan only changed the form of oppression, without lessening its burthen;” but they referred the papers for a final determination, to Congress. For themselves they declared,

[247] We have exhausted every mode of application which our invention could suggest, as proper and promising. We have decently remonstrated with parliament. They have added new injuries to the old. We have wearied our king with supplications; he has not deigned to answer us. We have appealed to the native honour and justice of the British nation. Their efforts in our favour have been hitherto ineffectual.

The assembly, among their first acts, appointed a committee to enquire into the causes of the late disturbances, and particularly to examine the state of the magazine. They found most of the remaining powder buried; the muskets deprived of their locks, and spring guns planted in the magazine. These discoveries irritated the people, and occasioned intemperate expressions of resentment.

Lord Dunmore quitted the palace privately, and retired on board the Fowey man of war, which then lay near York-town. He left a message for the house of burgesses, acquainting them
that he thought it prudent to retire to a place of safety, having reason to believe that he
was in constant danger of falling a sacrifice to popular fury; he nevertheless, hoped
they would proceed in the great business before them; and he engaged to render the
communication between him and the house as easy and as safe as possible. He
assured them that he would attend as heretofore, to the duties of his office, and that he
was well disposed to restore that harmony which had been unhappily interrupted.

This message produced a joint address from the council and house of burgesses, in
which they represented his lordship’s fears to be groundless, and declared their
willingness to concur in any measure he would propose for the security of himself and
family; and concluded by entreating his return to the palace. Lord Dunmore in a reply,
justified his apprehensions of danger from the threats which had been repeatedly
thrown out. He charged the house of burgesses with countenancing the violent
proceedings of the people, and with a design to usurp the executive power, and
subvert the constitution. This produced a reply fraught with recrimination and
defensive [248] arguments. Every incident afforded fresh room for altercation.
There was a continued intercourse by addresses, messages and
answers, between the house of burgesses and the Fowey, but
little of the public business was completed. His lordship was still acknowledged as the
lawful governor of the province, but did not think proper to set his foot on shore, in
the country over which his functions were to be exercised.

At length, when the necessary bills were ready for ratification, the council and
burgesses jointly intreated the governor’s presence, to give his assent to them and
finish the session. After several messages and answers, lord Dunmore peremptorily
refused to meet the assembly at the capital, their usual place of deliberation; but said
he would be ready to receive them on the next Monday, at his present residence on
board the Fowey, for the purpose of giving his assent to such bills as he should
approve of. Upon receiving this answer, the house of burgesses passed resolutions in
which they declared, that the message requiring them to attend the governor on board
a ship of war, was a high breach of their rights and privileges—that they had reason to
fear a dangerous attack was meditated against the colony, and it was therefore their
opinion, that they should prepare for the preservation of their rights and liberties.
After strongly professing loyalty to the king, and amity to the Mother Country, they
broke up their session.

The royal government in Virginia, from that day ceased. Soon
after, a convention of delegates was appointed, to supply the
place of the assembly. As these had an unlimited confidence reposed in them, they
became at once possessed of undefined discretionary powers, both legislative and
executive. They exercised this authority for the security of their constituents. They
raised and embodied an armed force, and took other measures for putting the colony
in a state of defence. They published a justification of their conduct, and set forth the
necessity of the measures they had adopted.

They concluded with professions of loyalty, and declared that
though they were determined at every hazard, to maintain their
rights and privileges, [249] it was also their fixed resolution to disband such forces as
were raised for the defence of the colony, whenever their dangers were removed. The
headstrong passions of lord Dunmore precipitated him into farther follies. With the
aid of the loyalists, run away negroes, and some frigates that were on the station, he
established a marine force. By degrees, he equipped and armed a number of vessels of
different kinds and sizes, in one of which he constantly resided, except when he went
on shore in a hostile manner. This force was calculated only for depredation, and
never became equal to any essential service. Obnoxious persons were seized and
taken on board. Negroes were carried off—plantations ravaged—and houses burnt.
These proceedings occasioned the sending of some detachments of the new raised
provincial forces to protect the coasts. This produced a predatory war, from which
neither honour nor benefit could be acquired, and in which every necessary from on
shore was purchased at the risque of blood.
The forces under his lordship attempted to burn Hampton; but
the crews of the royal vessels employed in that business, though
they had begun to cannonade it, were so annoyed by riflemen from on shore, that they
were obliged to quit their station.
In a few days after this repulse, a proclamation was issued by the
governor, dated on board the ship William, off Norfolk,
declaring, that as the civil law was at present insufficient to punish treason and
traitors, martial law should take place and be executed throughout the colony; and
requiring all persons capable of bearing arms, to repair to his majesty’s standard, or to
be considered as traitors. He also declared all indented servants, negroes and others,
appertaining to rebels, who were able and willing to bear arms, and who joined his
majesty’s forces, to be free.

Among the circumstances which induced the rulers of Great-Britain to count on an
easy conquest of America, the great number of slaves had a considerable weight. On
the sea coast of five of the most southern provinces, the number of slaves exceeded
that of freemen.
It was supposed that the proffer of freedom would detach them
[250] from their master’s interest, and bind them by strong ties to
support the royal standard. Perhaps, under favourable circumstances, these
expectations would in some degree have been realised; but lord Dunmore’s
indiscretion deprived his royal master of this resource. Six months had elapsed since
his lordship first threatened its adoption. The negroes had in a great measure ceased to
believe, and the inhabitants to fear. It excited less surprize, and produced less effect,
than if it had been more immediate and unexpected. The country was now in a
tolerable state of defence, and the force for protecting the negroes, in case they had
closed with his lordship’s offer, was far short of what would have been necessary for
their security. The injury done the royal cause by the bare proposal of the scheme, far
outweighed any advantage that resulted from it. The colonists were struck with horror,
and filled with detestation of a government which was exercised in loosening the
bands of society, and destroying domestic security. The union and vigor which was
given to their opposition, was great, while the additional force, acquired by his
lordship, was inconsiderable. It nevertheless produced some effect in Norfolk and the
adjoining country, where his lordship was joined by several hundreds, both whites and
blacks. The governor having once more got footing on the main, amused himself with
hopes of acquiring the glory of reducing one part of the province by means of the
other. The provincials had now an object against which they might direct their arms. An
expedition was therefore concerted against the force which had taken post at
Norfolk. To protect his adherents lord Dunmore constructed a fort at the great bridge, on the Norfolk side, and furnished it with artillery. The provincials also fortified themselves near to the same place, with a narrow causeway in their front. In this state both parties continued quiet for some days.

The royalists commenced an attack. Captain Fordyce, at the head of about 60 British grenadiers, passed the causeway, and boldly marched up to the provincial entrenchments with fixed bayonets. They were exposed without cover to the fire of the provincials in front, and enfiladed by another part of their works. The brave captain and several of his men fell. The lieutenant, with others, were taken, and all who survived were wounded. The slaves in this engagement were more prejudicial to their British employers than to the provincials. Captain Fordyce was interred by the victors, with military honors. The English prisoners were treated with kindness, but the Americans who had joined the king’s standard, experienced the resentment of their countrymen.

The royal forces, on the ensuing night, evacuated their post at the great bridge, and lord Dunmore shortly after abandoned Norfolk, and retired with his people on board his ships. Many of the tories, a name which was given to those who adhered to the royal interest, sought the same asylum, for themselves and moveable effects. The provincials took possession of Norfolk, and the fleet, with its new incumberances, moved to a greater distance. The people on board, cut off from all peaceable intercourse with the shore, were distressed for provisions and necessaries of every kind. This occasioned sundry unimportant contests between the provincial forces and the armed ships and boats. At length, on the arrival of the Liverpool man of war from England, a flag was sent on shore to put the question, whether they would supply his majesty’s ships with provisions. An answer was returned in the negative. It was then determined to destroy the town.

This was carried into effect, and Norfolk was reduced to ashes.

The whole loss was estimated at 300,000£. sterling. The provincials, to deprive the ships of every resource of supply, destroyed the houses and plantations that were near the water, and obliged the people to move their cattle, provisions, and effects, farther into the country. Lord Dunmore, with his fleet, continued for several months on the coast and in the rivers of Virginia. His unhappy followers suffered a complication of distresses. The scarcity of water and provisions, the closeness and filth of the small vessels, produced diseases which were fatal to many, especially to the negroes. Though his whole force was trifling when compared with [252] the resources of Virginia, yet the want of suitable armed vessels made its expulsion impracticable. The experience of that day evinced the inadequacy of land forces for the defence of a maritime country; and the extensive mischief which may be done, by even an inconsiderable marine, when unopposed in its own way. The want of a navy was both seen and felt. Some arrangements to procure one, were therefore made. Either the expectation of an attack from this quarter, or the sufferings of the crews on board, induced his lordship in the summer 1776 to burn the least valuable of his vessels, and to send the remainder, amounting to 30 or 40 sail, to Florida, Bermuda, and the West-Indies. The hopes which lord Dunmore had entertained of subduing Virginia by the cooperation of the negroes, terminated with
this movement. The unhappy Africans who had engaged in it, are said to have almost universally perished.

While these transactions were carrying on, another scheme, in which lord Dunmore was a party, in like manner miscarried. It was in contemplation to raise a considerable force at the back of the colonies, particularly in Virginia and the Carolinas. One Connelly, a native of Pennsylvania, was the framer of the design. He had gained the approbation of lord Dunmore, and had been sent by him to general Gage at Boston, and from him he received a commission to act as colonel commandant. It was intended that the British garrisons at Detroit, and some other remote posts, with their artillery and ammunition, should be subservient to this design. Connelly also hoped for the aid of the Canadians and Indians. He was authorised to grant commissions, and to have the supreme direction of the new forces. As soon as they were in readiness he was to penetrate through Virginia, and to meet lord Dunmore near Alexandria, on the river Potowmac. Connelly was taken up on suspicion, by one of the committees in Maryland, while on his way to the scene of action. The papers found in his possession betrayed the whole. Among these was a general sketch of the plan, and a letter from lord Dunmore to one of the Indian chiefs.

He was imprisoned, [253] and the papers published. So many fortunate escapes induced a belief among serious Americans, that their cause was favoured by heaven. The various projects which were devised and put in operation against them, pointed out the increasing necessity of union, while the havock made on their coasts—the proffer of freedom to their slaves, and the encouragement proposed to Indians for making war on their frontier inhabitants, quickened their resentment against Great-Britain.

North-Carolina was more fortunate than Virginia. The governors of both were perhaps equally zealous for the royal interest, and the people of both equally attached to the cause of America, but the former escaped with a smaller portion of public calamity. Several regulations were at this time adopted by most of the provinces. Councils of safety, committees, and conventions, were common substitutes for regular government. Similar plans for raising, arming and supporting troops, and for training the militia, were from north to south generally adopted. In like manner royal governors throughout the provinces, were exerting themselves in attaching the people to the schemes of Great-Britain. Governor Martin, of North-Carolina, was particularly zealous in this business. He fortified and armed his palace at Newbern, that it might answer the double purpose of a garrison and magazine. While he was thus employed, such commotions were excited among the people, that he thought it expedient to retire on board a sloop of war in Cape Fear river. The people on examining, found powder and various military stores which had been buried in his garden and yard. Governor Martin, though he had abandoned his usual place of residence, continued his exertions for reducing North-Carolina to obedience. He particularly addressed himself to the regulators and Highland emigrants. The former had acquired this name from their attempting to regulate the administration of justice in the remote settlements, in a summary manner subversive of the public peace. They had suffered the consequences of opposing royal government, and from obvious principles of human nature, were disposed to [254] support the authority whose power to punish they had recently
experienced. The Highland emigrants had been but a short time in America, and were yet more under the influence of European ideas than those which their new situation was calculated to inspire. Governor Martin sent commissions among these people for raising and commanding regiments; and he granted one to Mr. M'Donald to act as their general. He also sent them a proclamation commanding all persons, on their allegiance, to repair to the royal standard. This was erected by general M'Donald, about the middle of February. Upon the first intelligence of their assembling brigadier general Moore, with some provincial troops and militia, and some pieces of cannon, marched to oppose them. He took possession of Rock fish bridge and threw up some works. He had not been there many days when M'Donald approached, and sent a letter to Moore, enclosing the governor’s proclamation, and advising him and his party to join the king’s standard; and adding, that in case of refusal they must be treated as enemies. To this Moore replied, that he and his officers considered themselves as engaged in a cause the most glorious and honourable in the world, the defence of mankind; and in his turn offered, that if M'Donald’s party laid down their arms they should be received as friends, but, otherwise they must expect consequences similar to those which they threatened. Soon after this, general M'Donald with his adherents pushed on to join governor Martin, but colonels Lillington and Caswell, with about 1000 militia men, took possession of Moore’s creek bridge, which lay in their way, and raised a small breast work to secure themselves.

On the next morning the Highland emigrants attacked the militia posted at the bridge, but M’Cleod, the second in command, and some more of their officers being killed at the first onset, they fled with precipitation. General M'Donald was taken prisoner, and the whole of his party broken and dispersed. This overthrow produced consequences very injurious to the British interest. A royal fleet and army was expected on the coast. A [255] junction formed between them and the Highland emigrants in the interior country, might have made a sensible impression on the province. From an eagerness to do something, the insurgents prematurely took arms, and being crushed before the arrival of proper support, their spirits were so entirely broken, that no future effort could be expected from them.

While the war raged only in Massachusetts, each province conducted as under the expectation of being next attacked. Georgia, though a majority of its inhabitants were at first against the measures, yet about the middle of this year, joined the other colonies. Having not concurred in the petitions from Congress to the king, they petitioned by themselves, and stated their rights and grievances, in firm and decided language. They also adopted the continental association, and sent on their deputies to Congress.

In South-Carolina there was an eagerness to be prepared for defence, which was not surpassed in any of the provinces. Regiments were raised—forts were built—the militia trained, and every necessary preparation made for that purpose. Lord William Campbell, the royal governor, endeavoured to form a party for the support of government, and was in some degree successful. Distrusting his personal safety on
shore, about the middle of September, he took up his residence on board an armed
vessel, then in the harbour.

The royal government still existed in name and form; but the real power which the
people obeyed, was exercised by a provincial congress, a council of safety, and
subordinate committees. To conciliate the friendship of the Indians, the popular
leaders sent a small supply of powder into their country. They who were opposed to
Congress embodied, and robbed the wagons which were employed in its
transportation. To inflame the minds of their adherents, they propagated a report that
the powder was intended to be given to the Indians, for the purpose of massacring the
friends of royal government. The inhabitants took arms, some to support royal
government, but others to support the American measures.

The royalists [256] acted feebly and were easily overpowered. They were disheartened by the superior numbers that opposed
them. They every where gave way and were obliged either to fly or feign submission.
Solicitations had been made about this time for royal forces to awe the southern
provinces, but without effect till the proper season was over. One scheme for this
purpose was frustrated by a singular device. Private intelligence had been received of
an express being sent from Sir James Wright, governor of Georgia, to general Gage.
By him the necessity of ordering a part of the royal army to the southward was fully
stated. The express was waylaid, and compelled by two gentlemen to deliver his
letters. One to general Gage was kept back, and another one forwarded in its room.
The seal and hand writing were so exactly imitated that the deception was not
suspected. The forged letter was received and acted upon. It stated such a degree of
peace and tranquility as induced an opinion that there was no necessity of sending
royal troops to the southward. While these states were thus left to themselves, they
had time and opportunity to prepare for extremities, and in the mean time the friends
of royal government were severally crushed. A series of disasters followed the royal
cause in the year 1775. General Gage’s army was cooped up in Boston, and rendered
useless. In the southern states, where a small force would have made an impression,
the royal governors were unsupported. Much was done to irritate the colonists and to
cement their union, but very little, either in the way of conquest or concession, to
subdue their spirits or conciliate their affections.

In this year the people of America generally took their side. Every art was made use
of by the popular leaders to attach the inhabitants to their royal cause; nor were the
votaries of the royal interest inactive. But little impression was made by the latter,
except among the uninformed. The great mass of the wealth, learning, and influence,
in all the southern colonies, and in most of the northern, was in favour of the
American cause. Some aged persons were exceptions to the contrary.

Attached to ancient habits, and enjoying the fruits of their
industry, [257] they were slow in approving new measures
subversive of the former, and endangering the latter. A few who had basked in the
sunshine of court favour, were restrained by honour, principle and interest, from
forsaking the fountain of their enjoyments. Some feared the power of Britain, and
others doubted the perseverance of America; but a great majority resolved to hazard
every thing in preference to a tame submission. In the beginning of the year, the
colonists were farmers, merchants and mechanics; but in its close they had assumed
the profession of soldiers. So sudden a transformation of so numerous, and so
dispersed a people, is without a parallel.

This year was also remarkable for the general termination of royal government. This
was effected without any violence to its executive officers. The new system was not
so much forcibly imposed or designedly adopted, as introduced through necessity, and
the imperceptible agency of a common danger, operating uniformly on the mind of
the public. The royal governors, for the most part, voluntarily abdicated their
governments, and retired on board ships of war. They assigned for reason, that they
apprehended personal danger, but this, in every instance, was unfounded. Perhaps
these representatives of royalty thought, that as they were constitutionally necessary
to the administration of justice, the horrors of anarchy would deter the people from
prosecuting their opposition. If they acted from this principle, they were mistaken.
Their withdrawing from the exercise of their official duties, both furnished an
apology, and induced a necessity, for organising a system of government independent
of royal authority. By encouraging opposition to the popular measures, they involved
their friends in great distress. The unsuccessful insurrections which they fomented,
being improperly timed, and unsupported, were easily overthrown, and actually
strengthened the popular government, which they meant to destroy.
As the year 1775 drew near to a close, the friends of Congress were embarrassed with a new difficulty. Their army was temporary, and only engaged to serve out the year. The object for which they had taken up arms was not yet obtained. Every reason which had previously induced the provinces to embody a military force still existed, and with increasing weight. It was therefore resolved to form a new army. The same flattering hopes were indulged, that an army for the ensuing year would answer every purpose. A committee of Congress, consisting of Dr. Franklin, Mr. Lynch, and Mr. Harrison, repaired to head quarters at Cambridge, and there in conjunction with general Washington made arrangements for organizing an army for the year 1776. It was presumed that the spirit which had hitherto operated on the yeomanry of the country, would induce most of the same individuals to engage for another twelve-month, but on experiment it was found that much of their military ardor had already evaporated. The first impulse of passion, and the novelty of the scene, had brought many to the field, who had great objections against continuing in the military line. They found, that to be soldiers required sacrifices of which, when they assumed that character, they had no idea. So unacquainted were the bulk of the people with the mode of carrying on modern war, that many of them flew to arms with the delusive expectation of settling the whole dispute by a few decisive and immediate engagements. Experience soon taught them to risque life in open fighting, was but a part of the soldier’s duty. Several of the inferior officers retired—the men frequently refused to enlist, unless they were allowed to chuse their officers. Others would not engage unless they were indulged with furloughs. Fifty would apply together for leave of absence; indulgence threatened less ruinous consequences than a refusal would probably have produced. On the whole enlistments went on slowly.

Though the recruits for the new army had not arrived, yet the Connecticut troops, whose time expired on the first of December, could not be persuaded to continue in service. On their way home several of them were stopped by the country people and compelled to return. When every thing seemed to be exposed, by the departure of so great a part of the late army, the militia was called on for a temporary aid. A new difficulty obstructed, as well the recruiting of the army, as the coming in of the militia. Sundry persons infected with the small pox, were sent out of Boston and landed at Point Shirley. Such was the dread of that disease, that the British army scarcely excited equal terror. So many difficulties retarded the recruiting service, that on the last day of the year 1775, the whole American army amounted to no more than 9650 men. Of the remarkable events with which this important year was replete, it was not the least, that within musket shot of twenty British regiments, one army was disbanded and another enlisted.
All this time the British troops at Boston were suffering the inconvenience of a blockade. From the 19th of April they were cut off from those refreshments which their situation required. Their supplies from Britain did not reach the coast for a long time after they were expected. Several were taken by the American cruisers, and others were lost at sea. This was in particular the fate of many of their coal ships. The want of fuel was peculiarly felt in a climate where the winter is both severe and tedious. They relieved themselves in part from their sufferings on this account, by the timber of houses which they pulled down and burnt. Vessels were dispatched to the West-Indies to procure provisions; but the islands were so straitened, that they could afford but little assistance. Armed ships and transports were ordered to Georgia with an intent to procure rice, but the people of that province, with the aid of a party from South-Carolina, so effectually opposed them, that of eleven vessels, only two got off safe with their cargoes.

It was not till the stock of the garrison was nearly exhausted that the transports from England entered the port of Boston, and relieved the distresses of the garrison.

While the troops within the lines were apprehensive of suffering from want of provisions, the troops without were equally uneasy for want of employment. Used to labour and motion on their farms, they but illly relished the inactivity and confinement of a camp life. Fiery spirits declaimed in favour of an assault. They preferred a bold spirit of enterprize, to that passive fortitude which bears up under present evils, while it waits for favorable junctures. To be in readiness for an attempt of this kind, a council of war recommended to call in 7280 militia men, from New-Hampshire or Connecticut. This number added to the regular army before Boston, would have made an operating force of about 17,000 men.

The provincials laboured under great inconveniences from the want of arms and ammunition. Very early in the contest, the king of Great-Britain, by proclamation, forbade the exportation of warlike forces to the colonies. Great exertions had been made to manufacture salt petre and gun powder, but the supply was slow and inadequate. A secret committee of Congress had been appointed, with ample powers to lay in a stock of this necessary article. Some swift sailing vessels had been dispatched to the coast of Africa to purchase what could be procured in that distant region. A party from Charleston forcibly took about 17000 lbs. of powder from a vessel near the bar of St. Augustine. Some time after, commodore Hopkins stripped Providence, one of the Bahama islands of a quantity of artillery and stores; but the whole, procured from all these quarters, was far short of a sufficiency. In order to supply the new army before Boston with the necessary means of defence, an application was made to Massachusetts for arms, but on examination it was found that their public stores afforded only 200. Orders were issued to purchase firelocks from private persons, but few had any to sell, and fewer would part with them. In the month of February, there were 2000 of the American infantry, who were destitute of arms. Powder was equally scarce, and yet daily applications were made for dividends of the small quantity [261] which was on hand, for the defence of various parts threatened with invasion. The eastern colonies presented an unusual sight. A powerful enemy safely intrenched in their first city, while a fleet
was ready to transport them to any part of the coast. A numerous body of husbandmen
was resolutely bent on opposition, but without the necessary arms and ammunition for
self defence. The eyes of all were fixed on general Washington, and from him it was
unreasonably expected that he would by a bold exertion, free the town of Boston from
the British troops. The dangerous situation of public affairs led him to conceal the real
scarcity of arms and ammunition, and with that magnanimity which is characteristical
of great minds, to suffer his character to be assailed, rather than vindicate himself by
exposing his many wants. There were not wanting persons, who judging from the
superior numbers of men in the American army, boldly asserted, that if the
commander in chief was not desirous of prolonging his importance at the head of an
army, he might by a vigorous exertion gain possession of Boston. Such suggestions
were reported and believed by several, while they were uncontradicted by the general,
who chose to risque his fame, rather than expose his army and his country.

Agreeably to the request of the council of war, about 7000 of the militia had
rendezvoused in February. General Washington stated to his officers that the troops in
camp, together with the reinforcements which had been called for, and were daily
coming in, would amount nearly to 17,000 men—that he had not powder sufficient
for a bombardment, and asked their advice whether, as reinforcements might be daily
expected to the enemy, it would not be prudent before that event took place, to make
an assault on the British lines. The proposition was negatived; but it was
recommended to take possession of Dorchester heights. To conceal this design, and to
divert the attention of the garrison, a bombardment of the town from other directions
commenced, and was carried on for three days with as much briskness as a deficient
stock of powder would admit.

In this first essay, [262 ] three of the mortars were broken, either
from a defect in their construction, or more probably from
ignorance of the proper mode of using them.

The night of the 4th of March was fixed upon for taking possession of Dorchester
heights. A covering party of about 800 men led the way. These were followed by the
carts with the intrenching tools, and 1200 of a working party, commanded by general
Thomas. In the rear there were more than 200 carts, loaded with fascines, and hay in
bundles. While the cannon were playing in other parts, the greatest silence was kept
by this working party. The active zeal of the industrious provincials completed lines
of defence by the morning, which astonished the garrison. The difference between
Dorchester heights on the evening of the 4th, and the morning of the 5th, seemed to
realise the tales of romance. The admiral informed general Howe, that if the
Americans kept possession of these heights, he would not be able to keep one of his
majesty’s ships in the harbour. It was therefore determined in a council of war, to
attempt to dislodge them. An engagement was hourly expected. It was intended by
general Washington, in that case, to force his way into Boston with 4000 men, who
were to have embarked at the mouth of Cambridge river. The militia had come
forward with great alertness, each bringing three days provision, in expectation of an
immediate assault. The men were in high spirits, and impatiently waiting for the
appeal.
They were reminded that it was the 5th of March, and were called upon to avenge the death of their countrymen killed on that day. The many eminences in and near Boston, which overlooked the ground on which it was expected that the contending parties would engage, were crowded with numerous spectators. But general Howe did not intend to attack till the next day. In order to be ready for it, the transports went down in the evening towards the castle. In the night a most violent storm, and towards morning a heavy flood of rain, came on. A carnage was thus providentially prevented, that would probably have equalled, if not exceeded, the fatal 17th of June, at Bunker’s-hill. In this situation it was agreed by the British, in a council of war, to evacuate the town as soon as possible.

In a few days after, a flag came out of Boston, with a paper signed by four select men, informing, “that they had applied to general Robertson, who, on application to general Howe, was authorised to assure them, that he had no intention of burning the town, unless the troops under his command were molested, during their embarkation, or at their departure, by the armed force without.” When this paper was presented to general Washington, he replied, “that as it was an unauthenticated paper, and without an address, and not obligatory on general Howe, he could take no notice of it;” but at the same time intimated his good wishes for the security of the town.

A proclamation was issued by general Howe, ordering all woollen and linen goods to be delivered to Crean Brush, Esq. Shops were opened and stripped of their goods. A licentious plundering took place. Much was carried off, and more was wantonly destroyed. These irregularities were forbidden in orders, and the guilty threatened with death, but nevertheless every mischief which disappointed malice could suggest, was committed.

The British amounting to more than 7000 men, evacuated Boston, leaving their barracks standing, and also a number of pieces of cannon spiked, four large iron sea mortars, and stores, to the value of £30,000. They demolished the castle, and knocked off the trunnions of the cannon. Various incidents caused a delay of nine days after the evacuation, before they left Nantasket road.

This embarkation was attended with many circumstances of distress and embarrassment. On the departure of the royal army from Boston, a great number of the inhabitants attached to their sovereign, and afraid of public resentment, chose to abandon their country. From the great multitude about to depart, there was no possibility of procuring purchasers for their furniture, neither was there a sufficiency of vessels for its convenient transportation. Mutual jealousy subsisted between the army and navy; each charging the other as the cause of some part of their common distress. The army was full of discontent. Reinforcements though long promised, had not arrived. Both officers and soldiers thought themselves neglected. Five months had elapsed since they had received any advice of their destination. Wants and inconveniences increased their ill humour. Their intended voyage to Halifax subjected them to great dangers. The coast at all times hazardous, was eminently so at that tempestuous equinoctial season. They had reason to fear they
would be blown off to the West-Indies, and without a sufficient stock of provisions. They were also going to a barren country. To add to their difficulties, this dangerous voyage when completed, was directly so much out of their way. Their business lay to the southward, and they were going northward. Under all these difficulties, and with all these gloomy prospects, the fleet steered for Halifax. Contrary to appearances, the voyage thither was both short and prosperous. They remained there for some time, waiting for reinforcements and instructions from England. When the royal fleet and army departed from Boston, several ships were left behind for the protection of vessels coming from England, but the American privateers were so alert that they nevertheless made many prizes. Some of the vessels which they captured, were laden with arms and warlike stores. Some transports, with troops on board, were also taken. These had run into the harbour, not knowing that the place was evacuated. The boats employed in the embarkation of the British troops, had scarcely completed their business when general Washington, with his army, marched into Boston. He was received with marks of approbation more flattering than the pomps of a triumph. The inhabitants released from the severities of a garrison life, and from the various indignities to which they were subjected, hailed him as their deliverer. Reciprocal congratulations between those who had been confined within the British lines, and those [who] were excluded from entering them, were exchanged with an ardor which cannot be described.

General Washington [265] was honoured by Congress with a vote of thanks. They also ordered a medal to be struck, with suitable devices to perpetuate the remembrance of the great event. The Massachusetts council and house of representatives complimented him in a joint address, in which they expressed their good wishes in the following words, “May you still go on approved by heaven—revered by all good men, and dreaded by those tyrants, who claim their fellow men as their property.” His answer was modest and proper.

The evacuation of Boston had been previously determined upon by the British ministry, from principles of political expedience. Being resolved to carry on the war for purposes affecting all the colonies, they conceived a central position to be preferable to Boston. Reasoning of this kind had induced the adoption of the measure, but the American works on Roxbury expedited its execution. The abandonment of their friends, and the withdrawing their forces from Boston, was the first act of a tragedy in which evacuations and retreats were the scenes which most frequently occurred, and the epilogue of which was a total evacuation of the United States.
CHAPTER XI

Transactions In Canada.

The tide of good fortune which in the autumn of 1775 flowed in upon general Montgomery, induced Congress to reinforce the army under his command. Chamblee, St. Johns, and Montreal having surrendered to the Americans, a fair prospect opened of expelling the British from Canada, and of annexing that province to the united colonies. While they were in imagination anticipating these events, the army in which they confided was defeated, and the general whom they adored was killed. The intelligence transmitted from general Montgomery, previous to his assault on Quebec, encouraged Congress to resolve that nine battalions should be kept up and maintained in Canada. The repulse of their army, [266] though discouraging, did not extinguish the ardor of the Americans. It was no sooner known, at headquarters in Cambridge, than general Washington convened a council of war by which it was resolved, “That as no troops could be spared from Cambridge, the colonies of Massachusetts, Connecticut and New-Hampshire, should be requested to raise three regiments and forward them to Canada.”

Congress also resolved to forward the reinforcements previously voted, and to raise four battalions in New-York, for the defence of that colony, and to garrison Crown-Point, and the several posts to the southward of that fortress. That the army might be supplied with blankets for this winter expedition, a committee was appointed to procure from householders, such as could be spared from their families. To obtain a supply of hard money for the use of the army in Canada, proper persons were employed to exchange paper money for specie. Such was the enthusiasm of the times that many thousand Mexican dollars were freely exchanged at par, by individuals for the paper bills of Congress. It was also resolved, to raise a corps of artillery for this service, and to take into the pay of the colonies one thousand Canadians, in addition to colonel Livingston’s regiment. Moses Hazen, a native of Massachusetts, who had resided many years in Canada, was appointed to the command of this new corps.

Congress addressed a letter to the Canadians in which they observed, “Such is the lot of human nature, that the best of causes are subject to vicissitudes; but generous souls, enlightened and warmed with the fire of liberty, become more resolute as difficulties increase.” They stated to them, “that eight battalions were raising to proceed to their province, and that if more force was necessary it should be sent.” They requested them to seize with eagerness the favourable opportunity then offered to co-operate in the present glorious enterprise, and they advised them to establish associations in their different parishes—to elect deputies for forming a provincial assembly, and for representing them in Congress.
The cause of the Americans had received such powerful aid from many patriotic publications in their gazettes, [267] and from the fervent exhortations of popular preachers, connecting the cause of liberty with the animating principles of religion, that it was determined to employ these two powerful instruments of revolutions—printing and preaching, to operate on the minds of the Canadians. A complete apparatus for printing, together with a printer and a clergyman, were therefore sent into Canada.

Congress also appointed Dr. Franklin, Mr. Chase and Mr. Carrol, the two first of whom were members of their body, and the last a respectable gentleman of the Roman catholic persuasion to proceed to Canada with the view of gaining over the people of that colony to the cause of America, and authorised them to promise on behalf of the united colonies, that Canada should be received into their association on equal terms, and also that the inhabitants thereof should enjoy the free exercise of their religion, and the peaceable possession of all their ecclesiastical property.

The desire of effecting something decisive in Canada before the approaching spring, would permit relief to ascend the river St. Lawrence, added to the enthusiasm of the day, encountered difficulties which, in less animated times, would be reckoned unsurmountable. Arthur St. Clair who was appointed colonel of one of the Pennsylvania regiments received his recruiting orders on the 10th of January, and notwithstanding the shortness of the period, his regiment was not only raised, but six companies of it had, in this extreme cold season, completed their march from Pennsylvania to Canada, a distance of several hundred miles, and on the eleventh of April following, joined the American army before Quebec.

Though Congress and the states made great exertions to support the war in Canada, yet from the fall of Montgomery their interest in that colony daily declined. The reduction of Quebec was an object to which their resources were inadequate. Their unsuccessful assault on Quebec made an impression both on the Canadians and Indians unfavorable to their views.

A woman infected with the small-pox had either been sent out, or voluntarily came out of Quebec, and by mixing with the American soldiers [268] propagated that scourge of the new world to the great diminution of the effective force of their army. The soldiers inoculated themselves, though their officers issued positive orders to the contrary. By the first of May so many new troops had arrived that the American army, in name, amounted to 3000, but from the prevalence of the small-pox there were only 900 fit for duty. The increasing number of invalids retarded their military operations, and discouraged their friends, while the opposite party was buoyed up with the expectation that the advancing season would soon bring them relief. To these causes of the declining interest of Congress, it must be added that the affections of the Canadians were alienated. They had many and well founded complaints against the American soldiers. Unrestrained by the terror of civil law and refusing obedience to a military code, the hope of impunity and the love of plunder, led many of the invading army to practices not less disgraceful to themselves, than injurious to the cause in which they had taken arms. Not only the common soldiers but the officers of the American army deviated, in their intercourse with the Canadians, from the maxims of sound policy. Several of them
having been lately taken from obscure life were giddy with their exaltation. Far from home they were unawed by those checks which commonly restrain the ferocity of man.

The reduction of Chamblee, St. Johns’, and Montreal, together with the exposed situation of Quebec, being known in England, measures were without delay adopted by the British ministry to introduce into Canada, as soon as possible, a force sufficient for the double purpose of recovering what they had lost, and of prosecuting offensive operations from that quarter against the revolted colonies.

The van of this force made good its passage, very early in the spring, through the ice up the river St. Lawrence. The expectation of their coming had for some time damped the hopes of the besiegers, and had induced them to think of a retreat. The day before the first of the British reinforcements arrived, that measure was resolved upon by a council of war, and arrangements were made for carrying it into execution.

[269]
Governor Carleton was too great a proficient in the art of war, to delay seizing the advantages which the consternation of the besiegers, and the arrival of a reinforcement, afforded. A small detachment of soldiers and marines from the ships which had just ascended the river St. Lawrence, being landed and joined to the garrison in Quebec, he marched out at their head to attack the Americans. On his approach, he found every thing in confusion. The late besiegers abandoning their artillery and military stores, had in great precipitation retreated. In this manner at the expiration of five months, the mixed siege and blockade of Quebec was raised. The fortitude and perseverance of the garrison reflected honour on both officers and privates.

The reputation acquired by general Carleton in his military character, for bravely and judiciously defending the province committed to his care, was exceeded by the superior applause, merited from his exercise of the virtues of humanity and generosity. Among the numerous sick in the American hospitals, several incapable of being moved were left behind.

The victorious general proved himself worthy of success by his treatment of these unfortunate men, he not only fed and clothed them, but permitted them when recovered to return home, apprehending that fear might make some conceal themselves in the woods, rather than by applying for relief, make themselves known, he removed their doubts by a proclamation, in which he engaged, “that as soon as their health was restored, they should have free liberty of returning to the respective provinces.” This humane line of conduct was more injurious to the view of the leaders in the American councils, than the severity practised by other British commanders. The truly politic, as well as humane general Carleton, dismissed these prisoners after liberally supplying their wants with a recommendation, “to go home, mind their farms, and keep themselves and their neighbours from all participation in the unhappy war.”

The small force which arrived at Quebec early in May, was followed by several British regiments; together with [270] the

May 5
May 10

1776

1776
Brunswick troops in such a rapid succession, that in a few weeks the whole was estimated at 13,000 men.

The Americans retreated forty-five miles before they stopped. After a short halt, they proceeded to the Sorel, at which place they threw up some slight works for their safety. They were there joined by some battalions coming to reinforce them. About this time general Thomas, the commander in chief in Canada was seized with the small pox and died, having forbidden his men to inoculate, he conformed to his rule, and refused to avail himself of that precaution. On his death, the command devolved at first on general Arnold, and afterwards on general Sullivan. It soon became evident, that the Americans must abandon the whole province of Canada.

From a desire to do something which might counterbalance in the minds of the Canadians, the unfavorable impression which this farther retreat would communicate, General Thomson projected an attack on the British post at the Three Rivers. This lies about half way between Quebec and Montreal, and is so called from the vicinity of one of the branches of a large river, whose waters are discharged through three mouths into the St. Lawrence. With this view a detachment of six hundred men was put under the command of colonel St. Clair. At their head he advanced to the village of Nicolette. When every thing was ready for the enterprise, intelligence was received that six transports escorted by two frigates from Quebec, had arrived and brought a large addition to the late force at the Three Rivers. This caused some new movements, and a delay till more troops could be brought forward. General Thomson then came on with a reinforcement and took the command of the whole. It was determined to make the proposed attack in four different places at the same time. One division commanded by colonel Wayne was to gain the eastern extremity of the town. One commanded by colonel Maxwell was to enter from the northward about the center, and the other two divisions commanded by colonels Sinclair and Irvine were to enter from the westward. The whole [271] having embarked at midnight, landed at the Point du Lac, about three hours before day. At some distance from this point, there are two ways of approaching Three Rivers, one by a road that leads along the banks of the St. Lawrence, the other by a road almost parallel, but at a considerable distance. It had been determined to advance on the last. Intelligence was brought to general Thomson, soon after his landing that a party of 3 or 400 men were posted at three miles distance. The troops were instantly put in motion to dislodge them. The intelligence proved to be false but it had carried the detachment, some distance beyond the point, where the roads separated. To have returned, would have consumed time that could not be spared as the day was fast approaching. It was therefore resolved to proceed in a diagonal direction towards the road they had left. After being much retarded by very difficult grounds, they arrived at a morass which seemed impassable. Here the day broke, when they were six miles from the object. General Thomson suspecting the fidelity of his guides, put them under arrest—reversed the order of his march, and again reached the road by the river. He had advanced but a small distance before he was fired upon by two armed vessels. All expectation of succeeding by surprise, was now at an end. It was therefore instantly determined to make an open attack. The sun was rising. The drums were ordered to beat, and the troops moved on with the greatest alacrity. Having advanced three miles...
farther, the ships of war began to fire on them. The American officer who led the advance, struck into a road on the left, which also led to the town, and was covered from the fire of the ships. This last road was circuitous and led through a vast tract of woodland at that season almost impassable. He nevertheless entered the wood, and the rest of the detachment followed. After incredible labour, and wading a rivulet breast deep, they gained the open country north of the village. A party of the British were soon discovered about a mile to the left of the Americans, and between them and the town. Colonel Wayne, ardent for action immediately attacked them. The onset was gallant [272] and vigorous, but the contest was unequal. The Americans were soon repulsed and forced to retreat. In the beginning of the action general Thomson left the main body of his corps to join that which was engaged. The woods were so thick, that it was difficult for any person in motion, after losing sight of an object to recover it. The general therefore never found his way back. The situation of colonel St. Clair, the next in command became embarrassing. In his opinion a retreat was necessary, but not knowing the precise situation of his superior officer, and every moment expecting his return, he declined giving orders for that purpose. At last when the British were discovered on the river road, advancing in a direction to gain the rear of the Americans, colonel St. Clair in the absence of gen. Thomson, ordered a retreat. This was made by treading back their steps through the same dismal swamp by which they had advanced. The British marched directly for the point du Lac with the expectation of securing the American batteaux. On their approach major Wood, in whose care they had been left, retired with them to the Sorel. At the point du Lac, the British halted and took a very advantageous position. As soon as it was discovered that the Americans had retired, a party of the British pursued them. When the former arrived near the place of their embarkation, they found a large party of their enemies posted in their front, at the same time that another was only three quarters of a mile in their rear. Here was a new and trying dilemma, and but little time left for consideration. There was an immediate necessity, either to lay down their arms or attempt by a sudden March to turn the party in front and get into the country beyond it. The last was thought practicable. Colonel St. Clair having some knowledge of the country from his having served in it in the preceding war, gave them a route by the Acadian village where the river de Loups is fordable. They had not advanced far when colonel St. Clair found himself unable to proceed from a wound, occasioned by a root which had penetrated through his shoe. His men offered to carry him, but this generous proposal was declined. [273] He and two or three officers, who having been worn down with fatigue, remained behind with him, found an asylum under cover of a large tree which had been blown up by the roots. They had not been long in this situation when they heard a firing from the British in almost all directions. They nevertheless lay still, and in the night stole off from the midst of surrounding foes. They were now pressed with the importunate cravings of hunger, for they were entering on the third day without food. After wandering for some time, they accidentally found some peasants, who entertained them with great hospitality. In a few days they joined the army at Sorel, and had the satisfaction to find that the greatest part of the detachment had arrived safe before them. In their way through the country, although they might in almost every step of it have been made prisoners, and had reason to fear that the inhabitants from the prospect of reward, would have been
tempted to take them, yet they met with neither injury nor insult. General Thomson
was not so fortunate. After having lost the troops and falling in with colonel Irvine,
and some other officers, they wandered the whole night in thick swamps, without
being able to find their way out. Failing in their attempts to gain the river, they had
taken refuge in a house, and were there made prisoners.

The British forces having arrived, and a considerable body of them having
rendezvoused at the Three Rivers, a serious pursuit of the American army
commenced. Had Sir Guy Carleton taken no pains to cut off their retreat, and at once
attacked their post, or rather their fortified camp at Sorel, it would probably have
fallen into his hands; but either the bold, though unsuccessful attack, at the Three
rivers had taught him to respect them, or he wished to reduce them without bloodshed.
In the pursuit he made three divisions of his army, and arranged them so as to
embrace the whole American encampment, and to command it in every part. The
retreat was delayed so long that the Americans evacuated Sorel, only about two hours
before one division of the British made its appearance.

While the Americans were retreating, they were daily assailed by
the remonstrances of the inhabitants of Canada, who had either
joined or befriended them. Great numbers of Canadians had taken a decided part in
their favour, rendered them essential services, and thereby incurred the heavy
penalties annexed to the crime of supporting rebellion. These, though Congress had
assured them but a few months before “that they would never abandon them to the
fury of their common enemies” were from the necessity of the case left exposed to the
resentment of their provincial rulers. Several of them with tears in their eyes,
expostulated with the retreating army, and bewailing their hard fate prayed for
support. The only relief the Americans could offer was an assurance of continued
protection, if they retreated with them, but this was a hard alternative to men who had
wives, children and immovable effects. They generally concluded, that it was the least
of two evils to cast themselves on the mercy of that government, against which they
had offended.

The distresses of the retreating army were great. The British were close on their rear
and threatening them with destruction. The unfurnished state of the colonies in point
of ordnance, imposed a necessity of preserving their cannon. The men were obliged to
drag their loaded bateaus up the rapids by mere strength, and when they were to the
middle in water. The retreating army was also incumbered with great numbers
labouring under the small-pox, and other diseases. Two regiments, at one time, had
not a single man in health. Another had only six, and a fourth only forty, and two
more were in nearly the same condition.

To retreat in face of an enemy is at all times hazardous; but on this occasion it was
attended with an unusual proportion of embarrassments. General Sullivan, who
conducted the retreat, nevertheless acted with so much judgment and propriety, that
the baggage and public stores were saved, and the numerous sick brought off. The
American army reached Crown-Point on the first of July, and at that place made their
first stand.
A short time before the Americans evacuated the province of Canada, General Arnold convened the merchants of Montreal, and proposed to them to furnish a quantity of specified articles, for the use of the army in the service of Congress. While they were deliberating on the subject, he placed centinels at their shop doors, and made such arrangements, that what was at first only a request, operated as a command. A great quantity of goods were taken on pretence that they were wanted for the use of the American army, but in their number were many articles only serviceable to women, and to persons in civil life. His nephew soon after opened a store in Albany, and publicly disposed of goods which had been procured at Montreal.

The possession of Canada so eminently favoured the plans of defence adopted by Congress, that the province was evacuated with great reluctance. The Americans were not only mortified at the disappointment of their favourite scheme, of annexing it as a fourteenth link in the chain of their confederacy, but apprehended the most serious consequences from the ascending of the British power in that quarter. Anxious to preserve a footing there, they had persevered for a long time in stemming the tide of unfavorable events.

General Gates was about this time appointed to command in Canada, but on coming to the knowledge of the late events in that province, he concluded to stop short within the limits of New-York. The scene was henceforth reversed. Instead of meditating the recommencement of offensive operations, that army which had lately excited so much terror in Canada, was called upon to be prepared for repelling an invasion threatened from that province.

The attention of the Americans being exclusively fixed on plans of defence, their general officers commanding in the northern department, were convened to deliberate on the place and means most suitable for that purpose. To form a judgment on this subject, a recollection of the events of the late war, between France and England, was of advantage. The same ground was to be fought over, and the same posts to be again contended for. On the confines of Lake George and Lake Champlain two inland seas, which stretch almost from the sources of Hudson’s river to the St. Lawrence, are situated the famous posts of Ticonderoga and Crown-Point. These are of primary necessity to any power which contends for the possession of the adjacent country, for they afford the most convenient stand either for its annoyance or defence. In the opinion of some American officers, Crown-Point to which the army on the evacuation of Canada had retreated, was the most proper place for erecting works of defence, but it was otherwise determined, by the council convened, on this occasion. It was also by their advice resolved, to move lower down, and to make the principal work on the strong ground east of Ticonderoga, and especially by every means to endeavour to maintain a naval superiority in Lake Champlain. In conformity to these resolutions general Gates with about 12,000 men, which collected in the course of the summer, was fixed in command of Ticonderoga, and a fleet was constructed at Skenesborough. This was carried on with so much rapidity, that in a short time there were afloat, in Lake Champlain, one sloop, three schooners, and six gondolas, carrying in the whole 58 guns, 86 swivels, and 440 men.
Six other vessels were also nearly ready for launching at the same time. The fleet was put under the command of general Arnold, and he was instructed by general Gates, to proceed beyond Crown-Point, down Lake Champlain, to the Split Rock; but most peremptorily restrained from advancing any farther, as security against an apprehended invasion was the ultimate end of the armament.

The expulsion of the American invaders from Canada, was but a part of the British designs in that quarter. They urged the pursuit no farther than St. John’s, but indulged the hope of being soon in a condition for passing the lakes, and penetrating through the country to Albany, so as to form a communication with New-York. The objects they had in view were great, and the obstacles in the way of their accomplishment equally so. [277]

Before they could advance with any prospect of success, a fleet superior to that of the Americans on the lakes, was to be constructed. The materials of some large vessels were, for this purpose, brought from England, but their transportation, and the labour necessary to put them together required both time and patience. The spirit of the British commanders rose in proportion to the difficulties which were to be encountered. Nevertheless it was so late as the month of October, before their fleet was prepared to face the American naval force, on Lake Champlain. The former consisted of the ship Inflexible, mounting 18 twelve pounders, which was so expeditiously constructed, that she sailed from St. John’s 28 days after laying her keel. One schooner mounting 14 and another 12 six pounders. A flat bottomed radeau carrying six 24 and six 12 pounders, besides howitzers, and a gondola with seven nine pounders. There were also twenty smaller vessels with brass field pieces, from 9 to 24 pounders, or with howitzers. Some long boats were furnished in the same manner. An equal number of large boats acted as tenders. Besides these vessels of war, there was a vast number destined for the transportation of the army, its stores, artillery, baggage and provisions. The whole was put under the command of captain Pringle. The naval force of the Americans, from the deficiency of means, was far short of what was brought against them. Their principal armed vessel was a schooner, which mounted only 12 six and four pounders, and their whole fleet in addition to this, consisted of only fifteen vessels of inferior force.

No one step could be taken towards accomplishing the designs of the British, on the northern frontiers of New-York, till they had the command of Lake Champlain. With this view their fleet proceeded up the lake, and engaged the Americans. The wind was so unfavorable to the British, that their ship Inflexible, and some other vessel of force, could not be brought to action. This lessened the inequality between the contending fleets so much, that the principal damage sustained by the Americans, was the loss of a schooner and gondola. At the [278] approach of night the action was discontinued. The vanquished took the advantage, which the darkness afforded to make their escape. This was effected by general Arnold, with great judgment and ability. By the next morning the whole fleet under his command was out of sight. The British pursued with all the sail they could croud. The wind having become more favorable, they overtook the Americans, and brought them to action near Crown-Point.
A smart engagement ensued and was well supported on both sides for about two hours. Some of the American vessels which were most ahead escaped to Ticonderoga. Two gallies and five gondolas remained and resisted an unequal force, with a spirit approaching to desperation. One of the gallies struck and was taken. General Arnold, though he knew that to escape was impossible, and to resist unavailing, yet instead of surrendering, determined that his people should not become prisoners, nor his vessels a re-inforcement to the British. This spirited resolution was executed with a judgment, equal to the boldness, with which it had been adopted. He ran the Congress galley, on board of which he was, together with the five gondolas on shore, in such a position, as enabled him to land his men and blow up the vessels. In the execution of this perilous enterprise, he paid a romantic attention to a point of honour. He did not quit his own galley till she was in flames, lest the British should board her, and strike his flag. The result of this action, though unfavorable to the Americans, raised the reputation of general Arnold, higher than ever. In addition to the fame of a brave soldier, he acquired that of an able sea officer.

The American naval force being nearly destroyed, the British had undisputed possession of Lake Champlain. On this event a few continental troops which had been at Crown-Point, retired to their main body at Ticonderoga. General Carleton took possession of the ground from which they had retreated, and was there soon joined by his army. He sent out several reconnoitering parties, and at one time pushed forward a strong detachment on both sides of the lake, which approached near [279] to Ticonderoga.

Some British vessels appeared at the same time, within cannon shot of the American works, at that place. It is probable he had it in contemplation, if circumstances favoured to reduce the post, and that the apparent strength of the works, restrained him from making the attempt, and induced his return to Canada.

Such was the termination of the northern campaign in 1776. Though after the surrender of Montreal evacuations, defeats, and retreats, had almost uninterruptedly been the portion of the Americans, yet with respect to the great object of defence on the one side, and of conquest on the other, a whole campaign was gained to them, and lost to their adversaries.

The British had cleared Canada of its invaders, and destroyed the American fleet on the lakes, yet from impediments thrown in their way, they failed in their ulterior designs. The delays contrived by general Gates, retarded the British for so great a part of the summer, that by the time they had reached Ticonderoga, their retreat on account of the approaching winter, became immediately necessary. On the part of the Americans, some men, and a few armed vessels were lost, but time was gained, their army saved, and the frontier of the adjacent states secured from a projected invasion. On the part of the British, the object of a campaign, in which 13,000 men were employed, and near a million of money expended, was rendered in a great measure abortive.
CHAPTER XII


The operations carried on against the united colonies, in the year 1775, were adapted to cases of criminal combination among subjects not in arms. The military arrangements for that year, were therefore made on the idea of a trifling addition to a peace establishment. [280]

It was either not known, that a majority of the Americans had determined to resist the power of Great-Britain, rather than submit to the late coercive laws, or it was not believed that they had spirit sufficient to act in conformity to that determination. The propensity in human nature, to believe that to be true, which is wished to be so, had deceived the royal servants in America, and the British ministry in England, so far as to induce their general belief, that a determined spirit on the part of government, and a few thousand troops to support that determination, would easily compose the troubles in America. Their military operations in the year 1775, were therefore calculated on the small scale of strengthening the civil power, and not on the large one of resisting an organised army. Though it had been declared by parliament in February, 1775, that a rebellion existed in Massachusetts, yet it was not believed that the colonists would dare to abet their opposition by an armed force. The resistance made by the militia at Lexington, the consequent military arrangements adopted, first by Massachusetts, and afterwards by Congress, together with the defence of Bunker’s-hill, all conspired to prove that the Americans were far from being contemptible adversaries. The nation finding itself, by a fatal progression of the unhappy dispute, involved in a civil war, was roused to recollection. Though several corporate bodies, and sundry distinguished individuals in Great-Britain, were opposed to coercive measures, yet there was a majority for proceeding. The pride of the nation was interested in humbling the colonists, who had dared to resist the power which had lately triumphed over the combined force of France and Spain. The prospect of freeing their own estates from a part of the heavy taxes charged thereon, induced numbers of the landed gentlemen in Great-Britain to support the same measures. They conceived the coercion of the colonies to be the most direct mode of securing their contribution towards sinking the national debt. Influenced by these opinions, such not only justified the adoption of rigorous measures, but cheerfully consented to present additional taxes with the same spirit [281] which induces litigants in private life to advance money for forwarding a lawsuit, from the termination of which great profits are expected. Lord North, the prime minister of England, finding himself supported by so many powerful interests, was encouraged to proceed. He had already subdued a powerful party in the city of London, and triumphed over the East-India company. The submission of the colonies was only wanting to complete the glory of his administration. Previous success emboldened him to attempt the arduous business. He flattered himself that the accomplishment of it would, not only restore peace to the
empire, but give a brilliancy to his name, far exceeding that of any of his predecessors.

Such was the temper of a great part of the nation, and such the ambitious views of its prime minister, when the parliament was convened, on the 24th of October 1775. In the speech from the throne great complaints were made of the leaders in the colonies, who were said by their misrepresentatives to have infused into the minds of the deluded multitude opinions, repugnant to their constitutional subordination, and afterwards to have proceeded to the commencement of hostilities, and the usurpation of the whole powers of government. His majesty also charged his subjects in America with “meaning only to amuse by vague expressions of attachment to the Parent State, while they were preparing for a general revolt.” And he farther asserted “that the rebellious war now levied by them was become more general, and manifestly carried on for the purpose of establishing an independent empire, and that it was become the art of wisdom, and in its effects, of clemency to put a speedy end to these disorders, by the most decisive exertions.”

Information was also given, that “the most friendly offers of foreign assistance had been received, and that his majesty’s electoral troops were sent to the garrison of Gibraltar and Port Mahon, in order that a large number of the established forces of the kingdom might be applied to the maintenance of its authority.” The severity of these assertions was mitigated by a declaration, “that when the unhappy and deluded multitude against whom this force should be directed, would become sensible of their error, his majesty would be ready to receive the misled with tenderness and mercy,” “and that to prevent inconveniences, he should give authority to certain persons on the spot, to grant general or particular pardons and indemnities to such as should be disposed to return to their allegiance.” The sentiments expressed in this speech and the heavy charges therein laid against the colonists, were re-echoed in addresses to the king from both houses of parliament, but not without a spirited protest in the house of lords. In this, nineteen dissenting members asserted the American war to be “unjust and impolitic in its principles, and fatal in its consequences.” They also declared, that they could not consent to an address, “which might deceive his majesty and the public into a belief of the confidence of their house in the present ministers, who had disgraced parliament, deceived the nation—lost the colonies, and involved them in a civil war against their clearest interests, and upon the most unjustifiable grounds wantonly spilling the blood of thousands of their fellow subjects.”

The sanction of parliament being obtained for a vigorous prosecution of the American war, estimates for the public service, were agreed to on the idea of operating against the colonies as an hostile armed foreign power. To this end it was voted to employ 28,000 sea-men, and 55,900 land forces, and the sanction of authority was not long after given to measures for engaging foreign mercenaries. No ministry had in any preceding war exerted themselves more to prosecute military operations against alien enemies, than the present to make the ensuing campaign decisive of the dispute between the Mother Country and the colonies.

One legislative act was still wanting to give full efficacy to the intended prosecution of hostilities. This was brought into
parliament in a bill interdicting all trade and intercourse with the thirteen united colonies. By it all property of Americans, whether of ships or goods, on the high seas, or in harbour, was declared “to be forfeited to the captors, being the officers and crews of his majesty’s ships of war.” It farther enacted [283] “that the masters, crews and other persons found on board captured American vessels, should be entered on board his majesty’s vessels of war, and there considered to be in his majesty’s service to all intents and purposes, as if they had entered of their own accord.” This bill also authorised the crown to appoint commissioners, who over and above granting pardons to individuals were empowered to “enquire into general and particular grievances, and to determine whether any colony or part of a colony was returned to that state of obedience, which might entitle it to be received within the king’s peace and protection.” In that case upon a declaration from the commissioners “the restrictions of the proposed law were to cease.”

It was said in favour of this bill,

that as the Americans were already in a state of war, it became necessary that hostilities should be carried on against them, as was usual against alien enemies. That the more vigorously and extensively military operations were prosecuted, the sooner would peace and order be restored. That as the commissioners went out with the sword in one hand, and terms of conciliation in the other, it was in the power of the colonists to prevent the infliction of any real or apparent severities, in the proposed statute.

In opposition to it, it was said, “that treating the Americans as a foreign nation, was chalking out the way for their independence.” One member observed, that as the indiscriminate rapine of property authorised by the bill, would oblige the colonists to coalesce as one man, its title ought to be “A bill for carrying more effectually into execution the resolves of Congress.” The clause for vesting the property of the seizures in the captors, was reprobated as tending to extinguish in the breasts of seamen the principles of patriotism—of national pride and glory, and to substitute in their room habits of cruelty, of piracy and robbery. But of all parts of this bill none was so severely condemned as that clause by which persons taken on board the American vessels, were indiscriminately compelled to serve as common sailors in British ships of war. This was said to be “a refinement of [284] tyranny worse than death.”

It was also said, “That no man could be despoiled of his goods as a foreign enemy, and at the same time obliged to serve as a citizen, and that compelling captives to bear arms against their families, kindred, friends and country—and after being plundered themselves to become accomplices in plundering their brethren, was unexampled, except among pirates, the outlaws and enemies of human society.” To all these high charges the ministry replied, “that the measure was an act of grace and favour, for” said they, “the crews of American vessels, instead of being put to death, the legal punishment of their demerits, as traitors and rebels, are by this law to be rated on the king’s books, and treated as if they were on the same footing with a great body of his most useful and faithful subjects.” It was also said, “that their pay and emoluments in the service of their
lawful sovereign would be a compensation for all scruples that might arise from the
supposed violation of their principles.”

In the progress of the debates on this bill, lord Mansfield declared, “that the questions
of original right and wrong were no longer to be considered—that they were engaged
in a war, and must use their utmost efforts to obtain the ends proposed by it, that they
must either fight or be pursued, and that the justice of the cause must give way to their
present situation.” Perhaps no speech in or out of parliament operated more
extensively on the irritated minds of the colonists than this one.

The great abilities and profound legal knowledge of lord Mansfield were both known
and admired in America. That this illustrious oracle of law should declare from the
seat of legislation, that the justice of the cause was no longer to be regarded, excited
the astonishment, and cemented the union of the colonists. “Great-Britain, said they,
has commenced war against us for maintaining our constitutional liberties, and her
lawgivers now declare they must proceed without any retrospect to the merits of the
original ground of dispute. Our peace and happiness must be sacrificed to British
honour and consistency, in their continuing to prosecute [285] an unjust invasion of
our rights.”

A number of lords, as usual, entered a spirited protest against the
bill, but it was carried by a great majority in both houses of
parliament, and soon after received the royal assent.

This law arrives in the colonies in March 1776. The effects resulting from it were
such as had been predicted by its opposers. It not only united the colonies in resisting
Great-Britain, but produced a favorable opinion of independence in the minds of
thousands, who previously reprobated that measure. It was considered from New-
Hampshire to Georgia, as a legal discharge from allegiance to their native sovereign.
What was wanting to produce a decided majority of the party for breaking off all
connexion with Great-Britain, was speedily obtained from the irritation excited by the
hiring of foreign troops to fight against the colonists. This measure was nearly
coincident with the ratification of the prohibitory law just mentioned, and intelligence
of both arrived in the colonies about the same time.

The treaties which had been lately concluded with the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel, the
duke of Brunswic, and the hereditary prince of Hesse Cassel for hiring their troops to
the king of Great-Britain, to be employed in the American service being laid before
the house of commons, a motion was made thereon for referring them to the
committee of supply.

This occasioned a very interesting debate on the propriety of
employing foreign troops against the Americans. The measure
was supported on the necessity of prosecuting the war, and the impracticability of
raising a sufficient number of domestic levies. It was also urged “that foreign troops
inspired with the military maxims, and ideas of implicit submission, would be less apt
to be biassed by that false lenity, which native soldiers might indulge, at the expence
of national interest.” It was said,
Are we to sit still and suffer an unprovoked rebellion to terminate in the formation of an independent hostile empire? Are we to suffer our colonies, the object of the great national expence, and of two bloody wars to be lost forever to us, and given away to strangers from a scruple of employing foreign troops to preserve our just rights, over colonies for which we have paid so dear a purchase? As the Americans by refusing the obedience and taxes of subjects, deny themselves to be a part of the British empire, and make themselves foreigners, they cannot complain that foreigners are employed against them.

On the other side the measure was severely condemned. The necessity of the war was denied, and the nation was represented as disgraced by applying to the petty princes of Germany, for succours against her own rebellious subjects. The tendency of the example to induce the Americans to form alliances with foreign powers, was strongly urged. It was said,

hitherto the colonists have ventured to commit themselves singly in this arduous contest, without having recourse to foreign aid, but it is not to be doubted, that in future they will think themselves fully justified both by our example, and the laws of self preservation, to engage foreigners to assist them in opposing those mercenaries, whom we are about to transport for their destruction. Nor is it doubtful that in case of their application, European powers of a rank far superior to that of those petty princes, to whom we have so abjectly sued for aid, will consider themselves to be equally entitled to interfere in the quarrel between us and our colonies.

The supposition of the Americans receiving aid from France or Spain, was on this and several other occasions ridiculed, on the idea that these powers would not dare to set to their own colonies the dangerous example of encouraging those of Great-Britain, in opposing their sovereign. It was also supposed, that they would be influenced by considerations of future danger to their American possessions, from the establishment of an independent empire in their vicinity.

In this session of parliament between the 26th of October, 1775, and the 23d of May 1776, the ultimate plan for reducing the colonies was completely fixed. The Americans were declared out of the royal protection, and 16,000 foreign mercenaries, employed by national authority, to effect their subjugation. These measures induced Congress in the following summer to declare themselves independent, and to seek for foreign aid: Events which shall be hereafter more fully explained.

Parliamentary sanction for carrying on the war against the colonists, as against alien enemies being obtained, it became necessary to fix on a commander of the royal forces to be employed on this occasion. This as a matter of right was, in the first instance, offered to general Oglethorpe, as being the first on the list of general officers. To the surprise of the minister that respectable veteran, readily accepted the command, on condition of his being properly supported. A numerous well appointed army and a powerful fleet were promised him, to which he replied, “I will undertake the business without a man or a ship of war, provided you will authorise me to assure
the colonists on my arrival among them, that you will do them justice.” He added
farther, “I know the people of America well, and am satisfied, that his majesty has not
in any part of his dominions, more obedient, or more loyal subjects. You may secure
their obedience by doing them justice, but you will never subdue them by force of
arms.” These opinions so favourable to the Americans, proved general Oglethorpe to
be an improper person for the purpose intended by the British ministry. He was
therefore passed over, and the command given to Sir William Howe.

It was resolved to open the campaign, with such a powerful force as “would look
down all opposition, and effectuate submission without bloodshed,” and to direct its
operations to the accomplishment of three objects. The first was the relief of Quebec,
and the recovery of Canada, which also included a subsequent invasion of the
northwestern frontiers of the adjacent provinces. The second was a strong impression
on some of the southern colonies. The third and principal, was to take possession of
New-York, with a force sufficiently powerful to keep possession of Hudson’s-River,
and form a line of communication with the royal army in Canada, or to over-run the
adjacent country.

The partial success of the first part of this plan, has been in the preceding chapter
explained. The execution of the second part was committed to general Clinton,
and Sir Peter Parker. The former with a small force having called at New-York, and
also visited in Virginia lord Dunmore, the late royal governor of that colony, and
finding that nothing could be done at either place, proceeded to Cape-Fear-River. At
that place he issued a proclamation from on board the Pallas transport, offering free
pardon to all such as should lay down their arms, excepting Cornelius Hasnett, and
Robert Howe, but the recent defeat of the regulators and Highlanders, restrained even
their friends from paying any attention to this act of grace.

At Cape-Fear a junction was formed between Sir Henry Clinton, and Sir Peter Parker,
the latter of whom had sailed with his squadron directly from Europe. They concluded
to attempt the reduction of Charleston as being, of all places within the line of their
instructions, the object at which they could strike with the greatest prospect of
advantage. They had 2,800 land forces, which they hoped, with the co-operation of
their shipping, would be fully sufficient.

For some months past every exertion had been made to put the colony of South-
 Carolina, and especially its capital Charleston, in a respectable posture of defence. In
subserviency to this view, works had been erected on Sullivan’s island, which is
situated so near the channel leading up to the town, as to be a convenient post for
annoying vessels approaching it.

Sir Peter Parker attacked the fort on that island, with two fifty gun ships, the Bristol
and Experiment, four frigates, the Active, Acteon, Solebay and Syron, each of 28
guns. The Sphynx of 20 guns, the Friendship armed vessel of 22 guns, Ranger sloop,
and Thunder bomb, each of 8 guns. On the fort were mounted 26 cannon, 26, 18 and 9
pounders. The attack commenced between ten and eleven in the forenoon, and was
continued for upwards of ten hours. The garrison consisting of 375 regulars and a few
militia, under the command of colonel Moultrie, made a most gallant defence. They fired deliberately, for the most part took [289] aim and seldom missed their object. The ships were torn almost to pieces, and the killed and wounded on board exceeded 200 men. The loss of the garrison was only ten men killed, and 22 wounded. The fort being built of palmetto, was little damaged. The shot which struck it were ineffectually buried in its soft wood. General Clinton had some time before the engagement, landed with a number of troops on Long-Island, and it was expected that he would have co-operated with Sir Peter Parker, by crossing over the narrow passage, which divides the two islands, and attacking the fort in its unfinished rear; but the extreme danger to which he must unavoidably have exposed his men, induced him to decline the perilous attempt. Colonel Thomson with 7 or 800 men was stationed at the east end of Sullivan’s island, to oppose their crossing. No serious attempt was made to land either from the fleet, or the detachment commanded by Sir Henry Clinton. The firing ceased in the evening, and soon after the ships slipped their cables. Before morning they had retired about two miles from the island. Within a few days more the troops re-embarked and the whole sailed from New-York. The thanks of Congress were given to general Lee, who had been sent on by Congress to take the command in Carolina, and also to colonels Moultrie and Thomson, for their good conduct on this memorable day. In compliment to the commanding officer the fort from that time was called Fort Moultrie.

During the engagement the inhabitants stood with arms in their hands at their respective posts, prepared to receive the enemy wherever they might land. Impressed with high ideas of British power and bravery, they were apprehensive that the fort would be either silenced or passed, and that they should be called to immediate action. They were cantoned in the various landing places near Charleston, and their resolution was fixed to meet the invaders at the water’s edge, and dispute every inch of ground, trusting the event to heaven.

By the repulse of this armament the southern states obtained a respite from the calamities of war for two years and a half. The defeat the British met with at Charleston, [290] seemed in some measure to counterbalance the unfavourable impression made, by their subsequent successes, to the northward. Throughout the whole summer, and till the close of the year, Congress had little else than the victory on Sullivan’s island, to console them under the various evacuations, retreats, and defeats, to which, as shall hereafter be related, their armies were obliged to submit in every other part of the union. The event of the expedition contributed greatly to establish the cause which it was intended to overset. In opposition to the bold assertions of some, and the desponding fears of others, experience proved that America might effectually resist a British fleet and army. Those, who from interested motives had abetted the royal government, ashamed of their opposition to the struggles of an infant people for their dearest rights, retired into obscurity.

The effects of this victory, in animating the Americans, were much greater than could be warranted, by the circumstances of the action. As it was the first attack made by the British navy, its unsuccessful issue inspired a confidence which a more exact knowledge of military calculations would have corrected. The circumstance of its
happening in the early part of the war, and in one of the weaker provinces, were happily instrumental in dispelling the gloom which overshadowed the minds of many of the colonists, on hearing of the powerful fleets and numerous armies which were coming against them.

The command of the force which was designed to operate against New-York in this campaign, was given to admiral lord Howe, and his brother Sir William, officers who, as well from their personal characters, as the known bravery of their family, stood high in the confidence of the British nation. To this service was allotted a very powerful army, consisting of about 30,000 men. This force was far superior to any thing that America had heretofore seen. The troops were amply provided with artillery, military stores, and warlike materials of every kind, and were supported by a numerous fleet. The admiral and general, in addition to their military powers, were appointed commissioners for restoring peace to the colonies.

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General Howe having in vain waited two months at Halifax for his brother, and the expected re-inforcements from England, impatient of farther delays, sailed from that harbour, with the force which he had previously commanded in Boston, and directing his course towards New-York, arrived in the latter end of June, off Sandy-Hook. Admiral lord Howe, with part of the re-inforcement from England, arrived at Halifax, soon after his brother’s departure.

Without dropping anchor he followed, and soon after joined him near Staten-Island. The British general, on his approach, found every part of New-York island, and the most exposed parts of Long-Island fortified and well defended by artillery. About fifty British transports anchored near Staten-Island, which had not been so much the object of attention. The inhabitants thereof, either from fear, policy, or affection, expressed great joy on the arrival of the royal forces. General Howe was there met by Tryon, late governor of the province, and by several of the loyalists, who had taken refuge with him in an armed vessel. He was also joined by about sixty persons from New-Jersey, and 200 of the inhabitants of Staten-Island were embodied, as a royal militia. From these appearances, great hopes were indulged that as soon as the army was in a condition to penetrate into the country, and protect the loyalists, such numbers would flock to their standard as would facilitate the attainment of the objects of the campaign.

On the fourth day after the British transports appeared off Sandy-Hook. Congress, though fully informed of the numbers and appointment of the force about to be employed against the colonies, ratified their famous declaration of independence. This was publicly read to the American army, and received by them with unfeigned acclamations of joy. Though it was well known, that Great-Britain had employed a force of 55,000 men, to war upon the new-formed states, and that the continental army was not near equal to half that number, and only engaged for a few months, and that Congress was without any assurance of foreign aid, yet both the American [292] officers and privates gave every evidence
of their hearty approbation of the decree which severed the colonies from Great-Britain, and submitted to the decision of the sword, whether they should be free states, or conquered provinces. Now, said they, “we know the ground on which we stand. Now we are a nation. No more shall the opprobrious term of rebel, with any appearance of justice, be applied to us. Should the fortune of war throw us into the hands of our enemies, we may expect the treatment of prisoners, and not the punishment of rebels. The prize for which we contend is of such magnitude that we may freely risque our lives to obtain it.”

It had early occurred to general Washington, that the possession of New-York, would be with the British a favourite object. Its central situation and contiguity to the ocean, enabled them to carry with facility the war to any part of the sea coast. The possession of it was rendered still more valuable by the ease with which it could be maintained. Surrounded on all sides by water, it was defensible by a small number of British ships, against adversaries whose whole navy consisted only of a few frigates. Hudson’s river, being navigable for ships of the largest size to a great distance, afforded an opportunity of severing the eastern from the more southern states, and of preventing almost any communication between them.

From these well known advantages, it was presumed by the Americans, that the British would make great exertions to effect the reduction of New-York. General Lee, while the British were yet in possession of the capital of Massachusetts had been detached from Cambridge, to put Long-Island and New-York into a posture of defence. As the departure of the British from Boston became more certain, the probability of their instantly going to New-York, increased the necessity of collecting a force for its safety.

It had been therefore agreed in a council of war, that five regiments, together with a rifle battalion should march without delay to New-York, and that the states of New-York and New-Jersey should be requested to furnish the former two thousand, and the latter one thousand men for its immediate defence.

General Washington soon followed, and early in April fixed his head quarters in that city. A new distribution of the American army took place. Part was left in Massachusetts. Between two and three thousand were ordered to Canada: But the greater part rendezvoused at New-York.

Experience had taught the Americans the difficulty of attacking an army, after it had effected a lodgment. They therefore made strenuous exertions to prevent the British from enjoying the advantages in New-York, which had resulted from their having been permitted to land and fortify themselves in Boston. The sudden commencement of hostilities in Massachusetts, together with the previous undisturbed landing of the royal army, allowed no time for deliberating on a system of war. A change of circumstances indicated the propriety of fixing on a plan for conducting the defence of the new formed states. On this occasion general Washington, after much thought, determined on a war of posts. This mode of conducting military operations gave confidence to the Americans, and besides, it both retarded and alarmed their adversaries. The soldiers in the American army were new levies, and had not yet learned to stand uncovered, before the instruments of death. Habituating them to the
sound of fire arms, while they were sheltered from danger, was one step towards inspiring them with a portion of mechanical courage. The British remembered Bunker's-hill, and had no small reverence for even slight fortifications, when defended by freemen. From views of this kind, works were erected in and about New-York, on Long Island, and the heights of Haerlem. These, besides batteries, were field redoubts, formed of earth with a parapet and ditch. The former were sometimes fraised, and the latter palisadoed, but they were in no instance formed to sustain a siege. Slight as they were, the campaign was nearly wasted away before they were so far reduced, as to permit the royal army to penetrate into the country.

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The war having taken a more important turn than in the preceding year had been foreseen, Congress at the opening of the campaign, found themselves distitute of a force sufficient for their defence. They therefore in June determined on a plan to reinforce their continental army by bringing into the field, a new species of troops, that would be more permanent than the common militia, and yet more easily raised than regulars. With this view they instituted a flying camp, to consist of an intermediate corps, between regular soldiers and militia.

Ten thousand men were called for from the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware, to be in constant service to the first day of the ensuing December. Congress at the same time called for 13,800 of the common militia from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New-York, and New-Jersey. The men for forming the flying camp were generally procured, but there were great deficiencies of the militia, and many of those who obeyed their country’s call, so far as to turn out, manifested a reluctance to submit to the necessary discipline of camps.

The difficulty of providing the troops with arms while before Boston, was exceeded by the superior difficulty of supplying them, in their new position. By the returns of the garrison at fort Montgomery, in the Highlands in April, it appeared that there were 208 privates, and only forty one guns fit for use. In the garrison at fort Constitution, there were 136 men, and only 68 guns fit for use. Flints were also much wanted. Lead would have been equally deficient, had not a supply for the musquetry been obtained by stripping dwelling houses.

The uncertainty of the place, where the British would commence their operations, added much to the imbarrassment of general Washington. Not only each colony, but each seaport town, supposed itself to be the object of the British, and was ardent in its supplications, to the commander in chief for his puculiar attention. The people of Massachusetts were strongly impressed with an idea, that the evacuation of Boston was only a feint, and that the British army would soon return. They were for that reason very desirous, that the continental troops should not be withdrawn [295] from their state. The inhabitants of Rhode-Island urged in a long petition, that their maritime situation exposed them to uncommon danger, while their great exertions in fitting out armed vessels, had deprived them of many of their citizens. They therefore prayed for a body of continental soldiers, to be stationed for their constant and peculiar defence. So various were the applications for troops, so numerous the calls for arms, that a
decided conduct became necessary to prevent the feeble American force, and the
deficient stock of public arms from being divided and subdivided, so as to be unequal
to the proper defence of any one place.

In this crisis of particular danger, the people of New-York acted with spirit. Though
they knew they were to receive the first impression of the British army, yet their
convention resolved, “that all persons residing within the state of New-York, and
claiming protection from its laws, owed it allegiance, and that any person owing it
allegiance and levying war against the state, or being an adherent to the king of Great-
Britain, should be deemed guilty of treason and suffer death.” They also resolved
[“]that one fourth of the militia of West-Chester, Dutchess and Orange counties,
should be forthwith drawn out for the defence of the liberties, property, wives and
children, of the good people of the state, to be continued in service till the last day of
December,” and, “that as the inhabitants of King’s county, had determined not to
oppose the enemy, a committee should be appointed to enquire into the authenticity of
these reports, and to disarm and secure the disaffected. To remove or destroy the stock
of grain, and if necessary to lay the whole country waste.”

The two royal commissioners, admiral and general Howe, thought proper, before they
commenced their military operations, to try what might be done in their civil capacity,
towards effecting a re-union between Great-Britain and the colonies. It was one of the
first acts of lord Howe, to send on shore a circular letter to several of the royal
governors in America, informing them of the late act of parliament,
“for restoring peace to the colonies, [296] and granting pardon to
such as should deserve mercy,” and desiring them to publish a
declaration which accompanied the same. In this he informed the colonists of the
power with which his brother and he were intrusted “of granting general or particular
pards to all those who though they had deviated from their allegiance, were willing
to return to their duty,” and of declaring “any colony, province, county or town, port,
district or place to be at the peace of his majesty.” Congress, impressed with a belief,
that the proposals of the commissioners, instead of disuniting the people, would have
a contrary effect, ordered them to be speedily published in the several American
news-papers. Had a redress of grievances been at this late hour offered, though the
honour of the states was involved in supporting their late declaration of independence,
yet the love of peace, and the bias of great numbers to their Parent State, would in all
probability have made a powerful party for rescinding the act of separation, and for
re-uniting with Great-Britain. But when it appeared that the power of the royal
commissioners was little more than to grant pardons, Congress appealed to the good
sense of the people, for the necessity of adhering to the act of independence. The
resolution for publishing the circular letter, and the declaration of the royal
commissioners, assigned as a reason thereof,

that the good people of the United States may be informed of what nature are the
commissioners, and what the terms, with expectation of which the insidious court of
Great-Britain had endeavoured to amuse and disarm them, and that the few who still
remain suspended by a hope, founded either in the justice or moderation of their late
king, may now at length be convinced that the valour alone of their country is to save
its liberties.
About the same time flags were sent ashore by lord Howe, with a letter directed to George Washington, Esq. which he refused to receive as not being addressed to him with the title due to his rank.

In his letter to Congress on this subject, he wrote as follows, “I would not on any occasion sacrifice essentials to punctilio, but in this instance I deemed it a duty to my country and appointment, to insist [297] on that respect, which in any other than a public view, I would willingly have waved.

“Congress applauded his conduct in a public resolution, and at the same time directed [“]that no letter or message should be received on any occasion whatever, from the enemy, by the commander in chief, or others the commanders of the American army, but such as were directed to them in the characters they severally sustained.”

Some time after, adjutant general Patterson was sent to New-York, by general Howe, with a letter addressed to George Washington, &c. &c. &c. On an interview the adjutant general, after expressing his high esteem for the person and character of the American general, and declaring, that it was not intended to derogate from the respect due to his rank, expressed his hopes, that the et ceteras would remove the impediments to their correspondence. General Washington replied, “That a letter directed to any person in a public character, should have some description of it, otherwise it would appear a mere private letter. That it was true the et ceteras implied every thing, but they also implied any thing, and that he should therefore decline the receiving any letter directed to him as a private person, when it related to his public station.[“] A long conference ensued, in which the adjutant general observed, that “the commissioners were armed with great powers, and would be very happy in effecting an accommodation.” He received for answer, “that from what appeared, their powers were only to grant pardon, that they who had committed no fault, wanted no pardon.” Soon after this interview, a letter from Howe, respecting prisoners, which was properly addressed to Washington was received.

While the British, by their manifestoes and declarations, were endeavouring to separate those who preferred a reconciliation with Great-Britain from those who were the friends of independence, Congress, by a similiar policy, was attempting to detach the foreigners, who had come with the royal troops from the service of his Britannic majesty. Before hostilities had commenced, the following resolution was adopted and circulated among those [298] on whom it was intended to operate.

Resolved, that these states will receive all such foreigners who shall leave the armies of his Britannic majesty in America, and shall chuse to become members of any of these states, and they shall be protected in the free exercise of their respective religions, and be invested with the rights, privileges and immunities of natives, as established by the laws of these states, and moreover, that this congress will provide for every such person, fifty acres of unappropriated lands in some of these states, to be held by him and his heirs, as absolute property.

The numbers which were prepared to oppose the British, when they should disembark, made them for some time cautious of proceeding to their projected land
operations, but the superiority of their navy enabled them to go by water, whithersoever they pleased.

A British forty gun ship, with some smaller vessels, sailed up North-River, without receiving any damage of consequence, though fired upon from the batteries of New-York, Paules-Hook, Red-Bank, and Governor’s Island. An attempt was made, not long after, with two fire ships, to destroy the British vessels in the North-River, but without effecting any thing more than the burning of a tender. They were also attacked with row gallies, but to little purpose. After some time the Phoenix and Rose men of war, came down the river, and joined the fleet. Every effort of the Americans from their batteries on land, as well as their exertions on the water, proved ineffectual. The British ships passed with less loss than was generally expected, but nevertheless the damage they received was such as deterred them from frequently repeating the experiment. In two or three instances they ascended the North-River, and in one or two the East-River, but those which sailed up the former, speedily returned, and by their return, a free communication was opened through the upper part of the state.

The American army in and near New-York amounted to 17,225 men. These were mostly new troops, and were divided in many small and unconnected posts, some of which were fifteen miles removed from others.

The [299] British force before New-York was increasing by frequent successive arrivals from Halifax, South-Carolina, Florida, the West-Indies and Europe. But so many unforeseen delays had taken place, that the month of August was far advanced, before they were in a condition to open the campaign.

When all things were ready, the British commanders resolved to make their first attempt on Long-Island. This was preferred to New-York, as it abounded with those supplies which their forces required.

The British landed without opposition, between two small towns, Utrecht and Gravesend. The American works protected a small peninsula having Wallabout-Bay to the left, and stretching over to Red-Hook on the right, and the East-River being in their rear. General Sullivan, with a strong force, was encamped within these works at Brooklyne. From the east-side of the narrows runs a ridge of hills covered with thick wood, about five or six miles in length, which terminates near Jamaica. There were three passes through these hills, one near the narrows, a second on the Flatbush road, and a third on the Bedford road, and they are all defensible. These were the only roads which could be passed from the southside of the hills to the American lines, except a road which led round the easterly end of the hills to Jamaica. The Americans had 800 men on each of these roads, and colonel Miles was placed with his battalion of riflemen, to guard the road from the south of the hills to Jamaica, and to watch the motions of the British.

General de Heister, with his Hessians, took post at Flatbush, in the evening. In the following night the greater part of the British army, commanded by general Clinton, marched to gain the road leading round the
easterly end of the hills to Jamaica, and to turn the left of the Americans. He arrived about two hours before day, within half a mile of this road. One of his parties fell in with a patrol of American officers, and took them all prisoners, which prevented the early transmission of intelligence.

Upon the first appearance of day general Clinton advanced, and took possession of the heights over which the road passed. General Grant, with the left wing, advanced along the coast by the west road, near the narrows; but this was intended chiefly as a feint.

The guard which was stationed at this road, fled without making any resistance. A few of them were afterwards rallied, and lord Stirling advanced with 1500 men, and took possession of a hill, about two miles from the American camp, and in front of general Grant.

An attack was made very early in the morning by the Hessians from Flatbush, under general de Heister, and by general Grant on the coast, and was well supported for a considerable time by both sides. The Americans who opposed general de Heister were first informed of the approach of general Clinton, who had come round on their left. They immediately began to retreat to their camp, but were intercepted by the right wing under general Clinton, who got into the rear of their left, and attacked them with his light infantry and dragoons, while returning to their lines. They were driven back till they were met by the Hessians. They were thus alternately chased and intercepted, between general de Heister and general Clinton. Some of their regiments nevertheless found their way to the camp. The Americans under lord Stirling, consisting of colonel Miles’ two battalions, colonel Atlee’s, colonel Smallwood’s, and colonel Hatche’s, regiments, who were engaged with general Grant, fought with great resolution for about six hours. They were uninformied of the movements made by general Clinton, till some of the troops under his command, had traversed the whole extent of country in their rear. Their retreat was thus intercepted, but several notwithstanding, broke through and got into the woods. Many threw themselves into the marsh, some were drowned, and others perished in the mud, but a considerable number escaped by this way to their lines.

The king’s troops displayed great valour throughout the whole day. The variety of the ground occasioned a succession of small engagements, pursuits and slaughter, which lasted for many hours.

British discipline in every instance, triumphed over the native valour of raw troops, who had never been in action, and whose officers were unacquainted with the stratagems of war.

The loss of the British and Hessians was about 450. The killed, wounded and prisoners of the Americans, including those who were drowned or perished in the woods or mud, considerably exceeded a thousand. Among the prisoners of the latter were two of their general officers, Sullivan and lord Stirling. Three Colonels, 4 lieutenant colonels, 3 majors, 18 captains, 43 lieutenants, and 11 ensigns. Smallwood’s regiment, the officers of which were young men of the best families in the state of Maryland, sustained a loss of 259 men. The British after their victory were
so impetuous, that it was with difficulty, they could be restrained from attacking the American lines.

In the time of, and subsequent to the engagement, General Washington drew over to Long-Island, the greatest part of his army. After he had collected his principal force there, it was his wish and hope, that Sir William Howe, would attempt to storm the works on the island. These though insufficient to stand a regular siege, were strong enough to resist a coup de main. The rememberance of Bunker’s-hill, and a desire to spare his men, restrained the British general from making an assault. On the contrary he made demonstrations of proceeding by siege, and broke ground within three hundred yards to the left at Putnam’s redoubt.

Though general Washington wished for an assault, yet being certain that his works would be untenable, when the British batteries should be fully opened, he called a council of war, to consult on the measures proper to be taken. It was then determined that the objects in view were in no degree proportioned to the dangers to which, by a continuation on the island, they would be exposed. Conformably to this opinion, dispositions were made for an immediate retreat. This commenced soon after it was dark from two points, the upper and lower ferries, on East river. General M’Dougal, regulated the embarkation at one, and colonel Knox at the other.

The intention of evacuating the island, had been so prudently concealed [302] from the Americans, that they knew not whither they were going, but supposed to attack the enemy. The field artillery, tents, baggage, and about 9000 men were conveyed to the city of New-York over East River, more than a mile wide, in less than 13 hours, and without the knowledge of the British, though not six hundred yards distant. Providence, in a remarkable manner favoured the retreating army. For some time after the Americans began to cross the state of the tide, and a strong north-east wind made it impossible for them to make use of their sail boats, and their whole number of row boats was insufficient for completing the business, in the course of the night. But about eleven o’clock, the wind died away, and soon after sprung up at south-east, and blew fresh, which rendered the sail boats of use, and at the same time made the passage from the island to the city, direct, easy and expeditious. Towards morning an extreme thick fog came up, which hovered over Long-Island, and by concealing the Americans, enabled them to complete their retreat without interruption, though the day had begun to dawn some time before it was finished. By a mistake in the transmission of orders, the American lines were evacuated for about three quarters of an hour, before the last embarkation took place, but the British though so near, that their working parties could be distinctly heard, being enveloped in the fog knew nothing of the matter. The lines were repossessed and held till six o’clock in the morning, when every thing except some heavy cannon was removed. General Mifflin, who commanded the rear guard left the lines, and under the cover of the fog got off safe. In about half an hour the fog cleared away, and the British entered the works which had been just relinquished. Had the wind not shifted, the half of the American army could not have crossed, and even as it was, if the fog had not concealed their rear, it must have been discovered, and could hardly have escaped. General Sullivan, who was taken prisoner on Long-Island, was immediately sent on parole, with the following verbal message from lord Howe to Congress,
that though he could not at present treat [303] with them in that character, yet he was very desirous of having a conference with some of the members, whom he would consider as private gentlemen; that he with his brother the general, had full powers to compromise the dispute between Great-Britain and America, upon terms advantageous to both—that he wished a compact might be settled, at a time when no decisive blow was struck, and neither party could say it was compelled to enter into such agreement. That were they disposed to treat, many things which they had not yet asked, might and ought to be granted, and that if upon conference they found any probable ground of accommodation, the authority of Congress would be afterwards acknowledged to render the treaty complete.

Three days after this message was received, general Sullivan was requested to inform lord Howe,

that Congress being the representatives of the free and independent states of America, they cannot with propriety send any of their members to confer with his lordship in their private characters, but that ever desirous of establishing peace on reasonable terms, they will send a committee of their body, to know whether he has any authority to treat with persons authorised by Congress, for that purpose, on behalf of America, and what that authority is; and to hear such propositions as he shall think fit to make respecting the same.

They elected Dr. Franklin, John Adams, and Edward Rutledge their committee, for this purpose. In a few days they met lord Howe on Staten-Island, and were received with great politeness. On their return they made a report of their conference, which they summed up by saying,

It did not appear to your committee that his lordship’s commission contained any other authority than that expressed in the act of parliament—namely, that of granting pardons, with such exceptions as the commissioners shall think proper to make, and of declaring America, or any part of it, to be in the king’s peace, on submission: For as to the power of enquiring into the state of America, which his lordship mentioned to us, and of conferring and consulting with any persons the commissioners might think proper, and representing the result [304] of such conversation to the ministry, who, provided the colonies would subject themselves, might after all, or might not, at their pleasure, make any alterations in the former instructions to governors, or propose in parliament, any amendment of the acts complained of, we apprehended any expectation from the effect of such a power, would have been too uncertain and precarious, to be relied on by America, had she still continued in her state of dependence.

Lord Howe, had ended the conference on his part, by expressing his regard for America, and the extreme pain he would suffer in being obliged to distress those whom he so much regarded. Dr. Franklin, thanked him for his regards, and assured him, [“]that the Americans would shew their gratitude, by endeavouring to lessen as much as possible, all pain he might feel on their account, by exerting their utmost abilities, in taking good care of themselves.”
The committee in every respect maintained the dignity of Congress. Their conduct and sentiments were such as became their character. The friends to independence rejoiced that nothing resulted from this interview, that might disunite the people. Congress, trusting to the good sense of their countrymen, ordered the whole to be printed for their information. All the states would have then rejoiced at less beneficial terms than they obtained about seven years later. But Great-Britain counted on the certainty of their absolute conquest, or unconditional submission. Her offers therefore comportcd so little with the feelings of America, that they neither caused demur nor disunion, among the new formed states.

The unsuccessful termination of the action on the 27th, led to consequences more seriously alarming to the Americans, than the loss of their men. Their army was universally dispirited. The militia ran off by companies. Their example infected the regular regiments. The loose footing on which the militia came to camp, made it hazardous to exercise over them that discipline, without which, an army is a mob. To restrain one part of an army, while another claimed and exercised the right of doing as they pleased, was no less impracticable than absurd.

A council of war, recommended to act on the defensive, and not to risque the army for the sake of New-York.
To retreat, subjected the commander in chief to reflections painful to bear, and yet impolitic to refute. To stand his ground, and by suffering himself to be surrounded, to hazard the fate of America on one decisive engagement, was contrary to every rational plan of defending the wide extended states committed to his care. A middle line between abandoning and defending was therefore for a short time adopted. The public stores were moved to Dobbs’ ferry, about 26 miles from New-York. 12,000 men were ordered to the northern extremity of New-York island, and 4500 to remain for the defence of the city, while the remainder occupied the intermediate space, with orders, either to support the city or Kingsbridge, as exigencies might require. Before the British landed, it was impossible to tell what place would be first attacked. This made it necessary to erect works for the defence of a variety of places, as well as of New-York. Though every thing was abandoned when the crisis came that either the city must be relinquished, or the army risqued for its defence, yet from the delays, occasioned by the redoubts and other works, which had been erected on the idea of making the defence of the states a war of posts, a whole campaign was lost to the British, and saved to the Americans. The year began with hopes, that Great-Britain would recede from her demands, and therefore every plan of defence was on a temporary system. The declaration of independence, which the violence of Great-Britain forced the colonies to adopt in July, though neither foreseen nor intended at the commencement of the year, pointed out the necessity of organising an army, on new terms, correspondent to the enlarged objects for which they had resolved to contend.
Congress accordingly determined to raise 88 battalions, to serve during the war. Under these circumstances to wear away the campaign, with as little misfortune as possible, and thereby to gain time for raising a
permanent army against the next year, was to the Americans a matter of the last importance.

Though the commander in chief abandoned those works, [306] which had engrossed much time and attention yet the advantage resulting from the delays they occasioned, far overbalanced the expence incurred by their erection.

The same shortsighted politicians, who had before censured general Washington, for his cautious conduct, in not storming the British lines at Boston, renewed their clamors against him, for adopting this evacuating and retreating system. Supported by a consciousness of his own integrity, and by a full conviction that these measures were best calculated for securing the independence of America, he for the good of his country, voluntarily subjected his fame to be overshadowed by a temporary cloud.

General Howe having prepared every thing for a descent on New-York island, began to land his men under cover of ships of war, between Kepps’-bay and Turtle bay. A breast work had been erected in the vicinity, and a party stationed in it to oppose the British, in case of their attempting to land. But on the first appearance of danger, they ran off in confusion. The commander in chief came up, and in vain attempted to rally them. Though the British in sight, did not exceed sixty, he could not either by example, intreaty, or authority, prevail on a superior force to stand their ground, and face that inconsiderable number. Such dastardly conduct raised a tempest in the usually tranquil mind of general Washington. Having embarked in the American cause from the purest principles, he viewed with infinite concern this shameful behaviour, as threatening ruin to his country. He recollected the many declarations of Congress, of the army, and of the inhabitants, preferring liberty to life, and death to dishonour, and contrasted them with their present scandalous flight. His soul was harrowed up with apprehensions that his country would be conquered—her army disgraced, and her liberties destroyed. He anticipated, in imagination, that the Americans would appear to posterity in the light of high sounding boasters, who blustered when danger was at a distance, but shrunk at the shadow of opposition. Extensive confiscations and numerous attainders presented, themselves in full view to his agitated mind.

He saw, in imagination, new formed states, with [307] the means of defence in their hands, and the glorious prospects of liberty before them, levelled to the dust, and such constitutions imposed on them as were likely to crush the vigour of the human mind, while the unsuccessful issue of the present struggle would for ages to come, deter posterity from the bold design of asserting their rights. Impressed with these ideas he hazarded his person for some considerable time in rear of his own men, and in front of the enemy with his horse’s head towards the latter, as if in expectation, that by an honourable death he might escape the infamy he dreaded from the dastardly conduct of troops on whom he could place no dependance. His aids and the confidential friends around his person, by indirect violence, compelled him to retire. In consequence of their address and importunity, a life was saved for public service, which otherwise from a sense of honour, and a gust of passion, seemed to be devoted to almost certain destruction.
On the day after this shameful flight of part of the American army, a skirmish took place between two battalions of light infantry and highlanders commanded by brigadier Leslie, and some detachments from the American army, under the command of lieutenant colonel Knowlton of Connecticut, and major Leitch of Virginia. The colonel was killed and the major badly wounded. Their men behaved with great bravery, and fairly beat their adversaries from the field. Most of these were the same men, who had disgraced themselves the day before, by running away; struck with a sense of shame for their late misbehaviour, they had offered themselves as volunteers, and requested the commander in chief to give them an opportunity to retrieve their honour. Their good conduct, at this second engagement, proved an antidote to the poison of their example on the preceding day. It demonstrated that the Americans only wanted resolution and good officers to be on a footing with the British, and inspired them with hopes that a little more experience would enable them to assume, not only the name and garb, but the spirit and firmness of soldiers.

The Americans having evacuated the city of New-York, a brigade of the British army marched into it. They had been but a few days in possession, when a dreadful fire, most probably occasioned by the disorderly conduct of some British sailors, who had been permitted to regale themselves on shore, broke out, and consumed about a thousand houses. Dry weather, and a brisk wind, spread the flames to such an extent, that had it not been for great exertions of the troops and sailors, the whole city must have shared the same fate. After the Americans had evacuated New-York, they retired to the north end of the island, on which that city is erected. In about four weeks general Howe began to execute a plan for cutting off general Washington’s communication with the eastern states, and enclosing him so as to compel a general engagement on the island. With this view, the greater part of the royal army passed through Hellgate, entered the sound, and landed on Frog’s neck, in West-Chester county.

Two days after they made this movement, general Lee arrived from his late successful command to the southward. He found that there was a prevailing disposition among the officers in the American army for remaining on New-York island.

A council of war was called, in which general Lee gave such convincing reasons for quitting it, that they resolved immediately to withdraw the bulk of the army. He also pressed the expediency of evacuating Fort Washington, but in this he was opposed by general Greene, who argued that the possession of that post would divert a large body of the enemy, from joining their main force, and in conjunction with Fort Lee, would be of great use in covering the transportation of provisions and stores up the North-River, for the service of the American troops. He added farther, that the garrison could be brought off at any time, by boats from the Jersey side of the river. His opinion prevailed. Though the system of evacuating and retreating was in general adopted, an exception was made in favour of Fort Washington, and near 3000 men were assigned for its defence.
The royal army, after a halt of six days, at Frog’s neck, advanced near to New-Rochelle. On their march they [309] sustained a considerable loss by a party of Americans, whom general Lee posted behind a wall. After three days, general Howe moved the right and centre of his army two miles to the northward of New Rochelle, on the road to the White Plains, and there he received a large reinforcement.

General Washington, while retreating from New-York island, was careful to make a front towards the British, from East-Chester, almost to White Plains, in order to secure the march of those who were behind, and to defend the removal of the sick, the cannon and stores of his army. In this manner his troops made a line of small detached and intrenched camps, on the several heights and strong grounds, from Valentine’s hill, on the right, to the vicinity of the White Plains, on the left.

The royal army moved in two columns, and took a position with the Brunx in front, upon which the Americans assembled their main force at White Plains, behind entrenchments. A general action was hourly expected, and a considerable one took place, in which several hundreds fell. The Americans were commanded by general M‘Dougal, and the British by general Leslie. While they were engaged, the American baggage was moved off, in full view of the British army. Soon after this, general Washington changed his front, his left wing stood fast, and his right fell back to some hills. In this position, which was an admirable one in a military point of view, he both desired and expected an action; but general Howe declined it, and drew off his forces towards Dobbs’ ferry. The Americans afterwards retired to North-Castle.

General Washington, with part of his army, crossed the North-River, and took post in the neighborhood of Fort-Lee. A force of about 7500 men was left at North-Castle, under general Lee.

The Americans having retired, Sir William Howe determined to improve the opportunity of their absence, for the reduction of Fort Washington. This, the only post the Americans then held on New-York island, was under the command of colonel Magaw. The royal army made four attacks upon it. The first on the north [310] side, was led on by general Kniphausen. The second on the east by general Mathews, supported by lord Cornwallis. The third was under the direction of lieutenant colonel Stirling, and the fourth was commanded by lord Piercy. The troops under Kniphausen, when advancing to the fort, had to pass through a thick wood, which was occupied by colonel Rawling’s regiment of riflemen, and suffered very much from their well directed fire. During this attack, a body of the British light infantry advanced against a party of the Americans, who were annoying them from behind rocks and trees, and obliged them to disperse. Lord Piercy, carried an advance work on his side, and lieutenant colonel Stirling, forced his way up a steep height, and took 170 prisoners. Their outworks being carried, the Americans left their lines, and crowded into the fort. Colonel Rahl, who led the right column of Kniphausen’s attack, pushed forward, and lodged his column within a hundred yards of the fort, and was there soon joined by the left column—the garrison surrendered on terms of
capitulation, by which the men were to be considered as prisoners of war, and the officers to keep their baggage and side arms. The number of prisoners amounted to 2700. The loss of the British, inclusive of killed and wounded, was about 1200. Shortly after Fort Washington had surrendered.

Lord Cornwallis, with a considerable force passed over to attack Fort Lee, on the opposite Jersey shore.

The garrison was saved by an immediate evacuation, but at the expense of their artillery and stores. General Washington, about this time retreated to New-Ark. Having abundant reason from the posture of affairs, to count on the necessity of a farther retreat he asked colonel Reed—“Should we retreat to the back parts of Pennsylvania, will the Pennsylvanians support us?” The colonel replied, if the lower counties are subdued and give up, the back counties will do the same. The general replied, [“]we must retire to Augusta county, in Virginia. Numbers will be obliged to repair to us for safety, and we must try what we can do in carrying on a predatory war, and if overpowered, we must cross the Allegany mountains.”

While a tide of success, was flowing in upon general Howe, he and his brother, as royal commissioners, issued a proclamation, in which they commanded, “All persons assembled in arms against his majesty’s government to disband, and all general or provincial congresses to desist from their treasonable actings, and to relinquish their usurped power.” They also declared “that every person who within sixty days should appear before the governor, lieutenant governor, or commander in chief of any of his majesty’s colonies, or before the general, or commanding officer of his majesty’s forces, and claim the benefit of the proclamation; and testify his obedience to the laws, by subscribing a certain declaration, should obtain a full and free pardon of all treasons by him committed, and of all forfeitures, and penalties for the same.” Many who had been in office, and taken an active part in support of the new government, accepted of these offers, and made their peace by submission. Some who had been the greatest blusterers in favour of independence, veered round to the strongest side. Men of fortune generally gave way. The few who stood firm, were mostly to be found in the middle ranks of the people.

The term of time for which the American soldiers had engaged to serve, ended in November or December, with no other exception, than that of two companies of artillery, belonging to the state of New-York, which were engaged for the war. The army had been organized at the close of the preceding year, on the fallacious idea, that an accommodation would take place, within a twelve month. Even the flying camp, though instituted after the prospect of that event had vanished, was enlisted only till the first of December, from a presumption that the campaign would terminate by that time.

When it was expected that the conquerors would retire to winter quarters, they commenced a new plan of operations more alarming, than all their previous conquests. The reduction of Fort Washington, the evacuation of Fort Lee, and the diminution of the American army, by the departure of those whose time of service had expired, encouraged the British,
notwithstanding the [312] severity of the winter, and the badness of the roads, to pursue the remaining inconsiderable continental force, with the prospect of annihilating it. By this turn of affairs, the interior country was surprised into confusion, and found an enemy within its bowels, without a sufficient army to oppose it. To retreat, was the only expedient left. This having commenced, lord Cornwallis followed, and was close in the rear of general Washington, as he retreated successively to New-Ark, to Brunswick, to Princeton, to Trenton, and to the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware. The pursuit was urged with so much rapidity, that the rear of the one army, pulling down bridges was often within sight, and shot off the van of the other, building them up.

This retreat into, and through New-Jersey, was attended with almost every circumstance that could occasion embarrassment, and depression of spirits. It commenced in a few days, after the Americans had lost 2700 men in Fort Washington. In fourteen days after that event, the whole flying camp claimed their discharge. This was followed by the almost daily departure of others, whose engagements terminated nearly about the same time. A farther disappointment happened to general Washington at this time. Gates had been ordered by Congress to send two regiments from Ticonderoga, to reinforce his army. Two Jersey regiments were put under the command of general St. Clair, and forwarded in obedience to this order, but the period for which they were enlisted was expired, and the moment they entered their own state, they went off to a man. A few officers without a single private, were all that general St. Clair brought off these two regiments, to the aid of the retreating American army. The few who remained with general Washington were in a most forlorn condition. They consisted mostly of the troops which had garrisoned Fort Lee, and had been compelled to abandon that post so suddenly, that they commenced their retreat without tents or blankets, and without any utensils to dress their provisions. In this situation they performed a march of about ninety miles, and had the address to prolong it to [313] the space of nineteen days. As the retreating Americans marched through the country, scarcely one of the inhabitants joined them, while numbers were daily flocking to the royal army, to make their peace and obtain protection. They saw on the one side a numerous well appointed and full clad army, dazzling their eyes with the elegance of uniformity; on the other a few poor fellows, who from their shabby clothing were called ragamuffins, fleeing for their safety. Not only the common people changed sides in this gloomy state of public affairs, but some of the leading men in New-Jersey and Pennsylvania adopted the same expedient. Among these Mr. Galloway, and the family of the Allens of Philadelphia, were most distinguished. The former, and one of the latter, had been members of Congress. In this hour of adversity they came within the British lines, and surrendered themselves to the conquerors, alleging in justification of their conduct, that though they had joined with their countrymen, in seeking for a redress of grievances in a constitutional way, they had never approved of the measures lately adopted, and were in particular, at all times, averse to independence.

On the day general Washington retreated over the Delaware, the British took possession of Rhode-Island without any loss, and at the same time blocked up commodore Hopkins’ squadron, and a number of privateers at Providence.
In this period, when the American army was relinquishing its general—the people giving up the cause, some of their leaders going over to the enemy, and the British commanders succeeding in every enterprise, general Lee was taken prisoner at Baskenridge, by lieutenant colonel Harcourt. This caused a depression of spirits among the Americans, far exceeding any real injury done to their essential interests. He had been repeatedly ordered to come forward with his division and join general Washington, but these orders were not obeyed. This circumstance, and the dangerous crisis of public affairs, together with his being alone at some distance, from the troops which he commanded, begat suspicions that he chose to fall into the hands of the British. Though these apprehensions were without foundation, they produced the same extensive mischief, as if they had been realities. The Americans had reposed extravagant confidence in his military talents, and experience of regular European war. Merely to have lost such an idol of the states at any time, would have been distressful, but losing him under circumstances, which favoured an opinion that, despairing of the American cause, he chose to be taken a prisoner, was to many an extinguishment of every hope.

By the advance of the British into New-Jersey, the neighbourhood of Philadelphia became the seat of war. This prevented that undisturbed attention to public business which the deliberations of Congress required. They therefore adjourned themselves to meet in eight days at Baltimore, resolving at the same time, “that general Washington should be possessed of full powers to order and direct all things relative to the department, and the operations of war.”

The activity of the British in the close of the campaign, seemed in some measure to compensate for their tardiness, in the beginning of it.

Hitherto they had succeeded in every scheme. They marched up and down the Jersey side of the river Delaware, and through the country, without any molestation. All opposition to the re-establishment of royal government, seemed to be on the point of expiring. The Americans had thus far acted without system, or rather feebly executed what had been tardily adopted. Though the war was changed from its first ground, a redress of grievances to a struggle for sovereignty, yet some considerable time elapsed, before arrangements, conformable to this new system were adopted, and a much longer before they were carried into execution.

With the year 1776, a retreating, half naked army, was to be dismissed, and the prospect of a new one was both distant and uncertain. The recently assumed independence of the States, was apparently on the verge of dissolution. It was supposed by many, that the record of their existence would have been no more than that a fickle people, impatient of the restraints of regular government, had in a fit of passion abolished that of Great-Britain, and established in its room free constitutions of their own, but these new establishments, from want of wisdom in their rulers, or of spirit in their people, were no sooner
formed than annihilated. The leading men, in their respective governments, and the principal members of Congress, (for by this name the insurgents distinguished their supreme council) were hanged, and their estates confiscated. Washington, the gallant leader of their military establishments—worthy of a better fate—deserted by his army—abandoned by his country—rushing on the thickest battalions of the foe, provoked a friendly British bayonet to deliver him from an ignominious death.

To human wisdom it appeared probable, that such a paragraph would have closed some small section in the history of England, treating of the American troubles, but there is in human affairs an ultimate point of elevation or depression, beyond which they neither grow better nor worse, but turn back in a contrary course.

In proportion as difficulties increased, Congress redoubled their exertions to oppose them. They addressed the states in animated language, calculated to remove their despondency—renew their hopes—and confirm their resolutions.

They at the same time dispatched gentlemen of character and influence, to excite the militia to take the field. General Mifflin was, on this occasion, particularly useful. He exerted his great abilities in rousing his fellow citizens, by animated and affectionate addresses, to turn out in defence of their endangered liberties.

Congress also recommended to each of the United States “to appoint a day of solemn fasting and humiliation, to implore of Almighty God the forgiveness of their many sins, and to beg the countenance and assistance of his providence, in the prosecution of the present just and necessary war.”

In the dangerous situation to which every thing dear to the friends of independence was reduced, Congress transferred extraordinary powers to general Washington, by a resolution, expressed in the following words:

[316]
The unjust, but determined purposes of the British court to enslave these free states, obvious through every delusive insinuation to the contrary, having placed things in such a situation that the very existence of civil liberty now depends on the right execution of military powers, and the vigorous decisive conduct of these being impossible to distant, numerous, and deliberative bodies. This Congress, having maturely considered the present crisis; and having perfect reliance on the wisdom, vigour, and uprightness of general Washington, do hereby,

Resolve, That general Washington shall be, and he is hereby vested with full, ample, and complete powers, to raise and collect together, in the most speedy and effectual manner, from any or all of these United States, sixteen battalions of infantry, in addition to those already voted by Congress; to appoint officers for the said battalions of infantry; to raise, officer, and equip 3000 light-horse; three regiments of artillery,
and a corps of engineers, and to establish their pay; to apply to any of the states for such aid of the militia as he shall judge necessary; to form such magazines of provisions, and in such places as he shall think proper; to displace and appoint all officers under the rank of brigadier general, and to fill up all vacancies in every other department in the American armies; to take, wherever he may be, whatever he may want, for the use of the army, if the inhabitants will not sell it, allowing a reasonable price for the same; to arrest and confine persons who refuse to take the continental currency, or are otherwise disaffected to the American cause; and return to the states, of which they are citizens, their names, and the nature of their offences, together with the witnesses to prove them: That the foregoing powers be vested in general Washington for and during the term of six months, from the date hereof, unless sooner determined by Congress.

In this hour of extremity, the attention of the Congress was employed, in devising plans to save the states from sinking under the heavy calamities which were bearing them down.

It is remarkable, that, neither in the present condition, though trying and severe, nor in any other since the declaration of independence, was Congress influenced either by force, distress, artifice, or persuasion, to entertain the most distant idea of purchasing peace, by returning to the condition of British subjects. So low were they reduced in the latter end of 1776, that some members, distrustful of their ability to resist the power of Great-Britain, proposed to authorise their commissioners at the court of France (whose appointment shall be hereafter explained) to transfer to that country the same monopoly of their trade, which Great-Britain had hitherto enjoyed. On examination it was found, that concessions of this kind would destroy the force of many arguments heretofore used in favour of independence, and probably disunite their citizens. It was next proposed to offer a monopoly of certain enumerated articles of produce. To this the variant interests of the different states were so directly opposed, as to occasion a speedy and decided negative. Some proposed offering to France, a league offensive and defensive, in case she would heartily support American independence; but this was also rejected. The more enlightened members of Congress argued, “Though the friendship of small states might be purchased, that of France could not.” They alleged, that if she would risque a war with Great-Britain, by openly espousing their cause, it would not be so much from the prospect of direct advantages, as from a natural desire to lessen the overgrown power of a dangerous rival. It was therefore supposed, that the only inducement, likely to influence France to an interference, was an assurance that the United States were determined to persevere in refusing a return to their former allegiance. Instead of listening to the terms of the royal commissioners, or to any founded on the idea of their resuming their character of British subjects, it was therefore again resolved, to abide by their declared independence, and proffered freedom of trade to every foreign nation, trusting the event to Providence, and risquing all consequences. Copies of these resolutions were sent to the principal courts of Europe, and proper persons were appointed to solicit their friendship to the new formed states.

These despatches fell into the hands of the British, and were by them published. This was the very thing wished for by Congress. They well knew, that an apprehension of their making up all differences
with Great-Britain was the principal objection to the interference of foreign courts, in what was represented to be no more than a domestic quarrel. A resolution adopted in the deepest distress, and the worst of times that Congress would listen to no terms of reunion with their Parent State, convinced those, who wished for the dismemberment of the British empire, that it was sound policy to interfere, so far as would prevent the conquest of the United States.

These judicious determinations in the cabinet, were accompanied with vigorous exertions in the field. In this crisis of danger 1500 of the Pennsylvania militia, embodied to re-inforce the continental army. The merchant, the farmer, the tradesman and the labourer, cheerfully relinquished the conveniences of home, to perform the duties of private soldiers, in the severity of a winter campaign. Though most of them were accustomed to the habits of a city life, they slept in tents, barns, and sometimes in the open air, during the cold months of December and January. There were, nevertheless, only two instances of sickness, and only one of death in that large body of men in the course if six weeks. The delay so judiciously contrived on the retreat through Jersey, afforded time for these volunteer reinforcements to join general Washington. The number of troops under his command at that time, fluctuated between two and three thousand men. To turn round and face a victorious and numerous foe, with this inconsiderable force was risquing much; but the urgency of the case required that something should be attempted. The recruiting business for the proposed new continental army was at a stand, while the British were driving the Americans before them. The present regular soldiers could, as a matter of right, in less than a week claim their discharge, and scarce a single recruit offered to supply their place. Under these circumstances, the bold resolution was formed of recrossing into the state of Jersey, and attacking that part of the enemy, which was posted at Trenton.

When the Americans retreated over the Delaware, the boats in the vicinity were removed out of the way of their pursuers—this arrested their progress: But the British commanders in the security of conquest cantoned their army in Burlington, Bordenton, Trenton, and other towns of New-Jersey, in daily expectation of being enabled to cross into Pennsylvania, by means of ice, which is generally formed about that time.

Of all events, none seemed to them more improbable, than that their late retreating half naked enemies, should in this extreme cold season, face about and commence offensive operations. They indulged themselves in a degree of careless inattention to the possibility of a surprise, which in the vicinity of an enemy, however contemptible, can never be justified. It has been said that colonel Rahl, the commanding officer in Trenton, being under some apprehension for that frontier post, applied to general Grant for a reinforcement, and that the general returned for answer. “Tell the colonel, he is very safe, I will undertake to keep the peace in New-Jersey with a corporal’s guard.”

In the evening of Christmas day, general Washington, made arrangements for recrossing the Delaware in three divisions; at M. Konkey’s ferry, at Trenton ferry, and at or near Bordenton. The troops which were to have crossed at the two last places,
were commanded by generals Ewing, and Cadwallader, they made every exertion to get over, but the quantity of ice was so great, that they could not effect their purpose. The main body which was commanded by general Washington crossed at M. Konkey’s ferry, but the ice in the river retarded their passage so long, that it was three o’clock in the morning, before the artillery could be got over. On their landing in Jersey, they were formed into two divisions, commanded by general Sullivan, and Greene, who had under their command brigadiers, lord Stirling, Mercer and St. Clair: one of these divisions was ordered to proceed on the lower, or river road, the other on the upper or Pennington road. Col. Stark, with some light troops, was also directed to advance near to the river, and to possess himself [320] of that part of the town, which is beyond the bridge. The divisions having nearly the same distance to march, were ordered immediately on forcing the out guards, to push directly into Trenton, that they might charge the enemy before they had time to form. Though they marched different roads, yet they arrived at the enemy’s advanced post, within three minutes of each other. The out guards of the Hessian troops at Trenton soon fell back, but kept up a constant retreating fire. Their main body being hard pressed by the Americans, who had already got possession of half their artillery, attempted to file off by a road leading towards Princeton, but were checked by a body of troops thrown in their way. Finding they were surrounded, they laid down their arms. The number which submitted, was 23 officers, and 885 men. Between 30 and 40 of the Hessians were killed and wounded. Colonel Rahl, was among the former, and seven of his officers among the latter. Captain Washington of the Virginia troops, and five or six of the Americans were wounded. Two were killed, and two or three were frozen to death. The detachment in Trenton consisted of the regiments of Rahl, Losberg, and Kniphausen, amounting in the whole to about 1500 men, and a troop of British light horse. All these were killed or captured, except about 600, who escaped by the road leading to Bordenton.

The British had a strong battalion of light infantry at Princeton, and a force yet remaining near the Delaware, superior to the American army. General Washington, therefore in the evening of the same day, thought it most prudent to recross into Pennsylvania, with his prisoners.

The effects of this successful enterprize were speedily felt in recruiting the American army. About 1400 regular soldiers whose time of service was on the point of expiring, agreed to serve six weeks longer, on a promised gratuity of ten paper dollars to each. Men of influence were sent to different parts of the country to rouse the militia. The rapine, and impolitic conduct of the British, operated more forcibly on the inhabitants, to expel them [323 (the original paging errs, skipping over 321–22)] from the state, than either patriotism or persuasion to prevent their overrunning it.

The Hessian prisoners taken on the 26th being secured, general Washington re-crossed the Delaware, and took possession of Trenton. The detachments which had been distributed over New-Jersey, previous to the capture of the Hessians, immediately, after that event, assembled at Princeton, and were joined by the army from Brunswick under lord Cornwallis.
From this position they came forward towards Trenton in great
force, hoping by a vigorous onset to repair the injury their cause
had sustained by the late defeat.

Truly delicate was the situation of the feeble American army. To
retreat was to hazard the city of Philadelphia, and to destroy
every ray of hope which had begun to dawn from their late success. To risque an
action with a superior force in front, and a river in rear, was dangerous in the extreme.
To get round the advanced party of the British, and by pushing forwards to attack in
their rear, was deemed preferable to either.

The British on their advance from Princeton, about 4 P.M.
attacked a body of Americans which were posted with four field
pieces, a little to the northward of Trenton, and compelled them to retreat. The
pursuing British, being checked at the bridge over Sanpink creek, which runs through
that town, by some field pieces, which were posted on the opposite banks of that
rivulet, fell back so far as to be out of reach of the cannon, and kindled their fires. The
Americans were drawn up on the other side of the creek, and in that position remained
till night, cannonading the enemy and receiving their fire. In this critical hour, two
armies on which the success or failure of the American revolution, materially
depended, were crouded into the small village of Trenton, and only separated by a
creek in many places fordable. The British believing they had all the advantages they
could wish for, and that they could use them when they pleased, discontinued all
further operations, and kept themselves in readiness to make the attack next morning.

Sir William Erskine is reported to have advised an immediate attack, or at least to
place a strong [324] guard at a bridge over Sanpink creek, which lay in the route the
Americans took to Princeton, giving for reason that, otherwise, Washington if a good
general, would make a move to the left of the royal army, and attack the post at
Princeton in their rear. The next morning presented a scene as brilliant on the one
side, as it was unexpected on the other. Soon after it became dark, gen. Washington
ordered all his baggage to be silently removed, and having left guards for the purpose
of deception, marched with his whole force, by a circuitous route to Princeton. This
manoeuvre was determined upon in a council of war, from a conviction that it would
avoid the appearance of a retreat, and at the same time the hazard of an action in a bad
position, and that it was the most likely way to preserve the city of Philadelphia, from
falling into the hands of the British. General Washington also presumed, that from an
eagerness to efface the impressions, made by the late capture of Hessians at Trenton,
the British commanders had pushed forward their principal force, and that of course
the remainder in the rear at Princeton was not more than equal to his own. The event
verified this conjecture. The more effectually to disguise the departure of the
Americans from Trenton, fires were lighted up in front of their camp. These not only
gave an appearance of going to rest, but as flame cannot be seen through, concealed
from the British, what was transacting behind them. In this relative position they were
a pillar of fire to the one army, and a pillar of a cloud to the other. Providence
favoured this movement of the Americans. The weather had been for some time so
warm and moist, that the ground was soft and the roads so deep as to be scarcely
passable: but the wind suddenly changed to the northwest, and the ground in a short
time was frozen so hard, that when the Americans took up their line of march, they
were no more retarded, than if they had been upon a solid pavement.
General Washington reached Princeton, early in the morning, and would have completely surprised the British, had not a party, which was on their way to Trenton, descried his troops, when they were about two miles distant, and sent back couriers to alarm their unsuspecting fellow soldiers in their rear. These consisted of the 17th, the 40th, & 55th regiments of British infantry and some of the royal artillery with two field pieces, and three troops of light dragoons. The center of the Americans, consisting of the Philadelphia militia, while on their line of march, was briskly charged by a party of the British, and gave way in disorder. The moment was critical. General Washington pushed forward, and placed himself between his own men, and the British, with his horse’s head fronting the latter. The Americans encouraged by his example, and exhortations, made a stand, and returned the British fire. The general, though between both parties, was providentially uninjured by either. A party of the British fled into the college and were there attacked with field pieces which were fired into it. The seat of the muses became for some time the scene of action. The party which had taken refuge in the college, after receiving a few discharges from the American field pieces came out and surrendered themselves prisoners of war. In the course of the engagement, sixty of the British were killed, and a greater number wounded, and about 300 of them were taken prisoners. The rest made their escape, some by pushing on towards Trenton, others by returning towards Brunswick. The Americans lost only a few, but colonels Haslet and Potter, and capt. Neal of the artillery, were among the slain. General Mercer received three bayonet wounds of which he died in a short time. He was a Scotchman by birth, but from principle and affection had engaged to support the liberties of his adopted country, with a zeal equal to that of any of its native sons. In private life he was amiable, and his character as an officer stood high in the public esteem.

While they were fighting in Princeton, the British in Trenton were under arms, and on the point of making an assault on the evacuated camp of the Americans. With so much address had the movement to Princeton been conducted, that though from the critical situation of the two armies, every ear may be supposed to have been open, and every watchfulness to have been employed, yet General Washington moved completely off the ground, with his whole force, stores, baggage and artillery unknown to, and unsuspected by his adversaries. The British in Trenton, were so entirely deceived, that when they heard the report of the artillery at Princeton, though it was in the depth of winter, they supposed it to be thunder.

That part of the royal army, which having escaped from Princeton, retreated towards New-Brunswick, was pursued for three or four miles. Another party which had advanced as far as Maidenhead, on their way to Trenton, hearing the frequent discharge of fire arms in their rear, wheeled round and marched to the aid of their companions. The Americans by destroying bridges, retarded these, though close in their rear, so long as to gain time for themselves, to move off, in good order, to Pluckemin.

So great was the consternation of the British at these unexpected movements, that they instantly evacuated both Trenton and Princeton, and retreated with their whole
force to New-Brunswick. The American militia, collected and forming themselves into parties, waylaid their enemies, and cut them off whenever an opportunity presented. In a few days they over-ran the Jerseys. General Maxwell surprised Elisabeth-town, and took near 100 prisoners. Newark was abandoned, and the late conquerors were forced to leave Woodbridge. The royal troops were confined to Amboy and Brunswick, which held a water communication with New-York. Thus, in the short space of a month, that part of Jersey, which lies between New-Brunswick and Delaware, was both overrun by the British, and recovered by the Americans. The retreat of the continental army, the timid policy of the Jersey farmers, who chose rather to secure their property by submission, than defend it by resistance, made the British believe their work was done, and that little else remained, but to reap a harvest of plunder as the reward of their labours.

Unrestrained by the terrors of civil law, uncontrolled by the severity of discipline, and elated with their success, the soldiers of the royal army, and particularly [327] the Hessians, gave full scope to the selfish and ferocious passions of human nature. A conquered country, and submitting inhabitants presented easy plunder, equal to their unbounded rapacity. Infants, children, old men and women were stripped of their blankets and clothing. Furniture was burnt or otherwise destroyed. Domestic animals were carried off, and the people robbed of their necessary household provisions. The rapes and brutalities committed on women, and even on very young girls, would shock the ears of modesty, if particularly recited. These violences were perpetrated on inhabitants who had remained in their houses, and received printed protections, signed by order of the commander in chief. It was in vain, that they produced these protections as a safeguard. The Hessians could not read them, and the British soldiers thought they were entitled to a share of the booty, equally with their foreign associates.

Such, in all ages, has been the complexion of the bulk of armies, that immediate and severe punishments are indispensably necessary, to keep them from flagrant enormities. That discipline, without which an army is a band of armed plunderers, was as far, as respected the inhabitants, either neglected, or but feebly administered in the royal army. The soldiers finding, they might take with impunity what they pleased, were more strongly urged by avarice, than checked by policy or fear. Had every citizen been secured in his rights, protected in his property, and paid for his supplies, the consequences might have been fatal to the hopes of those who were attached to independence. What the warm recommendations of Congress, and the ardent supplications of general Washington could not effect, took place of its own accord, in consequence of the plundering and devastations of the royal army.

The whole country became instantly hostile to the invaders. Sufferers of all parties rose as one man, to revenge their personal injuries. Those, who from age, or infirmities, were incapable of bearing arms, kept a strict watch on the movements of the royal army, and from time to time, communicated information to their countrymen [328] in arms. Those who lately declined all military opposition, though called upon by the sacred tie of honour pledged to each other on the declaration of independence, cheerfully embodied, when they found submission to be unavailing for the security of their estates. This was not done originally in
consequence of the victories of Trenton and Princeton. In the very moment of these actions, or before the news of them had circulated, sundry individuals unknowing of general Washington’s movements, were concerting private insurrections, to revenge themselves on the plunderers. The dispute originated about property, or in other words, about the right of taxation. From the same source at this time, it received a new and forcible impulse. The farmer, who could not trace the consequences of British taxation, nor of American independence, felt the injuries he sustained from the depredation of licentious troops. The militia of New-Jersey, who had hitherto behaved most shamefully, from this time forward redeemed their character, and throughout a tedious war, performed services with a spirit and discipline in many respects, equal to that of regular soldiers.

The victories of Trenton and Princeton, seemed to be like a resurrection from the dead, to the desponding friends of independence. A melancholy gloom, had in the first 25 days of December overspread the United States; but from the memorable era of the 26th of same month, their prospects began to brighten. The recruiting service, which for some time had been at a stand, was successfully renewed, and hopes were soon indulged, that the commander in chief would be enabled to take the field in the spring, with a permanent regular force. General Washington retired to Morristown, that he might afford shelter to his suffering army. The American militia had sundry successful skirmishes with detachments of their adversaries. Within four days after the affair at Princeton, between forty and fifty Waldecker were killed, wounded, or taken at Springfield, by an equal number of the same New-Jersey militia, which but a month before, suffered the British to overrun their country [329] without opposition. This enterprise was conducted by colonel Spencer, whose gallantry, on the occasion, was rewarded with the command of a regiment.

During the winter movements, which have been just related, the soldiers of both armies underwent great hardships, but the Americans suffered by far the greater. Many of them were without shoes, though marching over frozen ground, which so gashed their naked feet, that each step was marked with blood. There was scarcely a tent in their whole army. The city of Philadelphia had been twice laid under contribution, to provide them with blankets. Officers had been appointed, to examine every house, and, after leaving a scanty covering for the family to bring off the rest, for the use of the troops in the field; but notwithstanding these exertions, the quantity procured was far short of decency, much less of comfort.

The officers and soldiers of the American army were about this time inoculated in their cantonment at Morristown. As very few of them had ever had the small pox, the inoculation was nearly universal. The disorder had previously spread among them in the natural way, and proved mortal to many: but after inoculation was introduced though whole regiments were inoculated, in a day, there was little or no mortality from the small pox, and the disorder was so slight, that from the beginning to the end of it, there was not a single day in which they could not, and if called upon, would not have turned out and fought the British. To induce the inhabitants to accommodate officers and soldiers in their houses, while under the small pox, they and their families were inoculated gratis by the military surgeons. Thus in a short time, the whole army
and the inhabitants in and near Morristown were subjected to the small pox, and with very little inconvenience to either.

Three months, which followed the actions of Trenton and Princeton, passed away without any important military enterprise on either side. Major general Putnam was directed to take post at Princeton, and cover the country in the vicinity. He had only a few hundred troops, though he was no more than eighteen miles distant from the strong garrison of the British at Brunswick. At one period he had fewer men for duty than he had miles of frontier to guard. The situation of general Washington at Morristown was not more eligible. His force was trifling, when compared with that of the British, but the enemy, and his own countrymen, believed the contrary. Their deception was cherished, and artfully continued by the specious parade of a considerable army. The American officers took their station in positions of difficult access, and kept up a constant communication with each other. This secured them from insult and surprise. While they covered the country, they harassed the foraging parties of the British, and often attacked them with success. Of a variety of these, the two following are selected as most worthy of notice.

General Dickenson, with four hundred Jersey militia, and fifty of the Pennsylvania riflemen, crossed Millstone-river, near Somerset courthouse, and attacked a large foraging party of the British, with so much spirit that they abandoned their convoy, and fled. Nine of them were taken prisoners. Forty waggons, and upwards of one hundred horses, with a considerable booty, fell into the hands of the general. While the British were loading their waggons, a single man began to fire on them from the woods. He was soon joined by more of his neighbors, who could not patiently see their property carried away. After the foragers had been annoyed for some time by these unseen marksmen, they fancied on the appearance of general Dickenson, that they were attacked by a superior force, and began a precipitate flight.

In about a month after the affair of Somerset courthouse, colonel Nelson, of Brunswick, with a detachment of 150 militiamen, surprised and captured at Lawrence’s Neck, a major, and fifty-nine privates, of the refugees, who were in British pay.

Throughout the campaign of 1776, an uncommon degree of sickness raged in the American army. Husbandmen, transferred at once from the conveniences of domestic life, to the hardships of a field encampment, could not accommodate themselves to the sudden change. The southern troops, sickened from the want of salt provisions. Linen shirts were too generally worn, in contact with the skin. The salutary influence of flannel, in preventing the diseases of camps, was either unknown or disregarded. The discipline of the army was too feeble to enforce those regulations which experience has proved to be indispensably necessary, for preserving the health of large bodies of men collected together. Cleanliness was also too much neglected. On the 8th of August the whole American army before New-York, consisted of 17,225 men, but of that number only 10,514 were fit for duty. These numerous sick suffered much, from the want of necessaries. Hurry and
confusion added much to their distresses. There was besides a real want of the requisites for their relief.

A proper hospital establishment was beyond the abilities of Congress, especially as the previous arrangements were not entered upon till the campaign had begun. Many, perhaps some thousands in the American army, were swept off in a few months by sickness. The country every where presented the melancholy sight of soldiers suffering poverty and disease, without the aid of medicine or attendance. Those who survived gave such accounts of the sufferings of the sick, as greatly discouraged the recruiting service. A rage for plundering, under the pretence of taking tory property, infected many of the common soldiery, and even some of the officers. The army had been formed on such principles, in some of the states, that commissions were, in several instances, bestowed on persons who had no pretensions to the character of gentlemen. Several of the officers were chosen by their own men, and they often preferred those from whom they expected the greatest indulgences. In other cases, the choice of the men was in favour of those who had consented to throw their pay into a joint stock with the privates, from which officers and men drew equal shares.

The army, consisting mostly of new recruits and unexperienced officers, and being only engaged for a twelve month, was very deficient in that mechanism and discipline which time and experience bestow on veteran troops. General Washington was unremitting in his [332] representations to Congress, favouring such alterations as promised permanency, order and discipline, in the army, but his judicious opinions on these subjects were slowly adopted. The sentiments of liberty, which then generally prevailed, made some distinguished members of Congress so distrustful of the future power and probable designs of a permanent domestic army, that they had well nigh sacrificed their country to their jealousies.

The unbounded freedom of the savage who roams the woods must be restrained when he becomes a citizen of orderly government, and from the necessity of the case must be much more so, when he submits to be a soldier. The individuals composing the army of America, could not at once pass over from the full enjoyment of civil liberty to the discipline of a camp, nor could the leading men in Congress for some time be persuaded, to adopt energetic establishments. “God forbid, would such say, that the citizen should be so far lost in the soldiers of our army, that they should give over longing for the enjoyments of domestic happiness. Let frequent furloughs be granted, rather than the endearments of wives and children should cease to allure the individuals of our army from camps to farms. ” The amiableness of this principle, veiled the error of the sentiment. The minds of the civil leaders in the councils of America were daily occupied in contemplating the rights of human nature, and investigating arguments on the principles of general liberty, to justify their own opposition to Great-Britain. Warmed with these ideas, they trusted too much to the virtue of their countrymen, and were backward to enforce that subordination and order in their army, which, though it intrudes on civil liberty, produces effects in the military line unequaled by the effusions of patriotism, or the exertions of undisciplined valor.
The experience of two campaigns evinced the folly of trusting the defence of the country to militia, or to levies raised only for a few months, and had induced a resolution for recruiting an army for the war. The good effects of this measure will appear in the sequel.

The campaign of 1776 did not end, till it had been [333] protracted into the first month of the year 1777. The British had counted on the complete and speedy reduction of their late colonies, but they found the work more difficult of execution, than was supposed. They wholly failed in their designs on the southern states. In Canada they recovered what, in the preceding year, they had lost—dove the Americans out of their borders, and destroyed their fleet on the lakes, but they failed in making their intended impression on the northwestern frontier of the states. They obtained possession of Rhode-Island, but the acquisition was of little service—perhaps was of detriment. For near three years several thousand men stationed thereon for its security, were lost to every purpose of active cooperation with the royal forces in the field, and the possession of it secured no equivalent advantages. The British completely succeeded against the city of New-York, and the adjacent country, but when they pursued their victories into New-Jersey, and subdivided their army, the recoiling Americans soon recovered the greatest part of what they had lost.

Sir William Howe, after having nearly reached Philadelphia, was confined to limits so narrow, that the fee simple of all he commanded would not reimburse the expence incurred by its conquest.

The war, on the part of the Americans, was but barely begun. Hitherto they had engaged with temporary forces, for a redress of grievances, but towards the close of this year they made arrangements for raising a permanent army to contend with Great-Britain, for the sovereignty of the country. To have thus far stood their ground, with their new levies, was a matter of great importance, because of them, delay was victory, and not to be conquered was to conquer.
CHAPTER XIII

Of Independence, State Constitutions, And The Confederation.

[334] In former ages it was common for a part of a community to migrate, and erect themselves into an independent society. Since the earth has been more fully peopled, and especially since the principles of Union have been better understood, a different policy has prevailed. A fondness for planting colonies has, for three preceding centuries, given full scope to a disposition for emigration, and at the same time the emigrants have been retained in a connexion with their Parent State. By these means Europeans have made the riches both of the east and west, subservient to their avarice and ambition. Though they occupy the smallest portion of the four quarters of the globe, they have contrived to subject the other three to their influence or command.

The circumstances under which New-England was planted, would a few centuries ago have entitled them from their first settlement, to the privileges of independence. They were virtually exiled from their native country, by being denied the rights of men—they set out on their own expence, and after purchasing the consent of the native proprietors, improved an uncultivated country, to which, in the eye of reason and philosophy, the king of England had no title.

If it is lawful for individuals to relinquish their native soil, and pursue their own happiness in other regions and under other political associations, the settlers of New-England were always so far independent, as to owe no obedience to their Parent State, but such as resulted from their voluntary assent. The slavish doctrine of the divine right of kings, and the corruptions of christianity, by undervaluing heathen titles, favoured an opposite system. What for several centuries after the christian era would have been called the institution of a new government, was by modern refinement denominated only an extension of the old, in the form of a dependent colony.

Though the prevailing ecclesiastical and political creeds [335] tended to degrade the condition of the settlers in New-England, yet there was always a party there which believed in their natural right to independence. They recurred to first principles, and argued, that as they received from government nothing more than a charter, founded on ideal claims of sovereignty, they owed it no other obedience than what was derived from express, or implied compact. It was not till the present century had more than half elapsed, that it occurred to any number of the colonists, that they had an interest in being detached from Great-Britain. Their attention was first turned to this subject, by the British claim of taxation. This opened a melancholy prospect, boundless in extent, and endless in duration. The Boston port act, and the other acts, passed in 1774, and 1775, which have been already the subject of comment, progressively weakened the attachment of the colonists to the birth place of their forefathers. The commencement of hostilities on the 19th of April, 1775, exhibited the Parent State in an odious point of view, and
abated the original dread of separating from it. But nevertheless at that time, and for a
twelve month after, a majority of the colonists wished for no more than to be re-
established as subjects in their antient rights. Had independence been their object even
at the commencement of hostilities, they would have rescinded these associations,
which have been already mentioned and imported more largely than ever. Common
sense revolts at the idea, that colonists unfurnished with military stores, and wanting
manufactures of every kind, should at the time of their intending a serious struggle for
independence, by a voluntary agreement, deprive themselves of the obvious means of
procuring such foreign supplies as their circumstances might make necessary. Instead
of pursuing a line of conduct, which might have been dictated by a wish for
independence, they continued their exports for nearly a year after they ceased to
import. This not only lessened the debts they owed to Great-Britain, but furnished
additional means for carrying on the war against themselves.
To aim at independence, and at the same time to transfer their
resources to their enemies, could not have been [336] the policy
of an enlightened people. It was not till some time in 1776, that the colonists began to
take other ground, and contend that it was for their interest to be forever separated
from Great-Britain. In favour of this opinion it was said, that in case of their
continuing subjects, the Mother country, though she redressed their present
grievances, might at pleasure repeat similar oppressions. That she ought not to be
trusted, having twice resumed the exercise of taxation, after it had been apparently
relinquished. The favourers of separation also urged, that Great-Britain was jealous of
their increasing numbers, and rising greatness—that she would not exercise
government for their benefit, but for her own. That the only permanent security for
American happiness, was to deny her the power of interfering with their government
or commerce. To effect this purpose they were of opinion, that it was necessary to cut
the knot, which connected the two countries, by a public renunciation of all political
connections between them.

The Americans about this time began to be influenced by new views. The military
arrangements of the preceding year—their unexpected union, and prevailing
enthusiasm, expanded the minds of their leaders, and elevated the sentiments of the
great body of their people. Decisive measures which would have been lately
reprobated, now met with approbation.

The favourers of subordination under the former constitution urged the advantages of
a supreme head, to control the disputes of interfering colonies, and also the benefits
which flowed from union. That independence was untried ground, and should not be
entered upon, but in the last extremity.

They flattered themselves that Great-Britain was so fully convinced of the determined
spirit of America, that if the present controversy was compromised, she would not at
any future period, resume an injurious exercise of her supremacy. They were therefore
for proceeding no farther than to defend themselves in the character of subjects,
trusting that ere long the present hostile measures would be relinquished,
and the harmony [337] of the two countries reestablished. The
favourers of this system were embarrassed, and all their
arguments weakened, by the perseverance of Great-Britain in her schemes of
coercion. A probable hope of a speedy repeal of a few acts of parliament, would have
greatly increased the number of those who were advocates for reconciliation. But the
certainty of intelligence to the contrary gave additional force to the arguments of the
opposite party. Though new weight was daily thrown into the scale, in which the
advantages of independence were weighed, yet it did not preponderate till about that
time in 1776, when intelligence reached the colonists of the act of parliament passed
in December 1775, for throwing them out of British protection, and of hiring foreign
troops to assist in effecting their conquest. Respecting the first it was said, “that
protection and allegiance were reciprocal, and that the refusal of the first was a legal
ground of justification for withholding the last.” They considered themselves to be
thereby discharged from their allegiance, and that to declare themselves independent,
was no more than to announce to the world the real political state, in which Great-
Britain had placed them. This act proved that the colonists might constitutionally
declare themselves independent, but the hiring of foreign troops to make war upon
them, demonstrated the necessity of their doing it immediately. They reasoned that if
Great-Britain called in the aid of strangers to crush them, they must seek similar relief
for their own preservation. But they well knew this could not be expected, while they
were in arms against their acknowledged sovereign. They had therefore only a choice
of difficulties, and must either seek foreign aid as independent states, or continue in
the awkward and hazardous situation of subjects, carrying on war from their own
resources both against their king, and such mercenaries as he chose to employ for
their subjugation. Necessity not choice forced them on the decision. Submission
without obtaining a redress of their grievances was advocated by none who possessed
the public confidence.

While the public mind was balancing on this eventful subject, several writers placed
the advantages of independence in various points of view. Among these Thomas
Paine in a pamphlet, under the signature of Common Sense, held the most
distinguished rank. The stile, manner, and language of this performance were
calculated to interest the passions, and to rouse all the active powers of human nature.
With the view of operating on the sentiments of a religious people, scripture was
pressed into his service, and the powers, and even the name of a king was rendered
odious in the eyes of the numerous colonists who had read and studied the history of
the Jews, as recorded in the Old Testament. The folly of that people in revolting from
a government, instituted by Heaven itself, and the oppressions to which they were
subjected in consequence of their lusting after kings to rule over them, afforded an
excellent handle for prepossessing the colonists in favour of republican institutions,
and prejudicing them against kingly government. Hereditary succession was turned
into ridicule. The absurdity of subjecting a great continent to a small island on the
other side of the globe, was represented in such striking language, as to interest the
honor and pride of the colonists in renouncing the government of Great-Britain. The
necessity, the advantages, and practicability of independence, were forcibly
demonstrated. Nothing could be better timed than this performance. It was addressed
to freemen, who had just received convincing proof, that Great-Britain had thrown
them out of her protection, had engaged foreign mercenaries to make war upon them,
and seriously designed to compel their unconditional submission to her unlimited power. It found the colonists most thoroughly alarmed for their liberties, and disposed to do and suffer any thing that promised their establishment. In union with the feelings and sentiments of the people, it produced surprising effects. Many thousands were convinced, and were led to approve [339] and long for a separation from the Mother Country. Though that measure, a few months before, was not only foreign from their wishes, but the object of their abhorrence, the current suddenly became so strong in its favour, that it bore down all opposition. The multitude was hurried down the stream, but some worthy men could not easily reconcile themselves to the idea of an eternal separation from a country, to which they had been long bound by the most endearing ties. They saw the sword drawn, but could not tell when it would be sheathed. They feared that the dispersed individuals of the several colonies would not be brought to coalesce under an efficient government, and that after much anarchy some future Caesar would grasp their liberties, and confirm himself in a throne of despotism. They doubted the perseverance of their countrymen in effecting their independence, and were also apprehensive that in case of success, their future condition would be less happy than their past. Some respectable individuals whose principles were pure, but whose souls were not of that firm texture which revolutions require, shrunk back from the bold measures proposed by their more adventurous countrymen. To submit without an appeal to Heaven, though secretly wished for by some, was not the avowed sentiment of any. But to persevere in petitioning and resisting was the system of some misguided honest men. The favourers of this opinion were generally wanting in that decision which grasps at great objects, and influenced by that timid policy, which does its work by halves. Most of them dreaded the power of Britain. A few, on the score of interest or an expectancy of favours from royal government, refused to concur with the general voice. Some of the natives of the Parent State who, having lately settled in the colonies, had not yet exchanged European for American ideas, together with a few others, conscientiously opposed the measures of Congress: but the great bulk of the people, and especially of the spirited and independent part of the community, came with surprising unanimity into the project of independence.

[340] The eagerness for independence resulted more from feeling than reasoning. The advantages of an unfettered trade, the prospect of honours and emoluments in administering a new government, were of themselves insufficient motives for adopting this bold measure. But what was wanting from considerations of this kind, was made up by the perseverance of Great-Britain, in her schemes of coercion and conquest. The determined resolution of the Mother Country to subdue the colonists, together with the plans she adopted for accomplishing that purpose, and their equally determined resolution to appeal to Heaven rather than submit, made a declaration of independence as necessary in 1776, as was the non-importation agreement of 1774, or the assumption of arms in 1775. The last naturally resulted from the first. The revolution was not forced on the people by ambitious leaders grasping at supreme power, but every measure of it was forced on Congress, by the necessity of the case, and the voice of the people. The change of the public mind of America respecting connexion with Great-Britain, is without a parallel. In the
short space of two years, nearly three millions of people passed over from the love
and duty of loyal subjects, to the hatred and resentment of enemies.

The motion for declaring the colonies free and independent, was
first made in Congress, by Richard Henry Lee of Virginia. He
was warranted in making this motion by the particular instructions of his immediate
constituents, and also by the general voice of the people of all the states. When the
time for taking the subject under consideration arrived, much knowledge, ingenuity
and eloquence were displayed on both sides of the question. The debates were
continued for some time, and with great animation. In these John Adams, and John
Dickinson, took leading and opposite parts. The former began one of his speeches, by
an invocation of the god of eloquence, to assist him in defending the claims, and in
enforcing the duty of his countrymen. He strongly urged the immediate dissolution of
all political connexion of the colonies with Great-Britain, from the voice of the [341] people,
from the necessity of the measure in order to obtain foreign
assistance, from a regard to consistency, and from the prospects of glory and happiness, which opened beyond the war, to a free and independent
people. Mr. Dickinson replied to this speech. He began by observing that the member
from Massachusetts (Mr. Adams) had introduced his defence of the declaration of
independence by invoking an heathen god, but that he should begin his objections to
it, by solemnly invoking the Governor of the Universe, so to influence the minds of
the members of Congress, that if the proposed measure was for the benefit of
America, nothing which he should say against it, might make the least impression. He
then urged that the present time was improper for the declaration of independence,
that the war might be conducted with equal vigor without it, that it would divide the
Americans, and unite the people of Great-Britain against them. He then proposed that
some assurance should be obtained of assistance from a foreign power, before they
renounced their connexion with Great-Britain, and that the declaration of
independence should be the condition to be offered for this assistance. He likewise
stated the disputes that existed between several of the colonies, and proposed that
some measures for the settlement of them should be determined upon, before they lost
sight of that tribunal, which had hitherto been the umpire of all their differences.

After a full discussion, the measure of declaring the colonies free and independent
was approved, by nearly an unanimous vote. The anniversary of the day on which this
great event took place, has ever since been consecrated by the Americans to religious
gratitude, and social pleasures. It is considered by them as the birth day of their
freedom.

The act of the united colonies for separating themselves from the government of
Great-Britain, and declaring their independence, was expressed in the following
words:

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for
one people to dissolve the political bands [342] which have
connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the
separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle
them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its power in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present king of Great-Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their [343] operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them, and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly, for opposing, with manly firmness, his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused, for a long time after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their exercise; the state remaining in the mean-time exposed to all the danger of invasion from without, and convulsions within.
He has endeavored to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

He has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

He has made judges dependent on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the military independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation:

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For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states:

For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing taxes on us without our consent:

For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury:

For transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighbouring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these colonies:

For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments:

For suspending our own legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.
He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection, and waging war against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is, at this time, transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy, scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow-citizens, taken captive on the high seas, to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms: our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have we been wanting in attention to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts made by their legislature, to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them, by the ties of our common kindred, to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace, friends.

We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown; and that all political connection between them and the state of Great-Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honour.

John Hancock, President

From the promulgation of this declaration, every thing assumed a new form. The Americans no longer appeared in the character of subjects in arms against their sovereign, but as an independent people, repelling the attacks of an invading foe. The propositions and supplications for reconciliation were done away. The dispute was brought to a single point, whether the late British colonies should be conquered provinces, or free and independent states.

The declaration of independence was read publicly in all the states, and was welcomed with many demonstrations of joy. The people were encouraged by it to bear up under the calamities of war, and viewed the evils they suffered, only as the thorn that ever accompanies the rose. The army received it with particular satisfaction. As far as it had validity, so far it secured them from suffering as rebels, and held out to their view an object, the attainment of which would be an adequate recompense for the [347] toils and dangers of war. They were animated by the consideration that they were no longer to risque their lives for the trifling purpose of procuring a repeal of a few oppressive acts of parliament, but for a new organization of government, that would forever put it out of the power of Great-Britain to oppress them. The flattering prospects of an extensive commerce, freed from British restrictions, and the honours and emoluments of office in independent states now began to glitter before the eyes of the colonists, and reconciled them to the difficulties of their situation. What was supposed in Great-Britain to be their primary object, had only a secondary influence. While they were charged with aiming at independence from the impulse of avarice and ambition, they were ardently wishing for a reconciliation. But, after they had been compelled to adopt that measure, these powerful principles of human actions opposed its retraction, and stimulated to its support. That separation which the colonists at first dreaded as an evil, they soon gloried in as a national blessing. While the rulers of Great-Britain urged their people to a vigorous prosecution of the American war, on the idea that the colonists were aiming at independence, they imposed on them a necessity of adopting that very measure, and actually effected its accomplishment. By repeatedly charging the Americans with aiming at the erection of a new government, and by proceeding on that idea to subdue them, predictions which were originally false, eventually became true. When the declaration of independence reached Great-Britain the
partisans of ministry triumphed in their sagacity. “The measure, said they, we have long foreseen, is now come to pass.” They inverted the natural order of things. Without reflecting that their own policy had forced a revolution contrary to the original design of the colonists, the declaration of independence was held out to the people of Great-Britain as a justification of those previous violences, which were its efficient cause.

The act of Congress for disbelieving the colonies from their Parent State, was the subject of many animadversions.

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The colonists were said to have been precipitate in adopting a measure, from which there was no honourable ground of retreating. They replied that for eleven years they had been incessantly petitioning the throne for a redress of their grievances. Since the year 1765, a continental Congress had at three sundry times stated their claims, and prayed for their constitutional rights. That each assembly of the thirteen colonies had also, in its separate capacity, concurred in the same measure. That from the perseverance of Great-Britain in her schemes for their coercion, they had no alternative, but a mean submission, or a vigorous resistance; and that as she was about to invade their coasts with a large body of mercenaries, they were compelled to declare themselves independent, that they might be put into an immediate capacity for soliciting foreign aid.

The virulence of those who had been in opposition to the claims of the colonists, was increased by their bold act in breaking off all subordination to the Parent State. “Great-Britain, said they, has founded colonies at great expence—has incurred a load of debt by wars on their account—has protected their commerce, and raised them to all the consequence they possess, and now in the insolence of adult years, rather than pay their proportion of the common expences of government, they ungratefully renounce all connexion with the nurse of their youth, and the protectress of their riper years.” The Americans acknowledged that much was due to Great-Britain, for the protection which her navy procured to the coasts, and the commerce of the colonies, but contended that much was paid by the latter, in consequence of the restrictions imposed on their commerce by the former. “The charge of ingratitude would have been just,” said they, “had allegiance been renounced while protection was given, but when the navy, which formerly secured the commerce and seaport towns of America, began to distress the former, and to burn the latter, the previous obligations to obey or be grateful, were no longer in force.”

That the colonists paid nothing, and would not pay to the support of government, was confidently asserted, and [349] no credit was given for the sums indirectly levied upon them, in consequence of their being confined to the consumption of British manufactures. By such illfounded observations were the people of Great-Britain inflamed against their fellow subjects in America. The latter were represented as an ungrateful people, refusing to bear any part of the expences of a protecting government, or to pay their proportion of a heavy debt, said to be incurred on their account. Many of the inhabitants of Great-Britain deceived in matters of fact, considered their American brethren as deserving the severity of
military coercion. So strongly were the two countries rivetted together, that if the whole truth had been known to the people of both, their separation would have been scarcely possible. Any feasible plan by which subjection to Great-Britain could have been reconciled with American safety, would at any time, previous to 1776, have met the approbation of the colonists. But while the lust of power and of gain, blinded the rulers of Great-Britain, mistated facts and uncandid representations brought over their people to second the infatuation. A few honest men properly authorised, might have devised measures of compromise, which under the influence of truth, humility and moderation, would have prevented a dismemberment of the empire; but these virtues ceased to influence, and falsehood, haughtiness and blind zeal usurped their places. Had Great-Britain, even after the declaration of independence, adopted the magnanimous resolution of declaring her colonies free and independent states, interest would have prompted them to form such a connexion as would have secured to the Mother Country the advantages of their commerce, without the expence or trouble of their governments. But misguided politics continued the fatal system of coercion and conquest. Several on both sides of the Atlantic, have called the declaration of independence, “a bold, and accidentally, a lucky speculation,” but subsequent events proved, that it was a wise measure. It is acknowledged, that it detached some timid friends from supporting the Americans in their opposition to Great-Britain, but it increased the vigour and union of those, who possessed more fortitude and perseverance. Without it, the colonists would have had no object adequate to the dangers to which they exposed themselves, in continuing to contend with Great-Britain. If the interference of France was necessary to give success to the resistance of the Americans, the declaration of independence was also necessary, for the French expressly founded the propriety of their treaty with Congress on the circumstance, “that they found the United States in possession of independence.”

All political connexion between Great-Britain and her colonies being dissolved, the institution of new forms of government became unavoidable. The necessity of this was so urgent that Congress, before the declaration of independence, had recommended to the respective assemblies and conventions of the United States, to adopt such governments as should, in their opinion, best conduce to the happiness and safety of their constituents. During more than twelve months the colonists had been held together by the force of antient habits, and by laws under the simple stile of recommendations. The impropriety of proceeding in courts of justice by the authority of a sovereign, against whom the colonies were in arms, was self-evident. The impossibility of governing, for any length of time, three millions of people, by the ties of honour, without the authority of law, was equally apparent. The rejection of British sovereignty therefore drew after it the necessity of fixing on some other principle of government. The genius of the Americans, their republican habits and sentiments, naturally led them to substitute the majesty of the people, in lieu of discarded royalty. The kingly office was dropped, but in most of the subordinate departments of government, antient forms and names were retained. Such a portion of power had at all times been exercised by the people and their representatives, that the change of sovereignty was hardly perceptible, and the revolution took place without violence or
convulsion. Popular elections elevated private citizens to the same offices, which formerly had been conferred by royal appointment. The people felt an uninterrupted continuation of the blessings of law and government under old names, though derived from a new sovereignty, and were scarcely sensible of any change in their political constitution. The checks and balances which restrained the popular assemblies under the royal government, were partly dropped, and partly retained, by substituting something of the same kind. The temper of the people would not permit that any one man, however exalted by office, or distinguished by abilities, should have a negative on the declared sense of a majority of their representatives, but the experience of all ages had taught them the danger of lodging all power in one body of men. A second branch of legislature, consisting of a few select persons, under the name of senate, or council, was therefore constituted in eleven of the thirteen states, and their concurrence made necessary to give the validity of law to the acts of a more numerous branch of popular representatives. New-York and Massachusetts went one step farther. The former constituted a council of revision, consisting of the governor and the heads of judicial departments, on whose objecting to any proposed law, a reconsideration became necessary, and unless it was confirmed by two thirds of both houses, it could have no operation. A similar power was given to the governor of Massachusetts. Georgia and Pennsylvania were the only states whose legislature consisted of only one branch. Though many in these states, and a majority in all the others, saw and acknowledged the propriety of a compounded legislature, yet the mode of creating two branches out of a homogeneous mass of people, was a matter of difficulty. No distinction of ranks existed in the colonies, and none were entitled to any rights, but such as were common to all. Some possessed more wealth than others, but riches and ability were not always associated. Ten of the eleven states, whose legislatures consisted of two branches, ordained that the members of both should be elected by the people. This rather made two co-ordinate houses of representatives than a check on a single one, by the moderation of a select few. Maryland adopted a singular plan for constituting an independent senate. By her constitution the members of that body were elected for five years, while the members of the house of delegates held their seats only for one. The number of senators was only fifteen, and they were all elected indiscriminately from the inhabitants of any part of the state, excepting that nine of them were to be resident on the west, and six on the east side of the Chesapeake Bay. They were elected not immediately by the people, but by electors, two from each county, appointed by the inhabitants for that sole purpose. By these regulations the senate of Maryland consisted of men of influence, integrity and abilities, and such as were a real and beneficial check on the hasty proceedings of a more numerous branch of popular representatives. The laws of that state were well digested, and its interest steadily pursued with a peculiar unity of system; while elsewhere it too often happened in the fluctuation of public assemblies; and where the legislative department was not sufficiently checked, that passion and party predominated over principle and public good.

Pennsylvania instead of a legislative council or senate, adopted the expedient of publishing bills after the second reading, for the information of the inhabitants. This had its advantages and disadvantages. It prevented the precipitate adoption of new
regulations, and gave an opportunity of ascertaining the sense of the people on those laws by which they were to be bound; but it carried the spirit of discussion into every comer, and disturbed the peace and harmony of neighbourhoods. By making the business of government the duty of every man, it drew off the attention of many from the steady pursuit of their respective businesses.

The state of Pennsylvania also adopted another institution peculiar to itself, under the denomination of a council of censors. These were to be chosen once every seven years, and were authorised to enquire whether the constitution had been preserved—whether the legislative and executive branch of government, had performed their duty, or assumed to themselves, or exercised other or greater powers, than those to which they were constitutionally entitled.

To enquire whether the public taxes had been justly laid and collected, and in what manner the public monies had been disposed of, and whether the laws had been duly executed. However excellent this institution may appear in theory, it is doubtful whether in practice it will answer any valuable end. It most certainly opens a door for discord, and furnishes abundant matter for periodical altercation. Either from the disposition of its inhabitants, its form of government, or some other cause, the people of Pennsylvania have constantly been in a state of fermentation. The end of one public controversy, has been the beginning of another. From the collision of parties, the minds of the citizens were sharpened, and their active powers improved, but internal harmony has been unknown. They who were out of place, so narrowly watched those who were in, that nothing injurious to the public could be easily effected, but from the fluctuation of power, and the total want of permanent system, nothing great or lasting could with safety be undertaken, or prosecuted to effect. Under all these disadvantages, the state flourished, and from the industry and ingenuity of its inhabitants acquired an unrivalled ascendancy in arts and manufactures. This must in a great measure be ascribed to the influence of habits, of order and industry, that had long prevailed.

The Americans agreed in appointing a supreme executive head to each state, with the title either of governor or president. They also agreed in deriving the whole powers of government, either mediately or immediately from the people. In the eastern states, and in New York, their governors were elected by the inhabitants, in their respective towns or counties, and in the other states by the legislatures: but in no case was the smallest title of power exercised from hereditary right. New-York was the only state which invested its governor with executive authority without a council. Such was the extreme jealousy of power which pervaded the American states, that they did not think proper to trust the man of their choice with the power of executing their own determinations, without obliging him in many cases to take the advice of such counsellors as they thought proper to nominate. The disadvantages of this institution far outweighed its advantages. Had the governors succeeded by hereditary right, a council would have been often necessary to supply the real want of abilities, but when an individual had been selected by the people as the fittest person for discharging the duties of this high department, to fetter him with a council was either to lessen his capacity of doing good, or to furnish him with a skreen for doing evil. It destroyed the secrecy, vigor and dispatch, which the executive power ought to possess, and by making governmental acts the acts of a body, diminished individual
responsibility. In some states it greatly enhanced the expences of government, and in all retarded its operations, without any equivalent advantages.

New-York in another particular, displayed political sagacity superior to her neighbors. This was in her council of appointment, consisting of one senator from each of her four great election districts, authorised to designate proper persons for filling vacancies in the executive departments of government. Large bodies are far from being the most proper depositaries of the power of appointing to offices. The assiduous attention of candidates is too apt to bias the voice of individuals in popular assemblies. Besides in such appointments, the responsibility for the conduct of the officer, is in a great measure annihilated. The concurrence of a select few on the nomination of one, seems a more eligible mode for securing a proper choice, than appointments made either by one, or by a numerous body. In the former case there would be danger of favoritism, in the latter that modest unassuming merit would be overlooked, in favour of the forward and obsequious.

A rotation of public officers made a part of most of the American constitutions. Frequent elections were required by all, but several still farther, and deprived the electors of the power of continuing the same office in the same hands, after a specified length of time. Young politicians suddenly called from the ordinary walks of life, to make laws and institute forms of government, turned their attention to the histories of ancient republics and the writings of speculative men on the subject of government. This led them into many errors and occasioned them to adopt sundry opinions, unsuitable to the state of society in America, and contrary to the genius of real republicanism.

The principle of rotation was carried so far, that in some of the states, public officers in several departments scarcely knew their official duty, till they were obliged to retire and give place to others, as ignorant as they had been on their first appointment. If offices had been instituted for the benefit of the holders, the policy of diffusing these benefits would have been proper, but instituted as they were for the convenience of the public, the end was marred by such frequent changes. By confining the objects of choice, it diminished the privileges of electors, and frequently deprived them of the liberty of choosing the man who, from previous experience, was of all men the most suitable. The favourers of this system of rotation contended for it, as likely to prevent a perpetuity of office and power in the same individual or family, and as a security against hereditary honours. To this it was replied, that free, fair and frequent elections were the most natural and proper securities, for the liberties of the people. It produced a more general diffusion of political knowledge, but made more smatterers than adepts in the science of government.

As a farther security for the continuance of republican principles in the American constitutions, they agreed in prohibiting all hereditary honours and distinction of ranks.

It was one of the peculiarities of these new forms of government, that all religious establishments were abolished. Some retained a constitutional distinction between
Christians and others, with respect to eligibility to office, but the idea of supporting one denomination at the expense of others, or of raising any one sect of protestants to a legal pre-eminence, was universally reprobated. The alliance between church and state was completely broken, and each was left to support itself, independent of the other.

The far famed social compact between the people and their rulers, did not apply to the United States. The [356] sovereignty was in the people. In their sovereign capacity by their representatives, they agreed on forms of government for their own security, and deputed certain individuals as their agents to serve them in public stations agreeably to constitutions, which they prescribed for their conduct.

The world has not hitherto exhibited so fair an opportunity for promoting social happiness. It is hoped for the honor of human nature, that the result will prove the fallacy of those theories, which suppose that mankind are incapable of self government. The ancients, not knowing the doctrine of representation, were apt in their public meetings to run into confusion, but in America this mode of taking the sense of the people, is so well understood, and so completely reduced to system, that its most populous states are often peaceably convened in an assembly of deputies, not too large for orderly deliberation, and yet representing the whole in equal proportions. These popular branches of legislature are miniature pictures of the community, and from the mode of their election are likely to be influenced by the same interests and feelings with the people whom they represent. As a farther security for their fidelity, they are bound by every law they make for their constituents. The assemblage of these circumstances gives as great a security that laws will be made, and government administered for the good of the people, as can be expected from the imperfection of human institutions.

In this short view of the formation and establishment of the American constitutions, we behold our species in a new situation. In no age before, and in no other country, did man ever possess an election of the kind of government, under which he would choose to live. The constituent parts of the antient free governments were thrown together by accident. The freedom of modern European governments was, for the most part, obtained by the concessions, or liberality of monarchs, or military leaders. In America alone, reason and liberty concurred in the formation of constitutions. It is true, from the infancy of political knowledge in the United States, there were [357] many defects in their forms of government. But in one thing they were all perfect. They left the people in the power of altering and amending them, whenever they pleased. In this happy peculiarity they placed the science of politics on a footing with the other sciences, by opening it to improvements from experience, and the discoveries of future ages. By means of this power of amending American constitutions, the friends of mankind have fondly hoped that oppression will one day be no more, and that political evil will at least be prevented or restrained with as much certainty, by a proper combination or separation of power, as natural evil is lessened or prevented by the application of the knowledge or ingenuity of man to domestic purposes. No part of the history of antient or modern Europe, can furnish a single fact that militates against this opinion, since in none of its
governments have the principles of equal representation and checks been applied, for the preservation of freedom. On these two pivots are suspended the liberties of most of the states. Where they are wanting, there can be no security for liberty, where they exist they render any farther security unnecessary.

The rejection of British sovereignty not only involved a necessity of erecting independent constitutions, but of cementing the whole United States by some common bond of union. The act of independence did not hold out to the world thirteen sovereign states, but a common sovereignty of the whole in their united capacity. It therefore became necessary to run the line of distinction, between the local legislatures, and the assembly of the states in Congress. A committee was appointed for digesting articles of confederation between the states or united colonies, as they were then called, at the time the propriety of declaring independence was under debate, and some weeks previously to the adoption of that measure, but the plan was not for sixteen months after so far digested, as to be ready for communication to the states. Nor was it finally ratified by the accession of all the states, till nearly three years more had elapsed.

In discussing its articles, many difficult questions occurred. One was to ascertain the ratio of contributions from each state. Two principles presented themselves, numbers of people, and the value of lands. The last was preferred as being the truest barometer of the wealth of nations, but from an apprehended impracticability of carrying it into effect, it was soon relinquished, and recurrence had to the former. That the states should be represented in proportion to their importance, was contended for by those who had extensive territory, but they who were confined to small dimensions, replied, that the states confederated as individuals, in a state of nature, and should therefore have equal votes. From fear of weakening their exertions against the common enemy, the large states for the present yielded the point, and consented that each state should have an equal suffrage.

It was not easy to define the power of the state legislatures, so as to prevent a clashing between their jurisdiction, and that of the general government. On mature deliberation it was thought proper, that the former should be abridged of the power of forming any other confederation or alliance—of laying on any imposts or duties that might interfere with treaties made by Congress—or keeping up any vessels of war, or granting letters of marque or reprisal. The powers of Congress were also defined. Of these the principle were as follows: To have the sole and exclusive right of determining on peace and war—of sending and receiving ambassadors—of entering into treaties and alliances,—of granting letters of marque or reprisal in times of peace.—To be the last resort on appeal, in all disputes between two or more states—to have the sole and exclusive right of regulating the alloy and value of coin, of fixing the standard of weights and measures—regulating the trade and managing all affairs with the Indians—establishing and regulating post offices—to borrow money or emit bills on the credit of the United States—to build and equip a navy—to agree upon the number of land forces, and to make requisitions from each state for its quota of men, in proportion to the number of its white inhabitants.

No coercive power was given to the general government, nor was it invested with any legislative power over individuals,
but only over states in their corporate capacity. As at the time the articles of confederation were proposed for ratification, the Americans had little or no regular commercial intercourse with foreign nations, a power to regulate trade or to raise a revenue from it, though both were essential to the welfare of the union, made no part of the federal system. To remedy this and all other defects, a door was left open for introducing farther provisions, suited to future circumstances.

The articles of confederation were proposed at a time when the citizens of America were young in the science of politics, and when a commanding sense of duty, enforced by the pressure of a common danger, precluded the necessity of a power of compulsion. The enthusiasm of the day gave such credit and currency to paper emissions, as made the raising of supplies an easy matter. The system of federal government was therefore more calculated for what men then were, under these circumstances, than for the languid years of peace, when selfishness usurped the place of public spirit, and when credit no longer assisted, in providing for the exigencies of government.

The experience of a few years after the termination of the war, proved, as will appear in its proper place, that a radical change of the whole system was necessary, to the good government of the United States.

the end of the first volume


[5.] Ramsay to Benjamin Rush, February 17, 1788, in Brunhouse, p. 119. Ramsay was a staunch Federalist delegate to his state’s constitution-ratifying convention; he wrote to Rush, April 21, 1788, exulting: “I hope in my next [letter] to congratulate you on South Carolina being the 7th pillar of the new Government.” Ibid., p. 120.

[6.] Ramsay’s “An Oration,”” for July 4, 1794. Ibid., p. 195. However, Ramsay’s was not a naive vision of homogeneity, for he also thought that “Even the prejudices,
peculiarities, and local habits of the different states, should be respected and tenderly dealt with.” Ibid. He emphasized unity of vision—an intellectual consensus—rather than a bland uniformity of customs or conduct.


[8.] Ramsay to Eliot, March 11, 1795, in Brunhouse, p. 139.

[9.] Ramsay to Belknap, March 11, 1795, in Brunhouse, pp. 139–140.


[12.] HAR, I, pp. 31, 27.


[14.] HAR, I, pp. 29–33. Even the colonists’ readings, though few in number, “generally favoured the cause of liberty.” They included Cato’s Letters, the Independent Whig, and, in New England, histories of the Puritans, which “kept alive the remembrance of the sufferings of their forefathers, and inspired a warm attachment, both to the civil and the religious rights of human nature.” Ibid., p. 30. Ramsay, who wrote of the powerful unifying force exerted by New England histories, was no doubt influenced by them in his own writings.


[17.] In fact, Ramsay publicly opposed slavery and branded the slave trade an “infamous traffic.” [See Ramsay to Rush, August 22, 1783, September 9, 1783,
January 31, 1785, December 14, 1785, April 12, 1786, in Brunhouse, pp. 76, 77, 86–87, 94, 99.] According to Winthrop Jordan, moreover, Ramsay was the only Southerner who, upon receipt of a copy of Thomas Jefferson’s Notes on the State of Virginia, wrote that he thought Jefferson had “depressed the negroes too low.”

Ramsay was as strong a proponent of the Lockean principle that environment shapes human nature as one could find in eighteenth-century America. He believed that “all mankind [is] originally the same & only diversified by accidental circumstances.”


While Ramsay’s attitudes toward slavery are beyond the scope of this essay, it is useful to note that his failure to condemn slavery more vehemently in his History was integral to his strategy of diminishing the importance of the forces that could tear the nation apart. For a fine discussion of Ramsay and slavery, see Arthur H. Shaffer, “Between Two Worlds: David Ramsay and the Politics of Slavery,” Journal of Southern History, 50 (1984): 175–196.


[19.] Ramsay to Drayton, September 1, 1779; to Rush, July 18, 1779; to Rush, July 11, 1783; to Eliot, August 6, 1785; to Rush, August 6, 1786; in Brunhouse, pp. 64, 62, 75, 90, 105.


[21.] Ramsay to Eliot, April 7, 1810, in Brunhouse, p. 166.

[22.] Ramsay to John Coakley Lettsom, October 29, 1808, in Brunhouse, p. 163. This analogy raises the issue of “truth” in historical writing, which I have addressed in “Creating a Useable Future,” and The Revolutionary Histories, particularly chapters 6 and 8.

[23.] The History of the Revolution of South-Carolina was, thanks to Jefferson’s brokering, translated into French. The fascinating story of Jefferson’s efforts is contained in several letters: Ramsay to Jefferson, June 15, 1785; Ramsay to Jefferson, July 13, 1785; Ramsay to Jefferson, August 8, 1785; Jefferson to Ramsay, August 31, 1785; Jefferson to Ramsay, October 12, 1785; Ramsay to Jefferson, December 10, 1785; Jefferson to Ramsay, January 26, 1786; Jefferson to Ramsay, January 27, 1786; Ramsay to Jefferson, May 3, 1786; Jefferson to Ramsay, July 10, 1786; Ramsay to Jefferson, November 8, 1786; Jefferson to Ramsay, August 4, 1786; Jefferson to Ramsay, May 7, 1788; Ramsay to Jefferson, October 8, 1788, in Brunhouse, pp. 88–94, 97, 101, 104, 107, 112–113, 121, 123. The History of the American Revolution was translated into Dutch and German, and The Life of George Washington was translated into French and Spanish.

Ramsay was married three times: first, in February 1775, to Sabina Ellis, who died in June 1776; then in March 1783 to Frances Witherspoon—daughter of John Witherspoon, president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton)—who died while delivering their child December 9, 1784; and finally in January 1787 to Martha Laurens—daughter of Henry Laurens, one of the giants of South Carolina politics and commerce; this marriage lasted some twenty-five years.


Ramsay to Jefferson, June 15, 1785, in Brunhouse, p. 88. Ramsay, along with other prominent Charlestonians, was arrested by the British on May 12, 1780, upon the capitulation of the city. On August 27 he was exiled to St. Augustine; a year later he was released.

Ramsay to Rush, February 11, 1786 and Ramsay to Jefferson, April 7, 1787, in Brunhouse, pp. 98, 110.


Ramsay was referred to as the “Tacitus” of America by J. Kingston, in The New American Biographic Dictionary (Baltimore, 1810), and as America’s “Polybius” in Niles’ Weekly Register, 11 (October 5, 1816), both quoted in Brunhouse, p. 220; Ramsay to Gordon, January 18, 1786, in Brunhouse, p. 96.

Ramsay to Rush, May 3, 1786, in Brunhouse, pp. 101–102. He added: “For some months past I have spent from five to 8 hours every day at this work. The drudery is nearly done. I have got my facts & I shall put them together in Carolina.”


Ramsay to Ashbel Green, October 4, 1791, in Brunhouse, p. 130. Aitken had a very good reputation, and he attempted to explain his procedures to the irate author. See Brunhouse’s index for several references to Aitken; Isaiah Thomas, The History of Printing in America (1810), rev. ed., by Marcus A. McCorison (New York, 1970).~

Ramsay to Eliot, October 19, 1789, April 13, 1792, April 7, 1810, and April 12, 1793, in Brunhouse, pp. 126, 131, 166, 135.


[38.] Libby adduced eight examples of plagiarism in Ramsay’s *The History of the American Revolution*. Fitts added ten more, Brunhouse six. Ironically, Libby searched only the *Annual Register*, whereas Ramsay himself mentioned that the *Remembrancer*, another English periodical, also was available to him. See Ramsay to Rush, May 3, 1786, in Brunhouse, p. 102. Brunhouse lists the examples of plagiarism at p. 219.

Edition Used:


Author: David Ramsay
Editor: Lester H. Cohen

About This Title:

Vol. 2 of a 2 volume work. David Ramsay’s History of the American Revolution appeared in 1789 during an enthusiastic celebration of nationhood. It is the first American national history written by an American revolutionary and printed in America. Ramsay, a well-known Federalist, was an active participant in many of the events of the period and a member of the Continental Congress from South Carolina. Ramsay discusses the events and ideas of the American Revolution (from the outbreak of turbulence in the 1760s to the onset of Washington’s administration) and makes an ardent Federalist defense of the Constitution of 1787. Based on the original and authorized 1789 version, this is the first new modern edition of the work.
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[357] an Alphabetical List of the Members of Congress, Who Attended From the Several States, From the 5th November, 1774, to the 3d of March, 1789.
CHAPTER XIV

The Campaign Of 1777, In The Middle States.

[1] Soon after the Declaration of Independence, the authority of Congress was obtained for raising an army, that would be more permanent than the temporary levies, which they had previously brought into the field. It was at first proposed to recruit, for the indefinite term of the war, but it being found on experiment that the habits of the people were averse to engagements, for such an uncertain period of service, the recruiting officers were instructed to offer the alternative of, either enlisting for the war, or for three years. Those who engaged on the first conditions were promised a hundred acres of land, in addition to their pay and bounty. The troops raised by Congress for the service of the United States, were called, continentals. Though in September 1776, it had been resolved, to raise 88 battalions, and in December following, authority was given to general Washington to raise 16 more, yet very little progress had been made in the recruiting business, till after the battles of Trenton and Princeton. Even after that period, so much time was necessarily consumed before these new recruits joined the commander in chief, that his whole force at Morris-town, and the several out-posts, for some time, did not exceed 1500 men.

Yet, what is almost incredible, these 1500 kept as many thousands of the British closely pent up in [2] Brunswick. Almost every party that was sent out by the latter, was successfully opposed by the former, and the adjacent country preserved in a great degree of tranquility.

It was matter of astonishment, that the British suffered the dangerous interval between the disbanding of one army, and the raising of another, to pass away without attempting something of consequence against the remaining shadow of an armed force. Hitherto there had been a deficiency of arms and ammunition, as well as of men, but in the spring of 1777, a vessel of 24 guns arrived from France at Portsmouth in New-Hampshire, with upwards of 11,000 stand of arms, and 1000 barrels of powder. Ten thousand stand of arms arrived about the same time, in another part of the United States.

Before the royal army took the field, in prosecution of the main business of the campaign, two enterprizes for the destruction of American stores were undertaken, in an opposite direction to what proved eventually to be the theatre of the operations of Sir William Howe.

The first was conducted by colonel Bird, the second by major general Tryon. The former landed with about 500 men at Peek’s-kill, near 50 miles from New-York. General Washington had repeatedly cautioned the commissaries not to suffer large quantities of provisions to be near the water, in such places as were accessible to shipping, but his prudent advice had not been regarded. The few Americans, who were stationed as a guard at Peek’s-kill, on the approach of
colonel Bird, fired the principal storehouses, and retired to a good position, about two or three miles distant. The loss of provisions, forage, and other valuable articles, was considerable.

Major general Tryon, with a detachment of 2000 men, embarked at New-York, and passing through the Sound, landed between Fairfield and Norwalk. They advanced through the country without interruption, and arrived in about 20 hours at Danbury. On their approach the few continental soldiers who were in the town withdrew from it. The British began to burn and destroy, but abstained from injuring the property of such as were reputed tories—18 houses, 800 barrels of pork and beef, 800 barrels of flour, 2000 bushels of grain, 1700 tents, and some other articles were lost to the Americans. Generals Wooster, Arnold and Silliman, having hastily collected a few hundred of the inhabitants, made arrangements for interrupting the march of the royal detachment, but the arms of those who came forward on this emergency, were injured by excessive rains, and the men were worn down with a march of 30 miles in the course of a day. Such dispositions were nevertheless made, and such advantageous posts were taken, as enabled them greatly to annoy the invaders when returning to their ships. General Arnold, with about 500 men, by a rapid movement, reached Ridgefield in their front—barricaded the road, kept up a brisk fire upon them, and sustained their attack, till they had made a lodgement on a ledge of rocks on his left. After the British had gained this eminence, a whole platoon levelled at general Arnold, not more than 30 yards distant. His horse was killed, but he escaped. While he was extricating himself from his horse, a soldier advanced to run him through with a bayonet, but he shot him dead with his pistol, and afterwards got off safe. The Americans, in several detached parties, harrassed the rear of the British, and from various stands kept up a scattering fire upon them, till they reached their shipping.

The British accomplished the object of the expedition, but it cost them dear. They had by computation 2 or 300 men killed, wounded, or taken. The loss of the Americans was about 20 killed, and 40 wounded. Among the former was Dr. Atwater, a gentleman of respectable character, and considerable influence. Colonel Lamb was among the latter: General Wooster, though seventy years old, behaved with the vigour and spirit of youth. While gloriously defending the liberties of his country, he received a mortal wound. Congress resolved, that a monument should be erected to his memory, as an acknowledgment of his merit and services. They also resolved, that a horse, properly caparisoned, should be presented to general Arnold, in their name, as a token of their approbation of his gallant conduct.

Not long after the excursion to Danbury, colonel [4] Meigs, an enterprising American officer, transported a detachment of about 170 Americans, in whale boats, over the Sound, which separates Long-Island from Connecticut, and burned twelve brigs and sloops, belonging to the British, and destroyed a large quantity of forage and other articles, collected for their use in Sagg-Harbour on that island—killed six of their soldiers, and brought off 90 prisoners, without having a single man either killed or wounded. The colonel
and his party returned to Guilford in 25 hours from the time of their departure, having in that short space not only completed the object of their expedition, but traversed by land and water, a space not less than 90 miles. Congress ordered an elegant sword to be presented to colonel Meigs, for his good conduct in this expedition.

As the season advanced, the American army in New-Jersey, was reinforced by the successive arrival of recruits, but nevertheless at the opening of the campaign, it amounted only to 7272 men.

Great pains had been taken to recruit the British army with American levies. A commission of brigadier general had been conferred on Mr. Oliver Delancey, a loyalist of great influence in New-York, and he was authorised to raise three battalions. Every effort had been made, to raise the men, both within and without the British lines, and also from among the American prisoners, but with all these exertions, only 597 were procured. Mr. Courtland Skinner, a loyalist well known in Jersey, was also appointed a brigadier, and authorised to raise five battalions. Great efforts were also made to procure recruits for his command, but their whole number amounted only to 517.

Towards the latter end of May, general Washington quitted his winter encampment at Morristown, and took a strong position at Middlebrook. Soon after this movement was effected, the British marched from Brunswick, and extended their van as far as Somerset court-house, but in a few days returned to their former station. This sudden change was probably owing to the unexpected opposition which seemed to be collecting from all quarters, [5] for the Jersey militia, turned out in a very spirited manner, to oppose them. Six months before that same army marched through New-Jersey, without being fired upon, and even small parties of them had safely patrolled the country, at a distance from their camp; but experience having proved that British protections were no security for property, the inhabitants generally resolved to try the effects of resistance, in preference to a second submission. A fortunate mistake gave them an opportunity of assembling in great force on this emergency. Signals had been agreed on, and beacons erected on high places, with the view of communicating over the country, instantaneous intelligence of the approach of the British. A few hours before the royal army began their march, the signal of alarm, on the foundation of a false report, had been hoisted. The farmers, with arms in their hands, ran to the place of rendezvous from considerable distances. They had set out at least twelve hours before the British, and on their appearance were collected in formidable numbers. Whether Sir William Howe intended to force his way through the country to the Delaware, and afterwards to Philadelphia, or to attack the American army, is uncertain, but whatever was his design, he thought proper, suddenly to relinquish it, and fell back to Brunswick. The British army, on their retreat, burned and destroyed the farm houses on the road, nor did they spare those buildings which were dedicated to the service of the Deity.

Sir William Howe, after his retreat to Brunswick, endeavoured to provoke general Washington to an engagement, and left no manoeuvre untried, that was calculated to induce him to quit his position. At one time he appeared as if he intended to push on without regarding the army opposed to him. At another he accurately examined the
situation of the American encampment, hoping that some unguarded part might be
found, on which an attack might be made that would open the way to a general
engagement. All these hopes were frustrated. General Washington knew the full value
of his situation.

He had too much penetration to lose it from the circumvention of
military manoeuvres, and too much temper [6] to be provoked to
a dereliction of it. He was well apprized it was not the interest of his country, to
commit its fortune to a single action.

Sir William Howe suddenly relinquished his position in front of the Americans, and
retired with his whole force to Amboy. The apparently retreating British, were
pursued by a considerable detachment of the American army, and general Washington
advanced from Middlebrook to Quibbletown, to be near at hand for the support of his
advanced parties.

The British general immediately marched his army back from
Amboy, with great expedition, hoping to bring on a general
action on equal ground, but he was disappointed. General Washington fell back, and
posted his army in such an advantageous position, as compensated for the inferiority
of his numbers. Sir William Howe was now fully convinced of the impossibility of
compelling a general engagement on equal terms, and also satisfied that it would be
too hazardous to attempt passing the Delaware, while the country was in arms, and the
main American army in full force in his rear. He therefore returned to Amboy, and
thence passed over to Staten-Island, resolving to prosecute the objects of the
campaign by another route. During the period of these movements, the real designs of
general Howe were involved in great obscurity. Though the season for military
operations was advanced as far as the month of July, yet his determinate object could
not be ascertained. Nothing on his part had hitherto taken place, but alternately
advancing and retreating. General Washington’s embarrassment on this account, was
increased by intelligence which arrived, that Burgoyne was coming in great force
towards New-York, from Canada. Apprehending that Sir William Howe would
ultimately move up the North-River, and that his movements, which looked
southwardly were calculated to deceive, the American general, detached a brigade to
reinforce the northern division of his army. Successive advices of the advance of
Burgoyne, favoured the idea, that a junction of the two royal armies near Albany, was
intended.

Some movements were therefore made by general Washington,
[7] towards Peek’s-kill, and on the other side towards Trenton,
while the main army was encamped near the Clove, in readiness to march either to the
north or south, as the movements of Sir William Howe might require. At length, the
main body of the royal army, consisting of thirty-six British and Hessian battalions,
with a regiment of light horse, and a loyal provincial corps, called the Queen’s
rangers, and a powerful artillery, amounting in the whole to about 16,000 men,
departed from Sandy-hook and were reported to steer southwardly. About the time of
this embarkation, a letter from Sir William Howe to general Burgoyne was
intercepted. This contained intelligence, that the British troops were destined to New-
Hampshire. The intended deception was so superficially veiled, that in conjunction
with the intelligence of the British embarkation, it produced a contrary effect. Within
one hour after the reception of this intercepted letter, general Washington gave orders
to his army to move to the southward, but he was nevertheless so much impressed
with a conviction, that it was the true interest of Howe to move towards Burgoyne,
that he ordered the American army to halt for some time, at the river Delaware,
suspecting that the apparent movement of the royal army to the southward, was a feint
calculated to draw him farther from the North-river. The British fleet having sailed
from Sandy-hook, were a week at sea, before they reached cape Henlopen. At this
time and place, for reasons that do not obviously occur, general Howe gave up the
idea of approaching Philadelphia, by ascending the Delaware, and resolved on a
circuitous route by the way of the Chesapeake. Perhaps he counted, on being joined by
large reinforcements from the numerous tories in Maryland or Delaware, or perhaps
he feared the obstructions which the Pennsylvanians had planted in the Delaware. If
these were his reasons, he was mistaken in both. From the tories he received no
advantage, and from the obstructions in the river, his ships could have received no
detriment, if he had landed his troops at New-Castle, which was 14 miles nearer
Philadelphia than the head of Chesapeake bay.

[8]
The British fleet, after they had left the capes of the Delaware
had a tedious and uncomfortable passage, being twenty days
before they entered the capes of Virginia.
They ascended the bay, with a favourable wind, and landed at
Turkey-point. The circumstance of the British fleet putting out to
sea, after they had looked into the Delaware, added to the apprehension before
entertained, that the whole was a feint calculated to draw the American army farther
from the North-river, so as to prevent their being at hand to oppose a junction between
Howe and Burgoyne. Washington therefore fell back to such a middle station, as
would enable him, either speedily to return to the North-river, or advance to the relief
of Philadelphia. The British fleet, after leaving the capes of Delaware, were not heard
of for near three weeks, except that they had once or twice been seen near the coast
steering southwardly.
A council of officers convened at Neshaminy, near Philadelphia,
unanimously gave it as their opinion, that Charlestown, in South-
Carolina, was most probably their object, and that it would be impossible for the army
to march in season for its relief. It was therefore concluded to try, to repair the loss of
Charleston, which was considered as unavoidable, either by attempting something on
New-York island, or by uniting with the northern army, to give more effectual
opposition to Burgoyne. A small change of position, conformably to this new system,
took place. The day before the above resolution was adopted, the British fleet entered
the Chesapeake. Intelligence thereof, in a few days, reached the American army, and
dispelled that mist of uncertainty, in which general Howe’s movements had been
heretofore enveloped. The American troops were put in motion to meet the British.
About the same time a number of the principal inhabitants of that
city, [9] being suspected of disaffection to the American cause,
were taken into custody, and sent to Virginia.
Soon after Sir William Howe had landed his troops in Maryland, he put forth a declaration, in which he informed the inhabitants, that he had issued the strictest orders to the troops “for the preservation of regularity and good discipline, and that the most exemplary punishment should be inflicted upon those who should dare to plunder the property, or molest the persons of any of his majesty’s well-disposed subjects.” It seemed as though fully apprized of the consequences, which had resulted from the indiscriminate plunderings of his army in New-Jersey, he was determined to adopt a more politic line of conduct. Whatever his lordship’s intentions might be, they were by no means seconded by his troops.

The royal army set out from the eastern heads of the Chesapeak, with a spirit which promised to compensate for the various delays, which had hitherto wasted the campaign. Their tents and baggage were left behind, and they trusted their future accommodation to such quarters as their arms might procure. They advanced with boldness, till they were within two miles of the American army, which was then posted near New-port. General Washington soon changed his position, and took post on the high ground near Chadd’s Ford, on the Brandywine creek, with an intention of disputing the passage. It was the wish, but by no means the interest of the Americans, to try their strength in an engagement. Their regular troops were not only greatly inferior in discipline, but in numbers, to the royal army. The opinion of the inhabitants, though founded on no circumstances more substantial than their wishes, imposed a species of necessity on the American general to keep his army in front of the enemy, and to risque an action for the security of Philadelphia. Instead of this, had he taken the ridge of high mountains on his right, the British must have respected his numbers, and probably would have followed him up the country.

In this manner the campaign might have been wasted away in a manner fatal to the invaders, but the bulk of the American people were so impatient of delays, and had such an overweening conceit of the numbers and prowess of their army, that they could not comprehend the wisdom and policy of manoeuvres to shun a general engagement.

On this occasion necessity dictated, that a sacrifice should be made on the altar of public opinion. A general action was therefore hazarded. This took place at Chadd’s Ford, on the Brandywine, a small stream which empties itself into Christiana creek, near its conflux with the river Delaware.

The royal army advanced at day break in two columns, commanded by lieutenant general Kniphausen, and by lord Cornwallis. The first took the direct road to Chadd’s Ford, and made a shew of passing it, in front of the main body of the Americans. At the same time the other column moved up on the west side of the Brandywine to its fork, and crossed both its branches about 2 o’clock in the afternoon, and then marched down on the east side thereof, with the view of turning the right wing of their adversaries.

This they effected and compelled them to retreat with great loss. General Kniphausen amused the Americans with the appearance of crossing the ford, but did not attempt it.
until lord Cornwallis having crossed above, and moved down on the opposite side, had
commenced his attack. Kniphausen then crossed the ford, and attacked the troops posted for its defence. These, after a severe conflict, were compelled to give way. The
retreat of the Americans soon became general, and was continued to Chester, under
cover of general Weeden’s brigade, which came off in good order. The final issue of
battles often depends on small circumstances, which human prudence cannot
control—one of these occurred here, and prevented general Washington from
executing a bold design, to effect which, his troops were actually in motion. This was
to have crossed the Brandywine, and attacked Kniphausen, while general Sullivan and
lord Stirling, should keep earl Cornwallis in check.
In the most critical moment, general Washington received
intelligence which he was obliged to credit, that the column of
lord Cornwallis [11] had been only making a feint, and was returning to join
Kniphausen. This prevented the execution of a plan, which, if carried into effect,
would probably have given a different turn to the events of the day. The killed and
wounded in the royal army, were near six hundred. The loss of the Americans was
twice that number. In the list of their wounded, were two of their general
officers—the marquis de la Fayette, and general Woodford. The former was a French
nobleman of high rank, who, animated with the love of liberty, had left his native
country, and offered his service to Congress. While in France, and only nineteen years
of age, he espoused the cause of the Americans, with the most disinterested and
generous ardour. Having determined to join them, he communicated his intentions to
the American commissioners, at Paris. They justly conceived, that a patron of so
much importance would be of service to their cause, and encouraged his design.
Before he had embarked from France, intelligence arrived in Europe, that the
American insurgents, reduced to 2000 men, were fleeing through Jersey before a
British force of 30,000. Under these circumstances, the American commissioners at
Paris thought it but honest to dissuade him from the present prosecution of his
perilous enterprise. It was in vain that they acted so candid a part. His zeal to serve a
distressed country, was not abated by her misfortunes. Having embarked in a vessel,
which he purchased for the purpose, he arrived in Charleston, early in 1777, and soon
after joined the American army. Congress resolved, that “in consideration of his zeal,
illustrious family and connexions, he should have the rank of major general in their
army.” Independent of the risque he ran as an American officer, he hazarded his large
fortune in consequence of the laws of France, and also the confinement of his person,
in case of capture, when on his way to the United States, without the chance of being
acknowledged by any nation, for his court had forbidden his proceeding to America,
and had dispatched orders to have him confined in the West-Indies, if found in that
quarter.
This gallant nobleman, who under all these disadvantages [12]
had demonstrated his good will to the United States, received a
wound in his leg, at the battle of Brandywine, but he nevertheless continued in the
field, and exerted himself both by word and example in rallying the Americans. Other
foreigners of distinction also shared in the engagement. Count Pulaski, a Polish
nobleman, the same who a few years before had carried off king Stanislaus from his
capital, though surrounded with a numerous body of guards, and a Russian army,
fought with the Americans at Brandywine. He was a thunderbolt of war, and always
sought for the post of danger as the post of honour. Soon after this engagement
Congress appointed him commander of horse, with the rank of brigadier. Monsieur du Coudray, a French officer of high rank, and great abilities, while on his way from Philadelphia to join the American army, about this time was drowned in the river Schuylkill. He rode into the flat-bottomed boat on a spirited mare, whose career he was not able to stop, and she went out at the farther end into the river, with her rider on her back.

The evening after the battle of Brandywine, a party of the British went to Wilmington, and took president M’Kinley prisoner. They also took possession of a shallop, loaded with the most valuable effects of the inhabitants.

Howe persevered in his scheme of gaining the right flank of the Americans. This was no less steadily pursued on the one side, than avoided on the other. Washington came forward in a few days with a resolution of risking another action. He accordingly advanced as far as the Warren tavern on the Lancaster road. Near that place both armies were on the point of engaging with their whole force, but were prevented by a most violent storm of rain, which continued for a whole day and night. When the rain ceased, the Americans found that their ammunition was entirely ruined. They therefore withdrew to a place of safety. Before a proper supply was procured, the British marched from their position near the White Horse tavern, down towards the Swedes Ford.

The Americans again took post in their front; but the British, instead of urging an action, began to march up towards Reading. To save the stores which had been deposited in that place, Washington took a new position, and left the British in undisturbed possession of the roads which lead to Philadelphia. His troops were worn down with a succession of severe duties. There were in his army above a thousand men who were barefooted, and who had performed all their late movements in that condition.

About this time the Americans sustained a considerable loss by a night attack, conducted by general Grey on a detachment of their troops, which was encamped near the Paoli tavern. The outposts and pickets were forced without noise, about one o’clock in the morning. The men had scarcely time to turn out, and when they turned out they unfortunately paraded in the light of their fires. This directed the British how, and where to proceed. They rushed in upon them and put about 300 to death in a silent manner by a free and exclusive use of the bayonet. The enterprise was conducted with so much address, that the loss of the assailants did not exceed eight.

Congress, which after a short residence at Baltimore had returned to Philadelphia, were obliged a second time to consult their safety by flight. They retired at first to Lancaster, and afterwards to Yorktown.

The bulk of the British army being left in Germantown, Sir William Howe, with a small part, made his triumphal entry into Philadelphia, and was received with the hearty welcome of numerous citizens, who either from conscience, cowardice, interest, or principle, had hitherto separated themselves from the class of active whigs.
The possession of the largest city in the United States, together with the dispersion of that grand council which had heretofore conducted their public affairs, were reckoned by the short sighted as decisive of their fate. The submission of countries, after the conquest of their capital, had often been a thing of course, but in the great contest for the sovereignty of the United States, the question did not rest with a ruler, or a body of rulers, nor was it to be determined by the possession or loss of any particular place. It was the public mind, the sentiments and opinions of the yeomanry of the country which were to decide. Though Philadelphia had become the residence of the British army, yet as long as the bulk of the people of the United States were opposed to their government, the country was unsubdued. Indeed it was presumed by the more discerning politicians, that the luxuries of a great city would so far enervate the British troops as to indispose them for those active exertions to which they were prompted, while inconveniently encamped in the open country.

To take off the impression the British successes, might make in France to the prejudice of America, Doctor Franklin gave them an ingenious turn, by observing, “that instead of saying Sir William Howe had taken Philadelphia, it would be more proper to say, Philadelphia had taken Sir William Howe.”

One of the first objects of the British, after they had got possession, was to erect batteries to command the river, and to protect the city from any insult by water. The British shipping were prevented from ascending the Delaware, by obstructions hereafter to be described which were fixed near Mud-Island. Philadelphia, though possessed by the British army, was exposed to danger from the American vessels in the river. The American frigate Delaware, of 32 guns, anchored within 500 yards of the unfinished batteries, and being seconded by some smaller vessels, commenced a heavy cannonade upon the batteries and town, but upon the falling of the tide she ran aground. Being briskly fired upon from the town, while in this condition she was soon compelled to surrender. The other American vessels, not able to resist the fire from the batteries after losing one of their number, retired.

General Washington, having been reinforced by 2500 men from Peeks-kill and Virginia; and having been informed, that general Howe had detached a considerable part of his force, for reducing the forts on the Delaware, conceived a design of attacking the British post at Germantown. Their line of encampment, crossed the town at right angles near its centre. The left wing extended to the Schuylkill, and was covered in front by the mounted and dismounted chasseurs. The queen’s American rangers and a battalion of light infantry were in front of the right. The 40th regiment with another battalion of light infantry were posted on the Chesnut-hill road, three quarters of a mile in advance. Lord Cornwallis lay at Philadelphia, with four battalions of grenadiers. A few of the general officers of the American army, whose advice was requested on the occasion unanimously recommended an attack; and it was agreed that it should be made in different places to produce the greater confusion, and to prevent the several parts of the British forces, from affording support to each other. From an apprehension, that the Americans from the want of discipline would not persevere in a long attack, it was resolved that it should be sudden and vigorous, and if unsuccessful to make an expeditious retreat. The divisions of Sullivan and
Wayne flanked by Conway’s brigade, were to enter the town by the way of Chesnut-hill, while general Armstrong with the Pennsylvania militia should fall down the Manatawny road, and gain the left and rear of the British. The divisions of Greene and Stephen’s flanked by M’Dougal’s brigade were to enter by the lime kiln road. The militia of Maryland and Jersey under generals Smallwood and Furman, were to march by the old York road, and to fall upon the rear of their right.

Lord Stirling with Nathe’s and Maxwell’s brigade were to form a corps de reserve. The Americans began their attack about sunrise on the 40th regiment, and a battalion of light infantry. These two corps being obliged to retreat, were pursued into the village. On their retreat lieutenant colonel Musgrove with six companies took post in Mr. Chew’s strong stone house, which lay in front of the Americans. From an adherence to the military maxim of never leaving a fort possessed by an enemy in the rear, it was resolved to attack the party in the house.

In the mean time general Greene got up with his column and attacked the right wing. Colonel Mathews routed a party of the British opposed to him, killed several, [16] and took 110 prisoners, but from the darkness of the day lost sight of the brigade to which he belonged, and having separated from it, was taken prisoner with his whole regiment, and the prisoners which he had previously taken, were released. A number of the troops in Greene’s division, were stopped by the halt of the party before Chew’s house. Near one half of the American army remained for some time at that place inactive. In the mean time general Grey led on three battalions of the third brigade, and attacked with vigour. A sharp contest followed. Two British regiments attacked at the same time on the opposite side of the town. General Grant moved up the 49th regiment to the aid of those who were engaged with Greene’s column.

The morning was extremely foggy. This, by concealing the true situation of the parties occasioned mistakes, and made so much caution necessary as to give the British time to recover from the effects of their first surprize. From these causes the early promising appearances on the part of the assailants were speedily reversed. The Americans left the field hastily, and all efforts to rally them were ineffectual. Lord Cornwallis arrived with a party of light horse, and joined in the pursuit. This was continued for some miles. The loss of the royal army, including the wounded and prisoners, was about 500. Among their slain were brigadier general Agnew, and lieutenant colonel Bird. The loss of the Americans, including 400 prisoners, was about 1000. Among their slain were general Nash and his aid de camp major Witherspoon.

Soon after this battle the British left Germantown, and turned their principal attention towards opening a free communication between their army and their shipping.

Much industry and ingenuity had been exerted for the security of Philadelphia on the water side. Thirteen galleys, two floating batteries, two zebeques, one brig, one ship, besides a number of armed boats, fire ships and rafts, were constructed or employed for this purpose.
The Americans had also built a fort on Mud-Island, to which [17] they gave the name of fort Mifflin, and erected thereon a considerable battery. This island is admirably situated for the erection of works to annoy shipping on their way up the Delaware. It lies near the middle of the river, about 7 miles below Philadelphia. No vessels of burden can come up but by the main ship channel, which passes close to Mud-Island, and is very narrow for more than a mile below. Opposite to fort Mifflin there is a height, called Red-Bank. This overlooks not only the river, but the neighbouring country. On this eminence, a respectable battery was erected. Between these two fortresses, which are half a mile distant from each other, the American naval armament for the defence of the river Delaware, made their harbour of retreat. Two ranges of chevaux de frise were also sunk into the channel. These consisted of large pieces of timber, strongly framed together, in the manner usual for making the foundation of wharfs in deep water. Several large points of bearded iron projecting down the river were annexed to the upper parts of these chevaux de frise, and the whole was sunk with stones, so as to be about four feet under the water at low tide. Their prodigious weight and strength could not fail to effect the destruction of any vessel which came upon them. Thirty of these machines were sunk about 300 yards below fort Mifflin, so as to stretch in a diagonal line across the channel. The only open passage left was between two piers lying close to the fort, and that was secured by a strong boom, and could not be approached but in a direct line to the battery. Another fortification was erected on a high bank on the Jersey shore, called Billingsport. And opposite to this, another range of chevaux de frise was deposited, leaving only a narrow and shoal channel on the one side. There was also a temporary battery of two heavy cannon, at the mouth of Mantua creek, about half way from Red-Bank to Billingsport. The British were well apprized, that without the command of the Delaware, their possession of Philadelphia would be of no advantage. They therefore strained every nerve, to open the navigation of that river—to this end lord Howe had early taken the most effectual measures [18] for conducting the fleet and transports round from the Chesapeake to the Delaware, and drew them up on the Pennsylvania shore, from Reedy-Island to New-Castle. Early in October, a detachment from the British army crossed the Delaware, with a view of dislodging the Americans from Billingsport. On their approach, the place was evacuated. As the season advanced, more vigorous measures for removing the obstructions were concerted between the general and the admiral. Batteries were erected on the Pennsylvania shore to assist in dislodging the Americans from Mud-Island. At the same time Count Donop with 2000 men, having crossed into New-Jersey, opposite to Philadelphia, marched down on the eastern side of the Delaware, to attack the redoubt at Red-Bank. This was defended by about 400 men under the command of colonel Greene. The attack immediately commenced by a smart cannonade, under cover of which the Count advanced to the redoubt. This place was intended for a much larger garrison than was then in it. It had therefore become necessary to run a line in the middle thereof, and one part of it was evacuated. That part was easily carried by the assailants, on which they indulged in loud huzzas for their supposed victory. The garrison kept up a severe well directed fire on the assailants by which they were compelled to retire. They suffered not only in the assault, but in the approach to, and retreat from the fort. Their whole loss in killed and wounded was about 400. Count Donop was mortally wounded and taken prisoner. Congress resolved, to present colonel Greene with a sword for his good conduct on
this occasion. An attack made about the same time on fort Mifflin by men of war and frigates, was not more successful than the assault on Red-Bank. The Augusta man of war of 64 guns, and the Merlin, two of the vessels which were engaged in it, got aground. The former was fired and blew up. The latter was evacuated.

Though the first attempts of the British, for opening the navigation of the Delaware, were unsuccessful, they carried their point in another way that was unexpected. The chevaux de frise, having been sunk some considerable time, the current of the water was diverted by this great bulk into new channels. In consequence thereof the passage between the islands and the Pennsylvania shore was so deepened as to admit vessels of some considerable draught of water. Through this passage, the Vigilant, a large ship, cut down so as to draw but little water, mounted with 24 pounders, made her way to a position from which she might enfilade the works on Mud-Island. This gave the British such an advantage, that the post was no longer tenable. Colonel Smith, who had with great gallantry defended the fort from the latter end of September, to the 11th of November, being wounded, was removed to the main. Within five days after his removal, major Thayer, who as a volunteer had nobly offered to take charge of this dangerous post, was obliged to evacuate it.

This event did not take place till the works were entirely beat down—every piece of cannon dismounted, and one of the British ships so near that she threw granadoes into the fort, and killed the men uncovered in the platform. The troops who had so bravely defended fort Mifflin, made a safe retreat to Red-Bank. Congress voted swords to be given to lieutenant colonel Smith and commodore Hazelwood, for their gallant defence of the Delaware. Within three days after Mud-Island was evacuated, the garrison was also withdrawn from Red-Bank, on the approach of lord Cornwallis, at the head of a large force prepared to assault it. Some of the American gallies and armed vessels escaped by keeping close in with the Jersey shore, to places of security above Philadelphia, but 17 of them were abandoned by their crews, and fired. Thus the British gained a free communication between their army and shipping. This event was to them very desirable. They had been previously obliged to draw their provisions from Chester, a distance of sixteen miles, at some risque, and a certain great expence. The long protracted defence of the Delaware, deranged the plans of the British, for the remainder of the campaign, and consequently saved the adjacent country.

About this time the chair of Congress became vacant, [20] by the departure of Mr. Hancock, after he had discharged the duties of that office to great acceptance, two years and five months. Henry Laurens, of South-Carolina, was unanimously elected his successor. He had been in England for some years, antecedent to the hostile determinations of parliament against the colonies, but finding the dispute growing serious, he conceived that honour and duty called him to take part with his native country. He had been warmly solicited to stay in England, and offers were made him not only to secure, but to double his American estate, in case of his continuing to reside there—but these were refused. To a particular friend in London, dissuading him from coming out to America, he replied on the 9th of Nov. 1774, when at Falmouth, on the point of embarking,
I shall never forget your friendly attention to my interest, but I dare not return. Your ministers are deaf to information, and seem bent on provoking unnecessary contest. I think I have acted the part of a faithful subject, I now go resolved still to labour for peace; at the same time determined in the last event to stand or fall with my country.

Immediately on his arrival in Charleston, he was elected a member, and soon after the president of the provincial congress—the president of the council of safety—the vice-president of the state—and a member of congress.

While Sir William Howe was succeeding in every enterprize in Pennsylvania intelligence arrived, as shall be related in the next chapter, that general Burgoyne and his whole army had surrendered prisoners of war to the Americans.

General Washington soon after received a considerable reinforcement from the northern army, which had accomplished this great event. With this increased force he took a position at and near Whitemarsh.

The royal army having succeeded in removing the obstructions in the river Delaware, were ready for new enterprizes. Sir William Howe, marched out of Philadelphia with almost his whole force, expecting to bring on a general engagement. The next morning he appeared on Chesnut-hill in front of, and about three miles distant from [21] the right wing of the Americans. On the day following the British changed their ground, and moved to the right. Two days after they moved still farther to the right, and made every appearance of an intention to attack the American encampment. Some skirmishes took place, and a general action was hourly expected: but instead thereof on the morning of the next day, after various marches and countermarches, the British filed off from their right, by two or three different routes, in full march for Philadelphia.

The position of general Washington in a military point of view was admirable. He was so sensible of the advantages of it, that the manoeuvres of Sir William Howe for some days, could not allure him from it. In consequence of the reinforcement lately received, he had not in any preceding period of the campaign been in an equal condition for a general engagement. Though he ardently wished to be attacked, yet he would not relinquish a position, from which he hoped for reparation for the adversities of the campaign. He could not believe that general Howe with a victorious army, and that lately reinforced with four thousand men from New-York, should come out of Philadelphia only to return thither again. He therefore presumed that to avoid the disgrace of such a movement, the British commander would, from a sense of military honour, be compelled to attack him, though under great disadvantages. When he found him cautious of engaging and inclining to his left, a daring design was formed which would have been executed, had the British either continued in their position, or moved a little farther to the left of the American army. This was to have attempted in the night to surprise Philadelphia. The necessary preparations for this purpose were made, but the retreat of the British prevented its execution. Soon after these events general Smallwood with a considerable force, was posted at Wilmington on the banks of the Delaware, and general Washington, with the main army retired to winter quarters at Valley Forge, 16 miles distant from Philadelphia.
This position was preferred to distant and more comfortable villages, as being calculated to give the most extensive security to the country adjacent to Philadelphia. The American army might have been tracked, by the blood of their feet, in marching without shoes or stockings over the hard frozen ground, between Whitemarsh and Valley Forge. Some hundreds of them were without blankets. Under these circumstances they had to sit down in a wood, in the latter end of December, and to build huts for their accommodation. This mode of procuring winter quarters, if not entirely novel, has been rarely if ever practiced in modern war. The cheerfulness with which the general and his army submitted to spend a severe winter, in such circumstances, rather than leave the country exposed, by retiring farther, demonstrated as well their patriotism as their fixed resolution to suffer every inconvenience, in preference to submission. Thus ended the campaign of 1777. Though Sir William Howe’s army had been crowned with the most brilliant success, having gained two considerable victories, and been equally triumphant in many smaller actions, yet the whole amount of this tide of good fortune was no more than a good winter lodging for his troops in Philadelphia, whilst the men under his command possessed no more of the adjacent country than what they immediately commanded with their arms. The Congress, it is true, was compelled to leave the first seat of their deliberations, and the greatest city in the United States changed a number of its whig inhabitants for a numerous royal army; but it is as true that the minds of the Americans were, if possible, more hostile to the claims of Great-Britain than ever, and their army had gained as much by discipline and experience, as compensated for its diminution by defeats.

The events of this campaign were adverse to the sangine hopes which had been entertained of a speedy conquest of the revolted colonies. Repeated proofs had been given, that, though general Washington was very forward to engage when he thought it to his advantage, yet it was impossible for the royal commander to bring him to action against his consent.

By this mode of conducting the defence of the new formed states, two campaigns had been wafted away, and the work which was originally allotted for one, was still unfinished.

An account of some miscellaneous transactions will close this chapter.

Lieutenant colonel Barton, of a militia regiment of the state of Rhode-Island, accompanied by about forty volunteers, passed by night from Warwick neck to Rhode-Island, and surprised general Prescot in his quarters, and brought him and one of his aids safe off to the continent. Though they had a passage of ten miles by water, they eluded the ships of war and guard boats, which lay all round the island. The enterprize was conducted with so much silence and address, that there was no alarm among the British till the colonel and his party had nearly reached the continent with their prize. Congress soon after resolved, that an elegant sword should be presented to lieutenant colonel Barton, as a testimonial of their sense of his gallant behaviour.

It has already been mentioned, that Congress in the latter end of November 1775, authorised the capture of vessels, laden with stores or reinforcements for their enemies. On the 23rd of March 1776, they extended this permission so far as to
authorise their inhabitants to fit out armed vessels to cruise on the enemies of the united colonies. The Americans henceforth devoted themselves to privateering, and were very successful. In the course of the year they made many valuable captures, particularly of homeward bound West-India men. The particulars cannot be enumerated, but good judges have calculated, that within nine months after Congress authorised privateering, the British loss in captures, exclusive of transports and government store ships, exceeded a million sterling. They found no difficulty in selling their prizes. The ports of France were open to them, both in Europe and in the West-Indies. In the latter they were sold without any disguise, but in the former a greater regard was paid to appearances. Open sales were not permitted in the harbours of France at particular times, but even then they were made at the entrance or offing.

In the French West-India islands the inhabitants not only purchased prizes, brought in by American cruisers, [24] but fitted out privateers under American colours and commissions, and made captures of British vessels. William Bingham, of Philadelphia, was stationed as the agent of Congress, at Martinico, and he took an early and active part in arming privateers in St. Pierre, to annoy and cruise against British property. The favourable disposition of the inhabitants furnished him with an opportunity, which he successfully improved, not only to distress the British commerce, but to sow the seeds of discord between the French and English. The American privateers also found countenance in some of the ports of Spain, but not so readily nor so universally as in those of France. The British took many of the American vessels, but they were often of inferior value. Such of them as were laden with provisions, proved a seasonable relief to their West-India islands, which otherwise would have suffered from the want of those supplies, which before the war had been usually procured from the neighbouring continent.

The American privateers in the year 1777, increased in numbers and boldness. They insulted the coasts of Great-Britain and Ireland, in a manner that had never before been attempted. Such was their spirit of adventure, that it became necessary to appoint a convoy for the protection of the linen ships from Dublin and Newry. The general Mifflin privateer, after making repeated captures, arrived at Brest, and saluted the French admiral. This was returned in form as to the vessel of an independent power. Lord Stormont, the British ambassador, at the court of Versailles, irritated at the countenance given to the Americans, threatened to return immediately to London, unless satisfaction was given, and different measures were adopted by France. An order was issued in consequences of his application, requiring all American vessels to leave the ports of His Most Christian Majesty, but though the order was positive, so many evasions were practiced, and the execution of it was so relaxed, that it produced no permanent discouragement of the beneficial intercourse.
CHAPTER XV

The Northern Campaign Of 1777.

[25] To effect a free communication between New-York and Canada, and to maintain the navigation of the intermediate lakes, was a principal object with the British, for the campaign of 1777. The Americans presuming on this, had been early attentive to their security, in that quarter. They had resolved to construct a fort on Mount Independence, which is an eminence adjoining the strait on which Ticonderoga stands, and nearly opposite to that fortress. They had also resolved to obstruct the navigation of the strait by casoons, to be sunk in the water, and joined so as to serve at the same time for a bridge between the fortifications on the east and west side of it; and that to prevent the British from drawing their small craft over land into lake George, the passage of that lake should be obstructed—that Fort Schuyler, the same which had formerly been called Fort Stanwix, should be strengthened, and other fortifications erected near the Mohawk river. Requisitions were made by the commanding officer in the department for 13,600 men, as necessary for the security of this district. The adjacent states were urged to fill up their recruits, and in all respects to be in readiness for an active campaign.

The British ministry were very sanguine in their hopes, from the consequences of forming a line of communication between New-York and Canada. They considered the New England people to be the soul of the confederacy, and promised themselves much by severing them from all free communication with the neighbouring states. They hoped, when this was accomplished, to be able to surround them so effectually with fleets and armies, and Indian allies, as to compel their submission. Animated with these expectations they left nothing undone, which bid fair for ensuring the success of the plans they had formed for this purpose.

The regular troops, British and German, allotted to this service, were upwards of 7000.

As artillery is considered to be particularly useful in an American war, [26] where numerous inhabitants are to be driven out of woods and fastnesses, this part of the service was particularly attended to. The brass train that was sent out, was perhaps the finest, and the most excellently supplied, both as to officers and men, that had ever been allotted to second the operations of an equal force. In addition to the regulars, it was supposed that the Canadians and the loyalists, in the neighbouring states, would add large reinforcements, well calculated for the peculiar nature of the service. Arms and accoutrements were accordingly provided to supply them. Several nations of savages had also been induced to take up the hatchet, as allies to his Britannic majesty. Not only the humanity, but the policy of employing them, was questioned in Great-Britain. The opposers of it contended that Indians were capricious, inconstant and intractable, their rapacity insatiate, and their actions cruel and barbarous. At the same time their services were represented to be uncertain, and
that no dependence could be placed on their most solemn engagements. On the other hand, the zeal of British ministers for reducing the revolted colonies, was so violent as to make them, in their excessive wrath, forget that their adversaries were men. They contended, that in their circumstances every appearance of lenity, by inciting to disobedience, and thereby increasing the objects of punishment, was eventual cruelty. In their opinion partial severity was general mercy, and the only method of speedily crushing the rebellion, was to envoile its abettors in such complicated distress, as by rendering their situation intolerable, would make them willing to accept the proffered blessings of peace and security. The sentiments of those who were for employing Indians against the Americans, prevailed. Presents were liberally distributed among them. Induced by these, and also by their innate thirst for war and plunder, they poured forth their warriors in such abundance, that their numbers threatened to be an incumberance.

The vast force destined for this service was put under the command of lieutenant general Burgoyne, an officer whose abilities were well known, and whose spirit of enterprize and thirst for military fame could not be exceeded. He was supported by major general Philips of the artillery, who had established a solid reputation by his good conduct during the late war in Germany, and by major general Reidesel, and brigadier general Speecht of the German troops, together with the British generals Frazer, Powell and Hamilton, all officers of distinguished merit.

The British had also undisputed possession of the navigation of Lake Champlain. Their marine force thereon, with which in the preceding campaign they had destroyed the American shipping on the lakes, was not only entire, but unopposed.

A considerable force was left in Canada for its internal security, and Sir Guy Carleton’s military command was restricted to the limits of that province. Though the British ministry attributed the preservation of Canada to his abilities in 1775 and 1776, yet by their arrangements for the year 1777, he was only called upon to act a secondary part, in subserviency to the grand expedition committed to general Burgoyne. His behaviour on this occasion, was conformable to the greatness of his mind. Instead of thwarting or retarding a service which was virtually taken out of his hands, he applied himself to support and forward it in all its parts, with the same diligence as if the arrangement had been entirely his own, and committed to himself for execution.

The plan of the British for their projected irruption into the northwestern frontier of New-York, consisted of two parts. General Burgoyne with the main body, was to advance by the way of Lake Champlain, with positive orders, as has been said, to force his way to Albany, or at least so far as to effect a junction with the royal army from New-York. A detachment was to ascend the river St. Lawrence, as far as Lake Ontario, and from that quarter to penetrate towards Albany, by the way of the Mohawk river. This was put under the command of lieutenant colonel St. Leger, and consisted of about 200 British troops, a regiment of New-York loyalists raised and commanded by Sir John Johnson, and a large body of savages.
Lieutenant general Burgoyne arrived in Quebec [28] on the 6th of May, and exerted all diligence to prosecute in due time the objects of the expedition. He proceeded up Lake Champlain and landed near Crown-Point. At this place he met the Indians—gave them a war feast, and made a speech to them. This was well calculated to excite them to take part with the royal army, but at the same time to repress their barbarity. He pointedly forbade them to shed blood when not opposed in arms, and commanded that aged men, women, children, and prisoners, should be held sacred from the knife and the hatchet, even in the heat of actual conflict. A reward was promised for prisoners, and a severe enquiry threatened for scalps, though permission was granted to take them from those who were previously killed in fair opposition. These restrictions were not sufficient, as will appear in the sequel, to restrain their barbarities. The Indians having decidedly taken part with the British army, general Burgoyne issued a proclamation, calculated to spread terror among the inhabitants. The numbers of his Indian associates were magnified, and their eagerness to be let loose to their prey described in high sounding words. The force of the British armies and fleets prepared to crush every part of the revolted colonies, was also displayed in pompous language. Encouragement and employment were promised to those who should assist in the re-establishment of legal government, and security held out to the peaceable and industrious, who continued in their habitations. All the calamities of war arrayed in their most terrific forms, were denounced against those who should persevere in a military opposition to the royal forces.

General Burgoyne advanced with his army in a few days to Crown-Point. At this place he issued orders of which the following words are a part: “The army embarks to-morrow to approach the enemy. The services required on this expedition are critical and conspicuous. During our progress occasions may occur, in which, nor difficulty, nor labour, nor life, are to be regarded. This army must not retreat.” From Crown-Point the royal army proceeded to invest Ticonderoga. On their approach to it, they advanced with equal caution and order [29] on both sides of the lake, while their naval force kept in its center. Within a few days they had surrounded three-fourths of the American works at Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, and had also advanced a work on Sugar Hill which commands both, so far towards completion, that in 24 hours it would have been ready to open. In these circumstances general St. Clair the commanding officer, resolved to evacuate the post at all events; but conceiving it prudent to take the sentiments of the general officers, he called a council of war on the occasion. It was represented to this council, that their whole numbers were not sufficient to man one half of the works, and that as the whole must be on constant duty, it would be impossible for them to sustain the necessary fatigue for any length of time, and that as the place would be completely invested on all sides within a day, nothing but an immediate evacuation of the posts could save their troops. The situation of general St. Clair was eminently embarrassing. Such was the confidence of the states in the fancied strength of this post, and of the supposed superiority of force for its defence, that to retreat without risquing an action could not fail of drawing on him the execration of the multitude. To stand still, and by suffering himself to be surrounded to risque his whole army for a single post, was contrary to the true interest
of the states. In this trying situation, with the unanimous approbation of a council of his general officers, he adopted the heroic resolution of sacrificing personal reputation to save his army.

The assumption of confident appearances by the garrison, had induced their adversaries to proceed with great caution. While from this cause they were awed into respect, the evacuation was completed with so much secrecy and expedition, that a considerable part of the public stores was saved, and the whole would have been embarked, had not a violent gale of wind which sprung up in the night, prevented the boats from reaching their station.

The works abandoned by the Americans, were as follow: The old French lines constructed in the late war [30] between France and England, which looked towards general Burgoyne’s encampment had been repaired the year before, and were in good order. About the center was a battery of six guns. These occupied about two-thirds of the high ground from the strait to the old fort. The remaining third was open, but some fleches were thrown up for its security. The old fort was in ruins, but some guns were mounted on a ravelin thereof, that looked towards the lake. There was also a battery of four guns in the French lines, which had the same aspect. On the point above the bridge was a battery of four guns, and on Mount Independence another of six or eight. The fort on that side was nearly a mile from the battery, and was formed of piquets. The defence of it might have employed four hundred men, but it could not have resisted a six pounder. There were no barracks within it, nor a drop of water, but at a considerable distance. From the battery at the point, a line of entrenchment ran round the mount, upwards of a mile and a half in length. There had been a strong abbatis in front of this line the year before, but it had been consumed by fire, as was also that in front of the French lines. Towards the east of the mount was a block-house. Another was on the Ticonderoga side. New works were begun on the mount, but there was neither time nor strength of hands to complete them. A great deal of timber had been felled between the east creek and the foot of the mount, to retard the approaches of the British. All the redoubts on the low ground were abandoned, for want of men to occupy them. These works, together with 93 pieces of ordnance, and a large collection of provisions, fell into the hands of the British.

This evacuation of Ticonderoga was the subject of a severe scrutiny. Congress recalled their general officers in the northern department, and ordered an enquiry into their conduct. They also nominated two gentlemen of eminence in the law to assist the judge advocate in prosecuting that enquiry, and appointed a committee of their own body to collect evidence in support of the charges, which were on this occasion brought against them. General [31] St. Clair, from the necessity of the case, submitted to this innovation in the mode of conducting courts martial, but in behalf of the army protested against its being drawn into precedent. Charges of no less magnitude than cowardice, incapacity and treachery, were brought forward in court against him, and believed by many. The public mind, sore with the loss of Ticonderoga, and apprehensive of general distress, sought to ease itself by throwing blame on the general. When the situation of the army permitted an enquiry into his conduct, he was honourably acquitted. In the course of
his trial it was made to appear, that though 13,600 men had been early called for as necessary to defend the northern posts, yet on the approach of general Burgoyne, the whole force collected to oppose him was only 2546 continental, and 900 militia badly equipped, and worse armed. From the insufficiency of their numbers, they could not possess themselves of Sugar-hill, nor of Mount-Hope, though the former commanded the works both of Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, and the latter was of great importance for securing the communication with Lake George, and had been fortified the year before with that view. To the question which had been repeatedly asked, “why was the evacuation, if really necessary, delayed, till the Americans were so nearly surrounded as to occasion the loss of such valuable stores?” It was answered, that

from various circumstances it was impossible for general St. Clair to get early information of the numbers opposed to him. They made no debarkation till they came to Gilliland’s creek, which is about 40 miles to the northward of Ticonderoga, and from this they speedily reimbarked. The savages which they kept in front, deterred small reconnoitring parties from approaching so near as to make any discoveries of their numbers. Large parties from the nature of the ground, could not have been supported without risking a general action, and that from the combined operation of these circumstances, the numbers of the approaching royal army were effectually concealed from the garrison, till the van of their force appeared in full view before it.

The retreating army embarked as [32] much of their baggage and stores as they had any prospect of saving on board batteaux, and dispatched them under convoy of five armed gallies to Skenesborough. Their main body took its route towards the same place by way of Castleton. The British were no sooner apprized of the retreat of the Americans than they pursued them. General Frazer, at the head of the light troops, advanced on their main body. Major general Reidesel was also ordered with the greater part of the Brunswic troops, to march in the same direction. General Burgoyne in person conducted the pursuit by water. The obstructions to the navigation, not having been completed, were soon cut through. The two frigates—the Royal George and the Inflexible, together with the gun boats, having effected their passage, pursued with so much rapidity, that in the course of a day the gun boats came up with and attacked the American gallies near Skenesborough falls. On the approach of the frigates all opposition ceased. Two of the gallies were taken and three blown up. The Americans set fire to their works, mills and batteaux. They were now left in the woods, destitute of provisions. In this forlorn situation they made their escape up Woodcreek to fort Anne. Brigadier Frazer pursued the retreating Americans—came up with, and attacked their rear guard, at Hubbordton. In the course of the engagement he was joined by the German troops, commanded by general Reidesel. The Americans commanded by colonel Warner, made a gallant resistance, but after sustaining considerable loss, were obliged to give way. Lieut. colonel Hall, with the ninth British regiment, was detached from Skenesborough by general Burgoyne, to take post near fort Anne. An engagement ensued between this regiment and a few Americans, but the latter, after a conflict of two hours, fired the fort, and retreated to fort Edward. The destruction of the gallies and batteaux of the Americans at Skenesborough, and the defeat of their rear, obliged general St. Clair, in order to
avoid being between two fires, to change the route of his main body, and to turn off from Castleton to the left.

After a fatiguing and distressing march of seven days, he joined [33] general Schuyler at fort Edward. Their combined forces, inclusive of the militia, not exceeding in the whole 4400 men, were not long after on the approach of general Burgoyne, compelled to retire farther into the country, bordering on Albany. Such was the rapid torrent of success, which in this period of the campaign swept away all opposition from before the royal army. The officers and men were highly elated with their good fortune. They considered their toils to be nearly at an end; Albany to be within their grasp, and the conquest of the adjacent provinces reduced to a certainty. In Great-Britain intelligence of the progress of Burgoyne diffused a general joy. As to the Americans, the loss of reputation which they sustained in the opinion of their European admirers, was greater than their loss of posts, artillery and troops. They were stigmatised as wanting the resolution and abilities of men in the defence of their dearest rights. Their unqualified subjugation, or unconditional submission was considered as being near at hand. An opinion was diffused, that the war in effect was over, or that the farther resistance of the colonists would serve only to make the terms of their submission more humiliating. The terror which the loss of Ticonderoga spread throughout the New-England states was great, but nevertheless no disposition to purchase safety by submission appeared in any quarter. They did not sink under the apprehensions of danger, but acted with vigour and firmness. The royal army, after these successes, continued for some days in Skenessborough, waiting for their tents, baggage and provision. In the mean time general Burgoyne put forth a proclamation, in which he called on the inhabitants of the adjacent towns to send a deputation of ten or more persons from their respective townships, to meet colonel Skene at Castleton, on the 15th of July. The troops were at the same time busily employed in opening a road, and clearing a creek, to favour their advance, and to open a passage for the conveyance of their stores. A party of the royal army which had been left behind at Ticonderoga, was equally industrious in carrying gun boats, provision, vessels, and batteaux over land, into lake George. [34]

An immensity of labour in every quarter was necessary, but animated as they were with past successes and future hopes, they disregarded toil and danger.

From Skenessborough general Burgoyne directed his course across the country to Fort Edward, on Hudson’s-River. Though the distance in a right line from one to the other is but a few miles, yet such is the impracticable nature of the country, and such were the artificial difficulties thrown in his way, that nearly as many days were consumed as the distance passed over in a direct line would have measured in miles. The Americans under the direction of general Schuyler, had cut large trees on both sides of the road, so as to fall across with their branches interwoven. The face of the country was likewise so broken with creeks and marshes, that they had no less than forty bridges to construct, one of which was a log-work over a morass, two miles in extent. This difficult march might have been avoided, had general Burgoyne fallen back from Skenessborough to Ticonderoga, and thence proceeded by lake George, but he declined this route, from an apprehension that a retrograde motion on his part would abate the panic of the enemy. He had also a suspicion that some delay might be occasioned by the American garrison at Fort George, as in case of his taking that
route, they might safely continue to resist to the last extremity, having open in their
rear a place of retreat. On the other hand it was presumed, that as soon as they knew
that the royal army was marching in a direction which was likely to cut off their
retreat, they would consult their safety by a seasonable evacuation. In addition to
these reasons he had the advice and persuasion of colonel Skene. That gentleman had
been recommended to him as a person proper to be consulted. His land was so
situated, that the opening of a road between Fort Edward and Skenesborough would
greatly enhance its value. This circumstance might have made him more urgent in his
recommendations of that route, especially as its being the shortest, it bid fair for
uniting the royal interest with private convenience.
The opinion formed by general Burgoyne of the effect of his
direct movement from Skenesborough [35] to Fort Edward on
the American garrison, was verified by the event; for being apprehensive of having
their retreat cut off, they abandoned their fort and burnt their vessels. The navigation
of Lake George being thereby left free, provisions and ammunition were brought
forward from Fort George to the first navigable parts of Hudson’s-River. This is a
distance of 15 miles, and the roads of difficult passage. The intricate combination of
land and water carriage, together with the insufficient means of transportation, and
excessive rains, caused such delays, that at the end of fifteen days there were not more
than four days provision brought forward, nor above ten bateaux in the river. The
difficulties of this conveyance, as well as of the march through the wilderness from
Skenesborough to Fort Edward, were encountered and overcome by the royal army,
with a spirit and alacrity which could not be exceeded.
At length, after incredible fatigue and labour, general Burgoyne,
and the army under his command reached Fort Edward, on
Hudson’s-River. Their exultation on accomplishing, what for a long time had been the
object of their hopes, was unusually great.

While the British were retarded in their advance by the combined difficulties of nature
and art, events took place, which proved the wisdom and propriety of the retreat from
Ticonderoga. The army saved by that means, was between the inhabitants and general
Burgoyne. This abated the panic of the people, and became a center of rendezvous for
them to repair to. On the other hand, had they stood their ground at Ticonderoga, they
must in the ordinary course of events, in a short time, either have been cut to pieces,
or surrendered themselves prisoners of war. In either case, as general St. Clair
represented in his elegant defence:

Fear and dismay would have seized on the inhabitants from the
false opinion that had been formed of the strength of these posts,
wringing grief and moping melancholy, would have filled the habitations of those
whose dearest connexions were in that army, and a lawless host of ruffians, set loose
from every social principle, would have roamed at large through the defenceless [36]
country, while bands of savages would have carried havoc, devastation and terror
before them. Great part of the state of New-York must have submitted to the
conqueror, and in it he would have found the means to prosecute his success. He
would have been able effectually to have co-operated with general Howe, and would
probably soon have been in the same country with him—that country where the
illustrious Washington, with an inferior force made so glorious a stand, but who must
have been obliged to retire, if both armies had come upon him at once—or he might have been forced to a general and decisive action in unfavourable circumstances, whereby the hopes, the now well founded hopes of America—of liberty, peace and safety might have been cut off forever.

Such, it was apprehended, would have been the consequences, if the American northern army had not retreated from their posts at Ticonderoga. From the adoption of that measure very different events took place. In a few days after the evacuation, General Schuyler issued a proclamation, calling to the minds of the inhabitants the late barbarities and desolations of the royal army in Jersey—warning them that they would be dealt with as traitors, if they joined the British, and requiring them with their arms to repair to the American standard. Numerous parties were also employed in bringing off public stores, and in felling trees, and throwing obstructions in the way of the advancing royal army. At first an universal panic intimidated the inhabitants, but they soon recovered. The laws of self-preservation operated in their full force, and diffused a general activity through the adjacent states. The formalities of convening, draughting and officering the militia, were in many instances dispensed with. Hundreds seized their firelocks, and marched on the general call, without waiting for the orders of their immediate commanders. The inhabitants had no means of security, but to abandon their habitations, and take up arms. Every individual saw the necessity of becoming a temporary soldier. The terror excited by the Indians, instead of disposing the inhabitants to court British protection, had a contrary effect.

The friends of the royal cause, as well as its enemies, suffered from their indiscriminate barbarities. Among other instances, the murder of Miss M'Crea excited an universal horror. This young lady, in the innocence of youth, and the bloom of beauty—the daughter of a steady loyalist, and engaged to be married to a British officer, was on the very day of her intended nuptials, massacred by the savage auxiliaries, attached to the British army. Occasion was thereby given to inflame the populace, and to blacken the royal cause. The cruelties of the Indians, and the cause in which they were engaged, were associated together, and presented in one view to the alarmed inhabitants. Those whose interest it was to draw forth the militia in support of American independence, strongly expressed their execrations of the army, which submitted to accept of Indian aid, and they loudly condemned that government which could call such auxiliaries into a civil contest, as were calculated not to subdue, but to exterminate a people whom they affected to reclaim as subjects. Their cruel mode of warfare, by putting to death as well the smiling infant and the defenceless female, as the resisting armed man, excited an universal spirit of resistance. In conjunction with other circumstances, it impressed on the minds of the inhabitants a general conviction that a vigorous determined opposition was the only alternative for the preservation of their property, their children and their wives. Could they have indulged the hope of security and protection while they remained peaceably at their homes, they would have found many excuses for declining to assume the profession of soldiers, but when they contrasted the dangers of a manly resistance, with those of a passive inaction, they chose the former, as the least of two unavoidable evils.

All the feeble aid, which the royal army received from their Indian auxiliaries, was infinitely overbalanced by the odium it brought on their cause, and by that determined spirit of opposition which the dread of
their savage cruelties excited. While danger was remote, the pressing calls of
Congress, and of the general officers, for the inhabitants to be in readiness to oppose a
distant foe were unavailing, or tardily executed, but no sooner had they recovered
from the first impression of the general panic, than they turned out with unexampled
alacrity. The owners of the soil came forward with that ardor, which the love of dear
connections and of property inspires. An army was speedily poured forth from the
woods and mountains. When they who had begun the retreat were nearly wasted
away, the spirit of the country immediately supplied their place with a much greater
and more formidable force. In addition to these incitements, it was early conjectured,
that the royal army, by pushing forward would be so entangled as not to be able to
advance or retreat on equal terms. Men of abilities and of eloquence, influenced with
this expectation, harangued the inhabitants in their several towns—set forth in high-
colouring, the cruelties of the savage auxiliaries of Great-Britain, and the fair
prospects of capturing the whole force of their enemies. From the combined influence
of these causes, the American army soon amounted to upwards of 13,000 men.

While general Burgoyne was forcing his way down towards Albany, lieutenant
colonel St. Leger was co-operating with him in the Mohawk country. He had
ascended the river St. Lawrence, crossed Lake Ontario, and commenced the siege of
Fort Schuyler.

On the approach of this detachment of the royal army, general
Harkimer collected about 800 of the whig militia of the parts
adjacent, for the relief of the garrison.

St. Leger aware of the consequences of being attacked in his
trenches, detached Sir John Johnson, with some tories and
Indians to lie in ambush, and intercept the advancing militia. The stratagem took
effect. The general and his militia were surprised, but several of the Indians were
nevertheless killed by their fire.

A scene of confusion [39] followed. Some of Harkimer’s men
run off, but others posted themselves behind logs, and continued
to fight with bravery and success. The loss on the side of the Americans was 160
killed, besides the wounded. Among the former was their gallant leader general
Harkimer. Several of their killed and wounded were principal inhabitants of that part
of the country. Colonel St. Leger availed himself of the terror excited on this
occasion, and endeavoured by strong representations of Indian barbarity to intimidate
the garrison into an immediate surrender. He sent verbal, and written messages,
demanding the surrender of the fort, and stating the impossibility of their obtaining
relief, as their friends under general Harkimer were entirely cut off, and as general
Burgoyne had forced his way through the country, and was daily receiving the
submission of the inhabitants,” he represented “the pains he had taken to soften the
Indians, and to obtain engagements from them, that in case of an immediate surrender
every man in the garrison should be spared,” and particularly enlarged on the
circumstance, “that the Indians were determined, in case of their meeting with farther
opposition, to massacre not only the garrison, but every man, woman or child in the
Mohawk country.” Colonel Gansevort, who commanded in the fort, replied, “that
being by the United States entrusted with the charge of the garrison, he was
determined to defend it to the last extremity, against all enemies whatever, without any concern for the consequences of doing his duty.”

It being resolved maugre, the threats of Indian barbarities to defend the fort—lieutenant colonel Willet undertook, in conjunction with lieutenant Stockwell, to give information to their fellow citizens, of the state of the garrison. These two adventurous officers passed by night through the besiegers works, and at the hazard of falling into the hands of savages, and suffering from them the severity of torture, made their way for fifty miles through dangers and difficulties, in order to procure relief for their besieged associates. In the mean time the British carried on their operations with such industry, that in less than three weeks they had advanced within 150 yards of the fort.

[40]
The brave garrison, in its hour of danger, was not forgotten. General Arnold, with a brigade of continental troops, had been previously detached by general Schuyler for their relief, and was then near at hand. Mr. Tost Schuyler who had been taken up by the Americans, on suspicion of his being a spy, was promised his life and his estate, on consideration that he should go on and alarm the Indians with such representations of the numbers marching against them, as would occasion their retreat. He immediately proceeded to the camp of the Indians, and being able to converse in their own language, informed them that vast numbers of hostile Americans were near at hand. They were thoroughly frightened and determined to go off. St. Leger used every art to retain them, but nothing could change their determination. It is the characteristic of these people on a reverse of fortune to betray irresolution, and a total want of that constancy, which is necessary to struggle for a length of time with difficulties. They had found the fort stronger and better defended than was expected. They had lost several headmen in their engagement with general Harkimer, and had gotten no plunder. These circumstances, added to the certainty of the approach of a reinforcement to their adversaries, which they believed to be much greater than it really was, made them quite untractable. Part of them instantly decamped, and the remainder threatened to follow, if the British did not immediately retreat. This measure was adopted, and the siege raised.

From the disorder, occasioned by the precipitancy of the Indians, the tents, and much of the artillery and stores of the besiegers, fell into the hands of the garrison. The discontented savages, exasperated by their ill fortune, are said, on their retreat, to have robbed their British associates, of their baggage and provisions.

While the fate of Fort Schuyler was in suspense, it occurred to general Burgoyne, on hearing of its being besieged, that a sudden and rapid movement forward would be of the utmost consequence.

As the principal force of his adversaries was in front between him and Albany, he hoped by advancing on them, to reduce [41] them to the necessity of fighting, or of retreating out of his way to New-England. Had they to avoid an attack, retreated up the Mohawk river, they would, in case of St. Leger’s success, have put themselves between two fires. Had they retreated to Albany, it was supposed their situation would have been worse, as a co-operation
from New-York was expected. Besides, in case of that movement, an opportunity would have been given for a junction of Burgoyne and St. Leger. To have retired from the scene of action by filing off for New-England, seemed to be the only opening left for their escape. With such views general Burgoyne promised himself great advantages, from advancing rapidly towards Albany. The principal objection against this plausible project, was the difficulty of furnishing provisions to his troops. To keep up a communication with Fort George, so as to obtain from that garrison, regular supplies at a distance daily encreasing, was wholly impracticable. The advantages which were expected from the proposed measure, were too dazzling to be easily relinquished. Though the impossibility of drawing provisions from the stores in their rear, was known and acknowledged, yet a hope was indulged that they might be elsewhere obtained. A plan was therefore formed to open resources, from the plentiful farms of Vermont. Every day’s account, and particularly the information of colonel Skene, induced Burgoyne to believe, that one description of the inhabitants in that country were panic struck, and that another, and by far the most numerous, were friends to the British interest, and only wanted the appearance of a protecting power to shew themselves. Relying on this intelligence, he detached only 500 men, 100 Indians, and two field pieces, which he supposed would be fully sufficient for the expedition. The command of this force was given to lieutenant colonel Baum, and it was supposed that with it he would be enabled to seize upon a magazine of supplies which the Americans had collected at Bennington, and which was only guarded by militia. It was also intended to try the temper of the inhabitants and to mount the dragoons.

Lieutenant colonel Baum was instructed to keep the regular [42][1777] force posted, while the light troops felt their way; and to avoid all danger of being surrounded, or of having his retreat cut off. But he proceeded with less caution than his perilous situation required. Confiding in the numbers and promised aid of those who were depended upon as friends, he presumed too much. On his approaching the place of his destination, he found the American militia stronger than had been supposed. He therefore took post in the vicinity, entrenched his party, and dispatched an express to general Burgoyne, with an account of his situation. Colonel Breyman was detached to reinforce him. Though every exertion was made to push forward this reinforcement, yet from the impracticable face of the country and defective means of transportation, 32 hours elapsed before they had marched 24 miles. General Starke who commanded the American militia at Bennington, engaged with them before the junction of the two royal detachments could be effected. On this occasion about 800 undisciplined militia, without bayonets, or a single piece of artillery, attacked and routed 500 regular troops advantageously posted behind entrenchments—furnished with the best arms, and defended with two pieces of artillery. The field pieces were taken from the party commanded by col. Baum, and the greatest part of his detachment was either killed or captured. Colonel Breyman arrived on the same ground and on the same day, but not till the action was over. Instead of meeting his friends, as he expected, he found himself briskly attacked. This was begun by colonel Warner, (who with his continental regiment, which having been sent for from Manchester, came opportunely at this time) and was well supported by Stark’s militia, which had just defeated the party commanded by colonel Baum. Breyman’s troops, though fatigued with their preceding march, behaved with great resolution, but were at length compelled to abandon their artillery, and retreat. In
these two actions the Americans took four brass field pieces, twelve brass drums, 250
dragoon swords, 4 ammunition wagons, and about 700 prisoners.

The loss of the Americans, inclusive of their wounded, was about
100 men. [43] Congress resolved, “that their thanks be presented
to gen. Stark, of the New-Hampshire militia, and the officers and troops under his
command, for their brave and successful attack upon, and signal victory over the
enemy in their lines at Bennington, and also, that brigadier Stark, be appointed a
brigadier general in the army of the United States.” Never were thanks more
deservedly bestowed. The overthrow of these detachments was the first link in a grand
chain of causes, which finally drew down ruin on the whole royal army. The
confidence with which the Americans were inspired, on finding themselves able to
defeat regular troops, produced surprising effects. It animated their exertions, and
filled them with expectation of farther successes.

That military pride, which is the soul of an army, was nurtured by the captured
artillery, and other trophies of victory. In proportion to the elevation of the
Americans, was the depression of their adversaries. Accustomed to success, as they
had been in the preceding part of the campaign, they felt unusual mortification from
this unexpected check. Though it did not diminish their courage, it abated their
confidence. It is not easy to enumerate all the disastrous consequences which resulted
to the royal army, from the failure of their expedition to Bennington. These were so
extensive, that their loss of men was the least considerable. It deranged every plan for
pushing the advantages which had been previously obtained. Among other
embarrassments it reduced general Burgoyne to the alternative of halting, till he
brought forward supplies from Fort George, or of advancing without them at the
risque of being starved. The former being adopted, the royal army was detained from
August 16th, to September 13th. This unavoidable delay, gave time and opportunity
for the Americans to collect in great numbers.

The defeat of lieutenant colonel Baum, was the first event which for a long time had
taken place in favour of the American northern army. From December 1775, it had
experienced one misfortune, treading on the heels of another, and defeat succeeding
defeat. Every movement [44] had been either retreating or evacuating. The subsequent
transactions present a remarkable contrast. Fortune, which previous to the battle of
Bennington, had not for a moment quitted the British standard, seemed after that
event, as if she had totally deserted it, and gone over to the opposite party.

After the evacuation of Ticonderoga, the Americans had fallen back from one place to
another, till they at last fixed at Vansnaick’s island. Soon after this retreating system
was adopted, Congress recalled their general officers, and put general Gates at the
head of their northern army.

His arrival gave fresh vigour to the exertions of the inhabitants.

The militia flushed with their recent victory at Bennington,
collected in great numbers to his standard. They soon began to be animated with a
hope of capturing the whole British army. A spirit of adventure burst forth in many
different points of direction.

While general Burgoyne was urging his preparations for
advancing towards Albany, an enterprize was undertaken by
general Lincoln to recover Ticonderoga, and the other posts in the rear of the royal army. He detached colonel Brown with 500 men to the landing at Lake George. The colonel conducted his operations with so much address, that he surprised all the outposts between the landing at the north end of Lake George, and the body of the fortress at Ticonderoga. He also took Mount Defiance and Mount Hope, the French lines, and a block-house, 200 batteaux, several gun boats, and an armed sloop, together with 290 prisoners, and at the same time released 100 Americans. His own loss was trifling. Colonel Brown and colonel Johnson, the latter of whom had been detached with 500 men, to attempt Mount Independence, on examination found that the reduction of either that post or of Ticonderoga, was beyond their ability. When the necessary stores for thirty days subsistence, were brought forward from Lake George, general Burgoyne gave up all communication with the magazines in his rear, and crossed Hudson’s river.

This movement was the subject of much discussion. Some charged it on the impetuosity of the general, and alleged, that it was premature before [45] he was sure of aid from the royal forces posted in New-York, but he pleaded the peremptory orders of his superiors. The rapid advance of Burgoyne, and especially his passage of the North-River, added much to the impracticability of his future retreat, and in conjunction with subsequent events made the total ruin of his army in a great degree unavoidable.

General Burgoyne, after crossing the Hudson, advanced along its side, and in four days encamped on the heights, about two miles from general Gates’ camp, which was three miles above Stillwater. The Americans, elated with their successes at Bennington and Fort Schuyler, thought no more of retreating, but came out to meet the advancing British, and engaged them with firmness and resolution.

The attack began a little before midday, between the scouting parties of the two armies. The commanders on both sides, supported and reinforced their respective parties. The conflict, though severe, was only partial for an hour and a half, but after a short pause it became general, and continued for three hours, without any intermission. A constant blaze of fire was kept up, and both armies seemed to be determined on death or victory. The Americans and British alternately drove, and were driven by each other. Men, and particularly officers, dropped every moment, and on every side. Several of the Americans placed themselves in high trees, and as often as they could distinguish an officer’s uniform, took him off by deliberately aiming at his person. Few actions have been characterised by more obstinacy in attack or defence. The British repeatedly tried their bayonets, but without their usual success in the use of that weapon. At length, night put an end to the effusion of blood. The British lost upwards of 500 men, including their killed, wounded, and prisoners. The Americans, inclusive of the missing, lost 319. Thirty-six, out of forty-eight British matrosses were killed, or wounded. The 62nd British regiment, which was 500 strong, when it left Canada, was reduced to 60 men, and 4 or 5 officers.

This hard fought battle decided nothing, and little else than honour was gained by either army, but nevertheless [46] it was followed by important consequences. Of these one was the diminution of the zeal and alacrity of the Indians in the British army. The dangerous service, in which they were
engaged, was by no means suited to their habits of war. They were disappointed of the
plunder they expected, and saw nothing before them but hardships and danger.
Fidelity and honour were too feeble motives in the minds of savages, to retain them in
such an unproductive service. By deserting in the season when their aid would have
been most useful, they furnished a second instance of the impolicy of depending upon
them. Very little more perseverance was exhibited by the Canadians, and other British
 provincials. They also abandoned the British standard, when they found, that instead
of a flying and dispirited enemy, they had a numerous and resolute force opposed to
them. These desertions were not the only disappointments which general Burgoyne
experienced. From the commencement of the expedition, he had promised himself a
strong reinforcement from that part of the British army, which was stationed at New-
York. He depended on its being able to force its way to Albany, and to join him there,
or in the vicinity. This co-operation, though attempted, failed in the execution, while
the expectation of it contributed to involve him in some difficulties, to which he
would not have otherwise been exposed.

General Burgoyne received intelligence in a cypher, that Sir
Henry Clinton, who then commanded in New-York, intended to
make a diversion in his favour, by attacking the fortresses which the Americans had
erected on Hudson’s river, to obstruct the intercourse between New-York and Albany.
In answer to this communication he dispatched to Sir Henry Clinton some trusty
persons, with a full account of his situation, and with instructions to press the
immediate execution of the proposed co-operation, and to assure him, that he was
enabled in point of provisions, and fixed in his resolution, to hold his present position
till the 12th of October, in the hopes of favourable events. The reasonable expectation
of a diversion from New-York, founded on this intelligence, [47] made it disgraceful
to retreat, and at the same time improper to urge offensive operations. In this posture
of affairs, a delay of two or three weeks, in expectation of the promised co-operation
from New-York became necessary. In the mean time the provisions of the royal army
were lessening, and the animation and numbers of the American army increasing. The
New-England people were fully sensible, that their All was at stake, and at the same
time sanguine, that by vigorous exertions Burgoyne would be so entangled, that his
surrender would be unavoidable. Every moment made the situation of the British
army more critical.

From the uncertainty of receiving farther supplies, general
Burgoyne lessened the soldiers provisions. The 12th of October,
the term till which the royal army had agreed to wait for aid from New-York, was fast
approaching, and no intelligence of the expected co-operation had arrived. In this
alarming situation it was thought proper to make a movement to the left of the
Americans. The body of troops employed for this purpose consisted of 1500 chosen
men, and was commanded by generals Burgoyne, Philips, Reidesel, and Frazer.
As they advanced, they were checked by a sudden and impetuous
attack; but major Ackland, at the head of the British grenadiers,
sustained it with great firmness. The Americans extended their attack along the whole
front of the German troops, who were posted on the right of the grenadiers, and they
also marched a large body round their flank, in order to cut off their retreat. To oppose
this bold enterprise, the British light infantry, with a part of the 24th regiment, were
directed to form a second line, and to cover the retreat of the troops into the camp. In
the mean time the Americans pushed forward a fresh and a strong re-inforcement, to renew the action on Burgoyne’s left. That part of his army was obliged to give way, but the light infantry, and 24th regiment, by a quick movement, came to its succour, and saved it from total ruin. The British lines being exposed to great danger, the troops which were nearest to them returned for their defence.

General Arnold, with a brigade of continental troops, pushed for the works [48] possessed by lord Balcarras, at the head of the British light infantry; but the brigade having an abbatiss to cross, and many other obstructions to surmount, was compelled to retire. Arnold left this brigade, and came to Jackson’s regiment, which he ordered instantly to advance, and attack the lines and redoubt in their front, which were defended by lieutenant colonel Breyman at the head of the German grenadiers. The assailants pushed on with rapidity, and carried the works. Arnold was one of the first who entered them. Lieutenant colonel Breyman was killed. The troops commanded by him retired firing. They gained their tents about 30 or 40 yards from their works, but on finding that the assault was general, they gave one fire, after which some retreated to the British camp, but others threw down their arms. The night put an end to the action.

This day was fatal to many brave men. The British officers suffered more than their common proportion. Among their slain general Frazer, on account of his distinguished merit, was the subject of particular regret. Sir James Clark, Burgoyne’s aid de camp, was mortally wounded. The general himself had a narrow escape, a shot passed through his hat, and another through his waistcoat. Majors Williams and Ackland were taken, and the latter was wounded. The loss of the Americans was inconsiderable, but general Arnold, to whose impetuosity they were much indebted for the success of the day, was among their wounded. They took more than 200 prisoners, besides 9 pieces of brass artillery, and the encampment of a German brigade, with all their equipage.

The royal troops were under arms the whole of the next day, in expectation of another action, but nothing more than skirmishes took place. At this time, general Lincoln, when reconnoitring, received a dangerous wound: An event which was greatly regretted, as he possessed much of the esteem and confidence of the American army.

The position of the British army, after the action of the 7th, was so dangerous, that an immediate and total change became necessary. This hazardous measure was executed without loss or disorder.

The British [49] camp, with all its appurtenances, was removed in the course of a single night. The American general now saw a fair prospect of overcoming the army opposed to him, without exposing his own to the danger of another battle. His measures were therefore principally calculated to cut off their retreat, and prevent their receiving any farther supplies.

While general Burgoyne was pushing on towards Albany, an unsuccessful attempt to relieve him was made by the British commander in New-York. For this purpose, Sir Henry Clinton conducted an expedition up Hudson’s river. This consisted of about 3000 men, and was accompanied by a suitable naval force. After making many feints he landed at
Stoney Point, and marched over the mountains to Fort Montgomery, and attacked the different redoubts. The garrison commanded by governor Clinton, a brave and intelligent officer, made a gallant resistance. But as the post had been designed principally to prevent the passing of ships, the works on the land side were incomplete and untenable. When it began to grow dark, the British entered the fort with fixed bayonets.

The loss on neither side was great. Governor Clinton, general James Clinton, and most of the officers and men effected their escape under cover of the thick smoke and darkness that suddenly prevailed.

The reduction of this post furnished the British with an opportunity for opening a passage up the North-River, but instead of pushing forward to Burgoyne’s encampment, or even to Albany, they spent several days in laying waste the adjacent country. The Americans destroyed Fort Constitution, and also set fire to two new frigates, and some other vessels. General Tryon at the same time destroyed a settlement, called Continental Village, which contained barracks for 1500 men, besides many stores.

Sir James Wallace with a flying squadron of light frigates, and general Vaughan with a detachment of land forces, continued on and near the river for several days, desolating the country near its margin. General Vaughan so completely burned Esopus, a fine flourishing village, that a single house was not left standing, [50] though on his approach the Americans had left the town without making any resistance. Charity would lead us to suppose that these devastations were designed to answer military purposes. Their authors might have hoped to divert the attention of general Gates, and thus indirectly relieve general Burgoyne, but if this was intended the artifice did not take effect. The preservation of property was with the Americans only a secondary object. The capturing of Burgoyne promised such important consequences that they would not suffer any other consideration to interfere with it. General Gates did not make a single movement that lessened the probability of effecting his grand purpose. He wrote an expostulatory letter to Vaughan, part of which was in the following terms: “Is it thus your king’s generals think to make converts to the royal cause? It is no less surprizing than true, that the measures they adopt to serve their master, have a quite contrary effect. Their cruelty establishes the glorious act of independence upon the broad basis of the resentment of the people.” Whether policy or revenge led to this devastation of property is uncertain, but it cannot admit of a doubt that it was far from being the most effectual method of relieving Burgoyne.

The passage of the North-River was made so practicable by the advantages gained on the 6th of October, that Sir Henry Clinton, with his whole force, amounting to 3000 men, might not only have reached Albany, but general Gates’ encampment, before the 12th, the day till which Burgoyne had agreed to wait for aid from New-York. While the British were doing mischief to individuals without serving the cause of their royal master, it seems as though they might by pushing forward about 136 miles in six days, have brought Gates’ army between two fires, at least twenty-four hours before Burgoyne’s necessity compelled his submission to articles of capitulation. Why they neglected this opportunity of relieving their suffering brethren, about thirty-six miles
to the northward of Albany, when they were only about one hundred miles below it, has never yet been satisfactorily explained.

Gates posted 1400 men on the heights opposite the [51] fords of Saratoga, and 2000 more in the rear, to prevent a retreat to Fort Edward, and 1500 at a ford higher up. Burgoyne receiving intelligence of these movements, concluded from them, especially from the last that Gates meant to turn his right. This, if effected, would have entirely enclosed him. To avoid being hemmed in, he resolved on an immediate retreat to Saratoga. His hospital, with the sick and wounded, were necessarily left behind, but they were recommended to the humanity of general Gates, and received from him every indulgence their situation required. When general Burgoyne arrived at Saratoga, he found that the Americans had posted a considerable force on the opposite heights, to impede his passage at that ford. In order to prepare the way for a retreat to Lake George, general Burgoyne ordered a detachment of artificers, with a strong escort of British and provincials, to repair the bridges and open the road leading thither. Part of the escort was withdrawn on other duty, and the remainder on a slight attack of an inconsiderable party of Americans, ran away. The workmen thus left without support, were unable to effect the business on which they had been sent. The only practicable route of retreat, which now remained, was by a night march to Fort Edward. Before this attempt could be made, scouts returned with intelligence, that the Americans were entrenched opposite to those fords on the Hudson’s river, over which it was proposed to pass, and that they were also in force on the high ground between Fort Edward and Fort George. They had at the same time parties down the whole shore and posts, so near as to observe every motion of the royal army. Their position extended nearly round the British, and was by the nature of the ground in a great measure secured from attacks. The royal army could not stand its ground where it was, from the want of the means necessary for their subsistence; nor could it advance towards Albany, without attacking a force greatly superior in number; nor could it retreat without making good its way over a river in face of a strong party, advantageously posted on the opposite side. In case of either attempt, the Americans [52] were so near as to discover every movement, and by means of their bridge could bring their whole force to operate.

Truly distressing was the condition of the royal army. Abandoned in the most critical moment by their Indian allies—unsupported by their brethren in New York—weakened by the timidity and desertion of the Canadians—worn down by a series of incessant efforts, and greatly reduced in their numbers by repeated battles, they were invested by an army nearly three times their number, without a possibility of retreat, or of replenishing their exhausted stock of provisions. A continual cannonade pervaded their camp, and rifle and grape shot fell in many parts of their lines. They nevertheless retained a great share of fortitude.

In the mean time the American army was hourly increasing. Volunteers came in from all quarters, eager to share in the glory of destroying or capturing those whom they considered as their most dangerous enemies. The 13th of October at length arrived. The day was spent in anxious expectation of its producing something of consequence. But as no prospect of assistance appeared, and their provisions were nearly expended,
the hope of receiving any in due time for their relief, could not reasonably be further indulged. General Burgoyne thought proper in the evening, to take an account of the provisions left. It was found on enquiry, that they would amount to no more than a scanty subsistence for three days. In this state of distress, a council of war was called, and it was made so general, as to comprehend both the field officers and the captains. Their unanimous opinion was, that their present situation justified a capitulation on honourable terms. A messenger was therefore dispatched to begin this business. General Gates in the first instance demanded, that the royal army should surrender prisoners of war. He also proposed that the British should ground their arms. But general Burgoyne replied, “This article is inadmissible in every extremity; sooner than this army will consent to ground their arms in their encampment, they will rush on the enemy, determined to take no quarter.” After various messages, a convention was settled, [53] by which it was substantially stipulated as follows:

The troops under general Burgoyne, to march out of their camp with the honours of war, and the artillery of the intrenchments to the verge of the river, where the arms and artillery are to be left. The arms to be piled by word of command from their own officers. A free passage to be granted to the army under lieutenant general Burgoyne to Great-Britain, upon condition of not serving again in North-America during the present contest, and the port of Boston to be assigned for the entry of the transports to receive the troops whenever general Howe shall so order. The army under lieutenant general Burgoyne to march to Massachusetts-Bay, by the easiest route, and to be quartered in, near, or as convenient as possible, to Boston. The troops to be provided with provision by general Gates’ orders, at the same rate of rations as the troops of his own army. All officers to retain their carriages, bat-horses, and no baggage to be molested or searched. The officers are not, as far as circumstances will admit, to be separated from their men. The officers to be quartered according to their rank. All corps whatever of lieutenant general Burgoyne’s army, to be included in the above articles. All Canadians, and persons belonging to the Canadian establishment, and other followers of the army, to be permitted to return to Canada—to be conducted to the first British post on Lake George, and to be supplied with provisions as the other troops, and to be bound by the same condition of not serving during the present contest. Passports to be granted to three officers, to carry despatches to Sir William Howe—Sir Guy Carleton, and to Great-Britain. The officers to be admitted on their parole, and to be permitted to wear their side arms.

Such were the embarrassments of the royal army, incapable of subsisting where it was, or of making its way to a better situation, that these terms were rather more favourable than they had a right to expect. On the other hand it would not have been prudent for the American general at the head of his army, which, though numerous consisted mostly of militia or new levies, to have provoked the despair of even an inferior number of [54] brave disciplined regular troops. General Gates rightly judged that the best way to secure his advantages was to use them with moderation. Soon after the convention was signed, the Americans marched into their lines, and were kept there till the royal army had deposited their arms at the place appointed. The delicacy with which this business was conducted, reflected the highest honour on the American general. Nor did the politeness of Gates end here. Every circumstance was withheld,
that could constitute a triumph in the American army. The captive general was received by his conqueror with respect and kindness. A number of the principal officers of both armies, met at general Gates’ quarters, and for a while, seemed to forget in social and convivial pleasures, that they had been enemies. The conduct of general Burgoyne in this interview with general Gates was truly dignified, and the historian is at a loss whether to admire most, the magnanimity of the victorious, or the fortitude of the vanquished general.

The British troops partook liberally of the plenty that reigned in the American army. It was the more acceptable to them, as they were destitute of bread and flour, and had only as much meat left, as was sufficient for a days subsistence.

But the convention which has been mentioned, 5790 men were surrendered prisoners. The sick and wounded left in camp, when the British retreated to Saratoga, together with the numbers of the British, German and Canadian troops, who were killed, wounded or taken, and who had deserted in the preceding part of the expedition, were reckoned to be 4689. The whole royal force, exclusive of Indians, was probably about 10,000. The stores which the Americans acquired, were considerable. The captured artillery consisted of 35 brass field pieces. There were also 4647 muskets, and a variety of other useful and much wanted articles, which fell into their hands. The continentalss in general Gates’ army were 9093, the militia 4129, but of the former, 2103 were sick or on furlough, and 562 of the latter were in the same situation. The number of militia was constantly fluctuating.

The general exultation of the Americans, on receiving the agreeable intelligence of the convention of Saratoga, disarmed them of much of their resentment. The burnings and devastations which had taken place were sufficient to have inflamed their minds, but private feelings were in a great measure absorbed by a consideration of the many advantages, which the capture of so large an army promised to the new formed states.

In a short time after the convention was signed, general Gates moved forward to stop the devastations of the British on the North-River, but on hearing of the fate of Burgoyne, Vaughan and Wallace retired to New-York.

About the same time the British, which had been left in the rear of the royal army, destroyed their cannon, and abandoning Ticonderoga, retreated to Canada. The whole country, after experiencing for several months the confusions of war, was in a moment restored to perfect tranquility.

Great was the grief and dejection in Britain, on receiving the intelligence of the fate of Burgoyne. The expedition committed to him had been undertaken with the most confident hopes of success. The quality of the troops he commanded, was such, that from their bravery, directed by his zeal, talents and courage, it was presumed that all the northern parts of the United States would be subdued before the end of the campaign. The good fortune which for some time followed him justified these
expectations, but the catastrophe proved the folly of planning distant expeditions, and of projecting remote conquests.

The consequences of these great events, vibrated round the world. The capture of Burgoyne was the hinge on which the revolution turned. While it encouraged the perseverance of the Americans by well grounded hopes of final success, it increased the embarrassments of that ministry, which had so ineffectually laboured to compel their submission. Opposition to their measures gathered new strength, and formed a stumbling block in the road to conquest. This prevented Great-Britain from acting with that collected force which an union of sentiments [56] and councils would have enabled her to do.

Hitherto the best informed Americans had doubts of success in establishing their independence, but henceforward their language was, “That whatever might be the event of their present struggle, they were forever lost to Great-Britain.” Nor were they deceived. The eclat of capturing a large army of British and German regular troops, soon procured them powerful friends in Europe.

Immediately after the surrender of the troops, commanded by lieutenant general Burgoyne, they were marched to the vicinity of Boston. On their arrival they were quartered in the barracks on Winter and Prospect hills. The general court of Massachusetts passed proper resolutions for procuring suitable accommodations for the prisoners; but from the general unwillingness of the people to oblige them, and from the feebleness of that authority which the republican rulers had at that time over the property of their fellow citizens, it was impossible to provide immediately for so large a number of officers and soldiers, in such a manner as their convenience required, or as from the articles of convention they might reasonably expect. The officers remonstrated to general Burgoyne, that six or seven of them were crowded together in one room, without any regard to their respective ranks, in violation of the 7th article of the convention. General Burgoyne, on the 14th of November forwarded this account to general Gates, and added, “the public faith is broken.” This letter being laid before Congress, gave an alarm. It corroborated an apprehension, previously entertained that the captured troops on their embarkation would make a junction with the British garrisons in America. The declaration of the general, that “the public faith was broken” while in the power of Congress, was considered by them as destroying the security which they before had in his personal honour, for in every event he might adduce his previous notice to justify his future conduct. They therefore resolved, “That the embarkation of lieutenant general Burgoyne, and the troops under his command, be postponed, till a distinct and explicit ratification of the convention of Saratoga be properly notified [57] by the court of Great-Britain to Congress.”

General Burgoyne explained the intention and construction of the passage objected to in his letter, and pledged himself, that his officers would join with him in signing any instrument that might be thought necessary for confirming the convention, but Congress would not recede from their resolution. They alleged, that it had been often asserted by their adversaries that “faith was not to be kept with rebels,” and that therefore they would be deficient in attention to the interests of their constituents, if they did not require an authentic ratification of the convention by national authority, before they parted with the captured troops. They urged farther, that by the law of nations, a compact broken in
one article, was no longer binding in any other. They made a distinction between the suspension and abrogation of the convention, and alleged that ground to suspect an intention to violate it, was a justifying reason for suspending its execution on their part, till it was properly ratified. The desired ratification if Great-Britain was seriously disposed to that measure, might have been obtained in a few months, and Congress uniformly declared themselves willing to carry it into full effect, as soon as they were secured of its observance by proper authority on the other side.

About eight months after certain royal commissioners, whose official functions shall be hereafter explained, made a requisition respecting these troops—offered to ratify the convention, and required permission for their embarkation. On enquiry it was found that they had no authority to do any thing in the matter which would be obligatory on Great-Britain. Congress therefore resolved, “that no ratification of the convention, which may be tendered in consequence of powers, which only reach that case by construction and implication, or which may subject whatever is transacted relative to it, to the future approbation or disapprobation of the parliament of Great-Britain, can be accepted by Congress.”

Till the capture of Burgoyne the powers of Europe were only spectators of the war between Great-Britain and her late colonies, but soon after that event they were drawn in to be parties.

In every period of the controversy, the claims of the Americans were patronised by sundry respectable foreigners. The letters, addresses, and other public acts of Congress, were admired by many who had no personal interest in the contest. Liberty is so evidently the undoubted right of mankind, that even they who never possessed it feel the propriety of contending for it, and whenever a people take up arms either to defend or to recover it, they are sure of meeting with encouragement or good wishes from the friends of humanity in every part of the world.

From the operation of these principles, the Americans had the esteem and good wishes of multitudes in all parts of Europe. They were reputed to be ill used, and were represented as a resolute and brave people, determined to resist oppression. Being both pitied and applauded, generous and sympathetic sentiments were excited in their favour. These circumstances would have operated in every case, but in the present, the cause of the Americans was patronised from additional motives. An universal jealousy prevailed against Great-Britain. Her navy had long tyrannised over the nations of Europe, and demanded as a matter of right that the ships of all other powers should strike their sails to her, as mistress of the ocean. From her eagerness to prevent supplies going to her rebellious colonists, as she called the Americans, the vessels of foreign powers had for some time past been subjected to searches and other interruptions, when steering towards America, in a manner that could not but be impatiently born by independent nations. That pride and insolence which brought on the American war, had long disgusted her neighbours, and made them rejoice at her misfortunes, and especially at the prospect of dismembering her over-grown empire.
CHAPTER XVI

The Alliance Between France And The United States. The
Campaign Of 1778.

Soon after intelligence of the capture of Burgoyne’s army
reached Europe, the court of France concluded at Paris, treaties
of alliance and commerce with the United States. The circumstances which led to this
great event, deserve to be particularly unfolded. The colonists having taken up arms,
uninfluenced by the enemies of Great-Britain, conducted their opposition for several
months after they had raised troops, and emitted money, without any reference to
foreign powers. They knew it to be the interest of Europe, to promote a separation
between Great-Britain and her colonies, but as they began the contest with no other
view than to obtain a redress of grievances, they neither wished in the first period of
their opposition to involve Great-Britain in a war, nor to procure aid to themselves by
paying court to her enemies. The policy of Great-Britain in attempting to deprive the
Americans of arms, was the first event which made it necessary for them to seek
foreign connexions. At the time she was urging military preparations to compel their
submission, she forbad the exportation of arms, and solicited the commercial powers
of Europe, to co-operate with her by adopting a similar prohibition. To frustrate the
views of Great-Britain Congress, besides recommending the domestic manufacture of
the materials for military stores, appointed a secret committee with powers to procure
on their account arms and ammunition, and also employed agents in foreign countries
for the same purpose. The evident advantage which France might derive from the
continuance of the dispute and the countenance which individuals of that country
daily gave to the Americans, encouraged Congress to send a political and commercial
agent to that kingdom, with instructions to solicit its friendship, and to procure
military stores.

Silas Deane, being chosen for this purpose, sailed for France
early in 1776, and was soon after his arrival at Paris instructed to
sound count de Vergennes, the French minister for foreign affairs, on the subject
of the American controversy. As the public mind, for reasons which have been
mentioned, closed against Great-Britain, it opened towards other nations.

On the 11th of June 1776, Congress appointed a committee, to prepare a plan of a
treaty to be proposed to foreign powers. The discussion of this novel subject engaged
their attention till the latter end of September. While Congress was deliberating
thereon, Mr. Deane was soliciting a supply of arms, ammunition and soldiers
cloathing, for their service. A sufficiency for lading three vessels was soon procured.
What agency the government of France had in furnishing these supplies, or whether
they were sold or given as presents, are questions which have been often asked, but
not satisfactorily answered, for the business was so conducted that the transaction
might be made to assume a variety of complexions, as circumstances might render
expedient.
It was most evidently the interest of France to encourage the Americans in their opposition to Great Britain, and it was true policy to do this by degrees and in a private manner, lest Great-Britain might take the alarm. Individuals are sometimes influenced by considerations of friendship and generosity, but interest is the pole star by which nations are universally governed. It is certain that Great-Britain was amused with declarations of the most pacific dispositions on the part of France, at the time the Americans were liberally supplied with the means of defence, and it is equally certain, that this was the true line of policy for promoting that dismemberment of the British empire which France had an interest in accomplishing.

Congress knew, that a diminution of the overgrown power of Britain, could not but be desirable to France. Sore with the loss of her possessions on the continent of North-America by the peace of Paris in the year 1763, and also by the capture of many thousands of her sailors in 1755, antecedent to a declaration of war, she must have been something more than human, not to have rejoiced at an opportunity of depressing an antient and formidable [61] rival.

Besides the increasing naval superiority of Great-Britain, her vast resources, not only in her antient dominions, but in colonies growing daily in numbers and wealth, added to the haughtiness of her flag, made her the object both of terror and envy. It was the interest of Congress to apply to the court of France, and it was the interest of France to listen to their application.

Congress having agreed on the plan of the treaty, which they intended to propose to his Most Christian Majesty, proceeded to elect commissioners to solicit its acceptance. Dr. Franklin, Silas Deane and Thomas Jefferson were chosen. The latter declining to serve, Arthur Lee, who was then in London, and had been very serviceable to his country in a variety of ways, was elected in his room. It was resolved, that no member should be at liberty to divulge any thing more of these transactions than “that Congress had taken such steps as they judged necessary for obtaining foreign alliances.” The secret committee were directed to make an effectual lodgement in France of ten thousand pounds sterling, subject to the order of these commissioners. Dr. Franklin, who was employed as agent in the business, and afterwards as minister plenipotentiary at the court of France, was in possession of a greater proportion of foreign fame, than any other native of America. By the dint of superior abilities and with but few advantages in early life, he had attained the highest eminence among men of learning, and in many instances extended the empire of science. His genius was vast and comprehensive, and with equal ease investigate the mysteries of philosophy and the labyrinths of politics. His fame as a philosopher had reached as far as human nature is polished or refined. His philanthropy knew no bounds. The prosperity and happiness of the human race were objects which at all times had attracted his attention. Disgusted with great Britain, and glowing with the most ardent love for the liberties of his oppressed native country, he left London, where he had resided some years in the character of agent for several of the colonies, and early in 1775 returned to Philadelphia, [62] and immediately afterwards was elected by the legislature of Pennsylvania, to share in the opposition to Great-Britain as a member of Congress. Shortly after his appointment to solicit the interests of Congress in France, he sailed for that country.
He was no sooner landed than universally carressed. His fame had smoothed the way for his reception in a public character. Doctor Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee, having rendezvoused at Paris, soon after opened their business in a private audience with Count de Vergennes. The Congress could not have applied to the court of France under more favourable circumstances. The throne was filled by a prince in the flower of his age, and animated with the desire of rendering his reign illustrious. Count de Vergennes was not less remarkable for extensive political knowledge, than for true greatness of mind. He had grown old in the habits of government, and was convinced that conquests are neither the surest nor the shortest way to substantial fame. He knew full well that no success in war, however brilliant, could so effectually promote the security of France, as the emancipation of the colonies of her ancient rival. He had the superior wisdom to discern, that there were no present advantages to be obtained by unequal terms, that would compensate for those lasting benefits which were likely to flow from a kind and generous beginning. Instead of grasping at too much, or taking any advantages of the humble situation of the invaded colonies, he aimed at nothing more than by kind and generous terms to a distressed country, to perpetuate the separation which had already taken place between the component parts of an empire, from the union of which his sovereign had much to fear.

Truly difficult was the line of conduct, which the real interest of the nation required of the ministers of His Most Christian Majesty. An haughty reserve would have discouraged the Americans. An open reception, or even a legal countenance of their deputies might have alarmed the rulers of Great-Britain, and disposed them to a compromise with their colonies, or have brought on an immediate rupture between France and England. A middle line as preferable to either, was therefore pursued. Whilst the French government prohibited, threatened and even punished the Americans; private persons encouraged, supplied, and supported them. Prudence, as well as policy required, that France should not be over-hasty in openly espousing their cause. She was by no means fit for war. From the state of her navy, and the condition of her foreign trade, she was vulnerable on every side. Her trading people dreaded the thoughts of a war with Great-Britain, as they would thereby be exposed to great losses. These considerations were strengthened from another quarter. The peace of Europe was supposed to be unstable from a prevailing belief, that the speedy death of the elector of Bavaria was an event extremely probable. But the principle reason which induced a delay, was an opinion, that the dispute between the Mother Country and the colonies would be compromised. Within the 13 years immediately preceding, twice had the contested claims of the two countries brought matters to the verge of extremity. Twice had the guardian genius of both interposed, and reunited them in the bonds of love and affection. It was feared by the sagacious ministry of France, that the present rupture would terminate in the same manner. These wise observers of human nature apprehended, that their too early interference would favour a reconciliation, and that the reconciled parties would direct their united force against the French, as the disturbers of their domestic tranquility. It had not yet entered into the hearts of the French nation, that it was possible for the British American colonists, to join with their antient enemies against their late friends.
At this period Congress did not so much expect any direct aid from France, as the indirect relief of a war between that country and Great-Britain. To subserve this design, they resolved, that “their commissioners at the court of France should be furnished with warrants and commissions, and authorised to arm and fit for war in the French ports any number of vessels (not exceeding six) at the expence of the United States, to war upon British property, provided they were satisfied this measure would [64] not be disagreeable to the court of France.”

This resolution was carried into effect, and in the year 1777 marine officers, with American commissions, both sailed out of French ports, and carried prizes of British property into them. They could not procure their condemnation in the courts of France, nor sell them publicly, but they nevertheless found ways and means to turn them into money. The commanders of these vessels were sometimes punished by authority to please the English, but they were oftener caressed from another quarter to please the Americans.

While private agents on the part of the United States were endeavouring to embroil the two nations, the American commissioners were urging the ministers of His Most Christian Majesty to accept the treaty proposed by Congress. They received assurances of the good wishes of the court of France, but were from time to time informed, that the important transaction required farther consideration, and were enjoined to observe the most profound secrecy. Matters remained in this fluctuating state from December 1776, till December 1777. Private encouragement and public discouragement were alternated, but both varied according to the complexion of news from America. The defeat on Long-Island, the reduction of New-York, and the train of disastrous events in 1776, which have already been mentioned, sunk the credit of the Americans very low and abated much of the national ardor for their support. Their subsequent successes at Trenton and Princeton, effaced these impressions, and rekindled active zeal in their behalf. The capture of Burgoyne fixed these wavering politics. The success of the Americans in the campaign of 1777, placed them on high ground. Their enmity had proved itself formidable to Britain, and their friendship became desirable to France. Having helped themselves, they found it less difficult to obtain help from others. The same interest, which hitherto had directed the court of France to a temporising policy, now required decisive conduct. Previous delay had favoured the dismemberment of the empire, but farther procrastination bid fair to promote, at least such a federal alliance of the [65] disjointed parts of the British Empire as would be no less hostile to the interests of France than a re-union of its severed parts. The news of the capitulation of Saratoga reached France, very early in December, 1777. The American deputies took that opportunity to press for an acceptance of the treaty, which had been under consideration for the preceding twelve months. The capture of Burgoyne’s army convinced the French, that the opposition of the Americans to Great Britain was not the work of a few men who had got power in their hands, but of the great body of the people, and was like to be finally successful. It was therefore determined to take them by the hand, and publicly to espouse their cause. The commissioners of Congress were informed by Mr. Gerard one of the secretaries of the King’s council of State,

that it was decided to acknowledge the independence of the United States and to make a treaty with them. That in the treaty

Dec. 16 1777

1778
no advantage would be taken of their situation to obtain terms which, otherwise, it
would not be convenient for them to agree to. That his Most Christian Majesty desired
the treaty once made should be durable, and their amity to subsist forever, which
could not be expected, if each nation did not find an interest in its continuance, as well
as in its commencement. It was therefore intended that the terms of the treaty should
be such as the new formed states would be willing to agree to if they had been long
since established, and in the fulness of strength and power; and such as they should
approve of when that time should come. That his most Christian Majesty was fixed in
his determination not only to acknowledge, but to support, their independence. That in
doing this he might probably soon be engaged in a war, yet he should not expect any
compensation from the United States on that account, nor was it pretended that he
acted wholly for their sakes, since besides his real good will to them, it was
manifestly the interest of France, that the power of England should be diminished, by
the separation of the colonies from its government.
The only condition he should require and rely on would be, that
the United States in no peace to be [66] made, should give up
their independence and return to the obedience of the British government.

At any time previously to the 16th of December, 1777, when Mr. Gerard made the
foregoing declaration, it was in the power of the British ministry to have ended the
American war, and to have established an alliance with the United States, that would
have been of great service to both; but from the same haughtiness which for some
time had predominated in their councils, and blinded them to their interests, they
neglected to improve the favourable opportunity.

Conformably to the preliminaries proposed by Mr. Gerard, his most Christian Majesty
Lewis the 16th, on the 6th of February 1778, entered into treaties of amity and
commerce, and of alliance with the United States, on the footing of the most perfect
equality and reciprocity. By the latter of these, that illustrious monarch became the
guarantee of their sovereignty, independence and commerce.

On a review of the conduct of the French ministry to the Americans, the former
appear to have acted uniformly from a wise regard to national interest. Any line of
conduct, different from that which they adopted, might have overset the measures
which they wished to establish. Had they pretended to act from disinterested
principles of generosity to the distressed, the known selfishness of human nature
would have contradicted the extravagant pretension. By avowing the real motive of
their conduct they furnished such a proof of candor as begat confidence.

The terms of reciprocity on which they contracted with the United States were no less
recommended by wise policy than dictated by true magnanimity. As there was
nothing exclusive in the treaty, an opening was left for Great Britain to close the war
when she pleased, with all the advantages for future commerce that France had
stipulated for herself.

This judicious measure made the establishment of American
independence the common cause of all the commercial powers of
Europe, for the question then was, whether the trade of the United States [67] should
by the subversion of their independence be again monopolised by Great Britain, or by
the establishment of it, laid open on equal terms to all the world.

In national events the public attention is generally fixed on the movements of armies
and fleets. Mankind never fail to do homage to the able general and expert admiral.
To this they are justly entitled, but as great a tribute is due to the statesman who, from
a more elevated station, determines on measures in which the general safety and
welfare of empires are involved. This glory in a particular manner belongs to the
Count de Vergennes, who, as his most Christian Majesty’s minister for foreign affairs,
conducted the conferences which terminated in these treaties. While the ministers of
his Britanic Majesty were pleasing themselves with the flattering idea of permanent
peace in Europe, they were not less surprised than provoked by hearing of the
alliance, which had taken place between his most Christian Majesty, and the United
States. This event though often foretold was disbelieved. The zeal of the British
ministry to reduce the colonies to submission, blinded them to danger from every
other quarter. Forgetting that interest governs public bodies perhaps more than private
persons, they supposed that feebler motives would outweigh its all commanding
influence. Intent on carrying into execution the object of their wishes, they fancied
that because France and Spain had colonies of their own, they would refrain from
aiding or abetting the revolted British colonists, from the fear of establishing a
precedent, which at a future day might operate against themselves. Transported with
indignation against their late fellow subjects, they were so infatuated with the
American war, as to suppose that trifling evils, both distant and uncertain, would
induce the court of France to neglect an opportunity of securing great and immediate
advantages.

How far this interference of the court of France can be justified by the laws of nations,
it is not the province of history to decide. Measures of this kind are not determined by
abstract reasoning. The present feelings of a nation, and the probable consequences of
loss or gain influence more than the decisions of speculative men.
Suffice [68] it to mention, that the French exculpated themselves
from the heavy charges brought against them, by this summary
mode of reasoning, “We have found” said they

the late colonies of Great Britain in actual possession of Independence, and in the
exercise of the prerogatives of sovereignty. It is not our business to enquire, whether
they had, or had not, sufficient reason to withdraw themselves from the government
of Great Britain, and to erect an independent one of their own. We are to conduct
towards nations, agreeably to the political state in which we find them, without
investigating how they acquired it. Observing them to be independent in fact, we were
bound to suppose they were so of right, and had the same liberty to make treaties with
them as with any other sovereign power.

They also alleged, that Great Britain could not complain of their interference, since
she had set them the example only a few years before, in supporting the Corsicans in
opposition to the court of France. They had besides many well founded complaints
against the British, whose armed vessels had for months past harassed their
commerce, on the idea of preventing an illicit trade with the revolted colonies.
The marquis de la Fayette, whose letters to France had a considerable share in reconciling the nation to patronise the United States, was among the first in the American army who received the welcome tidings of the treaty. In a transport of joy, mingled with an effusion of tears, he embraced general Washington exclaiming “The king my master has acknowledged your Independence, and entered into an alliance with you for its establishment.” The heart-felt joy, which spread from breast to breast, exceeded description. The several brigades assembled by order of the commander in chief. Their chaplains offered up public thanks to Almighty God, and delivered discourses suitable to the occasion. A feu de joie was fired, and on a proper signal being given, the air resounded with “Long live the king of France,” poured forth from the breast of every private in the army.

The Americans, having in their own strength for three years weathered the storms of war, fancied the port of peace to be in full view. Replete with the sanguine hopes of vigorous youth, they presumed that Britain, whose northern army had been reduced by their sole exertions, would not continue the unequal contest with the combined force of France and America.

Overvaluing their own importance, and undervaluing the resources of their adversaries, they were tempted to indulge a dangerous confidence. That they might not be lulled into carelessness, Congress made an animated address to them, in which, after reviewing the leading features of the war, they informed them “They must yet expect a severe conflict; that though foreign alliances secured their independence, they could not secure their country from devastation.”

The alliance between France and America had not been concluded three days, before it was known to the British ministry, and in less than five weeks more, it was officially communicated to the court of London in a rescript, delivered by the French ambassador, to lord Weymouth. In this new situation of affairs, there were some in Great Britain who advocated the measure of peace with America, on the footing of Independence: But the point of honor, which had before precipitated the nation into the war, predominated over the voice of prudence and interest. The king and parliament of Great Britain resolved to punish the French nation for treating with their subjects, which they termed “An unprovoked aggression on the honor of the crown, and essential interests of the kingdom.” And at the same time a vain hope was indulged, that the alliance between France and the United States, which was supposed to have originated in passion, might be dissolved. The national prejudices against the French, had been so instilled into the minds of Englishmen, and of their American descendants, that it was supposed practicable, by negotiations and concessions, to detach the United States from their new alliance, and re-unite them to the parent state.

Eleven days after the treaty between France and America had been concluded, the British minister introduced into the house of commons a project for conciliation, founded on the idea of obtaining a re-union of the new States with Great Britain.

This consisted of two bills, with the following titles, “A bill for declaring the intention of Great Britain, concerning the exercise of the right of imposing taxes within his Majesty’s colonies, provinces and plantations, in North America,” and a bill to “enable his Majesty to appoint commissioners with sufficient powers, to treat, consult and agree, upon the means of quieting the disorders now subsisting in certain of the colonies, plantations and
provinces of North America.” These bills were hurried through both houses of Parliament, and before they passed into acts, were copied and sent across the Atlantic, to lord and general Howe. On their arrival in America, they were sent by a flag to Congress at Yorktown.

When they were received, Congress was uninformed of the treaty which their commissioners had lately concluded at Paris. For upwards of a year, they had not received one line of information from them on any subject whatever. One packet had in that time been received, but all the letters therein were taken out before it was put on board the vessel which brought it from France, and blank paper put in their stead. A committee of Congress was appointed to examine these bills, and report on them. Their report was brought in the day following, and was unanimously adopted. By this they rejected the proposals of Great Britain. The vigorous and firm language in which Congress expressed their rejection of these offers, considered in connection with the circumstance of their being wholly ignorant of the late treaty with France, exhibits the glowing serenity of fortitude.

While the royal commissioners were industriously circulating these bills in a partial and secret manner, as if they suspected an intention of concealing them from the common people, Congress trusting to the good sense of their constituents, ordered them to be forthwith printed for the public information. Having directed the affairs of their country with an honest reference to its welfare, they had nothing to fear from the people knowing and judging for themselves. They submitted the whole to the public. Their act, after some general remarks on the bill, concluded as follows,

[71]

From all which it appears evident to your committee, that the said bills are intended to operate upon the hopes and fears of the good people of these states, so as to create divisions among them, and a defection from the common cause, now, by the blessing of Divine Providence, drawing near to a favourable issue. That they are the sequel of that insidious plan, which, from the days of the stamp-act, down to the present time, hath involved this country in contention and bloodshed. And that, as in other cases so in this, although circumstances may force them at times to recede from their unjustifiable claims, there can be no doubt but they will, as heretofore, upon the first favourable occasion, again display that lust of domination, which hath rent in twain the mighty empire of Britain.

Upon the whole matter, the committee beg leave to report it as their opinion, that as the Americans united in this arduous contest upon principles of common interest, for the defence of common rights and privileges, which union hath been cemented by common calamities, and by mutual good offices and affection, so the great cause for which they contend, and in which all mankind are interested, must derive its success from the continuance of that union. Wherefore any man or body of men, who should presume to make any separate or partial convention or agreement with commissioners under the crown of Great-Britain, or any of them, ought to be considered and treated as open and avowed enemies of these United States.

And further, your committee beg leave to report it as their opinion, that these United States cannot, with propriety, hold any conference with any commissioners on the part of Great-Britain, unless they shall, as a preliminary thereto, either withdraw their
fleets and armies, or else, in positive and express terms, acknowledge the independence of the said states.

And in as much as it appears to be the design of the enemies of these states to lull them into a fatal security—to the end that they may act with a becoming weight and importance, it is the opinion of your committee, that the several states be called upon to use the most strenuous exertions [72] to have their respective quotas of continental troops in the field as soon as possible, and that all the militia of the said states be held in readiness, to act as occasion may require.

The conciliatory bills were speedily followed by royal commissioners, deputed to solicit their reception. Gov. Johnstone, Lord Carlisle and Mr. Eden, appointed on this business attempted to open a negotiation on the subject. They requested General Washington, to furnish a passport for their secretary Dr. Ferguson, with a letter from them to Congress, but this was refused, and the refusal was unanimously approved by congress. They then forwarded in the usual channel of communication, a letter addressed “to his Excellency Henry Laurens, the president, and the other members of congress,” in which they communicated a copy of their commission and of the acts of Parliament on which it was founded, and offered to concur in every satisfactory and just arrangement towards the following among other purposes.

To consent to a cessation of hostilities, both by sea and land.

To restore free intercourse, to revive mutual affection, and renew the common benefits of naturalization, through the several parts of this empire.

To extend every freedom to trade that our respective interests can require.

To agree that no military forces shall be kept up in the different states of North-America, without the consent of the general congress or particular assemblies.

To concur in measures calculated to discharge the debts of America, and to raise the credit and value of the paper circulation.

To perpetuate our union by a reciprocal deputation of an agent or agents from the different states, who shall have the privilege of a seat and voice in the parliament of Great-Britain; or, if sent from Britain, in that case to have a seat and voice in the assemblies of the different states to which they may be deputed respectively, in order to attend the several interests of those by whom they are deputed.

[73]
In short, to establish the power of the respective legislatures in each particular state, to settle its revenue, in civil and military establishment, and to exercise a perfect freedom of legislation and internal government, so that the British states throughout North-America, acting with us in peace and war under one common sovereign, may have the irrevocable enjoyment of
every privilege, that is short of a total separation of interests, or consistent with that
union of force, on which the safety of our common religion and liberty depends.

A decided negative having been already given, previous to the arrival of the British
commissioners, to the overtures contained in the conciliatory bills, and intelligence of
the treaty with France having in the mean time arrived, there was no ground left for
farther deliberation.
President Laurens therefore, by order of Congress, returned the
following answer.

I have received the letter from your excellencies of the 9th instant, with the
enclosures, and laid them before Congress. Nothing but an earnest desire to spare the
farther effusion of human blood could have induced them to read a paper, containing
expressions so disrespectful to his most Christian Majesty, the good and great ally of
these states; or to consider propositions so derogatory to the honour of an independent
nation.

The acts of the British parliament, the commission from your sovereign, and your
letter, suppose the people of these states to be subjects of the crown of Great-Britain,
and are founded on the idea of dependence, which is utterly inadmissible.

I am further directed to inform your excellencies, that Congress are inclined to peace,
notwithstanding the unjust claims from which this war originated, and the savage
manner in which it hath been conducted. They will, therefore, be ready to enter upon
the consideration of a treaty of peace and commerce, not inconsistent with treaties
already subsisting, when the King of Great-Britain shall demonstrate a sincere
disposition for that purpose. The only solid proof of this disposition will be, an
explicit acknowledgment of the independence of these states, or the withdrawing his
fleets and armies.

Though Congress could not, consistently with national honor, enter on a discussion of the terms proposed by the British
commissioners, yet some individuals of their body ably proved the propriety of
rejecting them. Among these Gouverneur Morris, and W. H. Drayton, with great force
of argument and poignancy of wit, justified the decisive measures adopted by their
countrymen.

As the British plan for conciliation was wholly founded on the idea of the States
returning to their allegiance, it was no sooner known than rejected. In addition to the
sacred ties of plighted faith and national engagements, the leaders in Congress and the
legislative assemblies of America, had tasted the sweets of power and were in full
possession of its blessings, with a fair prospect of retaining them without any foreign
control. The war having originated on the part of Great-Britain from a lust of power,
had in its progress compelled the Americans in self defence to assume and exercise its
highest prerogatives. The passions of human nature which induced the former to
claim power, operated no less forcibly with the latter, against the relinquishment of it.
After the colonies had declared themselves independent states, had repeatedly pledged
their honor to abide by that declaration[,] had under the smiles of heaven maintained it for three campaigns without foreign aid, after the greatest monarch in Europe, had entered into a treaty with them, and guarantied their independence: After all this to expect popular leaders in the enjoyment of power voluntarily to retire from the helm of government to the languid indifference of private life, and while they violated national faith, at the same time to depress their country from the rank of sovereign states to that of dependent provinces, was not more repugnant to universal experience, than to, the governing principles of the human heart. The high spirited ardor of citizens in the youthful vigor of honor and dignity, did not so much as enquire whether greater political happiness might be expected from closing with the proposals of Great-Britain, or by adhering to their new allies. Honor forbad any balancing on the subject, nor were its dictates disobeyed. Though peace was desirable and the offers of Great [75] Britain so liberal, that if proposed in due time, they would have been acceptable, yet for the Americans, after they had declared themselves independent, and at their own solicitation obtained the aid of France, to desert their new allies, and leave them exposed to British resentment incurred on their account, would have argued a total want of honor and gratitude. The folly of Great Britain in expecting such conduct from virtuous freemen, could only be exceeded by the baseness of America, had her citizens realised that expectation.

These offers of conciliation in a great measure originated in an opinion that the Congress was supported by a faction, and that the great body of the people was hostile to independence, and well disposed to re-unite with Great Britain. The latter of these assertions was true, till a certain period of the contest, but that period was elapsed. With their new situation, new opinions and attachments had taken place. The political revolution of the government was less extraordinary than that of the stile and manner of thinking in the United States. The independent American citizens saw with other eyes, and heard with other ears, than when they were in the condition of British subjects. That narrowness of sentiment, which prevailed in England towards France, no longer existed among the Americans. The British commissioners unapprised of this real change in the public mind, expected to keep a hold on the citizens of the United States, by that illiberality which they inherited from their forefathers. Presuming that the love of peace, and the ancient national antipathy to France, would counterbalance all other ties, they flattered themselves that by perseverance an impression favourable to Great Britain might yet be made on the mind of America. They therefore renewed their efforts to open a negociation with Congress, in a letter of the 11th of July. As they had been informed in answer to their preceding letter of the 10th of June, that an explicit acknowledgment of the independence of the United States, or a withdrawing of their fleets and armies must precede an entrance on the consideration of a treaty of peace, and as neither branch of this alternative had been [76] complied with, it was resolved by Congress that no answer should be given to their reiterated application.

In addition to his public exertions as a commissioner, Governor Johnstone endeavoured to obtain the objects on which he had been sent by opening a private correspondence with some of the members of Congress, and other Americans of influence. He in particular addressed himself by letter to Henry Laurens, Joseph Reed, and Robert Morris. His letter to Henry Laurens, was in these words.
Dear Sir,

I beg to transfer to my friend Dr. Ferguson, the private civilities which my friends Mr. Manning, and Mr. Oswald, request in my behalf. He is a man of the utmost probity and of the highest esteem, in the republic of letters.

If you should follow the example of Britain, in the hour of her insolence and send us back without a hearing, I shall hope from private friendship, that I may be permitted to see the country, and the worthy characters she has exhibited to the world, upon making the request in any way you may point out.

The following answer was immediately written.

York Town, June 14th, 1778.

Dear Sir,

Yesterday I was honoured with your favour of the 10th, and thank you for the transmission of those from my dear and worthy friends, Mr. Oswald, and Mr. Manning. Had Dr. Ferguson been the bearer of these papers, I should have shewn that gentleman every degree of respect and attention, that times and circumstances admit of.

It is sir, for Great Britain to determine, whether, her commissioners shall return unheard by the representatives of the United States, or revive a friendship with the citizens at large, and remain among us as long as they please.

You are undoubtedly acquainted with the only terms upon which Congress can treat for accomplishing this good end, terms from which, although writing in a private [77] character, I may venture to assert with great assurance, they never will recede, even admitting the continuance of hostile attempts, and that from the rage of war, the good people of these States, shall be driven to commence a treaty west-ward of yonder mountains. And permit me to add, Sir, as my humble opinion the true interest of Great Britain, in the present advance of our contest, will be found in confirming our independence.

Congress in no hour have been haughty, but to suppose that their minds are less firm in the present than they were, when, destitute of all foreign aid, even without expectation of an alliance—when, upon a day of general public fasting and humiliation in their house of worship, and in presence of God, they resolved “to hold no conference or treaty with any commissioners on the part of Great-Britain unless they shall, as a preliminary thereto, either withdraw their fleets and armies, or in positive and express terms acknowledge the independence of these States,” would be irrational.

At a proper time, Sir, I shall think myself highly honoured by a personal attention paid by contributing to render every part of these states agreeable to you; but until the basis of mutual confidence shall be established, I believe sir, neither former private friendship, nor any other consideration, can influence Congress to consent that even
Governor Johnstone, a gentleman who has been so deservedly esteemed in America shall see the country. I have but one voice, and that shall be against it. But let me intreat you my dear sir, do not hence conclude that I am deficient in affection to my old friends, through whose kindness I have obtained the honor of the present correspondence, or that I am not with very great personal respect and esteem,

Sir,

Your Most Obedient,

And Most Humble Servant,

(Signed) Henry Laurens

Philadelphia.

The Honorable Geo. Johnstone, Esq.

[78] In a letter to Joseph Reed of April the 11th, governor Johnstone said,

The man who can be instrumental in bringing us all to act once more in harmony, and to unite together the various powers which this contest has drawn forth, will deserve more from the king and people, from patriotism, humanity, and all the tender ties that are affected by the quarrel and reconciliation, than ever was yet bestowed on human kind.

On the 16th of June he wrote to Robert Morris,

I believe the men who have conducted the affairs of America incapable of being influenced by improper motives, but in all such transactions there is risk, and I think, that whoever ventures should be secured, at the same time that honor and emolument should naturally follow the fortune of those, who have steered the vessel in the storm, and brought her safely to port. I think Washington and the President have a right to every favour, that grateful nations can bestow, if they could once more unite our interest, and spare the miseries and devastations of war.

To Joseph Reed, private information was communicated, that it had been intended by gov. Johnstone, to offer him, that in case of his exerting his abilities to promote a re-union of the two countries, if consistent with his principles and judgment, ten thousand pounds sterling, and any office in the colonies in his Majesty’s gift. To which Mr. Reed replied, “I am not worth purchasing, but such as I am, the king of Great Britain is not rich enough to do it.”
Congress ordered all letters, received by members of Congress from any of the British commissioners, or their agents, or from any subject of the king of Great Britain, of a public nature, to be laid before them. The above letters and information being communicated, Congress resolved “That the same cannot but be considered, as direct attempts to corrupt their integrity, and that it is incompatible with the honor of Congress, to hold any manner of correspondence or intercourse with the said George Johnstone Esquire, especially to negociate with him upon affairs in which the cause of liberty is interested.”

Their determination, with the reasons thereof, were expressed [79] in the form of a declaration, a copy of which was signed by the President, and sent by a flag to the commissioners at New-York. This was answered by governor Johnstone, by an angry publication, in which he denied or explained away, what had been alleged against him. Lord Carlisle, Sir Henry Clinton and Mr. Eden, denied their having any knowledge of the matter charged on governor Johnstone.

The commissioners failing in their attempts to negociate with Congress had no resource left, but to persuade the inhabitants to adopt a line of conduct, counter to that of their representatives. To this purpose they published a manifesto and proclamation, addressed to Congress, the assemblies, and all others the free inhabitants of the colonies, in which they observed,

The policy, as well as the benevolence of Great-Britain, have thus far checked the extremes of war, when they tended to distress a people still considered as our fellowSubjects, and to desolate a country shortly to become a source of mutual advantage: But when that country professes the unnatural design not only of estranging herself from us, but of mortgaging herself and her resources to our enemies, the whole contest is changed; and the question is, how far Great-Britain may, by every means in her power, destroy or render useless a connection contrived for her ruin, and for the aggrandizement of France. Under such circumstances the laws of self-preservation must direct the conduct of Great-Britain; and if the British colonies are to become an accession to France, will direct her to render that accession of as little avail as possible to her enemy.

Congress upon being informed of the design of the commissioners to circulate these papers declared, that the agents employed to distribute the manifestoes and proclamation of the commissioners, were not entitled to protection from a flag. They also recommended to the several states to secure and keep them in close custody, but that they might not appear to hood-wink their constituents, they ordered the manifestoes and proclamation to be printed in the news-papers. The proposals of the commissioners were not more favourably received by the people [80] than they had been by Congress. In some places the flags containing them were not received, but ordered instantly to depart, in others they were received, and forwarded to Congress, as the only proper tribunal to take cognizance of them. In no one place, not immediately commanded by the British army, was there any attempt to accept, or even to deliberate, on the propriety of closing with the offers of Britain.

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To deter the British from executing their threats of laying waste the country, Congress published to the world a resolution and manifesto in which they concluded with these words.

We, therefore, the Congress of the United States of America, do solemnly declare and proclaim, that if our enemies presume to execute their threats, or persist in their present career of barbarity, we will take such exemplary vengeance as shall deter others from a like conduct. We appeal to that God who searcheth the hearts of men, for the rectitude of our intentions; and in his holy presence we declare, that as we are not moved by any light and hasty suggestions of anger and revenge, so through every possible change of fortune we will adhere to this our determination.

This was the last effort of Great Britain, in the way of negotiation, to regain her colonies. It originated in folly, and ignorance of the real state of affairs in America. She had begun with wrong measures, and had now got into wrong time. Her concessions, on this occasion, were an implied justification of the resistance of the colonists. By offering to concede all that they at first asked for, she virtually acknowledged herself to have been the aggressor in an unjust war. Nothing could be more favourable to the cementing of the friendship of the new allies, than this unsuccessful negociation. The states had an opportunity of evincing the sincerity of their engagements, and France abundant reason to believe that by preventing their being conquered, her favourite scheme of lessening the power of Great Britain, would be secured beyond the reach of accident.

[81]
After the termination of the campaign of 1777, the British army retired to winter quarters in Philadelphia, and the American army to Valley-Forge. The former enjoyed all the conveniences which an opulent city afforded, while the latter not half cloathed, and more than once on the point of starving, were enduring the severity of a cold winter in a hutted camp. It was well for them that the British made no attempt to disturb them, while in this destitute condition.

The winter and spring passed away without any more remarkable events in either army, than a few successful excursions of parties from Philadelphia to the neighbouring country, for the purpose of bringing in supplies, or destroying property. In one of these, a party of the British proceeded to Bordentown, and there burned four store-houses full of useful commodities. Before they returned to Philadelphia, they burned two frigates, nine ships, six privateer sloops, twenty three brigs, with a number of sloops and schooners.

Soon after, an excursion from Newport was made by 500 British and Hessians, under the command of lieut. col. Campbell. These having landed in the night, marched next morning in two bodies, the one for Warren, the other for the head of Kickemuet river. They destroyed about 70 flat bottomed boats, and burned a quantity of pitch, tar and plank. They also set fire to the meeting house at Warren, and seven dwelling houses. At Bristol they burned the church and 22 houses. Several other houses were
plundered, and women were stripped of their shoe-buckles, gold rings and handkerchiefs.

A French squadron, consisting of 12 ships of the line and 4 frigates, commanded by count D’Estaing, sailed from Toulon for America, in about two months after the treaty had been agreed upon between the United States and the king of France. After a passage of 87 days, the count arrived at the entrance of the Delaware.

From an apprehension of something of this kind, and from the prospect of greater security, it was resolved in Great Britain, forthwith to evacuate Philadelphia and to concentrate [82] the royal force in the city and harbour of New-York. The commissioners brought out the orders for this movement, but knew nothing of the matter. It had an unfriendly influence on their proposed negotiations, but it was indispensibly necessary; for if the French fleet had blocked up the Delaware, and the Americans besieged Philadelphia, the escape of the British from either, would have been scarcely possible.

The royal army passed over the Delaware into New-Jersey. Gen. Washington, having penetrated into their design of evacuating Philadelphia, had previously detatched Gen. Maxwell’s brigade, to cooperate with the Jersey militia, in obstructing their progress, till time would be given for his army to overtake them. The British were incumbered with an enormous baggage, which, together with the impediments thrown in their way, greatly retarded their march. The American army having, in pursuit of the British, crossed the Delaware, six hundred men were immediately detatched under col. Morgan, to reinforce Gen. Maxwell.

Washington halted his troops, when they had marched to the vicinity of Princeton. The general officers in the American army, being asked by the commander in chief, “Will it be adviseable to hazard a general action?” answered in the negative, but recommended a detachment of 1500 men, to be immediately sent, to act as occasion might serve, on the enemy’s left flank and rear. This was immediately forwarded under General Scott. When Sir Henry Clinton had advanced to Allen-Town, he determined instead of keeping the direct course towards Staten-Island, to draw towards the sea coast and to push on towards Sandy-Hook. Gen. Washington on receiving intelligence that Sir Henry was proceeding in that direction towards Monmouth court-house, dispatched 1000 men under Gen. Wayne, and sent the Marquis de la Fayette to take command of the whole advanced corps, with orders to seize the first fair opportunity of attacking the enemy’s rear. Gen. Lee who having been lately exchanged had joined the army, was offered this command, but he declined it, as he was in principle against [83] hazarding an attack.

The whole army followed at a proper distance, for supporting the advanced corps, and reached Cranberry the next morning. Sir Henry Clinton sensible of the approach of the Americans, placed his grenadiers, light-infantry and chaseurs in his rear, and his baggage in his front. Gen. Washington increased his advanced corps with two brigades, and sent Gen. Lee, who now wished for the command, to take charge of the whole, and followed with the main army to give it support. On the next morning orders were sent to Lee, to move on and attack, unless there should be powerful reasons to the contrary. When Washington had
marched about five miles to support the advanced corps, he found the whole of it retreating by Lee’s orders, and without having made any opposition of consequence. Washington rode up to Lee and proposed certain questions to him which implied censure. Lee answered with warmth and unsuitable language. The commander in chief ordered Col. Stewart’s and Lieut. Col. Ramsay’s battalions, to form on a piece of ground, which he judged suitable for giving a check to the advancing enemy. Lee was then asked if he would command on that ground, to which he consented, and was ordered to take proper measures for checking the enemy, to which he replied, “your orders shall be obeyed, and I will not be the first to leave the field.” Washington then rode to the main army, which was formed with the utmost expedition. A warm cannonade immediately commenced, between the British and American artillery, and a heavy firing between the advanced troops of the British army, and the two battalions which Gen. Washington had halted. These stood their ground, till they were intermixed with a part of the British army. Lieut. Col. Ramsay the commander of one of them, was wounded and taken prisoner. Gen. Lee continued till the last on the field of battle, and brought off the rear of the retreating troops.

The check the British received, gave time to make a disposition of the left wing, and second line of the American army in the wood and on the eminence to which Lee was retreating. On this, some cannon were placed [84] by lord Sterling, who commanded the left wing, which, with the co-operation of some parties of infantry, effectually stopped the advance of the British in that quarter. Gen. Greene took a very advantageous position, on the right of lord Sterling. The British attempted to turn the left flank of the Americans, but were repulsed. They also made a movement to the right, with as little success, for Greene with artillery disappointed their design. Wayne advanced with a body of troops, and kept up so severe and well directed a fire, that the British were soon compelled to give way. They retired and took the position, which Lee had before occupied. Washington resolved to attack them, and ordered Gen. Poor to move round upon their right, and Gen. Woodford to their left; but they could not get within reach, before it was dark. These remained on the ground, which they had been directed to occupy during the night, with an intention of attacking early next morning, and the main body lay on their arms in the field to be ready for supporting them. Gen. Washington reposed himself in his cloak, under a tree, in hopes of renewing the action the next day. But these hopes were frustrated: The British troops marched away in the night, in such silence, that Gen. Poor, though he lay very near them, knew nothing of their departure. They left behind them, four officers and about forty privates, all so badly wounded, that they could not be removed. Their other wounded were carried off.

The British pursued their march without further interruption, and soon reached the neighbourhood of Sandy-Hook, without the loss of either their covering party or baggage. The American general declined all farther pursuit of the royal army, and soon after drew off his troops to the borders of the North river. The loss of the Americans, in killed and wounded, was about 250. The loss of the royal army, inclusive of prisoners, was about 350. Lt. col. Monckton, one of the British slain, on account of his singular merit, was universally lamented. Col. Bonner of Pennsylvania, and major Dickenson of Virginia, officers highly esteemed by their country, fell in this engagement.
The emotions of the mind, added to fatigue in a very hot [85] day, brought on such a fatal suppression of the vital powers, that some of the Americans, and 59 of the British, were found dead on the field of battle, without any marks of violence upon their bodies.

It is probable, that Washington intended to take no farther notice of Lee’s conduct in the day of action, but the latter could not brook the expressions used by the former at their first meeting, and wrote him two passionate letters. This occasioned his being arrested, and brought to trial. The charges exhibited against him were—

1st. For disobedience of orders, in not attacking the enemy on the 28th of June, agreeable to repeated instructions.

2dly. For misbehaviour before the enemy, on the same day, by making an unnecessary, disorderly and shameful retreat.

3dly, For disrespect to the commander in chief in two letters.

After a tedious hearing before a court-martial of which lord Sterling was president, Lee was found guilty and sentenced to be suspended from any command in the armies of the United States, for the term of one year, but the second charge was softened by the court martial who in their award only found him guilty of misbehaviour before the enemy, by making an unnecessary and in some few instances a disorderly retreat. Many were displeased with this sentence. They argued that by the tenor of Lee’s orders, it was submitted to his discretion, whether to attack or not, and also, that the time and manner were to be determined by his own judgment. That at one time he intended to attack, but altered his opinion on apparently good grounds. That the propriety of an attack considering the superiority of the British cavalry, and the openness of the ground was very questionable. That though it might have distressed the enemy’s rear in the first instance; it would probably have brought on a general action, before the advanced corps could have been supported by the main body, which was some miles in the rear.

If said they “Lee’s judgment was against attacking the enemy, he could not be guilty of disobeying an order for that purpose, which was suspended on the condition of his own approbation of the measure.” They also agreed [86] that a suspension from command, was not a sufficient punishment for his crimes, if really guilty. They therefore inferred a presumption of his innocence from the lenient sentence of his judges. Though there was a diversity of opinions relative to the first and second charges, all were agreed in pronouncing him guilty of disrespect to the commander in chief. The Americans had formerly idolised Gen. Lee, but some of them now went to the opposite extreme, and pronounced him treacherous or deficient in courage, though there was no foundation for either of these suspicions. His temper was violent, and his impatience of subordination had led him often to quarrel with those whom he was bound to respect and obey; but his courage and fidelity could not be questioned.
Soon after the battle of Monmouth, the American army took post at the White-Plains, a few miles beyond Kingsbridge and the British though only a few miles distant, did not molest them. They remained in this position from an early day in July, till a late one in the autumn, and then the Americans retired to Middle-Brook in Jersey, where they built themselves huts in the same manner as they had done at Valley-Forge.

Immediately on the departure of the British from Philadelphia, Congress, after an absence of nine months, returned to the former seat of their deliberations. Soon after their return, they were called upon, to give a public audience to a Minister Plenipotentiary from the court of France. The person appointed to this office, was M. Gerard, the same who had been employed in the negotiations, antecedent to the treaty. The arrival and reception of a minister from France, made a strong impression on the minds of the Americans. They felt the weight and importance, to which they were risen among nations. That the same spot, which in less than a century, had been the residence of savages, should become the theatre on which, the representatives of a new, free and civilised nation, gave a public audience to a minister Plenipotentiary, from one of the oldest and most powerful kingdoms of Europe, afforded ample materials for philosophic contemplation.

That in less than three years [87] from the day, on which an answer was refused by Great Britain to the united supplications of the colonists, praying for peace, liberty and safety, they should, as an independent people, be honored with the residence of a minister from the court of France, exceeded the expectation of the most sanguine Americans. The patriots of the new world revolved in their minds these transactions, with heart-felt satisfaction, while the devout were led to admire that Providence, which had, in so short a space, stationed the United States among the powers of the earth, and clothed them in robes of Sovereignty.

The British had but barely completed the removal of their fleet and army, from the Delaware and Philadelphia to the harbour and city of New-York, when they received intelligence, that a French fleet was on the coast of America. This was commanded by count D’Estaing, and consisted of twelve ships of the line and three frigates. Among the former, one carried 90 guns, another 80 and six 74 guns each. Their first object was the surprise of lord Howe’s fleet in the Delaware, but they arrived too late. In naval history, there are few more narrow escapes than that of the British fleet, on this occasion. It consisted only of six 64 gun ships, three of 50, and two of 40, with some frigates and sloops. Most of these had been long on service and were in a bad condition. Their force, when compared with that of the French fleet, was so greatly inferior, that had the latter reached the mouth of the Delaware, in 75 days from its leaving Toulon, their capture, in the ordinary course of events, would have been inevitable. This stroke was providentially prevented, by the various hinderances which retarded D’Estaing in his voyage to the term of 87 days, in the last eleven of which, lord Howe’s fleet, not only quitted the Delaware, but reached the harbour of New-York. D’Estaing, disappointed in his first scheme, pursued and appeared off Sandy-Hook.

American pilots of the first abilities, provided for the purpose, went on board his fleet. Among them were persons, whose circumstances placed them above the ordinary rank of pilots.
The sight of the French fleet raised all the active passions of their adversaries. Transported with indignation against the French for interfering in what they called a domestic quarrel, the British displayed a spirit of zeal and bravery which could not be exceeded. A thousand volunteers were dispatched from their transports to man their fleet. The masters and mates of the merchantmen and traders at New-York, took their stations at the guns with the common sailors. Others put to sea in light vessels, to watch the motions of their enemies. The officers and privates of the British army, contended with so much eagerness to serve on board the men of war as marines, that it became necessary to decide the point of honor by lot.

The French fleet came to anchor, and continued without the Hook for eleven days. During this time the British had the mortification of seeing the blockade of their fleet, and the capture of about 20 vessels under English colours. On the 22nd, the French fleet appeared under weigh. It was an anxious moment to the British. They supposed that Count D’Estaing would force his way into the harbour, and that an engagement would be the consequence. Every thing with them was at stake. Nothing less than destruction or victory would have ended the contest. If the first had been their lot, the vast fleet of transports and victuallers and the army must have fallen. The pilots on board the French fleet, declared it to be impossible to carry the large ships thereof over the bar, on account of their draught of water. D’Estaing on that account and by the advice of Gen. Washington, left the Hook and sailed for Newport. By his departure the British had a second escape for had he remained at the Hook but a few days longer, the fleet of admiral Byron must have fallen into his hands. That officer had been sent out to relieve lord Howe who had solicited to be recalled, and the fleet under his command had been sent to reinforce that which had been previously on the coast of America. Admiral Byron’s squadron had met with bad weather, and was separated in different storms. It now arrived, scattered, broken, sickly, [89] dismasted or otherwise damaged. Within 8 days after the departure of the French fleet, the Renown, the Raisonable, the Centurion, and the Cornwall, arrived singly at Sandy-Hook.

The next attempt of Count D’Estaing was against Rhode-Island, of which the British had been in possession since December, 1776. A combined attack against it was projected, and it was agreed that Gen. Sullivan should command the American land forces. Such was the eagerness of the people to co-operate with their new allies, and so confident were they of success, that some thousands of volunteers engaged in the service. The militia of Massachusetts was under the command of Gen. Hancock. The royal troops on the island, having been lately reinforced, were about 6000. Sullivan’s force was about 10,000. Lord Howe followed Count D’Estaing, and came within sight of Rhode-Island, the day after the French fleet entered the harbour of New-Port. The British fleet exceeded the French in point of number, but was inferior with respect to effective force and weight of metal. On the appearance of lord Howe, the French admiral put out to sea with his whole fleet, to engage him. While the two commanders were exerting their naval skill to gain respectively the advantages of position, a strong gale of wind came on which afterwards increased to a tempest, and greatly damaged
the ships on both sides. In this conflict of the elements, two capital French ships were
dismasted. The Languedoc of 90 guns, D’Estaing’s own ship, after losing all her
masts and her rudder, was attacked by the Renown of 50 guns, commanded by Capt
Dawson. The same evening the Preston of 50 guns, fell in with the Tonnant of 80
guns with only her mainmast standing, and attacked her with spirit, but night put an
end to the engagement. Six sail of the French squadron came up in the night, which
saved the disabled ships from any farther attack. There was no ship or vessel lost on
either side. The British suffered less in the storm than their adversaries, yet enough to
make it necessary for them to return to New-York, for the purpose of refitting.
The French fleet came to anchor, on [90] the 20th, near to
Rhode-Island, but sailed on the 22d, to Boston. Before they
sailed, Gen. Greene and the Marquis de la Fayette went on board the Languedoc, to
consult on measures proper to be pursued. They urged D’Estaing to return with his
fleet into the harbour, but his principal officers were opposed to the measure, and
protested against it. He had been instructed to go to Boston, if his fleet met with any
misfortune. His officers insisted on his ceasing to prosecute the expedition against
Rhode-Island, that he might conform to the orders of their common superiors. Upon
the return of Gen. Greene and the Marquis de la Fayette, and their reporting the
determination of Count D’Estaing, a protest was drawn up and sent to him, which was
signed by John Sullivan, Nathaniel Greene, John Hancock, J. Glover, Ezekiel Cornel,
William Whipple, John Tyler, Solomon Lovell, Jon. Fitconnell. In this they protested
against the Count’s taking the fleet to Boston, as derogatory to the honor of France,
contrary to the intention of his most Christian Majesty, and the interest of his nation,
and destructive in the highest degree to the welfare of the United States, and highly
injurious to the alliance formed between the two nations. Had D’Estaing prosecuted
his original plan within the harbour, either before or immediately after the pursuit of
lord Howe, the reduction of the British post on Rhode-Island would have been
probable, but his departure in the first instance to engage the British fleet, and in the
second from Rhode-Island to Boston, frustrated the whole plan. Perhaps Count
D’Estaing, hoped by something brilliant to efface the impressions made by his late
failure at New-York. Or he might have thought it imprudent to stake his whole fleet,
within an harbour possessed by his enemies.

After his ships had suffered both from battle and the storm, the letter of his
instructions—the imporuntity of his officers, and his anxiety to have his ships
speedily refitted, might have weighed with him to sail directly for Boston. Whatever
were the reasons which induced his adoption of that measure, the Americans were
greatly dissatisfied.
They complained that they had incurred [91] great expanse and
danger, under the prospect of the most effective co-
operation—that depending thereon, they had risqued their lives on an island, where
without naval protection, they were exposed to particular danger. That in this
situation, they were first deserted, and afterwards totally abandoned, at a time, when
by persevering in the original plan, they had well grounded hopes of speedy success.
Under these apprehensions, the discontented militia went home in such crowds, that
the regular army which remained, was in danger of being cut off from a retreat. In
these embarrassing circumstances, General Sullivan extricated himself with judgment
and ability.
He began to send off his heavy artillery and baggage on the 26th of August, and retreated from his lines on the night of the 28th. It had been that day resolved in a council of war, to remove to the north end of the island—fortify their camp, secure a communication with the main, and hold the ground till it could be known whether the French fleet would return to their assistance. The Marquis de la Fayette by desire of his associates set off for Boston, to request the speedy return of the French fleet. To this Count D’Estaing would not consent, but he made a spirited offer to lead the troops under his command, and co-operate with the American land forces against Rhode-Island.

Sullivan retreated with great order, but he had not been five hours at the north end of the island, when his troops were fired upon by the British, who had pursued them on discovering their retreat. The pursuit was made by two parties and on two roads, to one was opposed Col. Henry B. Livingston, to the other John Laurens, aid de camp to Gen. Washington, and each of them had a command of light troops. In the first instance, these light troops were compelled by superior numbers to give way, but they kept up a retreating fire. On being reinforced they gave their pursuers a check, and at length repulsed them. By degrees the action became in some respects general, and near 1200 Americans were engaged. The loss on each side was between two and three hundred.

[92] Lord Howe’s fleet with Sir Henry Clinton and about 4000 troops on board, being seen off the coast, General Sullivan concluded immediately to evacuate Rhode-Island. As the centries of both armies were within 400 yards of each other, the greatest caution was necessary. To cover the design of retreating, the shew of resistence and continuance on the island was kept up. The retreat was made in the night, and mostly completed by twelve o’clock. Towards the last of it the Marquis de la Fayette returned from Boston. He had rode thither from Rhode-Island, a distance of near 70 miles in 7 hours, and returned in six and a half. Anxious to partake in the engagement, his mortification was not little at being out of the way on the day before. He was in time to bring off the picquets, and other parties that covered the retreat of the American army. This he did in excellent order. Not a man was left behind, nor was the smallest article lost.

The bravery and good conduct which John Laurens displayed on this occasion, were excelled by his republican magnanimity, in declining a military commission which was conferred on him, by the representatives of his country. Congress resolved, that he should be presented with a continental commission, of Lieut. Colonel, in testimony of the sense which they entertained of his patriotic and spirited services, and of his brave conduct in several actions, particularly in that of Rhode-Island on the 29th of August.

On the next day he wrote to Congress a letter, expressing

his gratitude for the unexpected honor which they were pleased to confer on him, and of the satisfaction it would have afforded him, could he have accepted it without
injuring the rights of the officers in the line of the army, and doing an evident
injustice to his colleagues, in the family of the commander in chief. That having been
a spectator of the convulsions occasioned in the army by disputes of rank, he held the
tranquillity of it too dear, to be instrumental in disturbing it, and therefore intreated
Congress to suppress their resolve, ordering him the commission of Lieut. Colonel,
and to accept his sincere thanks for the intended honor.

[93]
With the abortive expedition to Rhode-Island, there was an end
to the plans, which were in this first campaign projected by the
allies of Congress, for a co-operation. The Americans had been intoxicated with hopes
of the most decisive advantages, but in every instance they were disappointed. Lord
Howe with an inferiority of force, not only preserved his own fleet, but counteracted
and defeated all the views and attempts of Count D’Estaing. The French fleet gained
no direct advantages for the Americans, yet their arrival was of great service to their
cause. Besides deranging the plans of the British, it carried conviction to their minds,
that his most Christian Majesty was seriously disposed to support them. The good will
of their new allies was manifested to the Americans, and though it had failed in
producing the effects expected from it, the failure was charged to winds, weather, and
unavoidable incidents. Some censured Count D’Estaing, but while they attempted to
console themselves, by throwing blame on him, they felt and acknowledged their
obligation to the French nation, and were encouraged to persevere in the war, from the
hope that better fortune would attend their future co-operation.

Sir Henry Clinton finding that the Americans had left Rhode-Island, returned to New-
York, but directed Gen. Grey to proceed to Bedford and the neighbourhood, where
several American privateers resorted.
On reaching the place of their destination the General’s party
landed, and in a few hours destroyed about 70 sail of shipping,
besides a number of small craft. They also burnt magazines, wharfs, stores,
warehouses, vessels on the stocks, and a considerable number of dwelling houses. The
buildings burned in Bedford, were estimated to be worth £20,000 sterling. The other
articles destroyed were worth much more. The royal troops proceeded to Martha’s
vineyard. There they destroyed a few vessels, and made a requisition of the militia
arms, the public money, 300 oxen and 2000 sheep, which was complied with.

A similar expedition under the command of Capt. Ferguson, was
about the same time undertaken against Little [94] Egg-Harbour,
at which place the Americans had a number of privateers and prizes, and also some
salt-works. Several of the vessels got off but all that were found were destroyed.
Previous to the embarkation of the British from Egg-Harbour for
New-York, Capt. Ferguson with 250 men, surprised and put to
death about fifty of a party of the Americans, who were posted in the vicinity. The
attack being made in the night, little or no quarter was given.

The loss sustained by the British in these several excursions was trifling, but the
advantage was considerable, from the supplies they procured, and the check which
was given to the American privateers.
One of the most disastrous events, which occurred at this period of the campaign, was the surprise and massacre of an American regiment of light dragoons, commanded by Lieut. Col. Baylor. While employed in a detached situation, to intercept and watch a British foraging party, they took up their lodging in a barn near Taapan. The officer, who commanded the party which surprised them, was Major Gen. Grey. He acquired the name of the “No flint General” from his common practice of ordering the men, under his command to take the flints out of their muskets, that they might be confined to the use of their bayonets. A party of militia, which had been stationed on the road, by which the British advanced, quitted their post, without giving any notice to Col. Baylor. This disorderly conduct was the occasion of the disaster which followed. Grey’s men proceeded with such silence and address, that they cut off a serjeant’s patrol without noise, and surrounded old Taapan without being discovered. They then rushed in upon Baylor’s regiment, while they were in a profound sleep. Incapable of defence or resistance, cut off from every prospect of selling their lives dear, the surprised dragoons sued for quarters. Unmoved by their supplications, their adversaries applied the bayonet and continued its repeated thrusts, while objects could be found, in which any signs of life appeared. A few escaped, and others, after having received from five to eleven bayonet wounds in the trunk of [95] the body, were restored, in a course of time, to perfect health. Baylor himself was wounded, but not dangerously: He lost, in killed, wounded and taken, 67 privates out of 104. About 40 were made prisoners. These were indebted, for their lives, to the humanity of one of Grey’s captains, who gave quarters to the whole fourth troop, though contrary to the orders of his superior officers. The circumstance of the attack being made in the night, when neither order nor discipline can be observed, may apologise in some degree, with men of a certain description, for this bloody scene. It cannot be maintained, that the laws of war require that quarters should be given in similar assaults, but the lovers of mankind must ever contend, that the laws of humanity are of superior obligation to those of war. The truly brave will spare when resistance ceases, and in every case where it can be done with safety. The perpetrators of such actions may justly be denounced the enemies of refined society. As far as their example avails, it tends to arrest the growing humanity of modern times, and to revive the barbarism of Gothic ages. On these principles, the massacre of Col. Baylor’s regiment was the subject of much complaint. The particulars of it were ascertained, by the oaths of sundry credible witnesses, taken before Gov. Livingston of Jersey, and the whole was submitted to the judgment of the public.

In the summer of this year, an expedition was undertaken against East-Florida. This was resolved upon, with the double view of protecting the State of Georgia from depredation, and of causing a diversion. Gen. Robert Howe, who conducted it, had under his command about 2000 men, a few hundred of which were continental troops, and the remainder militia of the States of South-Carolina and Georgia. They proceeded as far as St. Mary’s river, and without any opposition of consequence. At this place, the British had erected a fort, which, in compliment to Tonyn, governor of the province, was called by his name. On the approach of Gen. Howe, they destroyed this fort, and after some slight skirmishing, retreated towards St. Augustine. The season was more fatal [96] to the Americans than any opposition they experienced from their enemies. Sickness and death raged to
such a degree that an immediate retreat became necessary; but before this was
effected, they lost nearly one fourth of their whole number.

The royal commissioners having failed in their attempts to induce the Americans to
resume the character of British subjects, and the successive plans of co-operation
between the new allies, having also failed, a solemn pause ensued. It would seem as if
the commissioners indulged a hope, that the citizens of the United States, on finding a
disappointment of their expectation from the French, would reconsider and accept the
offers of Great-Britain. Full time was given, both for the circulation of their
manifesto, and for observing its effects on the public mind, but no overtures were
made to them from any quarter. The year was drawing near to a close, before any
interesting expedition was undertaken. With this new aera, a new system was
introduced. Hitherto the conquest of the states had been attempted by proceeding from
north to south: But that order was henceforth inverted, and the southern states became
the principal theatre, on which the British conducted their offensive operations.
Georgia being one of the weakest states in the union, and at the same time abounding
in provisions, was marked out as the first object of renewed warfare.

Lieut. Colonel Campbell, an officer of known courage and
ability embarked from New-York, for Savannah, with a force of
about 2000 men, under the convoy of some ships of war commanded by commodore
Hyde Parker. To make more sure of success in the enterprise, Major Gen. Prevost
who commanded the royal forces in East-Florida, was directed to advance with them
into the southern extremity of Georgia. The fleet that sailed from New-York, in about
three weeks effected a landing near the mouth of the river Savannah.

From the landing place a narrow causeway of six hundred yards
in length, with a ditch on each side, led through a swamp. A
body of the British light infantry moved forward along this causeway. On their
advance they received a heavy fire from a small [97] party under Capt. Smith, posted
for the purpose of impeding their passage. Capt. Cameron was killed, but the British
made their way good, and compelled Capt. Smith to retreat. General Howe, the
American officer to whom the defence of Georgia was committed, took his station on
the main road, and posted his little army, consisting of about 600 Continentals and a
few hundred militia between the landing-place and the town of Savannah, with the
river on his left and a morass in front. This disposition announced great difficulties to
be overcome, before the Americans could be dislodged. While Col. Campbell was
making the necessary arrangements for this purpose, he received intelligence from a
negro, of a private path through the swamp, on the right of the Americans, which lay
in such a situation that, the British troops might march through it unobserved. Sir
James Baird, with the light infantry, was directed to avail himself of this path, in order
to turn the right wing of the Americans and attack their rear. As soon as it was
supposed that Sir James Baird had cleared his passage, the British in front of the
Americans, were directed to advance and engage. Howe, finding himself attacked in
the rear as well as in the front, ordered an immediate retreat. The British pursued with
great execution: Their victory was complete. Upwards of 100 of the Americans were
killed. Thirty eight officers, 415 privates, 48 pieces of cannon, 23 mortars, the fort
with its ammunition and stores, the shipping in the river, a large quantity of provisions
with the capital of Georgia, were all, in the space of a few hours in the possession of
the conquerors. The broken remains of the American army retreated up the river.
Savannah for several miles, and then took shelter by crossing into South-Carolina. Agreeably to instructions, Gen. Prevost had marched from East-Florida, about the same time that the embarkation took place from New-York. After encountering many difficulties, the king’s troops from St. Augustine reached the inhabited parts of Georgia, and there heard the welcome tidings of the arrival and success of Col. Campbell. Savannah having fallen, the fort at Sunbury surrendered. Gen. Prevost marched to Savannah, and took the command of the combined forces from New-York and St. Augustine. Previous to his arrival, a proclamation had been issued, to encourage the inhabitants to come in and submit to the conquerors, with promises of protection, on condition that with their arms they would support royal government.

Lieut. Col. Campbell acted with great policy, in securing the submission of the inhabitants. He did more in a short time, and with comparatively a few men, towards the re-establishment of the British interest, than all the general officers who had preceded him. He not only extirpated military opposition, but subverted for some time every trace of republican government, and paved the way for the re-establishment of a royal legislature. Georgia soon after the reduction of its capital exhibited a singular spectacle. It was the only state of the union, in which after the declaration of independence, a legislative body was convened under the authority of the crown of Great Britain. The moderation and prudence of Lieut. Col. Campbell were more successful in reconciling the minds of the citizens to their former constitution, than, the severe measures which had been generally adopted by other British commanders.

The errors of the first years of the war forced on Congress some useful reforms, in the year 1778. The insufficiency of the provision, made for the support of the officers of their army, had induced the resignation of between two and three hundred of them, to the great injury of the service. From a conviction of the justice and policy of making commissions valuable, and from respect to the warm, but disinterested recommendations of Gen. Washington, Congress resolved “That half-pay should be allowed to their officers, for the term of seven years, after the expiration of their service.” This was, afterwards, extended to the end of their lives. And finally, that was commuted for full pay, for five years. Resignations were afterwards rare, and the States reaped the benefit of experienced officers continuing in service, till the war was ended.

A system of more regular discipline was introduced into the American army, by the industry, abilities and judicious regulations of Baron de Steuben a most excellent disciplinarian, who had served under the king of Prussia. A very important reform took place in the medical department, by appointing different officers, to discharge the directing and purveying business of the military hospitals, which had been before united in the same hands. Dr. Rush was principally instrumental, in effecting this beneficial alteration. Some regulations, which had been adopted for limiting the prices of commodities, being found not only impracticable, but injurious, were abolished.

A few detached events, which could not be introduced without interrupting the narrative of the great events of the campaign, shall close this chapter.
Cap. James Willing, in the service of the United States, arrived, with a few men from Fort-Pitt, at the Natches, a British settlement in West-Florida. He sent out parties, who, without any resistance, made the inhabitants prisoners. Articles of agreement were entered into, between them and Capt. Willing, by which they promised to observe a neutrality in the present contest, and in return it was engaged, that their property should be unmolested.

The Randolph, an American frigate of 36 guns and 305 men, commanded by Capt. Biddle, having sailed on a cruise from Charleston, fell in with the Yarmouth of 64 guns, and engaged her in the night. In about a quarter of an hour, the Randolph blew up. Four men only were saved, upon a piece of her wreck. These had subsisted for four days on nothing but rain water, which they sucked from a piece of blanket. On the 5th day, Cap. Vincent of the Yarmouth, though in chase of a ship, on discovering them, suspended the chase and took them on board. Capt. Biddle, who perished on board the Randolph, was universally lamented. He was in the prime of life, and had excited high expectations of future usefulness to his country, as a bold and skillful naval officer.

Major Talbot took the British schooner Pigot, of 8 twelve pounders, as she lay on the eastern side of Rhode-Island. [100] The Major, with a number of troops on board a small vessel, made directly for the Pigot in the night, and sustaining the fire of her marines, reserved his own till he had run his jibb-boom through her fore-shrouds. He then fired some cannon, and threw in a volley of musquetry, loaded with bullets and buck-shot, and immediately boarded her. The captain made a gallant resistance, but he was not seconded by his crew. Major Talbot soon gained undisturbed possession, and carried off his prize in safety. Congress, as a reward of his merit, presented him with the commission of Lieutenant Colonel.
CHAPTER XVII

Campaign Of 1779.

Throughout the year 1779, the British seem to have aimed at little more, in the States to the northward of Carolina, than distress and depredation. Having publicly announced their resolution of making “The colonies of as little avail as possible to their new connections,” they planned sundry expeditions, on this principle.

One of these consisting of both a naval and land force, was committed to Sir George Collyer and Gen. Mathews, who made a descent on Virginia. They sailed for Portsmouth, and on their arrival took possession of that defenceless town. The remains of Norfolk on the opposite side of the river, fell of course into their hands. The Americans burned some of their own vessels, but others were made prizes by the invaders. The British guards marched 18 miles in the night, and arriving at Suffolk by morning proceeded to the destruction of vessels, naval stores, and of a large magazine of provisions, which had been deposited in that place. A similar destruction was carried on at Kemp’s landing, Shepherds-gosport, Tanners creek, and other places in the vicinity.

The frigates and armed vessels were employed on the same business [101] along the margin of the rivers. Three thousand hogsheads of tobacco were taken at Portsmouth. Every house in Suffolk was burnt except the church, and one dwelling house. The houses of several private gentlemen in the country, shared the same fate. Above 130 vessels were either destroyed or taken. All that were upon the stocks were burned, and every thing relative to the building or fitting of ships, was either carried off or destroyed. The fleet and army after demolishing fort Nelson, and setting fire to the store-houses, and other public buildings in the dockyard at Gosport, embarked from Virginia, and returned with their prizes and booty safe to New-York, in the same month in which they had left it. This expedition into Virginia distressed a number of its inhabitants, and enriched the British forces, but was of no real service to the royal cause. It was presumed that by involving the citizens in losses and distress, they would be brought to reflect on the advantages of submitting to a power, against which they had not the means of defending themselves: But the temper of the times was unfavourable to these views.

Such was the high toned state of the American mind, that property had comparatively lost its value. It was fashionable to suffer in the cause of independence. Some hearty whigs gloried in their losses, with as much pride as others gloried in their possessions. The British supposing the Americans to be influenced, by the considerations which bias men in the languid scenes of tranquil life, and not reflecting on the sacrifices which enthusiastic patriotism is willing to make, proceeded in their schemes of distress: But the more extensively they carried on this mode of warfare, the more obstacles they created to the re-union of the empire. In about five weeks after the termination of the expedition to Virginia, a similar one was projected against the exposed margin of Connecticut. Gov. Tryon was appointed to the command of about 2600 land forces, employed on this business and he was supported by Gen. Garth. The
transports which conveyed these troops, were covered by a suitable number of armed
vessels, commanded by Sir George Collyer.
They proceeded from New-York, by the way of Hell-gate,
and landed at East-Haven. The royal commanders made an
address to the inhabitants, in which they invited them to return to their duty and
allegiance, and promised protection to all who should remain peaceably in their usual
place of residence, except the civil and military officers of the government. It also
stated

that their property lay still within the grasp of that power, whose lenity had persisted
in its mild and noble efforts, though branded with the most unworthy imputation. That
the existence of a single house on their defenceless coast, ought to be a constant
reproof of their ingratitude. That they who lay so much in the British power, afforded
a striking monument of their mercy, and therefore ought to set the first example of
returning to their allegiance.

One of the many addresses, from which the above extract is taken, was sent, by a flag
to Col. Whiting of the militia near Fairfield. The Col. was allowed an hour for his
answer, but he had scarcely time to read it before the town was in flames. He
nevertheless returned the following answer “Connecticut, having nobly dared to take
up arms against the cruel despotism of Great Britain, and the flames having preceded
the answer to your flag, they will persist to oppose to the utmost, the power exerted
against injured innocence.” The British marched from their landing to New-Haven.
The town on their entering it, was delivered up to promiscuous plunder, a few
instances of protection excepted. The inhabitants were stripped of their household
furniture and other moveable property. The harbour and water side was covered with
feathers, which were discharged from opened beds. An aged citizen who labored
under a natural inability of speech, had his tongue cut out by one of the royal army.
After perpetrating every species of enormity, but that of burning houses, the invaders
suddenly re-imbarked and proceeded by water to Fairfield. The militia of that place
and the vicinity, posted themselves at the court-house green, and gave considerable
annoyance to them as they were advancing, but soon retreated to the height back of
the town. On the approach of the British the town was evacuated by most of its
inhabitants. A few women remained with the view of saving their property. They
imagined, that their sex would protect them. They also reposed confidence in an
enemy who they knew had been formerly famed for humanity and politeness, but they
bitterly repented their presumption. Parties of the royal army entered the deserted
houses of the inhabitants, broke open desks, trunks, closets and chests, and took every
thing of value that came in their way. They robbed the women of their buckles, rings,
bonnets, aprons and handkerchiefs. They abused them with the foulest language,
threatened their lives, and presented the bayonets to their breasts. A sucking infant
was plundered of part of its clothing, while the bayonet was presented to the breast of
its mother. Towards evening, they began to burn the houses, which they had
previously plundered. The women begged Gen. Tryon to spare the town. Mr. Sayre,
the episcopal minister, who had suffered for his attachment to the royal cause, joined
the women in their requests, but their joint supplications were disregarded. They then
begged, that a few houses might be spared for a general shelter. This was at first
denied, but at length Tryon consented to save the buildings of Mr. Burr and of Mr.
Elliot, and also said, that the houses for public worship should be spared. After his departure on the next morning with the main body, the rear guard consisting of German yagers set fire to every thing which Tryon had spared, but on their departure the inhabitants extinguished the flames, and saved some of the houses. The militia were joined by numbers from the country which successively came in to their aid, but they were too few to make effectual opposition.

The British in this excursion, also burned East-Haven, and the greatest part of Green’s farms, and the flourishing town of Norwalk. A considerable number of ships, either finished or on the stocks, with whale-boats and a large amount of stores and merchandise, were destroyed. Particular accounts of these devastations were, in a short time, transmitted by authority to Congress. By these it appeared that they were burnt at Norwalk [104] two houses of public worship, 80 dwelling houses, 87 barns, 22 stores, 17 shops, 4 mills and 5 vessels; And at Fairfield two houses of public worship, 15 dwelling houses, 11 barns and several stores. There were at the same time a number of certificates transmitted to Gen. Washington, in which sundry persons of veracity bore witness on oath to various acts of brutality, rapine and cruelty, committed on aged persons, women and prisoners. Congress, on receiving satisfactory attestation of the ravages of the British in this and other similar expeditions, resolved “To direct their marine committee to take the most effectual measures, to carry into execution their manifesto of October 30th 1778, by burning or destroying the towns belonging to the enemy in Great Britain or the West-Indies;” but their resolve was never carried into effect.

The older citizens of the United States, who had grown up with habits of love and attachment to the British nation, felt the keenest sensations of regret, when they contrasted the years 1759 and 1779. The former was their glory, when in the days of their youth, they were disposed to boast of the honors of their common country, but the latter filled them with distress, not only for what they suffered, but for the degradation of a country they revered as the natal soil of their forefathers. The one enobled the British name with the conquest of Crown-Point, Oswego, Montreal, Quebec and the whole province of Canada. The other was remarkable only, for the burning of magazines, store-houses, dock-yards, the towns of Fairfield, and Norwalk, and for the general distress of a defenceless peasantry.

The fires and destruction which accompanied this expedition, were severely censured by the Americans, and apologised for by the British in a very unsatisfactory manner. The latter in their vindication, alleged that the houses which they had burned gave shelter to the Americans, while they fired from them, and on other occasions concealed their retreat.

Tryon, who was a civil governor as well as a general, undertook the justification of the measure, on principles [105] of policy. “I should be very sorry” said he
if the destruction of these villages would be thought less reconcileable with humanity, than the love of my country, my duty to the king, and the laws of arms. The usurpers have professedly placed their hopes of severing the empire, in avoiding decisive actions—upon the waste of the British treasures, and upon the escape of their own property during the protracting of the war. Their power is supported by the general dread of their tyranny and threats, practiced to inspire a credulous multitude, with a presumptuous confidence in our forbearance; I wish to detect this delusion.

These devastations were the subject of an elegant poem, written on the spot a few days after, by Col. Humphries.

While the British were proceeding in these desolating operations, Gen. Washington was called upon for continental troops, but he could spare very few. He durst not detach largely, as he apprehended that one design of the British in these movements was to draw off a proportion of his army from West-Point, to favour an intended attack on that important post. General Parsons, though closely connected with Connecticut, and though from his small force he was unable to make successful opposition to the invaders, yet instead of pressing General Washington for a large detachment of continental troops, wrote to him as follows, “The British may probably distress the country exceedingly, by the ravages they will commit, but I would rather see all the towns on the coast of my country in flames, than that the enemy should possess West-Point.”

The inhabitants feared much more than they suffered. They expected that the whole margin of their country, 120 miles in extent, would suffer the fate of Fairfield and Norwalk. The season of the year added much to their difficulties, as the close attention of the farmers to their harvesting could not be omitted, without hazarding their subsistence. These fears were not of long duration. In about ten days after the landing of the British troops, an order was issued for their immediate return to New-York.

This they effected, in a short time, and with a loss so inconsiderable, that in the whole expedition, it did not exceed 150 men.

While the British were successfully making these desultory operations, the American army was incapable of covering the country. The former, having by means of their superior marine force, the command of the numerous rivers, bays and harbours of the United States, had it in their power to make descents, where they pleased, with an expedition that could not be equalled by the American land forces. Had Gen. Washington divided his army, conformably to the wishes of the invaded citizens, he would have subjected his whole force to be cut up in detail. It was therefore his uniform practice, to risque no more by way of covering the country than was consistent with the general safety.

His army was posted at some distance from British head quarters in New York, and on both sides of the North river. The van thereof consisting of 300 infantry and 150 cavalry, under the command of Col. Anthony Walton White, patroled constantly, for
several months, in front of the British lines, and kept a constant watch on the Sound and on the North river. This corps had sundry skirmishes with parties of the British, and was particularly useful in checking their excursions, and in procuring and communicating intelligence of their movements.

About this time Gen. Putnam, who had been stationed with a respectable command at Reading in Connecticut, when on a visit to his out-post at Horse-Neck, was attacked by Gov. Tryon, with about 1500 men. Gen. Putnam had only a picket of 150 men, and two iron field pieces without horses or drag-ropes. He however planted his cannon on the high ground, near the meeting house, and by several fires retarded the advancing enemy, and continued to make opposition till he perceived the enemy’s horse, supported by the infantry, were about to charge. Gen. Putnam after ordering the picket to provide for their safety, by retiring to a swamp inaccessible to horse, plunged down the precipice at the church.

This is so steep as to have artificial stairs, composed of nearly one hundred stone steps, for the accommodation of foot passengers. The dragoons stopped short, without venturing down the abrupt declivity, and before they got round the brow of the hill, Putnam was far enough beyond their reach; of the many balls that were fired at him, all missed except one, which went through his hat. He proceeded to Stamford, and having strengthened his picket with some militia, faced about and pursued Governor Tryon on his return.

The campaign of 1779, though barren of important events, was distinguished by one of the most gallant enterprises, which took place in the course of the war. This was the capture of Stoney-Point, on the North river.

Gen. Wayne, who had the honor of conducting this enterprise, set out at the head of a strong detachment of the most active infantry in the American army at noon, and completed a march of about 14 miles, over bad roads, by eight o’clock in the evening. The detachment being then within a mile and a half of its object, was halted and formed into columns. The General, with a few of his officers, advanced and reconnoitred the works. At half past eleven, the whole moved forward to the attack. The van of the right, consisting of 150 volunteers under the command of Lieut. Col. Fleury, advanced with unloaded muskets, and fixed bayonets. The van of the left was led by Major Stewart, and advanced with unloaded muskets and fixed bayonets. These were preceded by 20 picked men, who were particularly instructed to remove the abbatis and other obstructions. The van of the left was led by Major Stewart, and advanced with unloaded muskets and fixed bayonets. It was also preceded by a similar forlorn hope. The General placed himself at the head of the right column, and gave the most pointed orders not to fire, but to depend solely on the bayonet. The two columns directed their attacks to opposite points of the works, while a detachment engaged the attention of the garrison, by a feint in their front. The approaches were more difficult than had been apprehended. The works were defended by a deep morass, which was also, at that time, overflowed by the tide.

Neither the morass, the double row of abbatis, nor the strength of the works, damped the ardor of the assailants. In the face of a most tremendous fire of musketry, and of cannon loaded with grape-shot, they forced their way, at the point of the bayonet, through every obstacle, until both columns met in the centre of the works, at nearly the same instant. Gen. Wayne as he passed the last abbatis, was wounded in the head by a musket ball, but nevertheless
insisted on being carried forward, adding as a reason for it, [“]that if he died he wished it might be in the fort.” Lieutenants Gibbons and Knox, who led the forlorn hope, escaped unhurt, although the first lost 17 men out of 20, and the last nearly as many. The killed and wounded of the Americans amounted to 98. The killed of the garrison were 63, and the number of their prisoners 543. Two flags, two standards, 15 pieces of ordnance, and a considerable quantity of military stores, fell into the hands of the conquerors. The vigor and spirit, with which this enterprise was conducted, was matter of triumph to the Americans. Congress gave their thanks to Gen. Washington “For the vigilance, wisdom and magnanimity with which he had conducted the military operations of the States, and which were among many other signal instances manifested in his orders for the above enterprise.” They also gave thanks to Gen. Wayne, and ordered a medal, emblematical of the action, to be struck and one of gold to be presented to him. They directed a silver one to be presented to Lieut. Col. Fleury, and also to Major Stewart. At the same time, they passed general resolutions in honor of the officers and men, but particularly designating Lieut. Col. Fleury, Major Stewart, Lieutenants Gibbons and Knox. To the two latter and also to Mr. Archer, the General’s volunteer aid-de-camp, they gave the rank of Captain. The clemency shewn to the vanquished, was universally applauded. The customs of war, and the recent barbarities at Fairfield and Norwalk, would have been an apology for the conquerors, had they put the whole garrison to the sword, but the assailants, no less generous than brave, ceased to destroy as soon as their adversaries ceased to resist.

Upon the capture of Stoney-Point, the victors turned its artillery against Verplank’s-Point, and fired upon it with such effect, that the shipping in its vicinity cut their cables and fell down the river. As soon as the news of these events reached New-York, preparations were instantly made to relieve the latter post and to recover the former. It by no means accorded with the cautious prudence of Gen. Washington, to risque an engagement for either or for both of them. He therefore removed the cannon and stores, destroyed the works, and evacuated the captured post. Sir Henry Clinton regained possession of Stoney-Point, on the third day after its capture, and placed in it a strong garrison.

The successful enterprise of the Americans at Stoney-Point, was speedily followed by another, which equalled it in boldness of design.

This was the surprise of the British garrison at Powles-Hook, opposite to New-York, which was effected by Major Lee with about 350 men. Major Sutherland the commandant, with a number of Hessians got off safe to a small block-house on the left of the fort, but about 30 of his men were killed and 160 taken prisoners. The loss of the Americans was inconsiderable. Major Lee in conformity to the orders he had received, made an immediate retreat, without waiting to destroy either the barracks or the artillery. Congress honored him with their thanks, and ordered a medal of gold, emblematical of the affair to be struck, and presented to him as a reward “for his prudence, address and bravery.” They also passed resolutions applauding his humanity, and expressing their high sense of the good conduct of his troops, and at the same time, ordered a considerable donative in money, to be distributed among them.
These advantages were more than counterbalanced, by an unsuccessful attempt, made by the state of Massachusetts, on a British post at Penobscot. Col. Macleane, by the direction of Sir Henry Clinton, landed with a detachment of 650 men from Halifax, on the banks of Penobscot river, in the eastern confines of New-England, and proceeded soon after to construct a fort in a well chosen situation. This occasioned an alarm at Boston. To counteract the establishment of the post, vigorous measures were resolved upon. That armed vessels, transports and sailors, might be secured for an expedition, which was immediately projected for this purpose, an embargo for 40 days was laid by the state of Massachusetts, on all their shipping. A considerable armament consisting of 18 armed vessels besides transports, was fitted out with extraordinary expedition, and put under the command of Com. Saltonstal. The largest vessel in this fleet, was the Warren of 32 guns, 18 and 12 pounders. The others varied from 24 to 12 guns. A body of land forces commanded by Gen. Lovel, embarked on this expedition. On the 25th of July, the American fleet consisting of 37 sail appeared off Penobscot. Col. Macleane had four days before gained information, of what was intended against him. This induced him to redouble his exertions in strengthening his fort, which was in an unfinished state. Two of the bastions were untouched. The remaining two were in no part above 4 or 5 feet high. The ditch was only about 3 feet deep. There was no platform laid, nor any artillery mounted.

The American general on his landing, summoned the colonel to surrender, which being refused, he proceeded to erect a battery at the distance of 750 yards. A cannonading commenced, and was kept up for about a fortnight, but without any considerable effect. While the besiegers were making preparation for an assault, which they had in immediate contemplation, Sir George Collyer appeared full in view, with a squadron for the relief of the garrison. He had sailed from Sandy-Hook, on hearing of the intended attack on Col. Macleane’s party, and in about 11 days arrived in the river Penobscot. His marine force consisted of the Raisonable of 64 guns and five frigates. The Americans at first made a shew of resistance, but they intended no more than to give the transports time to move up the river, that the troops might have an opportunity of landing, and making their escape. The superior force and weight of metal of the Raisonable was irresistible, and the escape of the Americans was impracticable. A general flight on the one side, and a general [111] chase on the other took place.

Sir George destroyed and took 17 or 18 armed vessels. The American soldiers and sailors had to return a great part of their way by land, and to explore their route through thick woods.

While the war languished as to great objects in the country where it originated, it was raging on a new element, and involving distant countries in its wide spreading flame. Hostilities between the fleets of France and Great-Britain, were carrying on in both the Indies and in the European seas, as well as on the coast of America. His most Catholic Majesty was also, about this time, induced to take a decided part with France against Great-Britain.
To the surprise of many, the Marquis D’Almodovar the Spanish ambassador delivered a manifesto to lord Viscount Weymouth, amounting to a declaration of war against Great-Britain. This event had often been predicted by the minority in the British parliament, but disbelieved by the ministry. The latter reasoned “that Spain could have no interest in joining their adversaries. That she had colonies of her own, and could not set so bad an example to them, as to give any countenance to the Americans. It was also said that Spain was naturally attached to Great-Britain, and unable to enter into war.” They were so far imposed upon by their eagerness to effect the conquest of the United-States, as to believe that to be true which they wished to be so. The event proved that the politics of sovereign powers, are not reducible to fixed principles. Sometimes one interest clashes with another, and it is not always the case that the strongest preponderates. Whether the influence of the French counsels, or the prospect of recovering Gibraltar, Jamaica and the two Floridas, or the pressure of recent injuries determined the court of Spain to adopt this measure it is impossible with certainty to decide, but circumstances make it probable, that the hope of regaining Gibraltar and Jamaica, was the principal inducement.

The situation of Great Britain, was at this time truly distressing. She was weakened and distracted in a domestic contest, in which victory produced no advantages, but defeat all its natural effects. In the midst of this wasting contest, in which her ability to reduce her revolted colonies, though without foreign aid was doubtful, she was suddenly involved in a new and much more dangerous war with one of the greatest powers in Europe. At this very time while she was engaged in this double warfare, against old friends and old enemies, his most Catholic Majesty added his force to that of her numerous foes.

In this situation a direlection of the American war was recommended by some leading characters in the nation, but every proposition of that kind was over-ruled, and assurances from both houses of Parliament, were given to his Majesty “to support him in carrying on the war against all his enemies”.

From these events which only affected the United-States as far as they increased the embarrassments of Great Britain, I return to relate the transactions which took place within their own limits. In the year 1779, though the war was carried on for little more than distress or depredation in the northern states, the re-establishment of British government was seriously attempted in Carolina and Georgia. After the reduction of Savannah, a great part of the state of Georgia was restored to the King’s peace. The royal army in that quarter was strengthened by a numerous re-inforcement from East Florida, and the whole was put under the command of Major Gen. Prevost. The force then in Georgia gave a serious alarm to the adjacent states. There were at that time but few continental troops in Georgia, or South Carolina, and scarce any in North-Carolina, as during the late tranquillity in the southern states, they had been detached to serve in the main army commanded by Gen. Washington. A body of militia was raised and sent forward by North Carolina to aid her neighbours. These joined the continental troops, but not till they had retreated out of Georgia, and taken post in South Carolina. Towards the close of the year 1778 Gen. Lincoln, at the request of the
delegates of South Carolina, was appointed by Congress, to take the command of their southern army.

[113]
This consisted only of a few hundred continental. To supply the deficiency of regular soldiers, a considerable body of militia was ordered to join him, but they added much more to his numbers than to his effective force.

They had not yet learned the implicit obedience necessary for military operations. Accustomed to activity on their farms, they could not bear the languor of an encampment. Having grown up in habits of freedom and independence, they reluctantly submitted to martial discipline. The royal army at Savannah being reinforced by the junction of the troops from St. Augustine, was in condition to extend their posts. Their first object was to take possession of Port-Royal, in South-Carolina. Major Gardiner with two hundred men being detached with this view, landed on the island, but Gen. Moultrie at the head of an equal number of Americans, in which there were only nine regular soldiers, attacked and drove him off it. This advantage was principally gained by two field pieces, which were well served by a party of Charleston militia artillery. The British lost almost all their officers. The Americans had eight men killed and 22 wounded. Among the former, was Lieut. Benjamin Wilkins an artillery officer of great merit, and a citizen of distinguished virtue, whose early fall deprived a numerous family of their chief support. He was the first officer of South-Carolina who lost his life in supporting its independence. This repulse restrained the British from attempting any immediate enterprise to the northward of Savannah, but they fixed posts at Ebenezer, and Augusta, and extended themselves over a great part of Georgia. They also endeavored to strengthen themselves by reinforcements from the tories, in the western settlements of Georgia and Carolina.

Emissaries were sent among the inhabitants of that description, to encourage them to a general insurrection. They were assured that if they embodied and added their force to that of the King’s army in Georgia, they would have such a decided superiority as would make a speedy return to their homes practicable, on their own terms. Several hundreds of them accordingly rendezvoused, [114] and set off to join the royal forces at Augusta. Among those who called themselves loyalists, there were many of the most infamous characters. Their general complexion was that of a plundering banditti, more solicitous for booty, than for the honor and interest of their royal master. At every period before the war, the western wilderness of these States which extended to the Mississippi, afforded an asylum for the idle or disorderly, who disrelished the restraints of civil society. While the war raged, the demands of militia duty and of taxes contributed much to the peopling of those remote settlements, by holding out prospects of exemption from the control of government. Among these people the royal emissaries had successfully planted the standard of loyalty, and of that class was a great proportion of those, who in the upper country of the Carolinas and Georgia, called themselves the King’s friends. They had no sooner embodied and begun their march to join the royal army at Augusta, than they commenced such a scene of plundering of the defenseless settlements through which they passed, as induced the orderly inhabitants to turn out
to oppose them. Col. Pickens, with about 300 men of the latter character, immediately
pursued and came up with them, near Kettle-creek. An action took place, which lasted
three quarters of an hour. The tories were totally routed. About forty of them were
killed, and in that number was their leader Col. Boyd, who had been secretly
employed by British authority to collect and head them. By this action the British
were disconcerted. The tories were dispersed. Some ran quite off. Others went to their
homes, and cast themselves on the mercy of their country. These were tried by the
laws of South Carolina for offending against an act called the sedition act, which had
been passed since the revolution for the security of the new government. Seventy of
them were condemned to die, but the sentence was only executed on five of their
ringleaders.

As the British extended their posts on the Georgia side of Savannah river, Gen.
Lincoln fixed encampments at Black-Swamp, and nearly opposite to Augusta on the
Carolina [115] side.
From these posts he formed a plan of crossing into Georgia, with
the view of limiting the British to the low country, near the
ocean. In the execution of this design, Gen. Ash with 1500 North-Carolina militia and
a few regular troops, after crossing the river Savannah, took a position on Briar-creek;
but in a few days he was surprised by Lieut. Col. Prevost, who
having made a circuitous march of about 50 miles, came
unexpectedly on his rear with about 900 men. The militia were thrown into confusion,
and fled at the first fire. One hundred and fifty of the Americans were killed, and 162
were taken. Few had any chance of escaping but by crossing the Savannah, in
attempting which many were drowned. Of those who got off safe, a great part
returned home. The number that rejoined the American camp did not exceed 450 men.
The few continentals under Col. Elbert made a brave Resistance, but the survivors of
them, with their gallant leader, were at last compelled to surrender. This event
deprived Gen. Lincoln of one fourth of his numbers, and opened a communication
between the British, the Indians, and the tories of North and South-Carolina.

Unexperienced in the art of war, the Americans were subject to those reverses of
fortune, which usually attend young soldiers. Unacquainted with military stratagems,
deficient in discipline, and not thoroughly broken to habits of implicit obedience, they
were often surprised, and had to learn by repeated misfortunes the necessity of
subordination, and the advantages of watchfulness and discipline. Their numbers in
the field, to those who are acquainted with European wars, must appear
inconsiderable, but such is the difference of the state of society and of the population
in the old and new world, that in America, a few hundreds decided objects of equal
magnitude with those, which in Europe would have called into the field as many
thousands. The prize contended for was nothing less than the Sovereignty of three
millions of people, and of five hundred millions of acres of land, and yet from the
remote situation of the invading powers, and the thin population of the invaded States,
especially [116] in the southern extreme of the union,
this momentous question was materially affected by the
consequences of battles, in which only a few hundreds engaged.
The series of disasters which had followed the American arms since the landing of the British near Savannah, occasioned well founded apprehension for the safety of the adjacent States. The militia of South-Carolina was therefore put on a better footing, and a regiment of cavalry was raised. John Rutledge a Carolinian of the most distinguished abilities, was called to the chair of government by an almost unanimous vote, and in imitation of the ancient republic of Rome invested, in conjunction with his council, with dictatorial powers. By virtue of his authority, he convened a large body of the militia near the centre of the State, that they might be in constant readiness to march withersoever public service required. The original plan of penetrating into Georgia was resumed. Part of the American force was stationed on the north side of the Savannah at Purrysburgh and Black-swamp, while Gen. Lincoln and the main army crossed into Georgia near Augusta. General Prevost availed himself of the critical moment, when the American army had ascended 150 miles towards the source of the Savannah, and crossed into Carolina over the same river near to its mouth, with about 2400 men. A considerable body of Indians, whose friendship the British had previously secured, were associated with the British on this expedition. The superior British force which crossed Savannah river, soon compelled General Moultrie, who was charged with the defence of South-Carolina, to retire. Lincoln on receiving information of these movements, detached 300 of his light troops to reinforce Moultrie, but proceeded with the main army towards the capital of Georgia. He was induced to pursue his original intention, from an idea that Gen. Prevost meant nothing more than to divert him by a feint on Carolina, and because his marching down on the south side of the river Savannah, would occasion very little additional delay in repairing to its defense. When Lincoln [117] found that Prevost was seriously pushing for Charleston, he re-crossed the Savannah and pursued him. The British proceeded in their march by the main road near the sea coast, with but little opposition, and in the mean time the Americans retreated before them towards Charleston. Gen. Moultrie, who ably conducted this retreat, had no cavalry to check the advancing foe. Instead of his receiving reinforcements from the inhabitants, as he marched through the country, he was abandoned by many of the militia who went to their homes. Their families and property lay directly in the route of the invading army. The absence of the main army under Lincoln, the retreat of Moultrie, the plunderings and devastations of the invaders, and above all the dread of the Indian savages which accompanied the royal army, diffused a general panic among the inhabitants. The terror of each individual became a source of terror to another. From the influence of these causes, many were induced to apply for British protection. New converts to the royal standard endeavoured to ingratiate themselves with their protectors, by encouraging them to attempt the reduction of Charleston. Being in their power, they were more anxious to frame intelligence on the idea of what was agreeable, than of what was true. They represented the inhabitants as being generally tired of the war, and wishing for peace at all events. They also stated that Charleston was incapable of much resistance. These circumstances combined with the facility with which the British marched through the country, induced Gen. Prevost to extend his plan and push for Charleston. Had he designed it at first, and continued his march with the same rapidity with which it was begun, the town would probably have been carried by a coup-de-main, but he halted two or three days when advanced near half the distance. In that interval every preparation was made by the South-Carolinians, for the defence
of their capital. All the houses in its suburbs were burnt. Lines and abbatis were, in a few days, carried across the peninsula between Ashley and Cooper rivers, and cannon were mounted at proper intervals on its whole extent.

Though this visit [118] of the British, and especially an attack on the land side, was unexpected, yet in a few days great preparations were made, and a force of 3300 men assembled in Charleston for its defence.

The main body and baggage of the British army, being left on the south side of Ashley river, an advanced detachment of 900 men, crossed the ferry and appeared before the town. In the mean time Lincoln was marching on as fast as possible, for the relief of Charleston, but as his arrival was doubtful and the crisis hazardous, to gain time was a matter of consequence. A whole day was therefore spent in the exchange of flags. Commissioners from the garrison were instructed “to propose a neutrality during the war between Great Britain and America, and that the question whether the state shall belong to Great Britain, or remain one of the United States, be determined by the treaty of peace between these powers.” The British commanders refused this advantageous offer, alledging that they did not come in a legislative capacity, and insisted that as the inhabitants and others were in arms, they should surrender prisoners of war. This being refused the garrison prepared for an immediate assault, but this was not attempted. About this time Major Benjamin Huger commanding a party without the lines, was through mistake killed by his countrymen. This was a loss indeed. The liberality, generosity and public spirit, which distinguished him as a citizen, added to great political and military talents, rendered his untimely death the subject of universal regret. By his fall the country was deprived of one of its firmest and most useful friends, and the army lost one of its brightest ornaments. Prevost knowing by an intercepted letter, that Lincoln was coming on in his rear, retreated from Charleston, and filed off with his whole force from the main to the islands near the sea, that he might avoid being between two fires. Both armies encamped in the vicinity of Charleston, watching each others motions till the 20th of June, when an attack was made with about 1200 Americans on six or 700 of the British, advantageously posted at Stono ferry. The latter had redoubts [119] with a line of communication, and field pieces in the intervals, and the whole was secured with an abbatis. By a preconcerted plan, a feint was to have been made from James Island, with a body of Charleston militia, at the moment when Gen. Lincoln began the attack from the main, but from mismanagement, they did not reach their place of destination till the action was over. The attack was continued for an hour and twenty minutes, and the assailants had the advantage, but the appearance of a reinforcement, to prevent which the feint from James Island was intended, made their retreat necessary. The loss of the Americans in killed and wounded was about 150. Among the former was Col. Roberts, an artillery officer of distinguished abilities. Having been bred to arms in his native country England, he had been particularly serviceable in diffusing military knowledge among the less informed American officers. In the short interval between his being wounded and his dying, he was visited on the field of battle by his son Capt. Roberts, of his own regiment. The expiring father presented his sword to his son, with an exhortation to behave worthy of it, and to use it in defence of liberty and
his country. After a short conversation he desired him to return to his proper station, adding for reason “that there he might be useful, but to him he could be of no service.”

Immediately after this attack, the American militia impatient of absence from their homes returned to their plantations, and about the same time the British left the islands adjacent to Charleston, retreating from one to another, till they arrived at Portroyal and Savannah. A considerable garrison was left at the former place under Col. Maitland, but the main body went to Savannah.

This incursion into South-Carolina contributed very little to the advancement of the royal cause, but added much to the wealth of the officers, soldiers and followers of the British army, and still more to the distresses of the inhabitants. The forces under the command of Gen. Prevost spread themselves over a considerable part of the richest settlements of the state, and where there are the fewest white inhabitants in proportion to the number of [120] slaves.

There was much to attract, and but little to resist the invaders. Small parties visited almost every house, and unopposed took whatever they chose. They not only rifled the inhabitants of household furniture, but of wearing apparel, money, rings and other personal ornaments. Every place, in their line of march, experienced the effects of their rapacity.

Soon after the affair at Stono, the continental forces under the command of Gen. Lincoln retired to Sheldon, a healthy situation in the vicinity of Beaufort. Both armies remained in their respective encampments, till the arrival of a French fleet on the coast, roused the whole country to immediate activity.

Count D’Estaing having repaired and victualled his fleet at Boston, sailed for the West-Indies, and on the same day Commodore Hotham with five men of war, a bomb vessel and some frigates, set out from New-York to convoy a number of transports with Gen. Grant, and 5000 men to the same theatre of naval operations.

The British took St. Lucia, and Count D’Estaing took St. Vincents and Grenada. Soon after the reduction of the latter, the Count retired to Cape François.

Having received instructions from the King his master to act in concert with the forces of the United States, and being strongly solicited by Gen. Lincoln, President Lownds, Gov. Rutledge, and Mr. Plombard Consul of France in Charleston, he sailed for the American continent with expectation of rendering essential service, in operating against the common enemy. He arrived on the coast of Georgia, with a fleet consisting of twenty sail of the line, two of fifty guns and eleven frigates. His appearance was so unexpected that the Experiment man of war, of 50 guns commanded by Sir James Wallace, and three frigates fell into his hands.

As soon as his arrival on the coast was known, Gen. Lincoln with the army under his command, marched for the vicinity of Savannah, and orders were given for the militia
of Georgia and South-Carolina to rendezvous near the same place. The British were equally diligent in preparing for their defence. Great numbers were employed [121] both by day and night, in strengthening and extending their lines. The American militia, flushed with the hope of speedily expelling the British from their southern possessions, turned out with an alacrity which far surpassed their exertions in the preceding campaign. D’Estaing before the arrival of Lincoln demanded the surrender of the town to the arms of France. Prevost in his answer declined surrendering on a general summons, and requested that specific terms should be proposed, to which he would give an answer. The Count replied that it was the part of the besieged to propose terms. Prevost then asked for a suspension of hostilities, for 24 hours, for preparing proper terms. This was inconsiderately granted. Before the 24 hours elapsed, Lieut. Col. Maitland with several hundred men who had been stationed at Beaufort, made their way good through many obstacles, and joined the royal army in Savannah. The garrison, encouraged by the arrival of so respectable a force, determined on resistance. The French and Americans, who formed a junction the evening after, were therefore reduced to the necessity of storming or besieging the garrison. The resolution of proceeding by siege being adopted, several days were consumed in preparing for it, and in the mean time the works of the garrison were hourly strengthened by the labour of several hundred negroes, directed by that able engineer Major Moncrief.

The besiegers opened with nine mortars, thirty seven pieces of cannon from the land side, and fifteen from the water. Soon after the commencement of the cannonade, Prevost solicited for leave to send the women and children out of town, but this was refused. The combined army suspected that a desire of secreting the plunder, lately taken from the South-Carolinians, was covered under the veil of humanity. It was also presumed that a refusal would expedite a surrender. On a report from the engineers that a considerable time would be necessary to reduce the garrison by regular approaches, it was determined to make an assault. This measure was forced on Count D’Estaing by his marine officers, who had remonstrated against his continuing to risk so valuable [122] a fleet on a dangerous coast, in the hurricane season, and at so great a distance from the shore, that it might be surprised by a British fleet, completely repaired and fully manned. In a few days the lines of the besiegers might have been carried into the works of the besieged, but under these critical circumstances, no farther delay could be admitted. To assault or raise the siege was the alternative. Prudence would have dictated the latter, but a sense of honor determined the besiegers to adopt the former.

Two feints were made with the country militia, and a real attack on Spring-hill battery early in the morning, with 3500 French troops, 600 continentals, and 350 of the inhabitants of Charleston. These boldly marched up to the lines, under the command of D’Estaing and Lincoln, but a heavy and well directed fire from the batteries, and a cross fire from the gallys, threw the front of their columns into confusion. Two standards were nevertheless planted on the British redoubts. A retreat of the assailants was ordered, after they had stood the enemies fire for 55 minutes. Count D’Estaing and Count Pulaski were both wounded. The former slightly, but the latter mortally. Six hundred and thirty seven of the French, and upwards of 200 of the continentals and militia were killed or wounded.
Gen. Prevost, Lieut. Col. Maitland, and Major Moncrief deservedly acquired great reputation by this successful defence. The force of the garrison was between 2 and 3000, of which about 150 were militia. The damage sustained by the besieged was trifling, as they fired from behind works, and few of the assailants fired at all. Immediately after this unsuccessful assault, the militia, almost universally, went to their homes. Count D’Estaing reimbarked his troops and artillery, and left the continent.

While the siege of Savannah was pending, a remarkable enterprise was effected by Col. John White of the Georgia line. Capt. French had taken post with about 100 men near the river Ogechee, some time before the siege began. There were also at the same place forty sailors on board of five British vessels, four of which were armed. All these men, together with the vessels and 130 stand of arms, were surrendered to Col. White, Capt. Elholm and four others, one of which was the Colonel’s servant. On the preceding night this small party kindled a number of fires in different places, and adopted the parade of a large encampment. By these and a variety of deceptive stratagems, Capt. French was fully impressed with an opinion, that nothing but an instant surrender, in conformity to a peremptory summons, could save his men from being cut to pieces by a superior force. He therefore gave up, without making any resistance.

This visit of the fleet of his most Christian Majesty to the coast of America, though unsuccessful as to its main object, was not without utility to the United States. It disconcerted the measures already digested by the British commanders, and caused a considerable waste of time, before they could determine on a new plan of operations. It also occasioned the evacuation of Rhode-Island. But this was of no advantage to the United States. For of all the blunders committed by the British in the course of the American war, none was greater than their stationing near 6000 men, for two years and eight months, on that Island, where they were lost to every purpose of cooperation, and where they could render very little more service to the royal cause, than could have been obtained by a couple of frigates cruising in the vicinity.

The siege being raised, the continental troops retreated over the river Savannah. The vicissitudes of an autumnal atmosphere made a severe impression on the irritable fibres of men, exhausted with fatigue and dejected by defeat. In proportion to the towering hopes, with which the expedition was undertaken, was the depression of spirits subsequent to its failure. The Georgia exiles, who had assembled from all quarters to repossess themselves of their estates, were a second time obliged to flee from their country and possessions. The most gloomy apprehensions, respecting the Southern States, took possession of the minds of the people.

Thus ended the southern campaign of 1779, without any thing decisive on either side. After one year, in which the British had over-run the State of Georgia for 150 miles from the sea coast, and had penetrated as far as the lines of Charleston, they were reduced to their original limits in Savannah. All their schemes of cooperation with the tories had failed, and the spirits of that class of the inhabitants, by successive disappointments, were thoroughly broken.
The campaign of 1779 is remarkable for the feeble exertions of the Americans. Accidental causes, which had previously excited their activity, had in a great measure ceased to have influence. An enthusiasm for liberty made them comparatively disregard property, and brave all danger in the first years of the war. The successes of their arms near the beginning of 1777, and the hopes of capturing Burgoyne’s army in the close of it, together with the brisk circulation of a large quantity of paper money in good credit, made that year both active and decisive. The flattering prospects inspired by the alliance with France in 1778 banished all fears of the success of the revolution, but the failure of every scheme of co-operation produced a despondency of mind unfavourable to great exertions. Instead of driving the British out of the country, as the Americans vainly presumed, the campaign of 1778 and 1779 terminated without any direct advantage from the French fleet sent to their aid. Expecting too much from their allies, and then failing in these expectations, they were less prepared to prosecute the war from their own resources, than they would have been had D’Estaing not touched on their coast. Their army was reduced in its numbers, and badly cloathed: In the first years of the war the mercantile character was lost in the military spirit of the times, but in the progress of it the inhabitants, cooling in their enthusiasm, gradually returned to their former habits of lucrative business. This made distinction between the army and the citizens, and was unfriendly to military exertions.

While several foreign events tended to the embarrassment of Great-Britain, and indirectly to the establishment of independence, a variety [125] of internal causes relaxed the exertions of the Americans, and for a time made it doubtful, whether they would ultimately be independent citizens or conquered subjects. Among these, the daily depreciation of their bills of credit held a distinguished pre-eminence. This so materially affected every department as to merit a particular discussion. The subject, to prevent an interruption of the thread of the narrative, is treated of in a separate appendix.
APPENDIX No. II

Of Continental Paper Currency.

In the modern mode of making war, money is not less essential, than valour in the field, or wisdom in the cabinet. The deepest purse decides the fate of contending nations, as often as the longest sword. It early occurred to the founders of the American empire, that the established revenues of Great Britain, must eventually overbalance the sudden and impetuous sallies of men contending for freedom, on the spur of the occasion, and without the permanent means of defence: but how to remedy the evil, puzzled their wisest politicians. Gold and silver, as far as was known, had not a physical existence in the country, in any quantity equal to the demands of war, nor could they be procured from abroad, as the channels of commerce had been previously shut, by the voluntary association of Congress to suspend foreign trade. America having never been much taxed in any direct way, and being without established governments, and especially as she was contending against what was lately lawful authority, could not immediately proceed to taxation. Besides as the contest was on the subject of taxation, the laying on of taxes adequate to the exigencies of war, even though it had been practicable, would have been impolitic. The only plausible expedient in their power to adopt, was the emission of bills of credit representing specie, under a public engagement to be ultimately sunk by equal taxes, or exchanged for gold or silver.

This practice had been familiar from the first settlement of the colonies, and under proper restrictions [126] had been found highly advantageous. Their resolution to raise an army in June 1775, was therefore followed by another to emit bills of credit, to the amount of two millions of dollars. To that sum on the 25th of the next month, it was resolved to add another million. For their redemption they pledged the confederated colonies, and directed each colony to find ways and means, to sink its proportion and quota, in four annual payments, the first to be made on or before the last of Nov. 1779. That time was fixed upon from an expectation, that previous to its arrival, the contest would be brought to a conclusion.

On the 29th of November, 1775, an estimate having been made by Congress of the public expences already incurred, or likely to be incurred in carrying on their defence till the 10th of June, 1776, it was resolved to emit a farther sum of three millions of dollars, to be redeemed as the former by four annual payments, the first to be made on or before the last day of Novem. 1783. It was at the same time determined, that the quotas of bills to be redeemed by each colony, should be in a relative proportion to their respective numbers of inhabitants. This estimate was calculated to defray expences to the 10th of June, 1776, on the idea that an accommodation would take place before that time. Hitherto all arrangements, both for men and money were temporary, and founded on the supposed probability of a reconciliation. Early in 1776, Congress obtained information, that Great Britain had contracted for 16,000 foreign mercenaries, to be sent over for the purpose of subduing America. This enforced the necessity of extending their plan of defence, beyond the 10th of the next June. They therefore on the 17th of February 1776, ordered four millions of dollars to
be emitted, and on the 9th of May and the 22d of July following, emitted ten millions more on the same security. Such was the animation of the times, that these several emissions amounting in the aggregate to 20 millions of dollars, circulated for several months without any depreciation, and commanded the resources of the country for public service, equally with the same sum of gold or [127] silver. The United States derived for a considerable time, as much benefit from this paper creation of their own, though without any established funds for its support or redemption, as would have resulted from a free gift of as many Mexican dollars. While the ministry of England were puzzling themselves for new taxes, and funds on which to raise their supplies, Congress raised theirs by resolutions, directing paper of no intrinsic value to be struck off, in form of promissory notes. But there was a point both in time and quantity, beyond which this congressional alchymy ceased to operate. That time was about 18 months from the date of their first emission, and that quantity about 20 millions of dollars.

Independence being declared in the second year of the war, and the object for which arms were at first assumed being changed, it was obvious that more money must be procured, and equally so that if bills of credit were multiplied beyond a reasonable sum for circulation, they must necessarily depreciate. It was therefore on the 3d of October 1776 resolved to borrow five millions of dollars, and in the month following a lottery was set on foot for obtaining a farther sum on loan. The expences of the war were so great, that the money arising from both, though considerable, was far short of a sufficiency. The rulers of America thought it still premature to urge taxation. They therefore reiterated the expedient of farther emissions. The ease with which the means of procuring supplies were furnished by striking off bills of credit, and the readiness of the people to receive them, prompted Congress to multiply them beyond the limits of prudence. A diminution of their value was the unavoidable consequence. This at first was scarcely perceivable, but it daily increased. The zeal of the people nevertheless so far overbalanced the nice mercantile calculations of interest, that the campaigns of 1776 and 1777 were not affected by the depreciation of the paper currency. Congress foresaw that this could not long be the case. It was therefore on the 22d of November 1777 recommended to the several States, to raise by taxes the [128] sum of five millions of dollars, for the service of the year 1778.

Previously to this it had been resolved to borrow larger sums, and for the encouragement of lenders, it was agreed to pay the interest which should accrue thereon by bills of exchange, payable in France, out of monies borrowed there for the use of the United States. This tax unfortunately failed in several of the States. From the impossibility of procuring a sufficiency of money either from loans or taxes, the old expedient of farther emissions was reiterated; but the value decreased as the quantity increased. Congress anxious to put a stop to the increase of their bills of credit, and to provide a fund for reducing what were issued, called upon the States on the 1st of January 1779, to pay into the continental treasury their respective quotas of fifteen millions of dollars for the service of that year, and of six millions annually from and after the year 1779, as a fund for reducing their early emissions and loans. Such had been the mistaken ideas, which originally prevailed of the duration of the
Sept. 13, 1779

contest, that though the war was raging, and the demands for money unabated, yet the period was arrived which had been originally fixed upon for the redemption of the first emissions of Congress.

In addition to these 15 millions called for on the 1st of January 1779, the States were on the 21st of May following called upon to furnish, for public service within the current year, their respective quotas of 45 millions of dollars. Congress wished to arrest the growing depreciation, and therefore called for taxes in large sums, proportioned to the demands of the public, and also to the diminished value of their bills. These requisitions, though nominally large, were by no means sufficient. From the fluctuating state of the money, it was impossible to make any certain calculations, for it was not two days of the same value. A sum which when demanded, would have purchased a sufficiency of the commodities wanted for the public service, was very inadequate, when the collection was made, and the money lodged in the treasury. The depreciation began at different periods in different [129] States; but in general about the middle of the year 1777, and progressively increased for three or four years. Towards the last of 1777, the depreciation was about two or three for one; in 1778 it advanced from two or three for one to five or six for one: in 1779, from five or six for one to 27 or 28 for one; in 1780 from 27 or 28 for one to 50 or 60 for one, in the first four or five months. Its circulation was afterwards partial, but where it passed it soon depreciated to 150 for one. In some few parts it continued in circulation for the first four or five months of 1781, but in this latter period many would not take it at any rate, and they who did, received it at a depreciation of several hundreds for one.

As there was a general clamor on account of the floods of money, which at successive periods had deluged the States, it was resolved in October 1779 that no farther sum should be issued on any account whatever than what, when added to the present sum in circulation, would in the whole be equal to 200 millions of dollars. It was at the same time resolved, that Congress should emit only such a part of the sum wanting to make up 200 millions, as should be absolutely necessary for the public exigencies, before adequate supplies could be otherwise obtained, relying for such supplies on the exertions of the several States. This was forcibly represented in a circular letter from Congress to their constituents, and the States were earnestly intreated to prevent that deluge of evils which would flow from their neglecting to furnish adequate supplies for the wants of the confederacy. The same circular letter stated the practicability of redeeming all the bills of Congress at par with gold and silver, and rejected with indignation the supposition that the States would ever tarnish their credit by violating public faith. These strong declarations in favour of the paper currency deceived many to repose confidence in it to their ruin. Subsequent events compelled Congress to adopt the very measure in 1780, which in the preceding year they had sincerely reprobated.

From the non-compliance of the States, Congress was obliged in a short time after the date of their circular letter to issue such a farther quantity, as when added to [130] previous emissions made the sum of 200 millions of dollars. Besides this immense sum, the paper emissions of the different States amounted to many millions; which mixed with the continental money, and added to its depreciation. What was of little
value before now became of less. The whole was soon expended, and yet from its increased depreciation the immediate wants of the army were not supplied. The source which for five years had enabled Congress to keep an army in the field being exhausted, Gen. Washington was reduced for some time to the alternative of disbanding his troops, or of supplying them by a military force. He preferred the latter, and the inhabitants of New-York and New-Jersey, though they felt the injury, saw the necessity, and patiently submitted.

The States were next called upon to furnish in lieu of money determinate quantities of beef, pork, flour and other articles, for the use of the army. This was called a requisition for specific supplies or a tax in kind, and was found on experiment to be so difficult of execution, so inconvenient, partial and expensive, that it was speedily abandoned. About this time, Congress resolved upon another expedient. This was to issue a new species of paper money, under the guarantee of the several States. The old money was to be called in by taxes, and as soon as brought in to be burnt, and in lieu thereof one dollar of the new was to be emitted for every twenty of the old, so that when the whole 200 millions were drawn in and cancelled, only ten millions of the new should be issued in their place, four tenths of which were to be subject to the order of Congress, and the remaining six tenths to the order of the several States. These new bills were to be redeemable in specie within six years, and to bear an interest at the rate of five per cent to be paid also in specie, at the redemption of the bills, or at the election of the owner annually in bills of exchange on the American commissioners in Europe, at four shillings and six pence for each dollar.

From the execution of these resolutions it was expected, that the old money would be cancelled—that the currency would be reduced to a fixed standard—that the States would be supplied with the means of purchasing the specific supplies required of them, and that Congress would be furnished with efficient money, to provide for the exigencies of the war. That these good effects would have followed, even though the resolutions of Congress had been carried into execution, is very questionable, but from the partial compliances of the States the experiment was never fairly made, and the new paper answered very little purpose. It was hoped by varying the ground of credit, that Congress would gain a repetition of the advantages which resulted from their first paper expedient, but these hopes were of short duration. By this time much of the popular enthusiasm had spent itself, and confidence in public engagements was nearly expired. The event proved, that credit is of too delicate a nature to be sported with, and can only be maintained by honesty and punctuality. The several expedients proposed by Congress for raising supplies having failed, a crisis followed very interesting to the success of the revolution. The particulars of this shall be related among the public events of the year 1781, in which it took place. Some observations on that primary instrument of American Independence, the old continental bills of credit, shall for the present close this subject.

It would have been impossible to have carried on the war, without something in the form of money. There was spirit enough in America to bring to the field of battle as many of her sons, as would have outnumbered the armies of Britain, and to have risqued their fate on a general engagement; but this was the very thing they ought to
avoid. Their principal hope lay in evacuating, retreating, and protracting to its utmost length a war of posts. The continued exertions, necessary for this species of defence, could not be expected from the impetuous sallies of militia. A regular permanent army became necessary. Though the enthusiasm of the times might have dispensed with present pay, yet without at least as much money, as would support them in the field, the most patriotic army must have dispersed.

[132]
The impossibility of the Americans procuring gold and silver even for that purpose, doubtless weighed with the British as an encouragement, to bring the controversy to the decision of the sword. What they knew could not be done by ordinary means, was accomplished by those which were extraordinary. Paper of no intrinsic value was made to answer all the purposes of gold and silver, and to support the expences of five campaigns. This was in some degree owing to a previous confidence, which had been begotten by honesty and fidelity, in discharging the engagements of government. From New-York to Georgia there never had been in matters relating to money, an instance of a breach of public faith. In the scarcity of gold and silver, many emergencies had imposed a necessity of emitting bills of credit. These had been uniformly and honestly redeemed. The bills of Congress being thrown into circulation, on this favourable foundation of public confidence, were readily received. The enthusiasm of the people contributed to the same effect. That the endangered liberties of America ought to be defended, and that the credit of their paper was essentially necessary to a proper defence, were opinions engraven on the hearts of a great majority of the citizens. It was therefore a point of honor and considered as a part of duty, to take the bills freely at their full value. Private gain was then so little regarded, that the whig citizens were willing to run all the hazards incidental to bills of credit, rather than injure the cause of their country by under valuing its money. Every thing human has its limits. While the credit of the money was well supported by public confidence and patriotism, its value diminished from the increase of its quantity. Repeated emissions begat that natural depreciation, which results from an excess of quantity. This was helped on by various causes, which affected the credit of the money. The enemy very ingeniously counterfeited their bills, and industriously circulated their forgeries through the United States. Congress allowed to their public agents a commission on the amount of their purchases. Instead of exerting themselves to purchase at a low price, they had therefore [133] an interest in giving a high price for every thing. So strong was the force of prejudice, that the British mode of supplying armies by contract, could not for a long time obtain the approbation of Congress. While these causes operated, confidence in the public was abating, and at the same time, that fervor of patriotism which disregarded interest was daily declining. To prevent or retard the depreciation of their paper money, Congress attempted to prop its credit by means which wrecked private property, and injured the morals of the people without answering the end proposed. They recommended to the States to pass laws for regulating the prices of labour, manufacture and all sorts of commodities, and for confiscating and selling the estates of tories, and for investing the money arising from the sales thereof in loan-office certificates. As many of those who were disaffected to the revolution absolutely refused to take the bills of Congress even in the first stage of
the war, when the real and nominal value was the same, with the view of counteracting their machinations, Congress early recommended to the States to pass laws for making the paper money a legal tender, at their nominal value in the discharge of *bona fide* debts, though contracted to be paid in gold or silver. With the same views, they farther recommended that laws should be passed by each of the States, ordaining that

whosoever should ask or receive more, in their bills of credit for gold or silver or any species of money whatsoever, than the nominal sum thereof in Spanish dollars, or more in the said bills for any commodities whatsoever, than the same could be purchased from the same person in gold and silver, or offer to sell any commodities for gold or silver, and refuse to sell the same for the said bills, shall be deemed an enemy to the liberties of the United States, and forfeit the property so sold or offered for sale.

The laws which were passed by the States, for regulating the prices of labor and commodities, were found on experiment to be visionary and impracticable. They only operated on the patriotic few, who were disposed to sacrifice every thing in the cause of their country, and who implicitly obeyed every mandate [134] of their rulers. Others disregarded them, and either refused to part with their commodities, or demanded and obtained their own prices.

These laws in the first instance, made an artificial scarcity, and had they not been repealed would soon have made a real one, for men never exert themselves unless they have the fruit of their exertions secured to them, and at their own disposal.

The confiscation and sale of the property of tories, for the most part brought but very little into the public treasury. The sales were generally made for credit, and by the progressive depreciation, what was dear at the time of the purchase, was very cheap at the time of payment. The most extensive mischief resulted in the progress, and towards the close of the war from the operation of the laws, which made the paper bills a tender, in the discharge of debts contracted payable in gold or silver. When this measure was first adopted little or no injustice resulted from it, for at that time the paper bills were equal, or nearly equal to gold or silver, of the same nominal sum. In the progress of the war, when depreciation took place, the case was materially altered. Laws which were originally innocent became eventually the occasion of much injustice.

The aged who had retired from the scenes of active business, to enjoy the fruits of their industry, found their substance melting away to a mere pittance, insufficient for their support. The widow who lived comfortably on the bequests of a deceased husband, experienced a frustration of all his well meant tenderness. The laws of the country interposed, and compelled her to receive a shilling, where a pound was her due. The blooming virgin who had grown up with an unquestionable title to a liberal patrimony, was legally stripped of every thing but her personal charms and virtues. The hapless orphan, instead of receiving from the hands of an executor, a competency to set out in business, was obliged to give a final discharge on the payment of 6d. in
the pound. In many instances, the earnings of a long life of care and diligence were, in
the space of a few years, reduced to a trifling sum.
A few persons escaped [135] these affecting calamities, by
secretly transferring their bonds, or by flying from the presence
or neighbourhood of their debtors. The evils which resulted from the legal tender of
these paper bills, were foreign from the intentions of Congress, and of the State
legislatures. It is but justice to add farther, that a great proportion of them flowed from
ignorance. Till the year 1780, when the bills fell to forty for one, it was designed by
most of the rulers of America, and believed by a great majority of the people, that the
whole sum in circulation would be appreciated by a reduction of its quantity, so as
finally to be equal to gold or silver. In every department of government the Americans
erred from ignorance, but in none so much, as in that which related to money.

Such were the evils which resulted from paper money. On the other hand, it was the
occasion of good to many. It was at all times the poor man’s friend. While it was
current, all kinds of labor very readily found their reward. In the first years of the war,
none were idle from want of employment, and none were employed, without having it
in their power to obtain ready payment for their services. To that class of people,
whose daily labor was their support, the depreciation was no disadvantage. Expending
their money as fast as they received it, they always got its full value. The reverse was
the case with the rich, or those who were disposed to hoarding. No agrarian law ever
had a more extensive operation, than continental money. That for which the Gracchi
lost their lives in Rome, was peaceably effected in the United States, by the legal
tender of these depreciating bills. The poor became rich, and the rich became poor.
Money lenders, and they whose circumstances enabled them to give credit, were
essentially injured. All that the money lost in its value was so much taken from their
capital, but the active and industrious indemnified themselves, by conforming the
price of their services to the present state of the depreciation. The experience of this
time inculcated on youth two salutary lessons, the impolicy of depending on paternal
acquisitions, and the necessity of their own exertions.

They who [136] were in debt, and possessed property of any
kind, could easily make the latter extinguish the former. Every
thing that was useful when brought to market readily found a purchaser. A hog or two
would pay for a slave; a few cattle for a comfortable house; and a good horse for an
improved plantation. A small part of the productions of a farm would discharge the
long outstanding accounts, due from its owner. The dreams of the golden age were
realised to the poor man and the debtor, but unfortunately what these gained, was just
so much taken from others.

The evils of depreciation did not terminate with the war. They extend to the present
hour. That the helpless part of the community were legislatively deprived of their
property, was among the lesser evils, which resulted from the legal tender of the
depreciated bills of credit. The iniquity of the laws estranged the minds of many of the
citizens from the habits and love of justice.

The nature of obligations was so far changed, that he was reckoned the honest man,
who from principle delayed to pay his debts. The mounds which government had
erected, to secure the observance of honesty in the commercial intercourse of man
with man, were broken down. Truth, honor, and justice were swept away by the
overflowing deluge of legal iniquity, nor have they yet assumed their ancient and
accustomed seats. Time and industry have already, in a great degree, repaired the
losses of property, which the citizens sustained during the war, but both have hitherto
failed in effacing the taint which was then communicated to their principles, nor can
its total ablation be expected till a new generation arises, unpractised in the iniquities
of their fathers.
CHAPTER XVIII

Of Indians, And Expeditions Into The Indian Country.

When the English colonies were first planted in North America, the country was inhabited by numerous tribes of Indians, who principally supported themselves by the spontaneous productions of nature. The arts and arms of Europeans soon gave them an ascendency over such untutored savages. Had the latter understood their interest, and been guided by a spirit of union, they would soon have expelled the invaders, and in that case they might now be flourishing in the possession of their ancient territories and independence. By degrees the old inhabitants were circumscribed within narrower limits, and by some strange fatality, their numbers have been constantly lessening. The names of several nations who in the last century boasted of several thousands, are now known only to those who are fond of curious researches. Many are totally extinct, and others can shew no more than a few straggling individuals, the remnants of their fallen greatness. That so many tribes should, in so short a time, lose both their country and their national existence, is an event scarcely to be paralleled in the history of the world. Spiritous liquors, the small pox, and an abridgment of territory, to a people whose mode of life needed an extensive range, evils which chiefly resulted from the neighbourhood of Europeans, were among the principal causes of their destruction. The reflections which may be excited by reviewing the havoc made among the native proprietors of this new world, is in some degree alleviated by its counterpart. While one set of inhabitants was insensibly dwindling away, another improving in the arts of civil and social life was growing in numbers, and gradually filling up their places. As the emigrants from Europe, and their dependents extended their possessions on the sea coast, the Aborigines retired from it. By this gradual advance of the one and retiring of the other, the former always presented an extensive frontier, to the incursions of the latter. The European emigrants from an avidity for land, the possession of which is the ultimate object of human avarice, were prone to encroach on the territories of the Indians, while the Indians from obvious principles of human nature, beheld with concern the descendants of the ancient proprietors circumscribed in their territory by the descendants of those strangers, whom their fathers had permitted to reside among them. From these causes and especially from the licentious conduct of disorderly individuals of both Indians and white people, there were frequent interruptions of the peace in their contiguous settlements. In the war between France and England which commenced in 1755, both parties paid assiduous attention to the Aborigines. The former succeeded in securing the greatest number of adherents, but the superior success of the latter in the progress, and at the termination of the war, turned the current of Indian affections and interest in their favor. When the dispute between Great Britain and her colonies began to grow serious, the friendship of the Indians became a matter of consequence to both parties. Stretching for fifteen hundred miles along the whole north-western frontier of the colonies, they were to them desirable friends and formidable enemies. As terror was one of the engines by which
Great Britain intended to enforce the submission of the colonies, nothing could be more conducive to the excitement of this passion, than the co-operation of Indians. Policy, not cruelty, led to the adoption of this expedient: But it was of that over-refined species which counteracts itself. In the competition for the friendship of the Indians, the British had advantages far superior to any which were possessed by the colonists. The expulsion of the French from Canada, an event which had only taken place about 13 years before, was still fresh in the memory of many of the savages, and had inspired them with high ideas of the martial superiority of British troops. The first steps taken by the Congress to oppose Great Britain, put it out of their power to gratify the Indians. Such was the effect of the non-importation agreement of 1774. While Great Britain had access to the principal Indian tribes through Canada on the north, and the two Floridas on the south, and was abundantly able to supply their many wants, the colonists had debarred themselves from importing the articles which were necessary for the Indian trade.

It was unfortunate for the colonies, that since the peace of Paris 1763, the transactions with the Indians [139] had been mostly carried on by superintendents appointed and paid by the King of Great Britain. These being under obligations to the crown, and expectants of further favours from it, generally used their influence with the Indians in behalf of the Mother Country, and against the colonies. They insinuated into the minds of the uninformed savages, that the King was their natural protector against the encroaching colonists, and that if the latter succeeded in their opposition to Great Britain, they would probably next aim at the extirpation of their red neighbours. By such representations, seconded with a profusion of presents, the attachment of the Indians was pre-engaged in support of the British interest.

The Americans were not unmindful of the Savages on their frontier. They appointed commissioners to explain to them the grounds of the dispute, and to cultivate their friendship by treaties and presents. They endeavoured to persuade the Indians that the quarrel was by no means relative to them, and that therefore they should take part with neither side.

For the greater convenience of managing the intercourse between the colonies and the Indians, the latter were divided into three departments, the northern, southern and middle, and commissioners were appointed for each. Congress also resolved to import and distribute among them a suitable assortment of goods, to the amount of £40,000 sterling, on account of the United States; but this was not executed. All the exertions of Congress were insufficient for the security of their western frontiers. In almost every period of the war, a great majority of the Indians took part with Great Britain against the Americans. South-Carolina was among the first of the States, which experienced the effects of British influence over the Indians. The Cherokees and Creeks inhabit lands, not far distant from the western settlements of Carolina and Georgia. The intercourse with these tribes had, for several years prior to the American war, been exclusively committed to John Stuart an officer of the crown, and devoted to the royal interest. His influence, which was great, was wholly exerted in favor [140] of Great Britain.
A plan was settled by him, in concert with the King’s governors, and other royal servants, to land a royal armed force in Florida, and to proceed with it to the western frontier of the Southern States, and there in conjunction with the tories and Indians, to fall on the friends of Congress, at the same time that a fleet and army should invade them on the sea coast. The whole scheme was providentially discovered by the capture of Moses Kirkland, one of the principal agents to be employed in its execution, while he was on his way to Gen. Gage with despatches, detailing the particulars, and soliciting for the requisite aid to accomplish it. The possession of Kirkland, and of his papers, enabled the Americans to take such steps as in a great degree frustrated the views of the royal servants, yet so much was carried into effect, that the Cherokees began their massacres, at the very time the British fleet attacked the fort on Sullivan’s Island. The undisturbed tranquillity, which took place in South-Carolina and the adjacent States, after the British had failed in their designs against them in the spring and summer of 1776, gave an opportunity for carrying war into the Indian country. This was done, not so much to punish what was past, as to prevent all future co-operation between the Indians and British in that quarter.

Virginia, North-Carolina, South-Carolina, and Georgia each sent about the same time a considerable force over the Alleghany mountains, which traversed the Indian settlements, burned their towns, and destroyed their fields of corn. Above 500 of the Cherokees were obliged, from the want of provisions, to take refuge in West-Florida and were there fed at the expense of the British government. These unfortunate misled people sued for peace in the most submissive terms, and soon after assented to a treaty, by which they ceded a considerable part of their land to South-Carolina. The decision with which this expedition was conducted intimidated the Cherokees, for some years, from farther hostilities. Very different was the case of those Indians who were in the vicinity of the British posts, and contiguous to the frontier of the northern and middle States. The presents which they continually received from England, the industry of the British agents, and the influence of a great number of American refugees who had taken shelter among them, operating on their native passion for rapine, excited them to frequent hostile excursions. Col. John Butler a Connecticut tory, and one Brandt a half Indian by blood, were the principal leaders of the Savages in these expeditions. The vast extent of frontier, and remote situation of the settlements, together with the exact knowledge which the refugees possessed of the country, made it practicable for even small marauding parties to do extensive mischief.

A storm of Indian and tory vengeance burst with particular violence on Wyoming, a new and flourishing settlement on the eastern branch of Susquehannah. Unfortunately for the security of the inhabitants, the soil was claimed both by Connecticut and Pennsylvania. From the collision of contradictory claims, founded on royal charters, the laws of neither were steadily enforced. In this remote settlement, where government was feeble, the tories were under less control and could easily assemble undiscovered. Nevertheless at one time 27 of them were taken, and sent to Hartford in Connecticut, but they were afterwards released. These and others of the same description, instigated by revenge against the
Americans, from whom some of them had suffered banishment and loss of property, made a common cause with the Indians, and attacked the Wyoming settlement with their combined forces estimated at 1100 men, 900 of which were Indians. The whole was commanded by Col. John Butler, a Connecticut tory. One of the forts, which had been constructed for the security of the inhabitants, being very weak, surrendered to this party; but some of the garrison had previously retired to the principal fort at Kingston, called Forty-Fort.

Col. John Butler next demanded the surrender of that. Col. Zebulon Butler a continental officer who commanded there, sent a message to him, proposing a conference at a bridge without the fort. This being agreed to, Col. Zebulon Butler, Dennison, and some other officers repaired to the [142] place appointed, and they were followed by the whole garrison, a few invalids excepted. None of the enemy appeared. The Wyoming people advanced, and supposed that the enemy were retiring. They continued to march on, till they were about three miles from the fort. They then saw a few of the enemy, with whom they exchanged some shot, but they presently found themselves ambuscaded and attacked by the whole body of Indians and tories. They fought gallantly, till they found that their retreat to the fort was cut off. Universal confusion then ensued. Of 417 who had marched out of the fort, about 360 were instantly slain. No quarters were given. Col. John Butler again demanded the surrender of Forty-Fort. This was agreed to under articles of capitulation, by which the effects of the people therein were to be secured to them. The garrison consisted of 30 men and 200 women. These were permitted to cross the Susquehannah, and retreat through the woods to Northampton county. The most of the other scattered settlers had previously retired, some through the woods to Northampton county, others down the river to Northumberland county. In this retreat, some women were delivered of children in the woods, and many suffered from want of provisions. Several of the settlers at Wyoming had erected good houses and barns, and made very considerable improvements. These and all the other houses in the vicinity, except about half a dozen, were destroyed. Their horses, cattle, sheep, and hogs were for the most part killed or driven away by the enemy.

The distresses of this settlement were uncommonly great. A large proportion of the male inhabitants were, in one day, slaughtered. In a single engagement, near 200 women were made widows, and a much greater number of children were left fatherless.

Soon after the destruction of the Wyoming settlement, an expedition was carried on against the Indians by Col. Butler of the Pennsylvania troops. He and his party, having gained the head of the Delaware, marched down the river for two days, and then struck across the country to the [143] Susquehannah. They totally burnt or destroyed the Indian villages, both in that quarter and the other settlements, but the inhabitants escaped. The destruction was extended for several miles on both sides of the Susquehannah. The difficulties which Col. Butler’s men encountered in this expedition, could not be undergone but by men who possessed a large share of hardiness, both of body and mind. They were obliged to carry their provisions on their backs, and thus loaded,
frequently to wade through creeks and rivers. After the toil of a hard march, they were
obliged to endure chilly nights and heavy rains, without even the means of keeping
their arms dry. They completed their business in sixteen days.

About four weeks after Col. Butler’s return, some hundreds of
Indians, a large body of tories, and about 50 regulars entered
Cherry-Valley within the State of New-York. They made an unsuccessful attempt on
fort Alden, but they killed and scalped thirty-two of the inhabitants, mostly women
and children, and also Col. Alden and ten soldiers.

An expedition which was to have taken place under Henry Hamilton Lt. Gov. of
Detroit, fortunately for the Virginian back settlers, against whom it was principally
directed fell through, in consequence of the spirited conduct of Col. Clarke. The
object of the expedition was extensive and many Indians were engaged in it. Hamilton
took post at St. Vincents in the winter, to have all things in readiness for invading the
American settlements, as soon as the season of the year would permit. Clarke on
hearing that Hamilton had weakened himself by sending away a considerable part of
his Indians against the frontier settlers, formed the resolution of attacking him, as the
best expedient for preventing the mischiefs which were designed against his country.
After surmounting many difficulties he arrived with 130 men unexpectedly at St.
Vincents.

The town immediately gave up to the Americans, and assisted them in taking the fort.
The next day Hamilton, with the garrison, agreed to surrender
prisoners of war on articles of capitulation. Clarke on hearing
that a convoy of British goods and provisions was on its way from Detroit, [144]
detached a party of sixty men which met them, and made prize of the whole. By this
well conducted and spirited attack on Hamilton, his intended expedition was nipped in
the bud. Col. Clarke transmitted to the council of Virginia letters and papers, relating
to Lt. Gov. Hamilton, Philip De Jean justice of peace for Detroit, and William
Lamothe captain of volunteers, whom he had made prisoners. The board reported that
Hamilton had incited the Indians to perpetrate their accustomed cruelties on the
defenceless inhabitants of the United States—had at the time of his captivity sent
considerable detachments of Indians against the frontiers—had appointed a great
council of them, to meet him and concert the operations of the ensuing
campaign—had given standing rewards for scalps, and had treated American
prisoners with cruelty. They also reported, that it appeared that De Jean was the
willing and cordial instrument of Hamilton, and that Lamothe was captain of the
volunteer scalping parties of Indians and tories, who went out from time to time,
under general orders to spare neither men, women, nor children. They therefore
considering them as fit objects, on which to begin the work of retaliation—advised the
Governor to put them in irons—confine them in the dungeon of the public jail—debar
them the use of pen, ink and paper, and exclude them from all converse, except with
their keeper.

Col. Goose Van Schaick, with 55 men, marched from fort
Schuyler to the Onandago settlements, and burned the whole,
consisting of about 50 houses, together with a large quantity of provisions. Horses,
and stock of every kind, were killed. The arms and ammunition of the Indians were

Nov. 4
Feb. 23
Apr. 19
either destroyed or brought off, and their settlements were laid waste. Twelve Indians were killed, and 34 made prisoners. This expedition was performed in less than six days, and without the loss of a single man.

In this manner, the savage part of the war was carried on in America. Waste and sometimes cruelty were inflicted and retorted, with infinite variety of scenes of horror and disgust. The selfish passions of human nature unrestrained by social ties, broke over all bounds of decency or humanity.

The American refugees, who had fled to the western wilderness, indulged their passion for rapine by assuming the colour and dress of Indians. At other times they acted as guides, and conducted these merciless ravagers into such settlements, as afforded the most valuable booty, and the fairest prospect of escape. The savages encouraged by British presents and agents, and led on by American refugees well acquainted with the country, and who cloaked the most consummate villainy under the specious name of loyalty, extended their depredations and murders far and near.

A particular detail of the devastation of property—of the distress of great numbers who escaped, only by fleeing to the woods, where they subsisted without covering on the spontaneous productions of the earth—and of the barbarous murders which were committed on persons of every age and sex, would be sufficient to freeze every breast with horror.

In sundry expeditions which had been carried on against the Indians, ample vengeance had been taken on some of them, but these partial successes produced no lasting benefit. The few who escaped, had it in their power to make thousands miserable. For the permanent security of the frontier inhabitants, it was resolved in the year 1779 to carry a decisive expedition into the Indian country. A considerable body of continental troops was selected for this purpose, and put under the command of Gen. Sullivan. The Indians who form the confederacy of the six nations, commonly called the Mohawks, were the objects of this expedition. They inhabit that immense and fertile tract of country, which lies between New-England, the middle States and the province of Canada. They had been advised by Congress, and they had promised, to observe a neutrality in the war, but they soon departed from this line of conduct. The Oneidas and a few others were friends to the Americans, but a great majority took part decidedly against them.

Overcome by the presents and promises of Sir John Johnson and other British agents, and their own native appetite for depredation, they invaded the frontiers carrying slaughter and devastation wherever they went. From the vicinity of their settlements, to the inhabited parts of the United States, they facilitated the inroads of the more remote Indians. Much was therefore expected from their expulsion. When Gen. Sullivan was on his way to the Indian country he was joined by the American Gen. Clinton with upwards of 1000 men. The latter made his way down the Susquehannah by a singular contrivance. The stream of water in that river was too low to float his batteaux. To remedy this inconvenience, he raised with great industry a dam across the mouth of the Lake Otsego, which is one of the sources of the river Susquehannah. The lake being constantly supplied by springs soon rose to the height of the dam. General Clinton
having got his batteaux ready, opened a passage through the dam for the water to
flow. This raised the river so high that he was enabled to embark all his troops and to
float them down to Tioga. By this exertion they soon joined Sullivan. The Indians on
hearing of the expedition projected against them, acted with firmness. They collected
their strength, took possession of proper ground, and fortified it with judgment. Gen.
Sullivan attacked them in their works. They stood a cannonade for more than two
hours but then gave way.
This engagement proved decisive: After the trenches were
forced, the Indians fled without making any attempt to rally.
They were pursued for some miles but without effect. The consternation occasioned
among them by this defeat was so great, that they gave up all ideas of farther
resistance. As the Americans advanced into their settlements, the Indians retreated
before them, without throwing any obstructions in their way. Gen. Sullivan penetrated
into the heart of the country inhabited by the Mohawks, and spread desolation every
where. Many settlements in the form of towns were destroyed, besides detached
habitations. All their fields of corn, and whatever was in a state of cultivation,
underwent the same fate. Scarcely any thing in the form of a house was left standing,
nor was an Indian to be seen.
To the surprise of the Americans, they found the lands about the
Indian towns well cultivated, and their houses both large
and commodious. The quantity of corn destroyed was immense. Orchards in which
were several hundred fruit trees were cut down, and of them many appeared to have
been planted for a long series of years. Their gardens, which were enriched with great
quantities of useful vegetables of different kinds, were laid waste. The Americans
were so full of resentment against the Indians, for the many outrages they had
suffered from them, and so bent on making the expedition decisive, that the officers
and soldiers cheerfully agreed to remain till they had fully completed the destruction
of the settlement. The supplies obtained in the country, lessened the inconvenience of
short rations. The ears of corn were so remarkably large, that many of them measured
twenty two inches in length. Necessity suggested a novel expedient for pulverising the
grains thereof. The soldiers perforated a few of their camp kettles with bayonets. The
protrusions occasioned thereby formed a rough surface, and by rubbing the ears of
corn thereon, a coarse meal was produced, which was easily converted into agreeable
nourishment.

In about three months from his setting out, Sullivan reached Easton in Pennsylvania,
and soon after rejoined the army.

The Indians, by this decisive expedition, being made to feel in the most sensible
manner, those calamities they were wont to inflict on others, became cautious and
timid. The sufferings they had undergone, and the dread of a repetition of them, in
case of their provoking the resentment of the Americans, damped the ardor of their
warriors from making incursions into the American settlements. The frontiers, though
not restored to perfect tranquility, experienced an exemption from a great proportion
of the calamities, in which they had been lately involved.
Though these good consequences resulted from this expedition, yet about the time of its commencement, and before its termination, several detached parties of Indians distressed different settlements in the United States. [148]

A party of 60 Indians, and 27 white men, under Brandt attacked the Minisink settlement, and burnt 10 houses 12 barns, a fort and two mills, and carried off much plunder, together with several prisoners.

The militia from Goshen and the vicinity, to the amount of 149, collected and pursued them, but with so little caution that they were surprised and defeated.

About this time, Gen. Williamson and Col. Pickens, both of South-Carolina, entered the Indian country adjacent to the frontier of their State, burned and destroyed the corn of eight towns, and insisted upon the Indians removing immediately from their late habitations into more remote settlements.

In the same month, Col. Broadhead engaged in a successful expedition against the Mingo, Munsey, and Seneca Indians. He left Pittsburg with 605 men, and was gone about five weeks, in which time he penetrated about 200 miles from the fort, destroyed a number of Indian huts and about 500 acres of corn.

The State of New-York continued to suffer in its frontier, from Indians and their tory associates. These burnt 50 houses, and 47 barns, the principal part of Canijohary, a fine settlement about 56 miles from Albany. They also destroyed 27 houses at Schoharie, and 20 at Normans creek.

In about two months after, they made a second irruption, and attacked Stone Arabia, Canasioraga and Schoharie.

At the same time, they laid waste a great extent of country about the Mohawk river, killed a number of the settlers, and made many prisoners.

The Cherokee Indians, having forgot the consequences of provoking the Americans to invade their settlements in the year 1776, made an incursion into Ninety-Six district in South-Carolina, massacred some families, and burned several houses.

Gen. Pickens collected a party of the militia, and penetrated into their country. This he accomplished in fourteen days, at the head of 394 horsemen. In that short space, he burned thirteen towns and villages, killed upwards of 40 Indians, and took a number of prisoners. Not one of his party was killed, and only two were wounded.

None of the expeditions [149] against the Cherokees had been so rapid and decisive as this one. The Americans did not expend three rounds of ammunition, and yet only three Indians escaped after having been once seen. On this occasion, a new and successful mode of fighting them was introduced. The American militia rushed forwards on horse-back, and charged the Indians with drawn swords. The vanquished Cherokees again sued for peace, in the most submissive terms and obtained it, but not till they had promised, that instead of listening to the advice of the royalists, instigating them to war, they would deliver to the authority of the State of South-Carolina, all who should visit them on that errand.
Towards the end of the war, there was a barbarous and unprovoked massacre of some civilised Indians, who had been settled near the Muskingum. These under the influence of some pious missionaries of the Moravian persuasion, had been formed into some degree of civil and religious order. They abhorred war, and would take no part therein, giving for reason that “The Great Being did not make men to destroy men, but to love and assist each other.” From a love of peace they advised those of their own colour, who were bent on war, to desist from it. They were also led from humanity, to inform the white people of their danger, when they knew that their settlements were about to be invaded. This provoked the hostile Indians to such a degree, that they carried these pacific people quite away from Muskingum to a bank of Sandusky creek. They finding corn dear and scarce in their new habitations, obtained liberty to come back in the fall of the same year to Muskingum, that they might collect the crops they had planted before their removal.

When the white people, at and near Monongahala, heard that a number of Indians were at the Moravian towns on the Muskingum, they gave out that their intentions were hostile. Without any further enquiry, 160 of them crossed the Ohio, and put to death these harmless, inoffensive people, though they made no resistance. In conformity to their religious principles, these Moravians patiently submitted to their hard fate, without attempting [150] to destroy their murderers. Upwards of ninety of this pacific set were killed by men, who while they called themselves Christians, were infinitely more deserving of the name of Savages than those whom they inhumanly murdered.

Soon after this unprovoked massacre, a party of the Americans set out for Sandusky, to destroy the Indian towns in that part; but the Delawares, Wyandots, and other Indians opposed them. An engagement ensued, in which some of the white people were killed, and several were taken prisoners. Among the latter was Col. Crawford and his son in law. The Colonel was sacrificed to the manes of those Indians, who were massacred at the Moravian towns. The other prisoners were put to death with the tomahawk.

Throughout the American war, the desolation brought by the Indians on the frontier settlements of the United States, and on the Indians by the Americans, were sufficient to excite compassion in the most obdurate hearts.

Not only the men and warriors, but the women and children, and whole settlements were involved in the promiscuous desolations. Each was made a scourge to the other, and the unavoidable calamities of war were rendered doubly distressing, by the dispersion of families, the breaking up of settlements, and an addition of savage cruelties to the most extensive devastation of those things, which conduce to the comfort of human life.
CHAPTER XIX

Campaign Of 1780 In The Southern States.

[151] The successful defence of savannah, together with the subsequent departure of Count D’Estaing from the coast of the United States, soon dissipated all apprehensions, previously entertained for the safety of New-York. These circumstances pointed out to Sir Henry Clinton, the propriety of renewing offensive operations. Having effected nothing of importance for the two preceding campaigns, he turned his attention southwardly, and regaled himself with flattering prospects of easy conquest, among the weaker States. The suitableness of the climate for winter operations, the richness of the country, and its distance from support, designated South-Carolina as a proper object of enterprize. No sooner therefore was the departure of the French fleet known and confirmed, than Sir Henry Clinton committed the command of the royal army in New-York to Lieut. Gen. Kniphausen, and embarked for the southward, with four flank battalions, 12 regiments, and a corps British, Hessian and provincial, a powerful detachment of artillery, 250 cavalry, together with an ample supply of military stores and provisions. Vice Admiral Arbuthnot, with a suitable naval force, undertook to convey the troops to the place of their destination. The whole sailed from New-York.

After a tedious and dangerous passage, in which part of their ordnance, most of their artillery, and all their cavalry horses were lost, the fleet arrived at Tybee in Georgia. In a few days, the transports with the army on board, sailed from Savannah for North-Edisto, and after a short passage, the troops made good their landing about 30 miles from Charleston, and took possession of John’s Island and Stono ferry, and soon after of James Island, and Wappoo-cut. A bridge was thrown over the canal, and part of the royal army took post on the banks of Ashley river opposite to Charleston.

The assembly of the State was sitting when the British landed, but broke up after “delegating to Gov. Rutledge, and such of his council as he could conveniently consult, a power to do every thing necessary for the public good, except the taking away the life of a citizen without a legal trial.” The Governor immediately ordered the militia to rendezvous. Though the necessity was great, few obeyed the pressing call. A proclamation was issued by the Governor, under his extraordinary powers, requiring such of the militia as were regularly draughted, and all the inhabitants and owners of property in the town, to repair to the American standard and join the garrison immediately, under pain of confiscation. This severe though necessary measure produced very little effect. The country was much despirited by the late repulse at Savannah.
The tedious passage from New-York to Tybee, gave the Americans time to fortify Charleston. This together with the losses which the royal army had sustained in the late tempestuous weather, induced Sir Henry Clinton, to dispatch an order to New-York for reinforcements of men and stores. He also directed Major General Prevost, to send on to him twelve hundred men from the garrison of Savannah. Brigadier General Patterson, at the head of this detachment, made his way good over the river Savannah, and through the intermediate country, and soon after joined Sir Henry Clinton near the banks of Ashley river. The royal forces without delay proceeded to the siege.

At Wappoo on James Island, they formed a depot, and erected fortifications both on that island and on the main, opposite to the southern and western extremities of Charleston. An advanced party crossed Ashley river, and soon after broke ground at the distance of 1100 yards from the American works. At successive periods, they erected five batteries on Charleston neck. The garrison was equally assiduous in preparing for its defence. The works which had been previously thrown up, were strengthened and extended. Lines and redoubts were continued across from Cooper to Ashley river. In front of the whole was a strong abattis, and a wet ditch made by passing a canal from the heads of swamps, which run in opposite directions. Between the abattis and the lines, deep holes were dug at short intervals. The lines were made particularly strong on the right and left, and so constructed as to rake the wet ditch in almost [153] its whole extent.

To secure the center, a hornwork had been erected, which being closed during the siege formed a kind of citadel. Works were also thrown up on all sides of the town, where a landing was practicable. Though the lines were no more than field works, yet Sir Henry Clinton treated them with the respectful homage of three parallels. From the 3d to the 10th of April, the first parallel was completed, and immediately after the town was summoned to surrender. On the 12th, the batteries were opened, and from that day an almost incessant fire was kept up. About the time the batteries were opened a work was thrown up near Wando river, nine miles from town, and another at Lempriere’s point, to preserve the communication with the country by water. A post was also ordered at a ferry over the Santee, to favour the coming in of reinforcements, or the retreat of the garrison when necessary.

The British marine force consisting of one ship of fifty guns, two of forty four guns, four of thirty two, and the Sandwich armed ship, crossed the bar in front of Rebellion road and anchored in Five fathom hole. The American force opposed to this was the Bricole, which though pierced for forty four guns, did not mount half of that number, two of 32 guns, one of 28, two of 26, two of 20, and the brig Notre Dame of 16 guns. The first object of its commander Commodore Whipple, was to prevent Admiral Arbuthnot from crossing the bar, but on farther examination this was found to be impracticable. He therefore fell back to Fort Moultrie, and afterwards to Charleston. The crew and guns of all his vessels, except one, were put on shore to reinforce the batteries.

Admiral Arbuthnot weighed anchor at Five fathom hole, and with the advantage of a strong southerly wind, and flowing tide, passed Fort Moultrie without stopping to engage it, and anchored near the remains of Fort Johnson. Colonel Pinckney who commanded on Sullivan’s Island, kept up a
brisk and well directed fire on the ships in their passage, which did as great execution
as could be expected.
To prevent the royal armed vessels [154] from running into
Cooper river, eleven vessels were sunk in the channel opposite to
the exchange. The batteries of the besiegers soon obtained a superiority over those of
the town. The former had 21 mortars and royals, the latter only two. The regular force
in the garrison was much inferior to that of the besiegers, and but few of the militia
could be persuaded to leave their plantations, and reinforce their brethren in the
capital. A camp was formed at Monk’s corner, to keep up the communication between
the town and country, and the militia without the lines, were requested to rendezvous
there: But this was surprised and routed by Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton. The British
having now less to fear, extended themselves to the eastward of Cooper river.
Two hundred and fifty horse, and 600 infantry were detached on
this service, but nevertheless in the opinion of a council of war,
the weak state of the garrison, made it improper to detach a number sufficient to
attack that small force.
About this time Sir Henry Clinton received a reinforcement of
3000 men from New-York.
A second council of war held four days after the first, agreed that
“a retreat would be attended with many distressing
inconveniences,
if not altogether impracticable,” and advised, “that offers of
capitulation before their affairs became more critical should be
made to General Clinton, which might admit of the army’s withdrawing, and afford
security to the persons and property of the inhabitants.” These terms being proposed,
were instantly rejected, but the garrison adhered to them in hopes that succours would
arrive from the neighbouring States. The bare offer of capitulating, dispirited the
garrison, but they continued to resist in expectation of favorable events. The British
speedily completed the investiture of the town, both by land and water.
After Admiral Arbuthnot had passed Sullivan’s Island, Colonel
Pinckney, with 150 of the men under his command, were
withdrawn from that post to Charleston. Soon after the fort on the island was
surrendered without opposition to Captain Hudson of the royal navy.
On the same day, the remains of the American cavalry which
escaped from the [155] surprise at Monk’s corner, on the 14th of
April, were again surprised by Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton at Laneau’s ferry on
Santee, and the whole either killed, captured or dispersed. While every thing
prospered with the British, Sir Henry Clinton began a correspondence with General
Lincoln, and renewed his former offers to the garrison in case of their surrender.
Lincoln was disposed to close with them, as far they respected his army, but some
demur was made with a view of gaining better terms for the citizens, which it was
hoped might be obtained on a conference. This was asked: But Clinton instead of
granting it, answered “that hostilities should recommence at 8 o’clock.” Nevertheless,
neither party fired till nine. The garrison then recommenced hostilities. The besiegers
immediately followed, and each cannonaded the other with unusual briskness. The
British batteries of the third parallel opened on this occasion. Shells and carcasses were
thrown into almost all parts of the town, and several houses were burned. The cannon
and mortars played on the garrison at a less distance than a hundred yards. The
Hessian chasseurs were so near the American lines, that with their rifles they could easily strike any object that was visible on them. The British having crossed the wet ditch by sap, advanced within 25 yards of the American works, and were ready for making a general assault by land and water. All expectation of succour was at an end. The only hope left was that 9000 men, the flower of the British army, seconded by a naval force, might fail in storming extensive lines defended by less than 3000 men. Under these circumstances, the siege was protracted till the 11th.

On that day a great number of the citizens addressed General Lincoln in a petition, expressing their acquiescence in the terms which Sir Henry Clinton had offered, and requesting his acceptance of them. On the reception of this petition, General Lincoln wrote to Sir Henry, and offered to accept the terms before proposed. The royal commanders wishing to avoid the extremity of a storm, and unwilling to press to unconditional submission an enemy, whose friendship they wished to conciliate, [156] returned a favourable answer. A capitulation was signed, and Major Gen. Leslie took possession of the town on the next day.

The loss on both sides during the siege was nearly equal. Of the King’s troops, 76 were killed, and 189 wounded. Of the Americans 89 were killed and 140 wounded. Upwards of 400 pieces of artillery were surrendered. By the articles of capitulation, the garrison was to march out of town, and to deposit their arms in front of the works, but the drums were not to beat a British march, nor the colors to be uncased. The continental troops and seamen were to keep their baggage, and remain prisoners of war till exchanged. The militia were to be permitted to return to their respective homes as prisoners on parole, and while they adhered to their parole, were not to be molested by the British troops in person or property. The inhabitants of all conditions to be considered as prisoners on parole, and to hold their property on the same terms with the militia. The officers of the army and navy to retain their servants swords, pistols and baggage unsearched. They were permitted to sell their horses, but not to remove them. A vessel was allowed to proceed to Philadelphia with Gen. Lincoln’s dispatches unopened.

The numbers which surrendered prisoners of war, inclusive of the militia and every adult male inhabitant, was above 5000, but the proper garrison at the time of the surrender did not exceed 2500. The precise number of privates in the continental army was 1977, of which number 500 were in the hospitals. The captive officers were much more in proportion than the privates, and consisted of one Major General, 6 Brigadiers, 9 Colonels, 14 Lieut. Colonels, 15 Majors, 84 Captains, 84 Lieutenants, 32 second Lieutenants and Ensigns. The gentlemen of the country, who were mostly militia officers, from a sense of honor repaired to the defence of Charleston, though they could not bring with them privates equal to their respective commands. The regular regiments were fully officered, though greatly deficient in privates.

This was the first instance, in which the Americans had attempted to defend a town. The unsuccessful event [157] with its consequences, demonstrated the policy of sacrificing the towns of the Union, in preference to endangering the whole, by risquing too much for their defence.
Much censure was undeservedly cast on Gen. Lincoln, for attempting the defence of Charleston. Though the contrary plan was in general the best, he had particular reasons to justify his deviation from the example of the commander in chief of the American army. Charleston was the only considerable town in the southern extreme of the confederacy, and for its preservation, South-Carolina and the adjacent States seemed willing to make great exertions. The reinforcements, promised for its defence, were fully sufficient for that purpose. The Congress, and the States of North and South-Carolina gave Gen. Lincoln ground to expect an army of 9900 men to second his operations, but from a variety of causes this army, including the militia, was little more than one third of that number. As long as an evacuation was practicable, he had such assurances of support, that he could not attempt it with propriety. Before he could be ascertained of the futility of these assurances, the British had taken such a position, that in the opinion of good judges a retreat could not be successfully made.

Shortly after the surrender, the commander in chief adopted sundry measures to induce the inhabitants to return to their allegiance. It was stated to them in a hand bill, which though without a name seemed to flow from authority: “That the helping hand of every man was wanting to re-establish peace and good government—That the commander in chief wished not to draw them into danger, while any doubt could remain of his success, but as that was now certain, he trusted that one and all would heartily join, and give effect to necessary measures for that purpose.” Those who had families were informed “That they would be permitted to remain at home, and form a militia for the maintenance of peace and good order, but from those who had no families it was expected that they would cheerfully assist in driving their oppressors, and all the miseries of war, from their borders.”

To such it was promised “That when on service, they [158] would be allowed pay, ammunition and provisions, in the same manner as the King’s troops.”

About the same time, Sir Henry Clinton in a proclamation declared

That if any person should thenceforward appear in arms in order to prevent the establishment of his Majesty’s government in that country, or should under any pretence or authority whatever, attempt to compel any other person or persons so to do, or who should hinder the King’s faithful subjects from joining his forces, or from performing those duties their allegiance required, such persons should be treated with the utmost severity, and their estates be immediately seized for confiscation.

In a few days after, Sir Henry Clinton and Admiral Arbuthnot, in the character of commissioners for restoring peace, offered to the inhabitants, with some exceptions, “Pardon for their past treasonable offences, and a re-instatement in the possession of all those rights and immunities which they heretofore had enjoyed under a free British government exempt from taxation, except by their own legislatures.”

The capital having surrendered, the next object with the British was to secure the general submission of the whole body of the people.
To this end, they posted garrisons in different parts of the country to awe the inhabitants. They also marched with upwards of 2000 men towards North-Carolina. This caused an immediate retreat of some parties of Americans, who had advanced into the northern extremity of South-Carolina, with the expectation of relieving Charleston. One of these, consisting of about 300 continentals commanded by Col. Buford, was overtaken at Wachaws by Lt. Col. Tarleton and completely defeated. Five out of six of the whole were either killed or so badly wounded, as to be incapable of being moved from the field of battle; and this took place though they made such ineffectual opposition as only to kill 12 and wound five of the British. This great disproportion of the killed on the two sides, arose from the circumstance that Tarleton’s party refused quarter to the Americans, after they had ceased to resist and laid down their arms.

[159]
Sir Henry Clinton having left about 4000 men for the southern service, embarked early in June with the main army for New-York. On his departure the command devolved on Lieut. Gen. Cornwallis. The season of the year, the condition of the army, and the unsettled state of South-Carolina, impeded the immediate invasion of North-Carolina. Earl Cornwallis dispatched instructions to the principal loyalists in that state to attend to the harvest, prepare provisions, and remain quiet till the latter end of August or beginning of September. His Lordship committed the care of the frontier to Lord Rawdon, and repairing to Charleston, devoted his principal attention to the commercial and civil regulations of South-Carolina. In the mean time, the impossibility of fleeing with their families and effects, and the want of an army to which the militia of the States might repair, induced the people in the country, to abandon all schemes of farther resistance. At Beaufort, Camden, and Ninety-Six, they generally laid down their arms, and submitted either as prisoners or as subjects. Excepting the extremities of the state bordering on North-Carolina, the inhabitants who did not flee out of the country preferred submission to resistance. This was followed by an unusual calm, and the British believed that the state was thoroughly conquered. An opportunity was now given to make an experiment from which much was expected, and for the omission of which, Sir Henry Clinton’s predecessor Sir William Howe, had been severely censured. It had been confidently asserted, that a majority of the Americans were well affected to the British government, and that under proper regulations, substantial service might be expected from them, in restoring the country to peace. At this crisis every bias in favor of Congress was removed. Their armies in the southern States were either captured or defeated. There was no regular force to the southward of Pennsylvania, which was sufficient to awe the friends of royal government. Every encouragement was held forth, to those of the inhabitants who would with arms support the old constitution. Confiscation and death were threatened as the consequence [160] of opposing its re-establishment. While there was no regular army within 400 miles to aid the friends of independence, the British were in force posted over all the country. The people were thus left to themselves, or rather strongly impelled to abandon an apparently sinking cause, and arrange themselves on the side of the conquerors. Under these favorable circumstances, the experiment was made, for supporting the British interest by the exertion of loyal inhabitants, unawed by
American armies or republican demagogues. It soon appeared that the disguise which fear had imposed, subsisted no longer than the present danger, and that the minds of the people though overawed were actuated by an hostile spirit. In prosecuting the scheme for obtaining a military aid from the inhabitants, that tranquillity which previous successes had procured was disturbed, and that ascendancy which arms had gained was interrupted. The inducement to submission with many, was a hope of obtaining a respite from the calamities of war, under the shelter of British protection. Such were not less astonished than confounded, on finding themselves virtually called upon to take arms in support of royal government. This was done in the following manner: After the inhabitants by the specious promises of protection and security, had generally submitted as subjects, or taken their parole as prisoners of war, a proclamation was issued by Sir Henry Clinton which set forth “That it was proper for all persons to take an active part in settling and securing his Majesty’s government”—and in which it was declared “That all the inhabitants of the province who were then prisoners on parole (those who were taken in Fort Moultrie and Charleston, and such as were in actual confinement excepted) should, from and after the 20th of June, be freed from their paroles, and restored to all the rights and duties belonging to citizens and inhabitants.” And it was in the same proclamation farther declared “that all persons under the description abovementioned, who should afterwards neglect to return to their allegiance, and to his Majesty’s government, should be considered as enemies and rebels to the same, and treated accordingly.”

It was designed by this arbitrary change of the political condition of the inhabitants from prisoners to citizens, to bring them into a dilemma, which would force them to take an active part in settling and securing the royal government. It involved a majority in the necessity of either fleeing out of the country, or of becoming a British militia. With this proclamation the declension of British authority commenced, for though the inhabitants from motives of fear or convenience, had generally submitted, the greatest part of them retained an affection for their American brethren, and shuddered at the thought of taking arms against them. Among such it was said “if we must fight, let it be on the side of America, our friends and countrymen.” A great number considering this proclamation as a discharge for their paroles, armed themselves in self defence, being induced thereto by the royal menaces, that they who did not return to their allegiance as British subjects, must expect to be treated as rebels. A greater number from being in the power of the British, exchanged their paroles as prisoners for the protection of subjects, but this was done in many cases, with a secret reservation of breaking the compulsory engagement, when a proper opportunity should present itself.

A party always attached to royal government, though they had conformed to the laws of the state, rejoiced in the ascendancy of the royal arms, but their number was inconsiderable, in comparison with the multitude who were obliged by necessity, or induced by convenience, to accept of British protection.

The precautions taken to prevent the rising of the royalists in North-Carolina, did not answer the end. Several of the inhabitants of Tryon county, under the direction of Col. Moore took up arms, and were in a few days defeated by the whig militia, commanded by Gen. Rutherford. Col. Bryan another loyalist, though equally
injudicious as to time, was successful. He reached the 71st regiment stationed in the
Cheraws with about 800 men, assembled from the neighbourhood of the river Yadkin.

[162]
While the conquerors were endeavoring to strengthen the party
for royal government, the Americans were not inattentive to their
interests. Governor Rutledge who during the siege of Charleston had been requested
by Gen. Lincoln to go out of town, was industriously and successfully negotiating
with North-Carolina, Virginia and Congress, to obtain a force for checking the
progress of the British arms. Representations to the same effect, had also been made
in due time by Gen. Lincoln. Congress ordered a considerable detachment from their
main army, to be marched to the Southward. North-Carolina also ordered a large body
of militia to take the field. As the British advanced to the upper country of South-
Carolina, a considerable number of determined whigs retreated before them, and took
refuge in North-Carolina. In this class was Col. Sumter a distinguished partizan, who
was well qualified for conducting military operations. A party of exiles from South-
Carolina, made choice of him for their leader. At the head of this little band of
freemen, he returned to his own state, and took the field against the victorious British,
after the inhabitants had generally abandoned all ideas of farther resistance. This
unexpected impediment to the extension of British conquests roused all the passions
which disappointed ambition can inspire. Previous successes had flattered the royal
commanders with hopes of distinguished rank among the conquerors of America, but
the renewal of hostilities obscured the pleasing prospect. Flushed with the victories
they had gained in the first of the campaign, and believing every thing told them
favorable to their wishes to be true, they conceived that they had little to fear on the
south side of Virginia. When experience refuted these hopes, they were transported
with indignation against the inhabitants, and confined several of them on suspicion of
their being accessory to the recommencement of hostilities.

The first effort of renewed warfare was two months after the fall
of Charleston, when 133 of Col. Sumter’s corps attacked and
routed a detachment of the royal forces and militia, which were posted in a lane at
Williamson’s [163] plantation.
This was the first advantage gained over the British, since their
landing in the beginning of the year. The steady persevering
friends of America, who were very numerous in the North-western frontier of South-
Carolina, turned out with great alacrity to join Col. Sumter, though opposition to the
British government, had entirely ceased in every other part of the State. His troops in
a few days amounted to 600 men. With this increase of strength, he made a spirited
attack on a party of the British at Rocky Mount, but as he had no artillery, and they
were secured under cover of earth filled in between logs, he could make no
impression upon them, and was obliged to retreat. Sensible that the minds of men are
influenced by enterprise and that to keep militia together it is necessary to employ
them, this active partizan attacked another of the royal detachments, consisting of the
Prince of Wales’ regiment, and a large body of tories posted at the Hanging rock. The
Prince of Wales’ regiment was almost totally destroyed. From 273 it was reduced to
9. The loyalists, who were of that party which had advanced from North Carolina
under Col. Bryan, were dispersed. The panic occasioned by the fall of Charleston
daily abated. The whig militia on the extremities of the state formed themselves into parties, under leaders of their own choice, and sometimes attacked detachments of the British army, but more frequently those of their own countrymen, who as a royal militia were co-operating with the King’s forces. While Sumter kept up the spirits of the people by a succession of gallant enterprizes, a respectable continental force was advancing through the middle States, for the relief of their southern brethren. With the hopes of relieving Charleston, orders were given for the Maryland and Delaware troops to march from Gen. Washington’s head quarters to South-Carolina, but the Quarter-master-general was unable to put this detachment in motion as soon as was intended.

The manufacturers employed in providing for the army would neither go on with their business, nor deliver the articles they had completed, declaring they had suffered so much from the depreciation of the money, that they [164] would not part with their property without immediate payment. Under these embarrassing circumstances, the Southern States required an aid from the northern army, to be marched through the intermediate space of 800 miles. The Maryland and Delaware troops were with great exertions at length enabled to move. After marching through Jersey and Pennsylvania, they embarked at the Head of Elk and landed soon after at Petersburg, and thence proceeded through the country towards South-Carolina. This force was at first put under the command of Major Gen. Baron de Kalb, and afterwards of Gen. Gates. The success of the latter in the northern campaigns of 1776 and 1777, induced many to believe that his presence as commander of the southern army, would re-animate the friends of Independence. While Baron de Kalb commanded, a council of war had advised him to file off from the direct road to Camden, towards the well cultivated settlements in the vicinity of the Waxhaws: But Gen. Gates on taking the command did not conceive this movement to be necessary, supporting it to be most for the interest of the States that he should proceed immediately with his army, on the shortest road to the vicinity of the British encampments. This led through a barren country, in passing over which, the Americans severely felt the scarcity of provisions. Their murmurs became audible, and there were strong appearances of mutiny, but the officers who shared every calamity in common with the privates interposed, and conciliated them to a patient sufferance of their hard lot. They principally subsisted on lean cattle, picked up in the woods. The whole army was under the necessity of using green corn, and peaches in the place of bread. They were subsisted for several days on the latter alone. Dysenteries became common in consequence of this diet. The heat of the season, the unhealthiness of the climate, together with insufficient and unwholsome food, threatened destruction to the army. The common soliders, instead of desponding, began after some time to be merry with their misfortunes. They used “starvation” as a cant word, and vied with each other in burlesquing their [165] situation.

The wit and humour displayed on the occasion contributed not a little to reconcile them to their sufferings.

The American army, having made its way through a country of pine-barrens, sand-hills and swamps, reached Clermont, 13 miles from Camden.
The next day, Gen. Stephens arrived with a large body of Virginia militia.

As the American army approached South-Carolina, lord Rawdon concentrated his force at Camden. The retreat of the British from their out-posts, the advances of the American army, and the impolitic conduct of the conquerors towards their new subjects, concurred at this juncture to produce a general revolt in favor of Congress. The people were daily more dissatisfied with their situation. Tired of war, they had submitted to British government with the expectation of bettering their condition, but they soon found their mistake. The greatest address should have been practiced towards the inhabitants, in order to second the views of the Parent State in re-uniting the revolted colonies to her government. That the people might be induced to return to the condition of subjects, their minds and affections, as well as their armies, ought to have been conquered. This delicate task was rarely attempted. The officers, privates, and followers of the royal army, were generally more intent on amassing fortunes by plunder and rapine, than on promoting a re-union of the dissenoided members of the empire. Instead of increasing the number of real friends to royal government, they disgusted those that they found. The high spirited citizens of Carolina, impatient of their rapine and insolence, rejoiced in the prospect of freeing their country from its oppressors. Motives of this kind, together with a prevailing attachment to the cause of Independence, induced many to break through all ties to join Gen. Gates, and more to wish him the completest success.

The similarity of language and appearance between the British and American armies, gave opportunities for imposing on the inhabitants. Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton with a party, by assuming the name and dress of Americans, passed themselves near Black river, for the advance of General Gates’ army. Some of the neighbouring militia were eagerly collected by Mr. Bradley, to co-operate with their supposed friends, but after some time the veil being thrown aside, Bradley and his volunteers were carried to Camden, and confined there as prisoners.

General Gates on reaching the frontier of South-Carolina, issued a proclamation inviting the patriotic citizens “to join heartily in rescuing themselves and their country, from the oppression of a government imposed on them by the ruffian hand of conquest.” He also gave assurances of forgiveness and perfect security, to such of the unfortunate citizens as had been induced by the terror of sanguinary punishment, the menace of confiscation, and the arbitrary measures of military domination, apparently to acquiesce under the British government, and to make a forced declaration of allegiance and support to a tyranny, which the indignant souls of citizens resolved on freedom, inwardly revolted at with horror and detestation,

excepting only from this amnesty, “those who in the hour of devastation, had exercised acts of barbarity and depredation on the persons and property of their fellow citizens.” The army with which Gates advanced, was by the arrival of Stephens’ militia, increased nearly to 4000 men, but of this large number, the whole regular
force was only 900 infantry and 70 cavalry. On the approach of Gates, Earl Cornwallis hastened from Charleston to Camden, and arrived there on the 14th. The force which his Lordship found collected on his arrival, was 1700 infantry and 300 cavalry. This inferior number would have justified a retreat, but he chose rather to stake his fortune on the decision of a battle. On the night of the 15th, he marched from Camden with his whole force, intending, to attack the Americans in their camp at Clermont. In the same night Gates, after ordering his baggage to the Waxhaws, put his army in motion, with an intention of advancing to an eligible position, about 8 miles from Camden. The American army was ordered to march at 10 o’clock p.m. in the following order.

Colonel Armand’s advance [167] cavalry. Colonel Porterfield’s light infantry, on the right flank of Colonel Armand’s in Indian-file, 200 yards from the road. Major Armstrong’s light infantry in the same order as Colonel Porterfield’s on the left flank of the legion advanced guard of foot, composed of the advanced piquets, first brigade of Maryland, second brigade of Maryland—division of North-Carolina, Virginia rear guard, volunteer cavalry, upon flanks of the baggage equally divided.

The light infantry upon each flank were ordered to march up and support the calvary, if it should be attacked by the British cavalry, and Colonel Armand was directed in that case to stand the attack at all events.

The advance of both armies met in the night and engaged. Some of the cavalry of Armand’s legion, being wounded in the first fire fell back on others, who recoiled so suddenly, that the first Maryland regiment was broken, and the whole line of the army was thrown into confusion. This first impression struck deep, and dispirited the militia. The American army soon recovered its order, and both they and their adversaries kept their ground, and occasionally skirmished through the night. Colonel Porterfield, a most excellent officer, on whose abilities General Gates particularly depended, was wounded in the early part of this night attack. In the morning a severe and general engagement took place. At the first onset, the great body of the Virginia militia, who formed the left wing of the army, on being charged with fixed bayonets by the British infantry, threw down their arms, and with the utmost precipitation fled from the field. A considerable part of the North-Carolina militia followed the unworthy example, but the continentals who formed the right wing of the army, inferior as they were in numbers to the British, stood their ground and maintained the conflict with great resolution. Never did men acquit themselves better: for some time they had clearly the advantage of their opponents, and were in possession of a considerable body of prisoners: overpowered at last by numbers, and nearly surrounded by the enemy, they were compelled reluctantly to leave the ground. In justice [168] to the North-Carolina militia, it should be remarked that part of the brigade commanded by Gen. Gregory acquitted themselves well. They were formed immediately on the left of the continentals, and kept the field while they had a cartridge to fire. Gen. Gregory himself was twice wounded by a bayonet in bringing off his men, and several of his brigade, who were made prisoners, had no wounds except from bayonets.* Two hundred and ninety American wounded prisoners were carried into Camden, after this action, of this number 206 were continentals, 82, were
North-Carolina militia, and 2 were Virginia militia. The resistance made by each corps, may in some degree be estimated from the number of wounded. The Americans lost the whole of their artillery, eight field pieces, upwards of 200 waggons, and the greatest part of their baggage, almost all their officers were separated from their respective commands. Every corps was broken in action and dispersed. The fugitives who fled by the common road, were pursued above 20 miles by the horse of Tarleton’s legion, and the way was covered with arms, baggage and waggons. Baron de Kalb, the second in command, a brave and experienced officer, was taken prisoner and died on the next day of his wounds. The baron who was a German by birth, had long been in the French service. He had travelled through the British provinces, about the time of the stamp act, and is said to have reported to his superiors on his return, “that the colonists were so firmly and universally attached to Great Britain, that nothing could shake their loyalty.” The Congress resolved that a monument should be erected to his memory in Annapolis, with a very honorable inscription. General Rutherford of North-Carolina, was wounded and taken prisoner.

The royal army fought with great bravery, but the completeness of their victory was in a great degree owing to their superiority in cavalry, and the precipitate flight of the American militia. Their whole loss is supposed to have amounted to several hundreds. To add to the distresses of the Americans, the defeat of Gates was immediately followed by the surprise and dispersion of Sumter’s corps. While the former was advancing near to the British army, the latter who had previously taken post between Camden and Charleston, took a number of prisoners and captured sundry British stores, together with their convoy. On hearing of the defeat of his superior officer, he began to retreat with his prisoners and stores. Tarleton with his legion, and a detachment of infantry, pursued with such celerity and address as to overtake and surprize this party at Fishing Creek. The British rode into their camp before they were prepared for defence. The retreating Americans, having been four days with little or no sleep, were more obedient to the calls of nature, than attentive to her first law self-preservation. Sumter had taken every prudent precaution to prevent a surprise, but his videttes were so overcome with fatigue, that they neglected their duty. With great difficulty he got a few to stand their ground for a short time, but the greater part of his corps fled to the river or the woods. He lost all his artillery, and his whole detachment was either killed, captured or dispersed. The prisoners he had lately taken were all retaken. On the 17th and 18th of Aug. about 150 of Gates’ army rendezvoused at Charlotte. These had reason to apprehend that they would be immediately pursued and cut to pieces. There was no magazine of provisions in the town, and it was without any kind of defence. It was therefore concluded to retreat to Salisbury. A circumstantial detail of this, would be the picture of complicated wretchedness. There were more wounded men than could be conveniently carried off. The inhabitants hourly expecting the British to advance into their settlement, and generally intending to flee, could not attend to the accommodation of the suffering soldiers. Objects of distress occurred in every quarter. There were many who stood in need of kind assistance, but there were few who could give it to them. Several men were to be seen with but one arm, and some without any. Anxiety, pain and dejection, poverty, hurry and confusion, promiscuously marked the gloomy scene.
Under these circumstances the remains of that numerous army, which had lately caused such terror to the friends of Great-Britain, retreated to Salisbury and soon after to Hillsborough. General Gates had previously retired to this last place, and was there in concert with the government of North-Carolina, devising plans of defense, and for renewing military operations.

Though there was no army to oppose Lord Cornwallis, yet the season and bad health of his army, restrained him from pursuing his conquests. By the complete dispersion of the continental forces, the country was in his power. The present moment of triumph seemed therefore the most favorable conjuncture, for breaking the spirits of those who were attached to independence. To prevent their future co-operation with the armies of Congress, a severer policy was henceforward adopted.

Unfortunately for the inhabitants, this was taken up on grounds which involved thousands in distress, and not a few in the loss of life. The British conceived themselves in possession of the rights of sovereignty over a conquered country, and that therefore the efforts of the citizens, to assert their independence exposed them to the penal consequences of treason and rebellion. Influenced by these opinions, and transported with indignation against the inhabitants, they violated the rights which are held sacred between independent hostile nations. Orders were given by Lord Cornwallis “that all the inhabitants of the province, who had submitted, and who had taken part in this revolt, should be punished with the greatest rigor—that they should be imprisoned, and their whole property taken from them or destroyed.” He also ordered in the most positive manner “that every militia man, who had born arms with the British, and afterwards joined the Americans, should be put to death.” At Augusta, at Camden and elsewhere, several of the inhabitants were hanged in consequence of these orders. The men who suffered had been compelled by the necessities of their families, and the prospect of saving their property, to make an involuntary submission to the royal conquerors. Experience soon taught them the inefficacy of these submissions.

This in [171] their opinion absolved them from the obligations of their engagements to support the royal cause, and left them at liberty to follow their inclinations. To treat men thus circumstanced, with the severity of punishment usually inflicted on deserters and traitors, might have a political tendency to discourage farther revolts, but the impartial world must regret that the unavoidable horrors of war, should be aggravated by such deliberate effusions of human blood.

Notwithstanding the decisive superiority of the British armies in South-Carolina, several of the most respectable citizens, though in the power of their conquerors, resisted every temptation to resume the character of subjects. To enforce a general submission, orders were given by lord Cornwallis immediately after his victory, to send out of South-Carolina a number of its principal citizens. Lieut. Gov. Gadsden, most of the civil and militia officers and some others, who had declined exchanging their paroles for the protection of British subjects, were taken up, put on board a vessel in the harbour, and sent to St. Augustine. General Moultrie remonstrated against the confinement and removal of these gentlemen, as contrary to their rights derived from the capitulation of
Charleston. They at the same time challenged their adversaries to prove any conduct of theirs, which merited expulsion from their country and families. They received no farther satisfaction, than that the measure had been “adopted from motives of policy.” To convince the inhabitants, that the conquerors were seriously resolved to remove from the country, all who refused to become subjects, an additional number of about thirty citizens of South-Carolina, who remained prisoners on parole, were sent off to the same place in less than three months. Gen. Rutherford and Col. Isaacs both of North-Carolina, who had been lately taken near Camden, were associated with them.

To compel the re-establishment of British government, lord Cornwallis, in about four weeks after his victory, issued a proclamation for the sequestration of all estates belonging to the active friends of Independence. By [172] this he constituted

John Cruden commissioner, with full power and authority, on the receipt of an order or warrant, to take into his possession the estates both real and personal (not included in the capitulation of Charleston) of those in the service or acting under the authority of the rebel Congress, and also the estates, both real and personal, of those persons who by an open avowal of rebellious principles, or by other notorious acts, manifested a wicked and desperate perseverance in opposing the re-establishment of his Majesty’s just and lawful authority;

and it was farther declared

That any person or persons obstructing or impeding the said commissioner in the execution of his duty, by the concealment or removal of property or otherwise, should on conviction be punished as aiding and abetting rebellion.

An adherent to Independence was now considered as one who courted exile, poverty and ruin. Many yielded to the temptation, and became British subjects. The mischievous effects of slavery, in facilitating the conquest of the country, now became apparent. As the slaves had no interest at stake, the subjugation of the State was a matter of no consequence to them. Instead of aiding in its defence, they by a variety of means threw the weight of their little influence into the opposite scale.

Though numbers broke through all the ties which bound them to support the cause of America, illustrious sacrifices were made at the shrine of liberty. Several of the richest men in the state suffered their fortunes to remain in the power and possession of their conquerors, rather than stain their honor, by joining the enemies of their country. The patriotism of the ladies contributed much to this firmness. They crowded on board prison ships, and other places of confinement, to solace their suffering countrymen. While the conquerors were regaling themselves at concerts and assemblies, they could obtain very few of the fair sex to associate with them; but no sooner was an American officer introduced as a prisoner, than his company was sought for, and his person treated with every possible mark of attention and respect. On other occasions the ladies in a great measure [173] retired from the public eye, wept over the distresses of their country, and gave every proof of the warmest attachment to its suffering cause. Among the
numbers who were banished from their families, and whose property was seized by
the conquerors, many examples could be produced of ladies cheerfully parting with
their sons, husbands and brothers, exhorting them to fortitude and perseverance; and
repeatedly entreating them never to suffer family-attachments to interfere with the
duty they owed to their country. When, in the progress of the war, they were also
comprehended under a general sentence of banishment, with equal resolution they
parted with their native country, and the many endearments of home—followed their
husbands into prison-ships and distant lands, where they were reduced to the necessity
of receiving charity.

Animated by such examples, as well as by a high sense of honor and the love of their
country, a great proportion of the gentlemen of South-Carolina deliberately adhered to
their first resolution, of risquing life and fortune in support of their liberties. Hitherto
the royal forces in South-Carolina had been attended with almost uninterrupted
success. Their standards overspread the country, penetrated into every quarter, and
triumphed over all opposition.

The British ministry by this flattering posture of affairs, were once more intoxicated
with the hope of subjugating America. New plans were formed, and great
expectations indulged, of speedily re-uniting the dissevered members of the empire. It
was now asserted with a confidence bordering on presumption, that such troops as
fought at Camden, put under such a commander as Lord Cornwallis, would soon
extirpate rebellion, so effectually as to leave no vestige of it in America. The British
ministry and army by an impious confidence in their own wisdom and prowess, were
duly prepared to give, in their approaching downfall, an useful lesson to the world.

The disaster of the army under General Gates, overspread at first
the face of American affairs, with a dismal [174] gloom, but the
day of prosperity to the United States, began as will appear in the sequel, from that
moment to dawn. Their prospects brightened up, while those of their enemies were
obscured by disgrace, broken by defeat, and at last covered with ruin. Elated with
their victories, the conquerors grew more insolent and rapacious, while the real
friends of independence became resolute and determined.

We have seen Sumter penetrating into South-Carolina, and recommencing a military
opposition to British government. Soon after that event, he was promoted by
Governor Rutledge, to the rank of Brigadier General. About the same time Marion
was promoted to the same rank, and in the northeastern extremities of the State,
successfully prosecuted a similar plan. This valuable officer after the surrender of
Charleston, retreated to North-Carolina. On the advance of General Gates, he obtained
a command of sixteen men. With these he penetrated through the country, and took a
position near the Santee. On the defeat of General Gates, he was compelled to
abandon the State, but returned after an absence of a few days. For several weeks he
had under his command only 70 men. At one time hardships and dangers reduced that
number to 25, yet with this inconsiderable number he secured himself in the midst of
surrounding foes. Various schemes were tried to detach the inhabitants from co-
operating with him. Major Wemys burned scores of houses on Pedee, Lynch’s creek
and Black river, belonging to such as were supposed to do duty with Marion, or to be
subservient to his views. This had an effect different from what was intended. Revenge and despair co-operated with patriotism, to make these ruined men keep the field. Having no houses to shelter them, the camps of their countrymen became their homes. For several months, Marion and his party were obliged to sleep in the open air, and to shelter themselves in the recesses of deep swamps. From these retreats they sallied out, whenever an opportunity of harrassing the enemy, or of serving their country presented itself.

Opposition to British government was not wholly confined to the parties commanded by Sumter and Marion. It was at no time altogether extinct in the extremities of the State. The disposition to revolt, which had been excited on the approach of General Gates, was not extinguished by his defeat. The spirit of the people was overawed, but not subdued. The severity with which revolters who fell into the hands of the British were treated, induced those who escaped to persevere and seek safety in swamps.

From the time of the general submission of the inhabitants in 1780, pains had been taken to increase the royal force by the co-operation of the yeomanry of the country. The British persuaded the people to form a royal militia, by representing that every prospect of succeeding in their scheme of independence was annihilated, and that a farther opposition would only be a prolongation of their distresses, if not their utter ruin. Major Ferguson of the 71st regiment, was particularly active in this business. He visited the settlements of the disaffected to the American cause, and collected a corps of militia of that description, from which much active service was expected. He advanced to the northwestern settlements, to hold communication with the loyalists of both Carolinas. From his presence, together with assurances of an early movement of the royal army into North-Carolina, it was hoped that the friends of royal government would be roused to activity in the service of their King. In the mean time every preparation was made for urging offensive operations, as soon as the season and the state of the stores would permit.

That spirit of enterprise, which has already been mentioned as beginning to revive among the American militia about this time, prompted Col. Clarke to make an attempt on the British post at Augusta in Georgia; but in this he failed and was obliged to retreat. Major Ferguson with the hope of intercepting his party, kept near the mountains and at a considerable distance from support. These circumstances, together with the depredations of the loyalists, induced those hardy republicans, who reside on the west side of the Alleghany mountains, [176] to form an enterprise for reducing that distinguished partizan. This was done of their own motion, without any direction from the governments of America, or from the officers of the continental army.

There was, without any apparent design, a powerful combination of several detached commanders of several adjacent States, with their respective commands of militia. Col. Campbell of Virginia, Colonels Cleveland, Shelby, Sevier, and M’Dowel of North Carolina, together with Colonels Lacey, Hawthorn and Hill, of South-Carolina, all rendezvoused together, with a number of men amounting to 1600, though they
were under no general command, and though they were not called upon to embody by any common authority, or indeed by any authority at all, but that of a general impulse on their own minds. They had so little of the mechanism of a regular army, that the Colonels of some of the States by common consent, commanded each day alternately. The hardships these volunteers underwent were very great. Some of them subsisted for weeks together, without tasting bread or salt, or spiritous liquors, and slept in the woods without blankets. The running stream quenched their thirst. At night the earth afforded them a bed, and the heavens, or at most the limbs of trees were their only covering. Ears of corn or pumpkins thrown into the fire, with occasional supplies of beef or venison, killed and roasted in the woods, were the chief articles of their provisions. They had neither commissaries, quarter-masters, nor stores of any kind. They selected about a thousand of their best men, and mounted them on their fleetest horses. These attacked Major Ferguson on the top of King’s mountain, near the confines of North and South-Carolina.

The Americans formed three parties. Col. Lacey of South-Carolina led one, which attacked on the west end. The two others were commanded by Cols. Campbell and Cleveland, one of which attacked on the east end and the other in the centre. Ferguson with great boldness attacked the assailants with fixed bayonets, and compelled them successively to retire, but they only fell back a little way, and getting behind trees and rocks, renewed [177] their fire in almost every direction.

The British being uncovered, were aimed at by the American marksmen, and many of them were slain. An unusual number of the killed were found to have been shot in the head. Riflemen took off riflemen with such exactness, that they killed each other when taking sight, so effectually that their eyes remained after they were dead, one shut and the other open, in the usual manner of marksmen when levelling at their object. Major Ferguson displayed as much bravery as was possible in his situation: But his encampment on the top of the mountain was not well chosen, as it gave the Americans an opportunity of covering themselves in their approaches. Had he pursued his march on charging and driving the first party of the militia which gave way, he might have got off with the most of his men, but his unconquerable spirit disdained either to flee or to surrender. After a severe conflict he received a mortal wound. No chance of escape being left, and all prospect of successful resistance being at an end, the contest was ended by the submission of the survivors. Upwards of 800 became prisoners, and 225 had been previously killed or wounded. Very few of the assailants fell, but in their number was Col. Williams a distinguished militia officer in Ninety-Six district, who had been very active in opposing the re-establishment of British government. Ten of the royal militia who had surrendered were hanged by their conquerors. They were provoked to this measure by the severity of the British, who had lately hanged several of the captured Americans, in South-Carolina and Georgia. They also alleged that the men who suffered were guilty of previous felonies, for which their lives were forfeited by the laws of the land. The fall of Ferguson was in itself a great loss to the royal cause. He possessed superior abilities as a partizan, and his spirit of enterprise was uncommon. To a distinguished capacity for planning great designs, he also added the practical abilities necessary to carry them into execution. The unexpected advantage which the Americans gained over him and his party, in a great degree frustrated a well concerted
scheme for strengthening [178] the British army by the co-operation of the tory inhabitants, whom he had undertaken to discipline and prepare for active service. The total rout of the party, which had joined Major Ferguson, operated as a check on the future exertions of the loyalists. The same timid caution, which made them averse to joining their countrymen in opposing the claims of Great Britain, restrained them from risking any more in support of the royal cause. Henceforward they waited to see how the scales were likely to incline, and reserved themselves till the British army, by its own unassisted efforts, should gain a decided superiority.

In a few weeks after the general action near Camden, Lord Cornwallis left a small force in that village, and marched with the main army towards Salisbury, intending to push forwards in that direction. While on his way thither, the North Carolina militia was very industrious and successful in annoying his detachments. Riflemen frequently penetrated near his camp, and from behind trees made sure of their objects. The late conquerors found their situation very uneasy, being exposed to unseen dangers if they attempted to make an excursion of only a few hundred yards from their main body. The defeat of Major Ferguson, added to these circumstances, gave a serious alarm to lord Cornwallis, and he soon after retreated to Winnsborough. As he retired, the militia took several of his waggons, and single men often rode up within gunshot of his army, discharged their pieces, and made their escape. The panic occasioned by the defeat of Gen. Gates had in a great measure worn off. The defeat of Major Ferguson and the consequent retreat of lord Cornwallis, encouraged the American militia to take the field, and the necessity of the times induced them to submit to stricter discipline. Sumter soon after the dispersion of his corps on the 18th of August, collected a band of volunteers, partly from new adventurers, and partly from those who had escaped on that day. With these, though for three months there was no continental army in the State, he constantly kept the field in support of American independence. He varied his position from [179] time to time about Evoree, Broad and Tyger rivers, and had frequent skirmishes with his adversaries. Having mounted his followers he infested the British parties with frequent incursions—beat up their quarters—intercepted their convoys, and so harassed them with successive alarms, that their movements could not be made but with caution and difficulty. His spirit of enterprize was so particularly injurious to the British, that they laid sundry plans for destroying his force, but they all failed in the execution. He was attacked at Broad river by Major Wemys, commanding a corps of infantry and dragoons. In this action the British were defeated, and their commanding officer taken prisoner.
months interrupted his gallant enterprizes in behalf of his country. His zeal and activity in animating the militia, when they were discouraged by repeated defeats, and the bravery and good conduct he displayed in sundry attacks on the British detachments, procured him the applause of his countrymen, and the thanks of Congress.

For the three months which followed the defeat of the American army near Camden, Gen. Gates was industriously preparing to take the field. Having collected a force at Hillsbury he advanced to Salisbury, and very soon after to Charlotte. He had done every thing in his power to repair the injuries of his defeat, and was again in a condition to face the enemy; but from that influence which popular opinion has over public affairs in a commonwealth, Congress resolved to supersede him, and to order a court of enquiry to be held on his conduct. This was founded on a former resolve, that whoever lost a post should be subject to a court of inquiry. The cases were no ways parallel, he had lost a battle but not a post. The only charge that could be exhibited against Gen. Gates was that he had been defeated. His enemies could accuse him of no military crime, unless that to be unsuccessful might be reckoned so. The public, sore with their losses, were desirous of a change, and Congress found it necessary to gratify them, though at the expence of the feelings of one of their best, and till August 1780, one of their most successful officers. Virginia did not so soon forget Saratoga. When Gen. Gates was at Richmond on his way home from Carolina, the house of Burgesses of that State unanimously resolved that a committee of four be appointed to wait on Gen. Gates, and assure him of their high regard and esteem, and that the remembrance of his former glorious services could not be obliterated by any reverse of fortune; but that ever mindful of his great merit, they would omit no opportunity of testifying to the world the gratitude which the country owed to him in his military character.

These events together with a few unimportant skirmishes not worthy of being particularly mentioned, closed the campaign of 1780 in the southern States. They afforded ample evidence of the folly of prosecuting the American war. Though British conquests had rapidly succeeded each other, yet no advantages accrued to the victors. The minds of the people were unsubdued, or rather more alienated from every idea of returning to their former allegiance. Such was their temper, that the expence of retaining them in subjection, would have exceeded all the profits of the conquest. British garrisons kept down open resistance in the vicinity of the places where they were established, but as soon as they were withdrawn, and the people left to themselves, a spirit of revolt hostile to Great-Britain always displayed itself, and the standard of independence whenever it was prudently raised, never wanted followers from the active and spirited part of the community.
CHAPTER XX

Campaign Of 1780, In The Northern States.

While the war raged in South-Carolina, the campaign of 1780, in the northern States was barren of important events. At the close of the preceding campaign, the American northern army took post at Morristown and built themselves huts, agreeably to the practice which had been first introduced at Valley-Forge. This position was well calculated to cover the country from the excursions of the British, being only 20 miles from New-York.

Lord Sterling made an ineffectual attempt to surprise a party of the enemy on Staten-Island. While he was on the island, a number of persons from the Jersey side passed over and plundered the inhabitants, who had submitted to the British government. In these times of confusion, licentious persons fixed themselves near the lines, which divided the British from the Americans. Whenssoever an opportunity offered, they were in the habit of going within the settlements of the opposite party, and under the pretence of distressing their enemies, committed the most shameful depredations. In the first months of the year 1780, while the royal army was weakened by the expedition against Charleston, the British were apprehensive for their safety in New-York. The rare circumstance which then existed of a connexion between the main and York island, by means of ice seemed to invite to the enterprise, but the force and equipments of the American army were unequal to it. Lieutenant General Kniphausen, who then commanded in New-York, apprehending such a design, embodied the inhabitants of the city as a militia for its defence. They very cheerfully formed themselves into companies, and discovered great zeal in the service.

An incursion was made into Jersey from New-York with 5000 men, commanded by Lieutenant General Kniphausen. They landed at Elizabeth-town, and proceeded to Connecticut farms. In this neighbourhood lived the Reverend Mr. James Caldwell, a Presbyterian clergyman of great activity, ability and influence, whose successful exertions in animating the Jersey militia to defend their rights, had rendered him particularly obnoxious to the British. When the royal forces were on their way into the country, a soldier came to his house in his absence and shot his wife Mrs. Caldwell instantly dead, by leveling his piece directly at her through the window of the room in which she was sitting with her children. Her body at the request of an officer of the new levies, was moved to some distance, and then the house and every thing in it was reduced to ashes. The British burnt about 12 other houses, and also the Presbyterian church, and then proceeded to Springfield. As they advanced they were annoyed by Colonel Dayton with a few militia. On their approach to the bridge near the town, they were farther opposed by General Maxwell, who with a few continental troops was prepared to dispute its passage. They made a halt and soon after returned
to Elizabeth town. Before they had retreated, the whole American army at Morristown marched to oppose them. While this royal detachment was in Jersey, Sir Henry Clinton returned with his victorious troops from Charleston to New-York. He ordered a reinforcement to Kniphhausen, and the whole advanced a second time towards Springfield. They were now opposed by General Greene, with a considerable body of continental troops. Colonel Angel with his regiment and a piece of artillery was posted to secure the bridge in front of the town. A severe action took place which lasted forty minutes. Superior numbers forced the Americans to retire. General Greene took post with his troops on a range of hills, in hopes of being attacked. Instead of this the British began to burn the town. Near fifty dwelling houses were reduced to ashes. The British then retreated, but were pursued by the enraged militia, till they entered Elizabethtown. [183]

The next day they set out on their return to New-York. The loss of the Americans in the action was about 80, and that of the British was supposed to be considerably more. It is difficult to tell what was the precise object of this expedition. Perhaps the royal commanders hoped to get possession of Morristown, and to destroy the American stores. Perhaps they flattered themselves that the inhabitants were so dispirited by the recent loss of Charlestown, that they would submit without resistance; and that the soldiers of the continental army would desert to them: But if these were their views, they were disappointed in both. The firm opposition which was made by the Jersey farmers, contrasted with the conduct of the same people in the year 1776, made it evident that not only their aversion to Great-Britain, continued in full force; but that the practical habits of service and danger had improved the country militia, so as to bring them near to an equality with regular troops.

By such desultory operations, were hostilities carried on at this time in the northern States. Individuals were killed, houses were burnt, and much mischief done; but nothing was effected which tended either to reconcilement or subjugation.

The loyal Americans who had fled within the British lines, commonly called refugees, reduced a predatory war into system. On their petition to Sir Henry Clinton, they had been in the year 1779, permitted to set up a distinct government in New-York, under a jurisdiction called the honorable board of associated loyalists. They had something like a fleet of small privateers and cruisers, by the aid of which, they committed various depredations. A party of them who had formerly belonged to Massachusetts, went to Nantucket, broke open the warehouses, and carried off every thing that fell in their way. They also carried off two loaded brigs and two or three schooners. In a proclamation they left behind them, they observed “that they had been deprived of their property, and compelled to abandon their dwellings, friends and connections. And that they conceived themselves warranted by the laws of God and man, to wage [184] war against their persecutors, and to endeavour by every means in their power, to obtain compensation for their sufferings.” These associated loyalists eagerly embraced every adventure, which gratified either their avarice or their revenge. Their enterprises were highly lucrative to themselves, and extremely distressing to the Americans. Their knowledge of the country and superior means of transportation, enabled them to make hasty descents and successful enterprises. A war
of plunder in which the feelings of humanity were often suspended, and which tended
to no valuable public purpose, was carried on in this shameful manner, from the
double excitements of profit and revenge. The adjoining coasts of the continent, and
especially the maritime parts of New-Jersey, became scenes of waste and havoc.

The distress which the Americans suffered from the diminished value of their
currency, though felt in the year 1778 and still more so in the year 1779, did not arrive
to its highest pitch till the year 1780. Under the pressure of sufferings from this cause,
the officers of the Jersey line addressed a memorial to their state legislature, setting
forth “that four months pay of a private, would not procure for his family a single
bushel of wheat, that the pay of a Colonel would not purchase oats for his horse; that a
common laborer or express rider received four times as much as an American
officer.” They urged “that unless a speedy and ample remedy was provided, the total
dissolution of their line was inevitable,” and concluded with saying “that their pay
should either be made up in Mexican dollars or in something equivalent.” In addition
to the insufficiency of their pay and support, other causes of discontent prevailed. The
original idea of a continental army, to be raised, paid, subsisted and regulated upon an
equal and uniform principle, had been in a great measure exchanged for State
establishments. This mischievous measure partly originated from necessity, for State
credit was not quite so much depreciated as continental. Congress not possessing the
means of supporting their army, devolved the business on the component parts of the
confederacy.

Some States, from their [185] internal ability and local advantages, furnished their troops not only with cloathing, but
with many conveinencies. Others supplied them with some necessaries, but on a more
contracted scale. A few from their particular situation could do little or nothing at all.
The officers and men in the routine of duty, mixed daily and compared circumstances.
Those who fared worse than others, were dissatisfied with a service which made such
injurious distinctions. From causes of this kind, super-added to a complication of
wants and sufferings, a disposition to mutiny began to shew itself in the American
army. This broke forth into full action among the soldiers, which were stationed at
fort Schuyler. Thirty-one of the men of that garrison went off in a body. Being
pursued sixteen of them were overtaken, and thirteen of the sixteen, were instantly
killed. About the same time, two regiments of Connecticut troops mutinied and got
under arms. They determined to return home, or to gain subsistence at the point of the
bayonet. Their officers reasoned with them, and urged every argument, that could
either interest their pride or their passions. They were reminded of their good conduct,
of the important objects for which they were contending, but their answer was “our
sufferings are too great and we want present relief.” After much expostulation they
were at length prevailed upon to go to their hutts. It is remarkable, that this mutinous
disposition of the Connecticut troops, was in a great measure quelled by the
Pennsylvania line, which in a few months, as shall hereafter be related, planned and
executed a much more serious revolt, than that which they now suppressed. While the
army was in this feverish state of discontent from their accumulated distresses, a
printed paper addressed to the soldiers of the continental army, was circulated in the
American camp. This was in the following words.
The time is at length arrived, when all the artifices and falsehoods of the Congress and of your commanders, can no longer conceal from you the miseries of your situation. You are neither fed, clothed nor paid. Your numbers are wasting away by sickness, famine and nakedness, and [186] rapidly so by the period of your stipulated services being expired. This is now the period to fly from slavery and fraud.

I am happy in acquainting the old countrymen that the affairs of Ireland are fully settled, and that Great Britain and Ireland are united as well from interest as from affection. I need not tell you who are born in America, that you have been cheated and abused. You are both sensible that in order to procure your liberty you must quit your leaders, and join your real friends, who scorn to impose upon you, and who will receive you with open arms, kindly forgiving all your errors. You are told you are surrounded by a numerous militia. This is also false. Associate then together, make use of your firelocks, and join the British army, where you will be permitted to dispose of yourselves as you please.

About the same time or rather a little before, the news arrived of the reduction of Charleston, and the capture of the whole American southern army. Such was the firmness of the common soldiery, and so strong their attachment to the cause of their country, that though danger impelled, want urged, and British favor invited them to a change of sides, yet on the arrival of but a scanty supply of meat for their immediate subsistence, military duty was cheerfully performed, and no uncommon desertion took place.

So great were the necessities of the American army, that Gen. Washington was obliged to call on the magistrates of the adjacent counties for specified quantities of provisions, to be supplied in a given number of days. At other times he was compelled to send out detachments of his troops, to take provisions at the point of the bayonet from the citizens. This expedient at length failed, for the country in the vicinity of the army afforded no further supplies. These impressments were not only injurious to the morals and discipline of the army, but tended to alienate the affections of the people. Much of the support, which the American general had previously experienced from the inhabitants, proceeded from the difference of treatment they received from their own army, [187] compared with what they suffered from the British. The General, whom the inhabitants hitherto regarded as their protector, had now no alternative but to disband his troops, or to support them by force. The situation of Gen. Washington was eminently embarrassing. The army looked to him for provisions, the inhabitants for protection of their property. To supply the one, and not offend the other, seemed little less than an impossibility. To preserve order and subordination in an army of free republicans, even when well fed, paid and clothed, would have been a work of difficulty, but to retain them in service and restrain them with discipline, when destitute, not only of the comforts, but often of the necessaries of life, required address and abilities of such magnitude as are rarely found in human nature. In this choice of difficulties Gen. Washington not only kept his army together, but conducted with so much discretion, as to command the approbation both of the army and of the citizens.
So great a scarcity, in a country usually abounding with provisions, appears extraordinary, but various remote causes had concurred about this time to produce an unprecedented deficiency. The seasons both in 1779 and 1780 were unfavorable to the crops. The labors of the husbandmen, who were attached to the cause of independence, had been frequently interrupted by the calls for militia duty. Those who cared for neither side, or who from principles of religion held the unlawfulness of war, or who were secretly attached to the royal interest, had been very deficient in industry. Such sometimes reasoned that all labor on their farms, beyond a bare supply of their own necessities, was unavailing; but the principal cause of the sufferings of the army was the daily diminishing value of the continental bills of credit. The farmers found, that the longer they delayed the payment of taxes, the less quantity of country produce would discharge the stipulated sum. They also observed, that the longer they kept their grain on hand, the more of the paper currency was obtained in exchange for it. This either discouraged them from selling, or made them very tardy in coming to market.

Many secreted their provisions [188] and denied their having any, while others who were contiguous to the British, secretly sold to them for gold or silver. The patriotism which at the commencement of the war had led so many to sacrifice property for the good of their country, had in a great degree subsided. Though they still retained their good wishes for the cause, yet these did not carry them so far as to induce a willingness to exchange the hard earned produce of their farms, for a paper currency of a daily diminishing value. For provisions carried to New-York, the farmers received real money, but for what was carried to the Americans, they only received paper. The value of the first was known, of the other daily varying, but in an unceasing progression from bad to worse. Laws were made against this intercourse, but they were executed in the manner laws uniformly have been in the evasion of which multitudes find an immediate interest.

In addition to these disasters from short crops, and depreciating money, disorder and confusion pervaded the departments for supplying the army. Systems for these purposes had been hastily adopted, and were very inadequate to the end proposed. To provide for an army under the best establishments, and with a full military chest, is a work of difficulty, and though guarded by the precautions which time and experience have suggested, opens a door to many frauds; but it was the hard case of the Americans to be called on to discharge this duty without sufficient knowledge of the business, and under ill digested systems, and with a paper currency that was not two days of the same value. Abuses crept in; frauds were practiced, and oeconomy was exiled.

To obviate these evils, Congress adopted the expedient of sending a committee of their own body to the camp of their main army. Mr. Schuyler of New-York, Mr. Peabody of New-Hampshire, and Mr. Mathews of South-Carolina, were appointed. They were furnished with ample powers and instructions to reform abuses—to alter preceding systems, and to establish new ones in their room. This committee proceeded to camp in May 1780, and thence wrote sundry letters to Congress [189] and the States,
in which they confirmed the representations previously made of the distresses and disorders every where prevalent. In particular they stated

that the army was unpaid for five months—that it seldom had more than six days provision in advance, and was on several occasions for sundry successive days without meat—that the army was destitute of forage—that the medical department had neither sugar, coffee, tea, chocolate, wine nor spiritous liquors of any kind—that every department of the army was without money, and had not even the shadow of credit left—that the patience of the soldiers, born down by the pressure of complicated sufferings, was on the point of being exhausted.

A tide of misfortunes from all quarters was at this time pouring in upon the United-States. There appeared not however, in their public bodies, the smallest disposition to purchase safety by concessions of any sort. They seemed to rise in the midst of their distresses, and to gain strength from the pressure of calamities. When Congress could neither command money nor credit for the subsistence of their army, the citizens of Philadelphia formed an association to procure a supply of necessary articles for their suffering soldiers. The sum of 300,000 dollars was subscribed in a few days, and converted into a bank, the principal design of which was to purchase provisions for the troops, in the most prompt and efficacious manner. The advantages of this institution were great, and particularly enhanced by the critical time in which it was instituted. The loss of Charleston, and the subsequent British victories in Carolina, produced effects directly the reverse of what were expected. It being the deliberate resolution of the Americans never to return to the government of Great-Britain, such unfavorable events as threatened the subversion of independence, operated as incentives to their exertions. The patriotic flame which had blazed forth in the beginning of the war was re-kindled. A willingness to do, and to suffer, in the cause of American liberty, was revived in the breasts of many.

These dispositions were invigorated [190] by private assurances, that his most Christian Majesty would, in the course of the campaign, send a powerful armament to their aid. To excite the States to be in readiness for this event, Congress circulated among them an address of which the following is a part.

The crisis calls for exertion. Much is to be done in a little time, and every motive that can stimulate the mind of man presents itself to view. No period has occurred in this long and glorious struggle, in which indecision would be so destructive on the one hand, and on the other, no conjuncture has been more favorable to great and deciding efforts.

The powers of the committee of Congress in the American camp, were enlarged so far as to authorize them to frame and execute such plans as, in their opinion, would most effectually draw forth the resources of the country, in co-operating with the armament expected from France. In this character they wrote sundry letters to the States, stimulating them to vigorous exertions. It was agreed to make arrangements for bringing into the field 35,000 effective men, and to call on the States for specific supplies of every thing necessary for their support. To obtain the men it was proposed to complete the regular regiments by draughts from the militia, and to make up what
they fell short of 35,000 effectives, by calling forth more of the militia. Every motive concurred to rouse the activity of the inhabitants. The States nearly exhausted with the war, ardently wished for its determination. An opportunity now offered for striking a decisive blow, that might at once, as they supposed, rid the country of its distresses. The only thing required on the part of the United States, was to bring into the field 35,000 men, and to make effectual arrangements for their support. The tardiness of deliberation in Congress was in a great measure done away, by the full powers given to their committee in camp. Accurate estimates were made of every article of supply, necessary for the ensuing campaign. These, and also the numbers of men wanted, were quoted on the ten northern States in proportion to their abilities and numbers. In conformity to these requisitions, [191] vigorous resolutions were adopted for carrying them into effect. Where voluntary enlistments fell short of the proposed number, the deficiencies were, by the laws of several States, to be made up by draughts or lots from the militia. The towns in New-England and the counties in the middle States, were respectively called on for a specified number of men. Such was the zeal of the people in New-England, that neighbours would often club together, to engage one of their number to go into the army. Being without money, in conformity to the practice usual in the early stages of society, they paid for military duty with cattle. Twenty head were frequently given as a reward for eighteen months service. Maryland directed her Lieutenants of counties to class all the property in their respective counties, into as many equal classes as there were men wanted, and each class was by law obliged within ten days thereafter, to furnish an able bodied recruit to serve during the war, and in case of their neglecting or refusing so to do, the county Lieutenants were authorised to procure men at their expence, at any rate not exceeding 15 pounds in every hundred pounds worth of property, classed agreeably to the law. Virginia also classed her citizens, and called upon the respective classes for every fifteenth man for public service. Pennsylvania concentrated the requisite power in her President Joseph Reed, and authorized him to draw forth the resources of the State, under certain limitations, and if necessary to declare martial law over the State. The legislative part of these complicated arrangements was speedily passed, but the execution though uncommonly vigorous lagged far behind. Few occasions could occur in which it might so fairly be tried, to what extent in conducting a war, a variety of wills might be brought to act in unison. The result of the experiment was, that however favorable republics may be to the liberty and happiness of the people in the time of peace, they will be greatly deficient in that vigor and dispatch, which military operations require, unless they imitate the policy of monarchies, by committing the executive departments of government to the direction of a single will.

[192] While these preparations were making in America, the armament which had been promised by his most Christian Majesty was on its way. As soon as it was known in France, that a resolution was adopted, to send out troops to the United States, the young French nobility discovered the greatest zeal to be employed on that service. Court favor was scarcely ever solicited with more earnestness, than was the honor of serving under General Washington. The number of applicants was much greater than the service required. The disposition to support the American revolution, was not only prevalent in the court of France, but it animated
the whole body of the nation. The winds and waves did not second the ardent wishes of the French troops. Though they sailed from France on the first of May 1780, they did not reach a port in the United States till the 10th of July following. On that day to the great joy of the Americans, M. de Ternay arrived at Rhode-Island, with a squadron of seven sail of the line, five frigates, and five smaller armed vessels. He likewise convoyed a fleet of transports with four old French regiments, besides the legion de Lauzun, and a battalion of artillery, amounting in the whole to 6000 men, all under the command of Lieutenant General Count de Rochambeau. To the French as soon as they landed possession was given of the forts and batteries on the island, and by their exertions, they were soon put in a high state of defence. In a few days after their arrival, an address of congratulation from the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island, was presented to Count de Rochambeau, in which they expressed “their most grateful sense of the magnanimous aid afforded to the United States, by their illustrious friend and ally the Monarch of France, and also gave assurances of every exertion in their power for the supply of the French forces, with all manner of refreshments and necessaries for rendering the service happy and agreeable.”

Rochambeau declared in his answer, “that he only brought over the vanguard of a much greater force which was destined for their aid; that he was ordered by the King his master to assure them, that his whole power should be [193] exerted for their support.”

“The French troops” he said “were under the strictest discipline, and acting under the orders of General Washington, would live with the Americans as brethren. He returned their compliments by an assurance, that as brethren, not only his own life, but the lives of all those under his command were devoted to their service.”

Gen. Washington recommended in public orders to the American officers, as a symbol of friendship and affection for their allies, to wear black and white cockades, the ground to be of the first colour, and the relief of the second.

The French troops, united both in interest and affection with the Americans, ardently longed for an opportunity to co-operate with them against the common enemy. The continental army wished for the same with equal ardor. One circumstance alone seemed unfavourable to this spirit of enterprise. This was the deficient clothing of the Americans. Some whole lines, officers as well as men, were shabby, and a great proportion of the privates were without shirts. Such troops, brought along side even of allies fully clad in the elegance of uniformity, must have been more or less than men to feel no degradation on the contrast.

Admiral Arbuthnot had only four sail of the line at New-York, when M. de Ternay arrived at Rhode-Island. This inferiority was in three days reversed, by the arrival of Admiral Greaves with six sail of the line. The British Admiral, having now a superiority, proceeded to Rhode-Island. He soon discovered that the French were perfectly secure from any attack by sea. Sir Henry Clinton, who had returned in the preceding month with his victorious troops from Charleston, embarked about 8000 of his best men, and proceeded as far as Huntingdon-bay on Long-Island, with the apparent design of concurring with the British fleet, in attacking the French force at
Rhode-Island. When this movement took place, Gen. Washington set his army in
motion, and proceeded to Peeks-kill.

Had Sir Henry Clinton prosecuted what appeared to be his
design, Gen. Washington intended to [194] have attacked New-
York in his absence. Preparations were made for this purpose, but Sir Henry Clinton
instantly turned about from Huntingdon-bay towards New-York.

In the mean time, the French fleet and army being blocked up at Rhode-Island, were
incapacitated from cooperating with the Americans. Hopes were nevertheless
indulged, that by the arrival of another fleet of his most Christian Majesty then in the
West-Indies, under the command of Count de Guichen, the superiority would be so
much in favor of the allies, as to enable them to prosecute their original intention, of
attacking New-York. When the expectations of the Americans were raised to the
highest pitch, and when they were in great forwardness of preparation to act in
concert with their allies, intelligence arrived that Count de Guichen had sailed for
France. This disappointment was extremely mortifying. The Americans had made
uncommon exertions, on the idea of receiving such an aid from their allies, as would
enable them to lay effectual siege to New-York, or to strike some decisive blow. Their
towering expectations were in a moment levelled with the dust. Another campaign
was anticipated, and new shades were added to the deep cloud, which for some time
past had overshadowed American affairs.

The campaign of 1780, passed away in the northern States as has been related, in
successive disappointments, and reiterated distresses. The country was exhausted, the
continental currency expiring. The army for want of subsistence, kept inactive, and
brooding over its calamities. While these disasters were openly menacing the ruin of
the American cause, treachery was silently undermining it. A distinguished officer
engaged for a stipulated sum of money, to betray into the hands of the British an
important post committed to his care. General Arnold who committed this foul crime
was a native of Connecticut. That State, remarkable for the purity of its morals, for its
republican principles and patriotism, was the birth place of a man to whom none of
the other States have produced an equal.

He had been among [195] the first to take up arms against Great-
Britain, and to widen the breach between the Parent State and the
colonies. His distinguished military talents had procured him every honor a greatful
country could bestow. Poets and Painters had marked him as a suitable subject for the
display of their respective abilities. He possessed an elevated seat in the hearts of his
countrymen, and was in the full enjoyment of a substantial fame, for the purchase of
which, the wealth of worlds would have been insufficient. His country had not only
loaded him with honors, but forgiven him his crimes. Though in his accounts against
the States there was much room to suspect fraud and imposition, yet the recollection
of his gallantry and good conduct, in a great measure served as a cloak to cover the
whole. He who had been prodigal of life in his country’s cause was indulged in
extraordinary demands for his services. The generosity of the States did not keep pace
with the extravagance of their favorite officer. A sumptuous table and expensive
equipage, unsupported by the resources of private fortune, unguarded by the virtues of
oeconomy and good management, soon increased his debts beyond a possibility of his
discharging them. His love of pleasure produced the love of money, and that
extinguished all sensibility to the obligations of honor and duty. The calls of luxury were various and pressing, and demanded gratification though at the expense of fame and country. Contracts were made, speculations entered into, and partnerships instituted, which could not bear investigation. Oppression, extortion, misapplication of public money and property, furnished him with the farther means of gratifying his favorite passions. In these circumstances, a change of sides afforded the only hope of evading a scrutiny, and at the same time, held out a prospect of replenishing his exhausted coffers. The disposition of the American forces in the year 1780, afforded an opportunity of accomplishing this so much to the advantage of the British, that they could well afford a liberal reward for the beneficial treachery. The American army was stationed in the strong holds of the highlands [196] on both sides of the North-river. In this arrangement, Arnold solicited for the command of West-point. This has been called the Gibraltar of America. It was built after the loss of fort Montgomery, for the defence of the North river, and was deemed the most proper for commanding its navigation. Rocky ridges rising one behind another, rendered it incapable of being invested, by less than twenty thousand men. Though some even then entertained doubts of Arnold’s fidelity, yet Gen. Washington in the unsuspecting spirit of a soldier, believing it to be impossible that honor should be wanting in a breast which he knew was the seat of valor, cheerfully granted his request, and intrusted him with the important post. Gen. Arnold thus invested with command, carried on a negociation with Sir Henry Clinton, by which it was agreed that the former should make a disposition of his forces, which would enable the latter to surprise West-point under such circumstances, that he would have the garrison so completely in his power, that the troops must either lay down their arms or be cut to pieces. The object of this negociation was the strongest post of the Americans, the thoroughfare of communication, between the eastern and southern State, and was the repository of their most valuable stores. The loss of it would have been severely felt.

The agent employed in this negociation on the part of Sir Henry Clinton, was Major André, adjutant general of the British army, a young officer of great hopes, and of uncommon merit. Nature had bestowed on him an elegant taste for literature and the fine arts, which by industrious cultivation he had greatly improved. He possessed many amiable qualities, and very great accomplishments. His fidelity together with his place and character, eminently fitted him for this business; but his high ideas of candor, and his abhorrence of duplicity, made him inexpert in practicing those arts of deception which it required. To favor the necessary communications, the Vulture sloop of war had been previously stationed in the North river, as near to Arnold’s posts as was practicable, without exciting suspicion.

Before this a written correspondence [197] between Arnold and André, had been for some time carried on, under the fictitious names of Gustavus and Anderson.

A boat was sent at night from the shore to fetch Major André. On its return, Arnold met him at the beach, without the posts of either army. Their business was not finished till it was too near the dawn of day for André to return to the Vulture. Arnold told him he must be concealed till the next night. For that purpose, he was conducted within one of the American posts, against his previous stipulation and knowledge, and continued with Arnold the following day. The boatmen refused to carry him back the next night, as the Vulture, from being
exposed to the fire of some cannon brought up to annoy her, had changed her position. André’s return to New-York by land, was then the only practicable mode of escape. To favor this he quitted his uniform which he had hitherto worn under a surtout, for a common coat, and was furnished with a horse, and under the name of John Anderson, with a passport “to go to the lines of White Plains or lower if he thought proper, he being on public business.” He advanced alone and undisturbed a great part of the way. When he thought himself almost out of danger, he was stopped by three of the New-York militia, who were with others scouting between the out posts of the two armies. Major André instead of producing his pass, asked the man who stopped him “where he belonged to” who answered “to below” meaning New-York. He replied “so do I” and declared himself a British officer, and pressed that he might not be detained. He soon discovered his mistake. His captors proceeded to search him: Sundry papers were found in his possession. These were secreted in his boots, and were in Arnold’s hand writing. They contained exact returns of the state of the forces, ordnance and defences at West-Point, with the artillery orders, critical remarks on the works, &c.

André offered his captors a purse of gold and a new valuable watch, if they would let him pass, and permanent provision and future promotion, if they would convey and accompany him to New-York. They nobly disdained [198] the proffered bribe, and delivered him a prisoner to Lieut. Col. Jameson, who commanded the scouting parties. In testimony of the high sense entertained of the virtuous and patriotic conduct of John Paulding, David Williams, and Isaac Van Vert, the captors of André, Congress resolved

That each of them receive annually two hundred dollars in specie during life, and that the board of war be directed to procure for each of them a silver medal, on one side of which should be a shield with this inscription, Fidelity; and on the other, the following motto, Vincit AmorPatriae: and that the commander in chief be requested to present the same, with the thanks of Congress, for their fidelity and the eminent service they had rendered their country.

André when delivered to Jameson continued to call himself by the name of Anderson, and asked leave to send a letter to Arnold, to acquaint him with Anderson’s detention. This was inconsiderately granted. Arnold on the receipt of this letter abandoned everything, and went on board the Vulture sloop of war. Lieut. Col. Jameson forwarded to Gen. Washington all the papers found on André, together with a letter giving an account of the whole affair, but the express, by taking a different route from the General, who was returning from a conference at Hartford with Count de Rochambeau, missed him. This caused such a delay as gave Arnold time to effect his escape. The same packet which detailed the particulars of André’s capture, brought a letter from him, in which he avowed his name and character, and endeavoured to shew that he did not come under the description of a spy. The letter was expressed in terms of dignity without insolence, and of apology without meanness. He stated therein, that he held a correspondence with a person under the orders of his General. That his intention went no farther than meeting that person on neutral ground, for the purpose of intelligence, and that, against his stipulation, his intention, and without his
knowledge beforehand, he was brought within the American posts, and had to concert his escape from them. Being taken on his return he was betrayed into the vile condition of an enemy in disguise. [199]

His principal request was that “whatever his fate might be, a decency of treatment might be observed, which would mark, that though unfortunate he was branded with nothing that was dishonourable, and that he was involuntarily an imposter.”

General Washington referred the whole case of Major André to the examination and decision of a board, consisting of fourteen general officers. On his examination, he voluntarily confessed every thing that related to himself, and particularly that he did not come ashore under the protection of a flag. The board did not examine a single witness, but founded their report on his own confession. In this they stated the following facts:

That Major André came on shore on the night of the 21st of September in a private and secret manner, and that he changed his dress within the American lines, and under a feigned name and disguised habit passed their works, and was taken in a disguised habit when on his way to New-York, and when taken, several papers were found in his possession, which contained intelligence for the enemy.

From these facts they farther reported it as their opinion “That Major André ought to be considered as a spy, and that agreeably to the laws and usages of nations he ought to suffer death.”

Sir Henry Clinton, Lieutenant General Robertson, and the late American General Arnold, wrote pressing letters to General Washington, to prevent the decision of the board of general officers from being carried into effect. General Arnold in particular urged, that every thing done by Major André was done by his particular request, and at a time when he was the acknowledged commanding officer in the department. He contended “that he had a right to transact all these matters for which though wrong, Major André ought not to suffer.” An interview also took place between General Robertson on the part of the British, and General Greene, on the part of the Americans.

Everything was urged by the former, that ingenuity or humanity could suggest for averting the proposed execution, Greene made a proposition for delivering up André for Arnold; but finding [200] this could not be acceded to by the British, without offending against every principle of policy, Robertson urged “that André went on shore under the sanction of a flag, and that being then in Arnold’s power, he was not accountable for his subsequent actions, which were said to be compulsory.” To this it was replied that “he was employed in the execution of measures very foreign from the objects of flags of truce, and such as they were never meant to authorise or countenance, and that Major André in the course of his examination had candidly confessed, that it was impossible for him to suppose that he came on shore under the sanction of a flag.” As Greene and Robertson differed so widely both in their statement of facts, and the inferences they drew from them, the latter proposed to the former, that the opinions of disinterested gentlemen might be taken on the subject, and proposed Kniphausen and Rochambeau. Robertson
also urged that André possessed a great share of Sir Henry Clinton’s esteem; and that he would be infinitely obliged if he should be spared. He offered that in case André was permitted to return with him to New-York, any person whatever, that might be named, should be set at liberty. All these arguments and entreaties having failed, Robertson presented a long letter from Arnold, in which he endeavoured to exculpate André, by acknowledging himself the author of every part of his conduct, “and particularly insisted on his coming from the Vulture, under a flag which he had sent for that purpose.” He declared that if André, suffered he should think himself bound in honour to retaliate. He also observed “that forty of the principal inhabitants of South-Carolina had justly forfeited their lives, which had hitherto been spared only through the clemency of Sir Henry Clinton, but who could no longer extend his mercy if Major André suffered: an event which would probably open a scene of bloodshed, at which humanity must revolt.” He intreated Washington by his own honour, and for that of humanity not to suffer an unjust sentence to touch the life of André, but if that warning should be disregarded and André suffer, he called [201] Heaven and earth to witness, that he alone would be justly answerable for the torrents of blood that might be spilt in consequence.”

Every exertion was made by the royal commanders to save André, but without effect. It was the general opinion of the American army that his life was forfeited, and that national dignity and sound policy required that the forfeiture should be exacted.

André though superior to the terrors of death, wished to die like a soldier. To obtain this favour, he wrote a letter to Gen. Washington, fraught with sentiments of military dignity. From an adherence to the usages of war, it was not thought proper to grant this request; but his delicacy was saved from the pain of receiving a negative answer. The guard which attended him in his confinement, marched with him to the place of execution. The way, over which he passed, was crouded on each side by anxious spectators. Their sensibility was strongly impressed by beholding a well dressed youth, in the bloom of life, of a peculiarly engaging person, mien and aspect, devoted to immediate execution. Major André walked with firmness, composure and dignity, between two officers of his guard, his arm being locked in theirs. Upon seeing the preparations at the fatal spot, he asked with some degree of concern “Must I die in this manner?”—He was told it was unavoidable—He replied, “I am reconciled to my fate, but not to the mode;” but soon subjoined, “It will be but a momentary pang.” He ascended the cart with a pleading countenance, and with a degree of composure, which excited the admiration and melted the hearts of all the spectators. He was asked when the fatal moment was at hand, if he had anything to say; he answered nothing but to request “That you will witness to the world that I die like a brave man.’ The succeeding moments closed the affecting scene.

This execution was the subject of severe censures. Barbarity, cruelty and murder, were plentifully charged on the Americans, but the impartial of all nations allowed, that it was warranted by the usages of war. It cannot be condemned, without condemning the maxims of [202] self-preservation, which have uniformly guided the practice of hostile nations. The finer feelings of humanity would have been gratified,
by dispensing with the rigid maxims of war in favour of so distinguished an officer, but these feelings must be controlled by a regard for the public safety. Such was the distress state of the American army, and so abundant were their causes of complaint, that there was much to fear from the contagious nature of treachery. Could it have been reduced to a certainty that there were no more Arnolds in America, perhaps André’s life might have been spared; but the necessity of discouraging farther plots, fixed his fate, and stamped it with the seal of political necessity. If conjectures in the boundless field of possible contingencies were to be indulged, it might be said that it was more consonant to extended humanity to take one life, than by ill timed lenity to lay a foundation, which probably would occasion not only the loss of many, but endanger the independence of a great country.

Though a regard to the public safety imposed a necessity for inflicting the rigors of martial law, yet the rare worth of this unfortunate officer made his unhappy case the subject of universal regret. Not only among the partisans of royal government, but among the firmest American republicans, the friendly tear of sympathy freely flowed, for the early fall of this amiable young man. Some condemned, others justified, but all regretted the fatal sentence which put an end to his valuable life.

This grand project terminated with no other alteration in respect of the British, than that of their exchanging one of their best officers for the worst man in the American army. Arnold was immediately made a Brigadier General, in the service of the King of Great Britain. The failure of the scheme respecting West-Point, made it necessary for him to dispel the cloud, which overshadowed his character, by the performance of some signal service for his new masters. The condition of the American army, afforded him a prospect of doing something of consequence. He flattered himself that by the allurements of pay and promotion, he should be able to raise a numerous force, from among the distressed American soldiery. He therefore took methods for accomplishing this purpose, by obviating their scruples, and working on their passions.

His first public measure was issuing an address, directed to the inhabitants of America, dated from New-York, five days after André’s execution. In this he endeavoured to justify himself for deserting their cause. He said “that when he first engaged in it, he conceived the rights of his country to be in danger, and that duty and honor called him to her defence. A redress of grievances was his only aim and object. He however acquiesced in the declaration of independence, although he thought it precipitate. But the reasons that then were offered to justify that measure, no longer could exist, when Great Britain with the open arms of a parent, offered to embrace them as children and to grant the wished for redress. From the refusal of these proposals, and the ratification of the French alliance, all his ideas of the justice and policy of the war were totally changed, and from that time, he had become a professed loyalist.” He acknowledged that “in these principles he had only retained his arms and command, for an opportunity to surrender them to Great Britain.” This address was soon followed by another, inscribed to the officers and soldiers of the continental army. This was intended to induce them to follow his example, and engage in the royal service. He informed them, that he was authorised to raise a corps of cavalry and infantry, who were to be on the same footing with the other troops in the British service. To allure the private
men, three guineas were offered to each, besides payment for their horses, arms and accoutrements. Rank in the British army was also held out to the American officers, who would recruit and bring in a certain number of men, proportioned to the different grades in military service. These offers were proposed to unpaid soldiers, who were suffering from the want of both food and clothing, and to officers who were in a great degree obliged to support themselves from their own resources, while they were spending the prime of their days, and risquing their lives in the unproductive service of Congress. Though they were urged at a time when the paper currency was at its lowest ebb of depreciation, and the wants and distresses of the American army were at their highest pitch, yet they did not produce the intended effect on a single sentinel or officer. Whether the circumstances of Arnold’s case, added new shades to the crime of desertion, or whether their providential escape from the deep laid scheme against West-point, gave a higher tone to the firmness of the American soldiery, cannot be unfolded: But either from these or some other causes, desertion wholly ceased at this remarkable period of the war.

It is matter of reproach to the United States, that they brought into public view a man of Arnold’s character, but it is to the honor of human nature, that a great revolution and an eight years war produced but one. In civil contests, for officers to change sides has not been unusual, but in the various events of the American war, and among the many regular officers it called to the field, nothing occurred that bore any resemblance to the conduct of Arnold. His singular case enforces the policy of conferring high trusts exclusively on men of clean hands, and of withholding all public confidence from those who are subjected to the dominion of pleasure.

A gallant enterprize of Major Talmadgc about this time shall close this chapter. He crossed the sound to Long-Island with 80 men, made a circuitous march of 20 miles to Fort-George, and reduced it without any other loss than that of one private man wounded. He killed and wounded eight of the enemy, captured a Lt. Colonel, a Captain and 55 privates.
CHAPTER XXI

Foreign Affairs, Connected With The American Revolution
1780, 1781.

[205] That spark which was first kindled at Boston, gradually expanded itself till sundry of the nations of Europe were involved in its wide spreading flame. France, Spain and Holland were in the years 1778, 1779 and 1780 successively drawn in for a share of the general calamity.

These events had so direct an influence on the American war, that a short recapitulation of them becomes necessary.

Soon after his most Catholic Majesty declared war against Great-Britain, expeditions were carried on by Don Galvez the Spanish governor of Louisiana, against the British settlements in West-Florida. These were easily reduced. The conquest of the whole province was completed in a few months by the reduction of Pensacola. The Spaniards were not so successful in their attempts against Gibraltar and Jamaica. They had blockaded the former of these places on the landside ever since July 1779, and soon after invested it as closely by sea, as the nature of the gut, and variety of wind and weather, would permit. Towards the close of the year the garrison was reduced to great straits. Vegetables were with difficulty to be got at any price, but bread, the great essential both of life and health, was most deficient.

Governor Elliott who commanded in the garrison, made an experiment to ascertain what quantity of rice would suffice a single person, and lived for eight successive days, on thirty two ounces of that nutritious grain.

The critical situation of Gibraltar called for relief. A strong squadron was prepared for that purpose, and the command of it given to Sir George Rodney. He when on his way thither fell in with 15 sail of merchant men, under a slight convoy bound from St. Sebastian to Cadiz, and captured the whole. Several of the vessels were laden with provisions which being sent into Gibraltar [206] proved a seasonable supply. In eight days after, he engaged near Cape St. Vincent with a Spanish squadron of eleven sail of the line, commanded by Don Juan de Langara. Early in the action the Spanish ship San Domingo mounting 70 guns, and carrying 600 men blew up, and all on board perished. The action continued with great vigor on both sides for ten hours. The Spanish Admiral’s ship the Phoenix of 80 guns, with three of 70, were carried into a British port. The San Julian of 70 guns was taken. A Lieutenant with 70 British seamen was put on board, but as she ran on shore, the victors became prisoners. Another ship of the same force was also taken, but afterwards totally lost. Four escaped, but two of them were greatly damaged. The Spanish Admiral did not strike till his ship was reduced to a mere wreck. Captain Macbride of the Bienfaiscent, to whom he struck, disdaining to convey infection even
to an enemy, informed him that a malignant small pox prevailed on board the Bienfaisant and offered to permit the Spanish prisoners to stay on board the Phoenix, rather than by a removal to expose them to the small pox, trusting to the Admiral’s honor, that no advantage would be taken of the circumstance. The proposal was cheerfully embraced, and the conditions honorably observed. The consequence of this important victory was the immediate and complete relief of Gibraltar. This being done, Rodney proceeded to the West-Indies. The Spaniards nevertheless persevered with steadiness, in their original design of reducing Gibraltar. They seemed to be entirely absorbed in that object. The garrison, after some time, began again to suffer the inconveniences which flow from deficient and unwholesome food: But in April 1781, complete relief was obtained through the intervention of a British fleet, commanded by Admiral Darby.

The Court of Spain, mortified at this repeated disappointment, determined to make greater exertions. Their works were carried on with more vigor than ever. Having on an experiment of 20 months found the inefficacy of a blockade, they resolved to try the effects of a bombardment. Their batteries were mounted with guns of the heaviest metal, and with mortars of the largest dimensions. These disgorged torrents of fire on a narrow spot. It seemed as if not only the works, but the rock itself must have been overwhelmed. All distinction of parts was lost in flame and smoke. This dreadful cannonade continued day and night, almost incessantly for three weeks, in every 24 hours of which 100,000 lbs. of gunpowder were consumed, and between 4 and 5000 shot and shells went through the town. It then slackened, but was not intermitted for one whole day for upwards of a twelve month. The fatigues of the garrison were extreme, but the loss of men was less than might have been expected. For the first ten weeks of this unexampled bombardment, the whole number of killed and wounded was only about 300. The damage done to the works was trifling. The houses in town about 500 in number were mostly destroyed. Such of the inhabitants as were not buried in the ruins of their houses, or torn to pieces by the shells, fled to the remote parts of the rocks, but destruction followed them to places which had always been deemed secure. No scene could be more deplorable. Mothers and children clasped in each others arms, were so completely torn to pieces, that it seemed more like an annihilation, than a dispersion of their shattered fragments. Ladies of the greatest sensibility and most delicate constitutions deemed themselves happy to be admitted to a few hours of repose in the casemates, amidst the noise of a crouded soldiery, and the groans of the wounded.

At the first onset Gen. Elliot retorted on the besiegers a shower of fire, but foreseeing the difficulty of procuring supplies he soon retrenched, and received with comparative unconcern, the fury and violence of his adversaries. By the latter end of November, the besiegers had brought their works to that state of perfection which they intended. The care and ingenuity employed upon them were extraordinary. The best engineers of France and Spain had united their abilities, and both kingdoms were filled with sanguine expectations of speedy success. In this conjuncture, when all Europe was in suspense concerning the fate of the garrison, and when from the prodigious efforts made for its reduction, many believed that it could not hold out much longer, a
sally was projected and executed which in about two hours destroyed those works
which had required so much time, skill and labor to accomplish.

A body of 2000 chosen men, under the command of Brig. Gen. Ross, marched out about 2 o’clock in the morning, and at the
same instant made a general attack on the whole exterior front of the lines of the
besiegers. The Spaniards gave way on every side, and abandoned their works. The
pioneers and artillery men spread their fire with such rapidity, that in a little time
every thing combustible was in flames. The mortars and cannon were spiked, and
their beds platforms and carriages destroyed. The magazines blew up, one after
another. The loss of the detachment, which accomplished all this destruction, was
inconsiderable.

This unexpected event disconcerted the besiegers, but they soon recovered from their
alarm, and with a perseverance almost peculiar to their nation, determined to go on
with the siege. Their subsequent exertions, and re-iterated defeats, shall be related in
the order of time in which they took place.

While the Spaniards were urging the siege of Gibraltar, a scheme which had been
previously concerted with the French was in a train of execution. This consisted of
two parts: The object of the first, concerted between the French and Spaniards, was no
less than the conquest of Jamaica. The object of the second, in which the French and
the Americans were parties, was the reduction of New-York. In conformity to this
plan, the monarchs of France and Spain early in the year 1780, assembled a force in
the West-Indies, superior to that of the British. Their combined fleets amounted to
thirty six sail of the line, and their land forces were in a correspondent proportion. By
acting in concert, they hoped to make rapid conquests in the West Indies.

Fortunately for the British interest, this great hostile force carried within itself the
cause of its own overthrow. [209] The Spanish troops from being too much crowded
on board their transports, were seized with a mortal and contagious distemper. This
spread through the French fleet and land forces, as well as their own. With the hopes
of arresting its progress, the Spaniards were landed in the French islands. By these
disastrous events, the spirit of enterprise was damped. The combined fleets, having
neither effected nor attempted any thing of consequence, desisted from the
prosecution of the objects of the campaign. The failure of the first part of the plan,
occaisioned the failure of the second. Count de Guichen the commander of the French
fleet, who was to have followed M. de Ternay, and to have co-operated with Gen.
Washington, instead of coming to the American continent, sailed with a large convoy
collected from the French islands, directly to France.

The abortive plans of the French and Spaniards, operated directly against the interest
of the United States, but this was in a short time counterbalanced, by the increased
embarrassments occasioned to Great Britain, by the armed neutrality of the northern
powers, and by a rupture with Holland.

The naval superiority of Great Britain, had long been the subject of regret and of
envy. As it was the interest, so it seemed to be the wish of European sovereigns, to
avail themselves of the present favourable moment, to effect an humiliation of her maritime grandeur. That the flag of all nations must strike to British ships of war, could not be otherwise than mortifying to independent sovereigns. This haughty demand was not their only cause of complaint. The activity and number of British privateers had rendered them objects of terror, not only to the commercial shipping of their enemies, but to the many vessels belonging to other powers, that were employed in trading with them. Various litigations had taken place between the commanders of British, armed vessels, and those who were in the service of neutral powers, respecting the extent of that commerce, which was consistent with a strict and fair neutrality. The British insisted on the lawfulness of seizing supplies, which were about to be carried to their enemies. Having been in the habit of commanding on the sea, they considered power and right to be synonimous terms. As other nations from a dread of provoking their vengeance, had submitted to their claim of dominion on the ocean, they fancied themselves invested with authority to controul the commerce of independent nations, when it interfered with their views. This haughtiness worked its own overthrow. The Empress of Russia took the lead in establishing a system of maritime laws, which subverted the claims of Great Britain. Her trading vessels had long been harrassed by British searches and seizures, on pretence of their carrying on a commerce inconsistent with neutrality. The present crisis favoured the re-establishment of the laws of nature, in place of the usurpations of Great Britain.

A declaration was published by the empress of Russia, addressed to the courts of London, Versailles and Madrid. In this it was observed

that her Imperial Majesty had given such convincing proofs of the strict regard she had for the rights of neutrality, and the liberty of commerce in general, that it might have been hoped her impartial conduct, would have entitled her subjects to the enjoyment of the advantages belonging to neutral nations. Experience had however proved the contrary; her subjects had been molested in their navigation, by the ships and privateers of the belligerent powers.

Her Majesty therefore declared

that she found it necessary to remove these vexations which had been offered to the commerce of Russia, but before she came to any serious measures, she thought it just and equitable, to expose to the world and particularly to the belligerent powers, the principles she had adopted for her conduct, which were as follows.

That neutral ships should enjoy a free navigation, even from port to port, and on the coasts of the belligerent powers. That all effects belonging to the belligerent powers, should be looked on as free on board such neutral ships, with an exception of places actually blocked up or besieged, and with a proviso that they do not carry to the enemy contraband articles.

These were limited by an explanation, so as to “comprehend only warlike stores and ammunition,” her imperial Majesty declared that “she was firmly resolved to
maintain these principles, and that with the view of protecting the commerce and navigation of her subjects, she had given orders to fit out a considerable part of her naval force.” This declaration was communicated to the States General, and the empress of Russia invited them to make a common cause with her, so far as such an union might serve to protect commerce and navigation. Similar communications and invitations were also made to the courts of Copenhagen, Stockholm and Lisbon. A civil answer was received from the court of Great-Britain, and a very cordial one from the court of France. On this occasion, it was said by his most Christian Majesty “that what her Imperial Majesty claimed from the belligerent powers, was nothing more than the rules prescribed to the French navy.” The Kings of Sweden and Denmark, also formally acceded to the principles and measures proposed by the empress of Russia. The States General did the same. The queen of Portugal was the only sovereign who refused to concur. The powers engaged in this association resolved to support each other against any of the belligerent nations, who should violate the principles which had been laid down, in the declaration of the empress of Russia.

This combination assumed the name of the armed neutrality. By it a respectable guarantee was procured to a commerce, from which France and Spain procured a plentiful supply of articles, essentially conducive to a vigorous prosecution of the war. The usurped authority of Great Britain on the highway of nature received a fatal blow. Her embarrassments from this source were aggravated by the consideration, that they came from a power in whose friendship she had confided.

About the same time the enemies of Great Britain were increased by the addition of the States General. Though these two powers were bound to each other, by the obligations of treaties, the conduct of the latter had long been considered, rather as hostile than friendly. [212] Few Europeans had a greater prospect of advantage from American independence than the Hollanders. The conquest of the United States, would have regained to Great Britain a monopoly of their trade; but the establishment of their independence promised to other nations, an equal chance of participating therein. As commerce is the soul of the United Netherlands, to have neglected the present opportunity of extending it, would have been a deviation from their established maxims of policy. Former treaties framed in distant periods, when other views were predominant, opposed but a feeble barrier to the claims of present interest. The past generation found it to their advantage, to seek the friendship and protection of Great Britain. But they who were now on the stage of life, had similar inducements to seek for new channels of trade. Though this could not be done without thwarting the views of the court of London, their recollection of former favours was not sufficient to curb their immediate favorite passion. From the year 1777, Sir Joseph Yorke, the British minister at the Hague, had made sundry representations to their High Mightinesses of the clandestine commerce, carried on between their subjects and the Americans. He particularly stated that Mr. Van Graaf, the Governor of St. Eustatius, had permitted an illicit commerce with the Americans; and had at one time returned the salute of a vessel carrying their flag. Sir Joseph, therefore demanded a formal disavowal of this salute, and the dismissal and immediate recall of Governor Van Graaf. This insolent demand was answered with a pusillanimous temporising reply. On the 12th of September 1778, a memorial was presented to the States General, from the merchants and others of Amsterdam, in which they complained that
their lawful commerce was obstructed by the ships of his Britannic Majesty. On the 22d of July, 1779, Sir Joseph Yorke demanded of the States General, the succours which were stipulated in the treaty of 1678: But this was not complied with. Friendly declarations and unfriendly actions followed each other in alternate succession. At length a declaration was published by the King of Great Britain, by which it was announced “that the subjects of the United Provinces, were henceforth to be considered upon the same footing with other martial powers, not privileged by treaty.” Throughout the whole of this period, the Dutch by means of neutral ports, continued to supply the Americans and the English, to insult and intercept their navigation, but open hostilities were avoided by both. The former aimed principally at the gains of a lucrative commerce, the latter to remove all obstacles which stood in the way of their favourite scheme of conquering the Americans. The event which occasioned a formal declaration of war, was the capture of Henry Laurens. In the deranged state of the American finances, that gentleman had been deputed by Congress, to solicit a loan for their service in the United Netherlands; and also to negotiate a treaty between them and the United States.

On his way thither, he was taken by the Vestal frigate commanded by Captain Kepple. He had thrown his papers overboard; but great part of them were nevertheless recovered without having received much damage. His papers being delivered to the ministry, were carefully examined. Among them was found one purporting to be a plan of a treaty of amity and commerce, between the States of Holland and the United States of America. This had been originally drawn up in consequence of some conversation between William Lee, whom Congress had appointed commissioner to the courts of Vienna and Berlin; and John de Neufville, merchant of Amsterdam, as a plan of a treaty destined to be concluded hereafter: But it had never been proposed either by Congress or the States of Holland, though it had received the approbation of the Pensionary Van Berkel, and of the city of Amsterdam. As this was not an official paper, and had never been read in Congress the original was given to Mr. Laurens as a paper that might be useful to him in his projected negociations. This unauthentic paper, which was in Mr. Laurens’ possession by accident, and which was so nearly sunk in the ocean, proved the occasion of a national war. The court of Great Britain, was highly offended at it. The paper itself and some others, relating to the same subject were delivered to the Prince of Orange, who laid them before the States of Holland and West-Friesland.

Sir Joseph Yorke presented a memorial to the States General, in which he asserted that the papers of Mr. Laurens, who stiled himself President of the pretended Congress, had furnished the discovery of a plot unexampled in all the annals of the republic. That it appeared by these papers, that the gentlemen of Amsterdam had been engaged in a clandestine correspondence with the American rebels, from the month of August 1778, and that instructions and full powers had been given by them for the conclusion of a treaty of indisputable amity with those rebels, who were the subjects of a sovereign, to whom the republic was united by the closest engagements.
He therefore, in the name of his master, demanded “A formal disavowal of this irregular conduct, and a prompt satisfaction proportioned to the offence, and an exemplary punishment of the Pensionary Van Berkel, and his accomplices, as disturbers of the public peace and violaters of the laws of nations.” The States General disavowed the intended treaty of the city of Amsterdam, and engaged to prosecute the Pensionary according to the laws of the country; but this was not deemed satisfactory.

Sir Joseph Yorke was ordered to withdraw from the Hague, and soon after a manifesto against the Dutch was published in London. This was followed by an order of council “That general reprisals be granted against the ships, goods and subjects, of the States General.” Whatever may be thought of the policy of this measure, its boldness must be admired. Great Britain, already at war with the United States of America, the monarchies of France and Spain, deliberately resolves on a war with Holland, and at a time when she might have avoided open hostilities. Her spirit was still farther evinced by the consideration that she was deserted by her friends, and without a single ally. Great must have been her resources to support so extensive a war against so many hostile sovereigns, but this very ability, by proving that her overgrown power was dangerous to the peace of Europe, furnished an apology for their combination against her.

A war with Holland being resolved upon, the storm of British vengeance first burst on the Dutch Island of St. Eustatius. This though intrinsically of little value, had long been the seat of an extensive commerce. It was the grand freeport of the West-Indies and as such was a general market and magazine to all nations. In consequence of its neutrality and situation, together with its unbounded freedom of trade, it reaped the richest harvests of commerce during the seasons of warfare among its neighbours. It was in a particular manner, a convenient channel of supply to the Americans.

The Island is a natural fortification, and very capable of being made strong; but as its inhabitants were a motley mixture of transient persons, wholly intent on the gains of commerce, they were more solicitous to acquire property, than attentive to improve those means of security which the Island afforded.

Sir George Rodney and General Vaughan, with a large fleet and army, surrounded this Island, and demanded a surrender thereof and of its dependencies within an hour.

Mr. de Graaf returned for answer “That being utterly incapable of making any defence against the force which invested the Island, he must of necessity surrender it, only recommending the town and its inhabitants to the known and usual clemency of British commanders.”

The wealth accumulated in this barren spot was prodigious. The whole Island seemed to be one vast magazine. The store-houses were filled, and the beach covered with valuable commodities. These on a moderate calculation were estimated to be worth above three millions sterling. All this property, together with what was found on the Island, was indiscriminately seized and declared to be confiscated. This valuable booty was farther increased by new arrivals. The conquerors for some time kept up Dutch colors, which decoyed a number of French, Dutch and American vessels into
their hands. Above 150 merchant vessels, most of which were richly laden, were captured. A Dutch frigate of 38 guns, and five [216] small armed vessels, shared the same fate. The neighbouring Islands of St. Martin and Saba were in like manner reduced. Just before the arrival of the British, 30 large ships, laden with West-India commodities, had sailed from Eustatius for Holland, under the convoy of a ship of sixty guns. Admiral Rodney despatched the Monarch and Panther, with the Sybil frigate in pursuit of this fleet. The whole of it was overtaken and captured.

The Dutch West-India company, many of the citizens of Amsterdam, and several Americans were great sufferers by the capture of this Island, and the confiscation of all property found therein, which immediately followed, but the British merchants were much more so. These confiding in the acknowledged neutrality of the island, and in acts of Parliament, had accumulated therein great quantities of West-India produce, as well as of European goods. They stated their hard case to Admiral Rodney and Gen. Vaughan, and contended that their connexion with the captured island was under the sanction of acts of Parliament, and that their commerce had been conducted according to the rules and maxims of trading nations. To applications of this kind it was answered, “That the island was Dutch, every thing in it was Dutch, was under the protection of the Dutch flag, and as Dutch it should be treated.”

The severity with which the victors proceeded, drew on them pointed censures not only from the immediate sufferers, but from all Europe. It must be supposed that they were filled with resentment for the supplies which the Americans received through this channel, but there is also reason to suspect, that the love of gain was cloaked under the specious veil of national policy.

The horrors of an universal havoc of property were realised. The merchants and traders were ordered to give up their books of correspondence, their letters and also inventories of all their effects, inclusive of an exact account of all money and plate in their possession. The Jews were designated as objects of particular resentment. They were ordered to give up the keys of their stores, to leave their wealth and merchandize behind them, and to [217] depart the island without knowing the place of their destination. From a natural wish to be furnished with the means of supplying their wants, in the place of their future residence, they secreted in their wearing apparel, gold, silver and other articles of great value and small bulk. The policy of these unfortunate Hebrews did not avail them. The avarice of the conquerors, effectually counteracted their ingenuity. They were stripped, searched and despoiled of their money and jewels. In this state of wretchedness, many of the inhabitants were transported as outlaws and landed on St. Christopher’s. The assembly of that island with great humanity, provided for them such articles as their situation required. The Jews were soon followed by the Americans, some of these though they had been banished from the United States, on account of their having taken part with Great Britain, were banished a second time by the conquering troops of the sovereign, in whose service they had previously suffered. The French merchants and traders were next ordered off the island, and lastly the native Dutch were obliged to submit to the same sentence. Many opulent persons in consequence of these proceedings, were instantly reduced to extreme indigence.
In the mean time public sales were advertised, and persons of all nations invited to become purchasers. The island of St. Eustatius became a scene of constant auctions. There never was a better market for buyers. The immense quantities exposed for sale, reduced the price of many articles far below their original cost. Many of the commodities sold on this occasion, became in the hands of their new purchasers, as effectual supplies to the enemies of Great Britain, as they could have been in case the island had not been captured. The spirit of gain, which led the traders of St. Eustatius to sacrifice the interests of Great Britain, influenced the conquerors to do the same. The friends of humanity, who wish that war was exterminated from the world, or entered into only for the attainment of national justice, must be gratified when they are told, that this unexampled rapacity was one link in the great chain of causes which, as hereafter shall be explained [218], brought on the great event in the Chesapeake, which gave peace to contending nations. While Admiral Rodney and his officers were bewildered, in the sales of confiscated property at St. Eustatius, and especially while his fleet was weakened, by a large detachment sent off to convoy their booty to Great Britain, the French were silently executing a well digested scheme, which assured them a naval superiority on the American coast, to the total ruin of the British interest in the United States.
CHAPTER XXII

The Revolt Of The Pennsylvania Line; Of Part Of The Jersey Troops; Distresses Of The American Army; Arnold’S Invasion Of Virginia.

Though General Arnold’s address to his countrymen produced no effect, in detaching the soldiery of America from the unproductive service of Congress, their steadiness could not be accounted for, from any melioration of their circumstances. They still remained without pay, and without such cloathing as the season required. They could not be induced to enter the British service, but their complicated distresses at length broke out into deliberate mutiny. This event which had been long expected, made its first threatening appearance in the Pennsylvania line. The common soldiers enlisted in that State, were for the most part natives of Ireland, but though not bound to America by the accidental tie of birth, they were inferior to none in discipline, courage, or attachment to the cause of independence. They had been but a few months before, the most active instruments in quelling a mutiny of the Connecticut troops, and had on all occasions done their duty to admiration. An ambiguity in the terms of their enlistment, furnished a pretext for their conduct. A great part of them were enlisted for three years or during the war, the three years were expired, and the men insisted that the choice of staying or going remained with them, while the officers contended that the choice was in the State.

[219] The mutiny was excited by the non-commissioned officers and privates, in the night of the 1st of January 1781, and soon became so universal in the line of that State as to defy all opposition. The whole, except three regiments, upon a signal for the purpose, turned out under arms without their officers, and declared for a redress of grievances. The officers in vain endeavoured to quell them. Several were wounded, and a captain was killed in attempting it. Gen. Wayne presented his pistols, as if about to fire on them; they held their bayonets to his breast and said “We love and respect you, but if you fire you are a dead man.” “We are not going to the enemy, on the contrary, if they were now to come out, you should see us fight under your orders with as much alacrity as ever; but we will be no longer amused, we are determined on obtaining what is justly due.” Deaf to arguments and entreaties, they to the number of 1300 moved off in a body from Morristown, and proceeded in good order with their arms and six field pieces to Princeton. They elected temporary officers from their own body, and appointed a Serjeant Major, who had formerly deserted from the British army, to be their commander. Gen. Wayne forwarded provisions after them, to prevent their plundering the country for their subsistence. They invaded no man’s property, farther than their immediate necessities made unavoidable. This was readily submitted to by the inhabitants, who had long been used to exactions of the same kind, levied for similar purposes by their lawful rulers. They professed that they had no object in view, but to obtain what was justly due to them, nor were their actions inconsistent with that profession.
Congress sent a committee of their body, consisting of General Sullivan, Mr. Mathews, Mr. Atlee and Dr. Witherspoon, to procure an accommodation. The revolters were resolute in refusing any terms, of which a redress of their grievances was not the foundation. Every thing asked of their country, they might at any time after the 6th of January, have obtained from the British, by passing over into New-York. This they refused. Their sufferings had exhausted their patience but not their patriotism. Sir Henry Clinton, by confidential messengers, offered to take them under the protection of the British government—to pardon all their past offences—to have the pay due them from Congress faithfully made up, without any expectation of military service in return, although it would be received if voluntarily offered. It was recommended to them to move behind the South river, and it was promised, that a detachment of British troops should be in readiness for their protection as soon as desired. In the mean time, the troops passed over from New-York to Staten-Island, and the necessary arrangements were made for moving them into New-Jersey, whenssoever they might be wanted. The royal commander was not less disappointed than surprised to find that the faithful, though revolting soldiers, disdained his offers. The messengers of Sir Henry Clinton were seized and delivered to Gen. Wayne. President Reed and General Potter were appointed, by the council of Pennsylvania, to accommodate matters with the revolters. They met them at Princeton, and agreed to dismiss all whose terms of enlistment were completed, and admitted the oath of each soldier to be evidence in his own case. A board of officers tried and condemned the British spies, and they were instantly executed. President Reed offered a purse of 100 guineas to the mutineers, as a reward of their fidelity, in delivering up the spies: but they refused to accept it, saying “That what they had done was only a duty they owed their country, and that they neither desired nor would receive any reward but the approbation of that country, for which they had so often fought and bled.”

By these healing measures the revolt was completely quelled; but the complaints of the soldiers being founded in justice, were first redressed. Those whose time of service was expired obtained their discharges, and others had their arrears of pay in a great measure made up to them. A general amnesty closed the business. On this occasion, the commander in chief stated in a circular letter to the four eastern states, the well founded complaints of his army; and the impossibility of keeping them together, under the pressure of such a variety of sufferings. General Knox was requested to be the bearer of these dispatches; and to urge the States to an immediate exertion for the relief of the soldiers. He visited Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode-Island; and with great earnestness and equal success described the wants of the army. Massachusetts gave 24 silver dollars to each man of her line; and also furnished them with some cloathing. Other States about the same time made similar advances.

The spirit of mutiny proved contagious. About 160 of the Jersey troops followed the example of the Pennsylvania line; but they did not conduct with equal spirit, nor with equal prudence. They committed sundry acts of outrage against particular officers, while they affected to be submissive to others. Major General Howe, with a considerable force, was ordered to take methods for reducing them to obedience. Convinced that there was no medium between dignity and servility, but coercion, and that no other remedy could be applied without the
deepest wound to the service, he determined to proceed against them with decision. General Howe marched from Kingwood about midnight; and by the dawning of the next day, had his men in four different positions, to prevent the revolters from making their escape. Every avenue being secured, Colonel Barber of the Jersey line was sent to them, with orders immediately to parade without arms; and to march to a particular spot of ground. Some hesitation appearing among them, Colonel Sproat was directed to advance, and only five minutes were given to the mutineers to comply with the orders which had been sent them. This had its effect, and they to a man marched without arms to the appointed ground. The Jersey officers gave a list of the leaders of the revolt, upon which General Howe desired them to select three of the greatest offenders. A field court martial was presently held upon these three, and they were unanimously sentenced to death. Two of them were executed on the spot, and the executioners were selected from among the most active in the mutiny. The men were divided into platoons, and made public concessions to their officers, and promised by future good conduct, to atone for past offences.

These mutinies alarmed the States, but did not produce permanent relief to the army. Their wants with respect to provisions were only partially supplied, and by expedients from one short time to another. The most usual was ordering an officer to seize on provisions wherever found. This differed from robbing only in its being done by authority for the public service, and in the officer being always directed to give the proprietor a certificate, of the quantity and quality of what was taken from him. At first some reliance was placed on these certificates as vouchers to support a future demand on the United States; but they soon became so common as to be of little value. Recourse was so frequently had to coercion, both legislative and military, that the people not only lost confidence in public credit but became impatient under all exertions of authority, for forcing their property from them. That an army should be kept together under such circumstances, so far exceeds credibility as to make it necessary to produce some evidence of the fact. The American General Clinton in a letter to General Washington dated at Albany, April 16th 1781, wrote as follows.

There is not now (independent of fort Schuyler) three days provision in the whole department for the troops in case of an alarm, nor any prospect of procuring any. The recruits of the new levies, I cannot receive, because I have nothing to give them. The Canadian families, I have been obliged to deprive of their scanty pittance, contrary to every principle of humanity. The quartermaster’s department is totally useless, the public armory has been shut up for near three weeks, and a total suspension of every military operation has ensued.

Soon after this General Washington was obliged to apply 9000 dollars, sent by the State of Massachusetts for the payment of her troops to the use of the quartermaster’s department, to enable him to transport provisions from the adjacent States. Before he consented to adopt this expedient, he had consumed every ounce of provision, which had been kept as a reserve in the garrison of West-Point; and had strained impress by military force, to so great an extent, that there was reason to apprehend the inhabitants, irritated by such frequent calls, would proceed to dangerous insurrections. Fort Schuyler, West-Point, and the posts up the North river, were on the point of being abandoned by their starving garrisons. At this period of the war, there was little
or no circulating medium, either in the form of paper or specie, and in the
neighbourhood of the American army there was a real want of necessary provisions.
The deficiency of the former occasioned many inconveniences, and an unequal
distribution of the burdens of the war; but the insufficiency of the latter, had well nigh
dissolved the army, and laid the country in every direction open to British excursions.

These events were not unforeseen by the rulers of America. From the progressive
depreciation of their bills of credit, it had for some time past occurred, that the period
could not be far distant, when they would cease to circulate. This crisis which had
been ardently wished for by the enemies, and dreaded by the friends of American
independence, took place in 1781; but without realising the hopes of the one, or the
fears of the other. New resources were providentially opened, and the war was carried
on with the same vigor as before. A great deal of gold and silver was about this time
introduced into the United States, by a beneficial trade with the French and Spanish
West-India islands, and by means of the French army in Rhode-Island. Pathetic
representations were made to the ministers of his most Christian Majesty by General
Washington, Dr. Franklin, and particularly by Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens, who
was sent to the court of Versailles as a special minister on this occasion. The King of
France gave the United States a subsidy of six millions of livres, and became their
security for ten millions more, borrowed for their use in the United Netherlands. A
regular system of finance was also about this time adopted. All matters relative to
[224] the treasury the supplies of the army and the accounts, were put under the
direction of Robert Morris, who arranged the whole with judgment and oeconomy.
The issuing of paper money by the authority of government was discontinued, and the
public engagements were made payable in coin. The introduction of so much gold and
silver, together with these judicious domestic regulations, aided by the bank, which
had been erected the preceding year in Philadelphia, extricated Congress from much
of their embarrassment, and put it in their power to feed, cloath and move their army.

About the same time the old continental money, by common consent, ceased to have
currency. Like an aged man expiring by the decays of nature, without a sigh or a
groan, it fell asleep in the hands of its last possessors. By the scale of depreciation the
war was carried on five years, for little more than a million of pounds sterling, and
200 millions of paper dollars were made redeemable by five millions of silver ones. In
other countries, such measures would probably have produced popular insurrections,
but in the United States they were submitted to without any tumults. Public faith was
violated but in the opinion of most men public good was promoted. The evils
consequent on depreciation had taken place, and the redemption of the bills of credit
at their nominal value as originally promised, instead of remedying the distresses of
the sufferers would in many cases have increased them, by subjecting their small
remains of property to exorbitant taxation. The money had in a great measure got out
of the hands of the original proprietors, and was in the possession of others, who had
obtained it at a rate of value not exceeding what was fixed upon it by the scale of
depreciation.

Nothing could afford a stronger proof that the resistance of America to Great Britain
was grounded in the hearts of the people, than these events. To receive paper bills of
credit issued without any funds, and to give property in exchange for them, as equal to
gold or silver, demonstrated the zeal and enthusiasm with which the war was begun; but to consent to the extinction of the same after a currency of five years, without any adequate provision made for their future redemption, was more than would have been born by any people, who conceived that their rulers had separate interests or views from themselves. The demise of one king and the coronation of a lawful successor have often excited greater commotions in royal governments, than took place in the United States on the sudden extinction of their whole current money. The people saw the necessity which compelled their rulers to act in the manner they had done, and being well convinced that the good of the country was their object, quietly submitted to measures, which under other circumstances, would scarcely have been expiated by the lives and fortunes of their authors.

While the Americans were suffering the complicated calamities which introduced the year 1781, their adversaries were carrying on the most extensive plan of operation, which had ever been attempted since the war. It had often been objected to the British commanders, that they had not conducted the war in the manner most likely to effect the subjugation of the revolted provinces. Military critics in particular, found fault with them for keeping a large army idle at New-York, which they said if properly applied, would have been sufficient to make successful impressions, at one and the same time, on several of the States. The British seem to have calculated the campaign of 1781, with a view to make an experiment of the comparative merit of this mode of conducting military operations. The war raged in that year, not only in the vicinity of British head quarters at New-York, but in Georgia, South-Carolina, North-Carolina, and in Virginia. The latter State from its peculiar situation, and from the modes of building, planting and living, which had been adopted by the inhabitants, is particularly exposed, and lies at the mercy of whatever army is master of the Chesapeake. These circumstances, together with the pre-eminent rank which Virginia held in the confederacy, pointed out the propriety of making that State the object of particular attention. To favour lord Cornwallis’ designs in the southern States, Major Gen. Leslie, with about 2000 men, had been detached from New-York to the Chesapeake, in the latter end of 1780; but subsequent events induced his lordship to order him from Virginia to Charleston, with the view of his more effectually cooperating with the army under his own immediate command. Soon after the departure of General Leslie, Virginia was again invaded by another party from New-York. This was commanded by Gen. Arnold, now a Brigadier in the royal army. His force consisted of about 1600 men, and was supported by such a number of armed vessels as enabled him to commit extensive ravages, on the unprotected coasts of that well watered country. The invaders landed about 15 miles below Richmond, and in two days marched into the town, where they destroyed large quantities of tobacco, salt, rum, sail-cloth and other merchandize. Successive excursions were made to several other places, in which the royal army committed similar devastations.

In about a fortnight, they marched into Portsmouth and began to fortify it. The loss they sustained from the feeble opposition of the dispersed inhabitants was inconsiderable. The havoc made by General Arnold, and the apprehension of a design to fix a permanent post in Virginia, induced General
Washington to detach the Marquis de la Fayette, with 1200 of the American infantry, to that State, and also to urge the French in Rhode-Island to co-operate with him in attempting to capture Arnold and his party. The French commanders eagerly closed with the proposal. Since they had landed in the United States, no proper opportunity of gratifying their passion for military fame, had yet presented itself. They rejoiced at that which now offered, and indulged a cheerful hope of rendering essential service to their allies, by cutting off the retreat of Arnold’s party.

With this view, their fleet with 1500 additional men on board, sailed from Rhode-Island for Virginia. D’Estouches, who since the death of de Ternay on the preceding December had commanded the French fleet, previous to the sailing of his whole naval force, dispatched the Eveillé, a sixty [227] four gun ship, and two frigates, with orders to destroy the British ships and frigates in the Chesapeake.

These took or destroyed ten vessels, and captured the Romulus of 44 guns.

Arbuthnot with a British fleet sailed from Gardiner’s-bay in pursuit of D’Estouches.

The former overtook and engaged the latter off the capes of Virginia. The British had the advantage of more guns than the French, but the latter were much more strongly manned than the former. The contest between the fleets thus nearly balanced, ended without the loss of a ship on either side; but the British obtained the fruits of victory so far as to frustrate the whole scheme of their adversaries. The fleet of his most Christian Majesty returned to Rhode-Island, without effecting the object of the expedition. Thus was Arnold saved from imminent danger of falling into the hands of his exasperated countrymen.

The day before the French fleet returned to Newport, a convoy arrived in the Chesapeake from New-York, with Major Gen. Philips and about 2000 men. This distinguished officer who having been taken at Saratoga had been lately exchanged, was appointed to be commander of the royal forces in Virginia. Philips and Arnold soon made a junction, and carried every thing before them. They successively defeated those bodies of militia which came in their way. The whole country was open to their excursions. On their embarkation from Portsmouth, a detachment visited York-town but the main body proceeded to Williamsburgh.

On the 22d of April they reached Chickapowing. A party proceeded up that river 10 or 12 miles, and destroyed much property.

On the 24th they landed at City-point, and soon after they marched for Petersburgh. About one mile from the town they were opposed by a small force commanded by Baron Steuben; but this after making a gallant resistance was compelled to retreat.

At Petersburgh they destroyed 4000 hogsheads of tobacco, a ship and a number of small vessels. Within three days one party marched to Chesterfield courthouse, and burned a range of barracks, and 300 barrels of flour. On the same day, another party under the command [228] of Gen. Arnold marched to Osborne’s. About four miles above that place, a small marine force was
drawn up to oppose him. Gen. Arnold sent a flag to treat with the commander of this
fleet, but he declared that he would defend it to the last extremity. Upon this refusal,
Arnold advanced with some artillery, and fired upon him with decisive effect from the
banks of the river. Two ships and ten small vessels loaded with tobacco, cordage,
flour, &c. were captured. Four ships, five brigantines and a number of small vessels
were burnt or sunk.

The quantity of tobacco taken or destroyed in this fleet, exceeded 30
2000 hogsheads, and the whole was effected without the loss of a
single man, on the side of the British. The royal forces then marched up the fork till
they arrived at Manchester. There they destroyed 1200 hogsheads of tobacco;
returning thence they made great havoc at Warmic. They destroyed the ships on the
stocks, and in the river, and a large range of rope walks. A magazine of 500 barrels of
flour, within a number of warehouses, and of tan houses, all filled with their
respective commodities, were also consumed in one general conflagration. On the 9th
of May they returned to Petersburgh, having in the course of the preceding three
weeks, destroyed property to an immense amount. With this expedition, Major Gen.
Philips terminated a life, which in all his previous operations had been full of glory.
At early periods of his military career, on different occasions of a preceding war, he
had gained the full approbation of Prince Ferdinand, under whom he had served in
Germany. As an officer he was universally admired. Though much of the devastations
committed by the troops under his command, may be vindicated on the principles of
those who hold that the rights and laws of war, are of equal obligation with the rights
and laws of humanity; yet the friends of his fame, have reason to regret that he did not
die three weeks sooner.
CHAPTER XXIII

Campaign Of 1781. Operations In The Two Carolinas And Georgia.

The successes which, with a few checks, followed the British arms since they had reduced Savannah and Charleston encouraged them to pursue their object by advancing from south to north. A vigorous invasion of North-Carolina was therefore projected, for the business of the winter which followed Gen. Gates’ defeat. The Americans were sensible of the necessity of reinforcing, and supporting their southern army, but were destitute of the means of doing it. Their northern army would not admit of being farther weakened, nor was there time to march over the intervening distance of seven hundred miles, but if men could have been procured and time allowed for marching them to South-Carolina, money for defraying the unavoidable expences of their transportation, could not be commanded, either in the latter end of 1780, or the first months of 1781. Though Congress was unable to forward either men or money, for the relief of the Southern States, they did what was equivalent. They sent them a general, whose head was a council, and whose military talents were equal to a reinforcement. The nomination of an officer for this important trust, was left to Gen. Washington. He mentioned General Greene, adding for reason “that he was an officer in whose abilities and integrity, from a long and intimate experience, he had the most entire confidence.”

The army after its defeat and dispersion on the 16th of August 1780, rendezvoused at Hillsborough. In the latter end of the year they advanced to Charlotte-Town. At this place Gen. Gates transferred the command to Gen. Greene. The manly resignation of the one, was equalled by the delicate disinterestedness of the other. Expressions of civility, and acts of friendship and attention were reciprocally exchanged. Greene upon all occasions, was the vindicator of Gates’ reputation. In his letters and conversation, he uniformly maintained that his predecessor, had failed in no part of his military duty, and that he had deserved success, though he could not command it. Within a few hours after Greene took charge of the army a report was made of a gallant enterprize of Lieut. Col. Washington. Being out on a foraging excursion, he had penetrated within 13 miles of Camden, to Clermont the seat of Lieut. Col. Rigely of the British militia. This was fortified by a block house, and encompassed by an abbatis, and was defended by upwards of one hundred of the inhabitants, who had submitted to the British government. Lieut. Col. Washington advanced with his cavalry, and planted the trunk of a pine tree, so as to resemble a field piece. The lucky moment was seized and a peremptory demand of an immediate surrender was made, when the garrison was impressed with the expectation of an immediate cannonade in case of their refusal. The whole surrendered at discretion, without a shot on either side. This fortunate incident, through the superstition to which most men are more or less subject, was viewed by the army as a presage of success under their new commander.
When Gen. Greene took the command, he found the troops had made a practice of going home without permission, staying several days or weeks, and then returning to camp. Determined to enforce strict discipline, he gave out that he would make an example of the first deserter of the kind he caught. One such being soon taken, was accordingly shot, at the head of the army, drawn up to be spectators of the punishment. This had the desired effect, and put a stop to the dangerous practice.

The whole southern army at this time consisted of about 2000 men, more than half of which were militia. The regulars had been for a long time without pay, and were very deficient in clothing. All sources of supply from Charleston were in possession of the British, and no imported article could be obtained from a distance less than 200 miles. The procuring of provisions for this small force was a matter of difficulty. The paper currency was depreciated so far, as to be wholly unequal to the purchase of even such supplies as the country afforded.

Hard money had not a physical existence in any hands accessible to the Americans. The only resource left for supplying the army was by the arbitrary mode of impress. To seize on the property of the inhabitants, and at the same time to preserve their kind affections, was a difficult business and of delicate execution, but of the utmost moment, as it furnished the army with provisions without impairing the disposition of the inhabitants to co-operate with it in recovering the country. This grand object called for the united efforts of both. Such was the situation of the country, that it was almost equally dangerous for the American army to go forward or stand still. In the first case every thing was hazarded; in the last the confidence of the people would be lost, and with it all prospect of being supported by them. The impatience of the suffering exiles and others, led them to urge the adoption of rash measures. The mode of opposition they preferred was the least likely to effect their ultimate wishes. The nature of the country thinly inhabited, abounding with swamps, and covered with woods—the inconsiderable force of the American army, the number of the disaffected, and the want of magazines, weighed with Gen. Greene to prefer a partizan war. By close application to his new profession, he had acquired a scientific knowledge of the principles and maxims for conducting wars in Europe but considered them as often inapplicable to America. When they were adapted to his circumstances he used them, but oftener deviated from them, and followed his own practical judgement, founded on a comprehensive view of his real situation.

With an inconsiderable army, miserably provided, Gen. Greene took the field against a superior British regular force, which had marched in triumph 200 miles from the sea coast, and was flushed with successive victories through a whole campaign. Soon after he took the command, he divided his force and sent Gen. Morgan with a respectable detachment to the western extremity of South-Carolina, and about the same time marched with the main body to Hick’s-creek, on the north side of the Pedee, opposite to Cheraw-Hill.

After the general submission of the militia in the year 1780, a revolution took place highly favourable to the interest of America. The residence of the British army, instead of increasing the real friends to
royal government, diminished their number, and added new vigor to the opposite party. The British had a post in Ninety six for thirteen months, during which time the country was filled with rapine, violence and murder. Applications were daily made for redress, yet in that whole period, there was not a single instance wherein punishment was inflicted, either on the soldiery or on the tories. The people soon found that there was no security for their lives, liberties or property, under the military government of British officers, careless of their civil rights. The peaceable citizens were reduced to that uncommon distress, in which they had more to fear from oppression, than resistance. They therefore most ardently wished for an American force. Under these favourable circumstances General Greene detached General Morgan, to take a position in that district. The appearance of this force, a sincere attachment to the cause of independence, and the impolitic conduct of the British, induced several persons to resume their arms, and to act in concert with the continental troops.

When this irruption was made into the district of Ninety six, lord Cornwallis was far advanced in his preparations for the invasion of North-Carolina. To leave General Morgan in his rear, was contrary to military policy. In order therefore to drive him from this station, and to deter the inhabitants from joining him, Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton was ordered to proceed with about 1100 men and “push him to the utmost.” He had two field pieces, and a superiority of infantry in the proportion of five to four, and of cavalry in the proportion of three to one. Besides this inequality of force, two thirds of the troops under General Morgan were militia. With these fair prospects of success, Tarleton engaged Morgan at the Cowpens, with the expectation of driving him out of South-Carolina. The latter drew up his men in two lines. The whole of the southern militia, with 190 from [233] North-Carolina, were put under the command of Colonel Pickens. These formed the first line, and were advanced a few hundred yards before the second, with orders to form on the right of the second, when forced to retire. The second line consisted of the light infantry, and a corps of Virginia militia riflemen. Lieutenant Colonel Washington, with his cavalry and about 45 militia men, mounted and equipped with swords, were drawn up at some distance in the rear of the whole. The open wood in which they were formed, was neither secured in front, flank or rear. On the side of the British, the light legion infantry and fusileers, though worn down with extreme fatigue, were ordered to form in line. Before this order was executed, the line, though far from being complete, was led to the attack by Tarleton himself. They advanced with a shout and poured in an incessant fire of musquetry. Colonel Pickens directed the men under his command to restrain their fire, till the British were within forty or fifty yards. This order though executed with great firmness was not sufficient to repel their advancing foes. The militia fell back. The British advanced and engaged the second line, which after an obstinate conflict was compelled to retreat to the cavalry. In this crisis Lieutenant Colonel Washington made a successful charge on Captain Ogilvie, who with about forty dragoons, was cutting down the militia, and forced them to retreat in confusion. Lieutenant Colonel Howard almost at the same moment rallied the continental troops and charged with fixed bayonets. The example was instantly followed by the militia. Nothing could exceed the astonishment and confusion of the British occasioned by these unexpected charges. Their advance fell back on their rear, and communicated a panic to the whole. Two hundred and fifty horse which had not been engaged fled with precipitation. The pieces of artillery were
seized by the Americans, and the greatest confusion took place among the infantry. While they were in this state of disorder, Lieutenant Colonel Howard called to them, to “lay down their arms,” and promised them good quarter. Some hundreds accepted the offer and surrendered. The first battalion of the 71st, and two British light infantry companies, laid down their arms to the American militia. A party which had been left some distance in the rear to guard the baggage, was the only body of infantry that escaped. The officer of that detachment on hearing of Tarleton’s defeat, destroyed a great part of the baggage, and retreated to lord Cornwallis. Upwards of 300 of the British were killed or wounded, and above 500 prisoners were taken. Eight hundred muskets, two field pieces, 35 baggage wagons, and 100 dragoon horses fell into the hands of the conquerors. The Americans had only 12 men killed and 60 wounded.

General Morgan’s good conduct on this memorable day, was honoured by Congress with a gold medal. They also presented medals of silver to Lieutenant Colonels Washington and Howard, a sword to colonel Pickens, a brevet majority to Edward Giles the General’s aid de camp, and a Captaincy to Baron Glassbeck. Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton hitherto triumphant in a variety of skirmishes, on this occasion lost his laurels, though he was supported by the 7th regiment, one battalion of the 71st, and two companies of light infantry; and his repulse did more essential injury to the British interest, than was equivalent to all the preceding advantages he had gained. It was the first link in a chain of causes which finally drew down ruin, both in North and South Carolina on the royal interest. That impetuosity of Tarleton which had acquired him great reputation, when on former occasions he had surprised an incautious enemy, or attacked a panic struck militia, was at this time the occasion of his ruin. Impatient of delay he engaged with fatigued troops, and led them on to action, before they were properly formed, and before the reserve had taken its ground. He was also guilty of a great oversight in not bringing up a column of cavalry to support and improve the advantages he had gained when the Americans retreated.

Lord Cornwallis though preparing to extend his conquests northwardly was not inattentive to the security of South-Carolina. Besides the force at Charleston, he left a considerable body of troops under the command of lord Rawdon. These were principally stationed at Camden, from which central situation they might easily be drawn forth to defend the frontiers or to suppress insurrections. To facilitate the intended operations against North-Carolina, Major Craig, with a detachment of about 300 men from Charleston, and a small marine force took possession of Wilmington. While these arrangements were making, the year 1781 commenced with the fairest prospects to the friends of British government. The arrival of General Leslie in Charleston, with his late command in Virginia gave Earl Cornwallis a decided superiority, and enabled him to attempt the reduction of North-Carolina, with a force sufficient to bear down all probable opposition. Arnold was before him in Virginia, while South-Carolina in his rear, was considered as completely subdued. His lordship had much to hope and little to fear. His admirers flattered him with the expectation, that his victory at Camden would prove but the dawn of his glory; and that the events of the approaching campaign would immortalize his name as the conqueror, at least of the southern States. Whilst lord Cornwallis was indulging these pleasing prospects, he received intelligence, no less unwelcome than unexpected, that Tarleton his favourite
officer, in whom he placed the greatest confidence, instead of driving Morgan out of the country, was completely defeated by him. This surprised and mortified, but did not discourage his lordship. He hoped by vigorous exertions soon to obtain reparation for the late disastrous event, and even to recover what he had lost. With the expectation of retaking the prisoners captured at the Cowpens, and to obliterate the impression made by the issue of the late action at that place, his lordship instantly determined on the pursuit of General Morgan, who had moved off towards Virginia with his prisoners. The movements of the royal army in consequence of this determination induced General Greene immediately to retreat from Hick’s creek, lest the British by crossing the upper sources of the Pedee, should get between him and the detachment, [236] which was incumbered with the prisoners.

In this critical situation General Greene left the main army, under the command of General Huger, and rode 150 miles through the country, to join the detachment under General Morgan, that he might be in front of lord Cornwallis, and direct the motions of both divisions of his army, so as to form a speedy junction between them. Immediately after the action, on the 17th of January, Morgan sent on his prisoners under a proper guard, and having made every arrangement in his power for their security retreated with expedition. Nevertheless the British gained ground upon him. Morgan intended to cross the mountains with his detachment and prisoners, that he might more effectually secure the latter: But Greene on his arrival ordered the prisoners to Charlotteville, and directed the troops to Guildford court-house, to which place he had also ordered General Huger to proceed with the main army.

In this retreat the Americans underwent hardships almost incredible. Many of them performed this march without shoes over frozen ground, which so gashed their naked feet, that their blood marked every step of their progress. They were sometimes without meat, often without flour, and always without spiritous liquors. Their march led them through a barren country, which scarcely afforded necessaries for a few straggling inhabitants. In this severe season, also with very little clothing, they were daily reduced to the necessity of fording deep creeks, and of remaining wet without any change of cloaths, till the heat of their bodies and occasional fires in the woods dried their tattered rags. To all these difficulties they submitted without the loss of a single centinal by desertion. Lord Cornwallis reduced the quantity of his own baggage, and the example was followed by the officers under his command. Every thing which was not necessary in action, or to the existence of the troops, was destroyed. No waggons were reserved except those loaded with hospital stores, salt and ammunition, and four empty ones for the use of the sick.

The royal army, encouraged by the example of his lordship, [237] submitted to every hardship with cheerfulness. They beheld, without murmuring, their most valuable baggage destroyed[[,] their spiritous liquors staved, when they were entering on hard service, and under circumstances which precluded every prospect of supply.

The British had urged the pursuit with so much rapidity, that they reached the Catawba on the evening of the same day on which their fleeing adversaries had crossed it. Before the next morning a heavy fall of rain made that river impassable. The Americans, confident of the justice of their cause, considered this event as an
interposition of providence in their favour. It is certain that if the rising of the river had taken place a few hours earlier, Gen. Morgan with his whole detachment and 500 prisoners would have scarcely had any chance of escape. When the fresh had subsided so far as to leave the river fordable, a large proportion of the King’s troops received orders to be in readiness to march at one o’clock in the morning. Feints had been made of passing at several different fords, but the real attempt was made at a ford near M’Cowans, the north banks of which were defended by a small guard of militia commanded by Gen. Davidson. The British marched through the river upwards of 500 yards wide and about three feet deep, sustaining a constant fire from the militia on the opposite bank without returning it till they had made good their passage. The light infantry and grenadier companies as soon as they reached the land dispersed the Americans. Gen. Davidson the brave leader of the latter was killed at the first onset. The militia throughout the neighbouring settlements were dispirited, and but few of them could be persuaded to take or keep the field. A small party which collected about ten miles from the ford was attacked and dispersed by Lt. Col. Tarleton. All the fords were abandoned, and the whole royal army crossed over without any farther opposition. The passage of the Catawba being effected, the Americans continued to flee and the British to pursue. The former by expeditious movements crossed the Yadkin, partly in flats, and partly by fording on the second and third days of February, and secured their boats on [238] the north side.

Though the British were close in their rear, yet the want of boats and the rapid rising of the river from preceding rains made their crossing impossible. This second hair breadth escape was considered by the Americans as a farther evidence that their cause was favoured by Heaven. That they in two successive instances should effect their passage, while their pursuers only a few miles in their rear could not follow, impressed the religious people of that settlement with such sentiments of devotion as added fresh vigor to their exertions in behalf of American independence.

The British having failed in their first scheme of passing the Yadkin, were obliged to cross at the upper fords; but before this was completed, the two divisions of the American army made a junction at Guildford court-house. Though this had taken place, their combined numbers were so much inferior to the British, that Gen. Greene could not with any propriety risque an action. He therefore called a council of officers, who unanimously concurred in opinion that he ought to retire over the Dan, and to avoid an engagement till he was reinforced. Lord Cornwallis knowing the inferiority of the American force conceived hopes, by getting between General Greene and Virginia, to cut off his retreat, intercept his supplies and reinforcements, and oblige him to fight under many disadvantages. With this view, his lordship kept the upper country where only the rivers are fordable—supposing that his adversaries, from the want of a sufficient number of flats, could not make good their passage in the deep water below, or in case of their attempting it, he expected to overtake and force them to action before they could cross. In this expectation he was deceived. Gen. Greene by good management eluded his lordship. The British urged their pursuit with so much rapidity, that the American light troops were on the 14th compelled to retire upwards of 40 miles.
By the most indefatigable exertions Gen. Greene had that day transported his army, artillery and baggage, over the river Dan into Virginia. So rapid was the pursuit, and so narrow the escape, that the van of the pursuing British [239] just arrived as the rear of the Americans had crossed. The hardships and difficulties, which the royal army had undergone in this march, were exceeded by the mortification that all their toils and exertions were to no purpose. They conceived it next to impossible that General Greene could escape, without receiving a decisive blow. They therefore cheerfully submitted to difficulties, of which they who reside in cultivated countries can form no adequate ideas. After surmounting incredible hardships, when they fancied themselves within grasp of their object, they discovered that all their hopes were blasted.

The continental army being driven out of North-Carolina, Earl Cornwallis thought the opportunity favourable for assembling the loyalists. With this view he left the Dan, and proceeded to Hillsborough. On his arrival there, he erected the King’s standard, and published a proclamation, inviting all loyal subjects to repair to it with their arms and ten days provision, and assuring them of his readiness to concur with them in effectual measures for suppressing the remains of rebellion, and for the reestablishment of good order and constitutional government. Soon after the King’s standard was erected at Hillsborough, some hundreds of the inhabitants rode in to the British camp. They seemed to be very desirous of peace, but averse to any co-operation for procuring it. They acknowledged the continentals were chased out of the province, but expressed their apprehensions that they would soon return, and on the whole declined to take any decided part in a cause which yet appeared dangerous. Notwithstanding the indifference or timidity of the loyalists near Hillsborough, lord Cornwallis hoped for substantial aid from the inhabitants between Haw and Deep river. He therefore detached Lieut. Col. Tarleton with 450 men, to give countenance to the friends of royal government in that district. Greene being informed that many of the inhabitants had joined his lordship, and that they were repairing in great numbers to make their submission, was apprehensive that unless some spirited measure was immediately taken, the whole country would be lost to the Americans. He therefore concluded, [240] at every hazard, to recross the Dan.

This was done by the light troops, and these on the next day were followed by the main body accompanied with a brigade of Virginia militia. Immediately after the return of the Americans to North-Carolina, some of their light troops, commanded by Gen. Pickens and Lieut. Colonel Lee, were detached in pursuit of Tarleton, who had been sent to encourage the insurrection of the loyalists. Three hundred and fifty of these tories commanded by Col. Pyles, when on their way to join the British, fell in with this light American party, and mistook them for the royal detachment sent for their support. The Americans attacked them, laboring under this mistake, to great advantage, and cut them down as they were crying out “God save the King” and making protestations of their loyalty. Natives of the British colonies, who were of this character, more rarely found mercy than European soldiers. They were considered by the whig Americans as being cowards, who not only wanted spirit to defend their constitutional rights, but who unnaturally co-operated with strangers in fixing the
chains of foreign domination on themselves and countrymen. Many of them on this occasion suffered the extremity of military vengeance. Tarleton was refreshing his legion, about a mile from this scene of slaughter. Upon hearing the alarm, he re-crossed the Haw and returned to Hillsborough. On his retreat he cut down several of the royalists, as they were advancing to join the British army, mistaking them for the rebel militia of the country. These events, together with the return of the American army, overcast all the schemes of lord Cornwallis. The tide of public sentiment was no longer in his favour. The recruiting service in behalf of the royal army was entirely stopped. The absence of the American army, for one fortnight longer, might have turned the scale. The advocates for royal government being discouraged by these adverse accidents, and being also generally deficient in that ardent zeal which characterised the patriots, could not be induced to act with confidence. They were so dispersed over a large extent of a thinly settled country, that it was difficult to bring them to unite in any common plan. They had no superintending Congress to give system or concert to their schemes. While each little district pursued separate measures, all were obliged to submit to the American governments. Numbers of them, who were on their way to join lord Cornwallis, struck with terror at the unexpected return of the American army, and with the unhappy fate of their brethren, went home to wait events. Their policy was of that timid kind, which disposed them to be more attentive to personal safety, than to the success of either army.

Though Gen. Greene had recrossed, his plan was not to venture upon an immediate action, but to keep alive the courage of his party—to depress that of the loyalists, and to harass the foragers and detachments of the British, till reinforcements should arrive. While Greene was unequal even to defensive operations, he lay seven days within ten miles of Cornwallis’ camp, but took a new position every night, and kept it a profound secret where the next was to be. By such frequent movements lord Cornwallis, could not gain intelligence of his situation in time to profit by it. He maneuvered in this manner, to avoid an action for three weeks, during which time he was often obliged to ask bread from the common soldiers, having none of his own. By the end of that period, two brigades of militia from North-Carolina, and one from Virginia, together with 400 regulars raised for 18 months, joined his army, and gave him a superiority of numbers. He therefore determined no longer to avoid an engagement. Lord Cornwallis having long sought for this, no longer delay took place on either side.

The American army consisted of about 4400 men, of which more than one half were militia. The British of about 2400, chiefly troops grown veteran in victories. The former was drawn up in three lines. The front composed of North-Carolina militia, the second of Virginia militia, the third and last of continental troops commanded by Gen. Huger and Col. Williams. After a brisk cannonade in front, the British advanced in three columns. The Hessians on the right, the guards in the center, and Lieut. Col. Webster’s brigade on the left, and attacked the front line. This gave way when their adversaries were at the distance of 140 yards, and was occasioned by the misconduct of a colonel, who on the advance of the enemy, called out to an officer at some distance “that he would be surrounded.” The alarm was sufficient: Without enquiring into the probability of what had been injudiciously
suggested, the militia precipitately quitted the field: As one good officer may sometimes mend the face of affairs, so the misconduct of a bad one may injure a whole army. Untrained men when on the field are similar to each other. The difference of their conduct depends much on incidental circumstances, and on none more than the manner of their being led on, and the quality of the officers by whom they are commanded.

The Virginia militia stood their ground, and kept up their fire till they were ordered to retreat. Gen. Stevens their commander, had posted 40 riflemen at equal distances, twenty paces in the rear of his brigade, with orders to shoot every man who should leave his post. That brave officer though wounded through the thigh did not quit the field. The continental troops were last engaged, and maintained the conflict with great spirit for an hour and a half. At length the discipline of veteran troops gained the day. They broke the second Maryland brigade, turned the American left flank, and got in rear of the Virginia brigade. They appeared to be gaining Greene’s right, which would have encircled the whole of the continental troops, a retreat was therefore ordered. This was made in good order, and no farther than over the reedy fork, a distance of about three miles. Greene halted there and drew up till he had collected most of the stragglers, and then retired to Speedwell’s iron works, ten miles distant from Guildford. The Americans lost 4 pieces of artillery and two ammunition waggons. The victory cost the British dear. Their killed and wounded amounted to several hundreds. The guards lost Colonel Stuart and three Captains, besides subalterns. Colonel Webster, an officer of distinguished merit died of his wounds to the great regret of the whole royal army. Generals O’Hara and Howard, and Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton, were wounded. About 300 of the continentals, and one hundred of the Virginia militia were killed or wounded. Among the former was Major Anderson of the Maryland line a most valuable officer, of the latter were Generals Huger and Stevens. The early retreat of the North Carolinians saved them from much loss. The American army sustained a great diminution, by the numerous fugitives who instead of rejoining the camp went to their homes. Lord Cornwallis suffered so much that he was in no condition to improve the advantage he had gained. The British had only the name, the Americans, all the good consequences of a victory. General Greene retreated, and lord Cornwallis kept the field, but notwithstanding the British interest in North Carolina was from that day ruined.

Soon after this action, lord Cornwallis issued a proclamation setting forth his complete victory, and calling on all loyal subjects to stand forth, and take an active part in restoring order and good government, and offering a pardon and protection to all rebels, murderers excepted, who would surrender themselves on or before the 20th of April. On the next day after this proclamation was issued, his lordship left his hospital and 75 wounded men, with the numerous loyalists in the vicinity, and began a march towards Wilmington, which had the appearance of a retreat. Major Craig who for the purposes of cooperating with his lordship, had been stationed at Wilmington, was not able to open a water communication with the British army while they were in the upper country. The distance, the narrowness of Cape Fear river, the commanding elevation of its banks, and the hostile sentiments of the inhabitants on each side of it forbade the attempt. The destitute condition of the British army, made it necessary to go to these supplies, which for these reasons could not be brought to them.
General Greene no sooner received information of this movement of lord Cornwallis, than he put his army in motion to follow him. As he had no means of providing for the wounded, of his own, and the British forces, he wrote a letter to the neighbouring inhabitants of the Quaker persuasion, in which he mentioned his being brought up a Quaker, and urged them to take care of the wounded on both sides. His recommendations prevailed, and the Quakers supplied the hospitals with every comfort in their power.

The Americans continued the pursuit of Cornwallis till they had arrived at Ramsay’s mill on Deep river, but for good reasons desisted from following him any farther.

Lord Cornwallis halted and refreshed his army for about three weeks at Wilmington, and then marched across the country to Petersburg in Virginia. Before it was known that his lordship had determined on this movement, the bold resolution of returning to South-Carolina, was formed by Gen. Greene. This animated the friends of Congress in that quarter. Had the American army followed his lordship, the southern States would have conceived themselves conquered; for their hopes and fears prevailed just as the armies marched north or south. Though lord Cornwallis marched through North-Carolina to Virginia, yet as the American army returned to South-Carolina, the people considered that movement of his lordship in the light of a retreat.

While the two armies were in North-Carolina, the whig inhabitants of South-Carolina were animated by the gallant exertions of Sumter and Marion. These distinguished partisans, while surrounded with enemies, kept the field. Though the continental army was driven into Virginia, they did not despair of the commonwealth. Having mounted their followers, their motions were rapid, and their attacks unexpected. With their light troops they intercepted the British convoys of provisions, infested their out posts, beat up their quarters, and harassed their detachments with such frequent alarms, that they were obliged to be always on their guard. In the western extremity of the State, Sumter was powerfully supported by Cols. Niel, Lacey, Hill, Winn, [245] Bratton, Brandon and others, each of whom held militia commissions, and had many friends. In the north eastern extremity, Marion received in like manner great assistance from the active exertions of Cols. Peter Horry, and Hugh Horry, Lt. Col. John Baxter, Col. James Postell, Major John Postell, and Major John James.

The inhabitants, either as affection or vicinity induced them, arranged themselves under some of the militia officers and performed many gallant enterprises. These singly were of too little consequence to merit a particular relation, but in general they displayed the determined spirit of the people and embarrassed the British. One in which Major John Postell commanded may serve as an illustration of the spirit of the times, and particularly of the indifference for property which then prevailed. Capt. James de Peyster of the royal army, with 25 grenadiers, having taken post in the house of the Major’s father, the Major posted his small command of 21 militia men, in such positions as commanded its doors, and demanded their surrender. This being refused, he set fire to an outhouse, and was proceeding to burn that in which they were posted,
and nothing but the immediate submission of the whole party restrained him from sacrificing his father’s valuable property, to gain an advantage to his country.

While lord Cornwallis was preparing to invade Virginia, Gen. Greene determined to re-commence offensive military operations in the southern extreme of the confederacy, in preference to pursuing his lordship into Virginia. Gen. Sumter, who had warmly urged this measure, was about this time authorised to raise a State brigade, to be in service for eighteen months. He had also prepared the militia to cooperate with the returning continental. With these forces an offensive war was recommenced in South-Carolina, and prosecuted with spirit and success.

Before Greene set out on his march for Carolina, he sent orders to General Pickens, to prevent supplies from going to the British garrisons at Ninety-Six and Augusta, and also detached Lieutenant Colonel Lee to advance [246] before the continental troops. The latter in eight days penetrated through the intermediate country to General Marion’s quarters upon the Santee. The main army, in a few more days, completed their march from Deep river to Camden. The British had erected a chain of posts from the capital to the extreme districts of the State, which had regular communications with each other. Lord Cornwallis being gone to Virginia, these became objects of enterprise to the Americans. While Gen. Greene was marching with his main force against Camden, fort Watson, which lay between Camden and Charleston, was invested by Gen. Marion and Lieut. Col. Lee. The besiegers speedily erected a work which overlooked the fort, though that was built on an Indian mount upwards of 30 feet high, from which they fired into it with such execution that the besieged durst not shew themselves. Under these circumstances the garrison, consisting of 114 men, surrendered by capitulation.

Camden, before which the main American army was encamped, is a village situated on a plain, covered on the south and east sides by the Wateree and a creek, the western and northern by six redoubts. It was defended by lord Rawdon with about 900 men. The American army, consisting only of about an equal number of continentals, and between two and three hundred militia, was unequal to the task of carrying this post by storm, or of completely investing it. Gen. Greene therefore took a good position about a mile distant, in expectation of alluring the garrison out of their lines. Lord Rawdon armed his whole force, and with great spirit sallied on the 25th. An engagement ensued. Victory for some time evidently inclined to the Americans, but in the progress of the action, the premature retreat of two companies eventually occasioned the defeat of the whole American army. Greene with his usual firmness, instantly took measures to prevent lord Rawdon from improving the success he had obtained. He retreated with such order that most of his wounded and all his artillery, together with a number of prisoners, were carried off. The British retired to Camden, and the Americans encamped [247] about five miles from their former position.

Their loss was between two and three hundred. Soon after this action Gen. Greene, knowing that the British garrison could not subsist long in Camden without fresh supplies from Charleston or the country, took such positions as were most likely to prevent their getting any.
Lord Rawdon received a reinforcement of 4 or 500 men by the arrival of Col. Watson from Pedee. With this increase of strength, he attempted on the next day to compel Gen. Greene to another action, but found it to be impracticable. Failing in this design, he returned to Camden and burned the jail, mills, many private houses and a great deal of his own baggage. He then evacuated the post, and retired to the southward of Santee. His lordship discovered as much prudence in evacuting Camden, as he had shewn bravery in its defence. The fall of fort Watson broke the chain of communication with Charleston, and the position of the American army, in a great measure intercepted supplies from the adjacent country. The British in South-Carolina, now cut off from all communication with lord Cornwallis, would have hazarded the capital, by keeping large detachments in their distant out-posts. They therefore resolved to contract their limits by retiring within the Santee. This measure animated the friends of Congress in the extremities of the State, and disposed them to co-operate with the American army. While Greene lay in the neighbourhood of Camden, he hung in one day eight soldiers, who had deserted from his army. This had such effect afterwards that there was no desertion for three months.

On the day after the evacuation of Camden the post at Orangeburg, consisting of 70 British militia and 12 regulars, surrendered to Gen. Sumter.

On the next day fort Motte capitulated. This was situated above the fork on the south side of the Congaree. The British had built their works round Mrs. Motte’s dwelling house. She with great cheerfulness furnished the Americans with materials for firing her own house. These being thrown by them on its roof soon kindled into flame.

The firing of the house, [248] which was in the center of the British works, compelled the garrison, consisting of 165 men, to surrender at discretion.

In two days more the British evacuated their post at Nelson’s ferry, and destroyed a great part of their stores.

On the day following, fort Granby, garrisoned by 352 men mostly royal militia, surrendered to Lieut. Col. Lee: Very advantageous terms were given them, from an apprehension that lord Rawdon was marching to their relief.

Their baggage was secured, in which was included an immense quantity of plunder. The American militia were much disgusted at the terms allowed the garrison, and discovered a disposition to break the capitulation and kill the prisoners; but Greene restrained them, by declaring in the most peremptory manner that he would instantly put to death any one, who should offer violence to those who by surrendering were under his protection.

General Marion with a party of militia, marched about this time to Georgetown, and began regular approaches against the British post in that place. On the first night after his men had broken ground, their adversaries evacuated their works, and retreated to Charleston; shortly after one Manson, an inhabitant of South-Carolina, who had joined the British, appeared in an armed vessel, and demanded permission to land his
men in the town. This being refused, he sent a few of them ashore and set fire to it. Upwards of forty houses were speedily reduced to ashes.

In the rapid manner just related, the British lost six posts, and abandoned all the northeastern extremities of South-Carolina. They still retained possession of Augusta and Ninety-six, in addition to their posts near the sea coast. Immediately after the surrender of fort Granby, Lieutenant Colonel Lee began his march for Augusta, and in four days completed it.

The British post at Silver-Bluff, with a field piece and considerable stores, surrendered to a detachment of Lee’s legion commanded by Captain Rudolph. Lee on his arrival at Augusta joined Pickens, who with a body of militia had for some time past taken post in the vicinity. They jointly carried on their approaches against fort Cornwallis at Augusta, in which Colonel Brown commanded. Two batteries were erected within 30 yards of the parapet, which overlooked the fort. From these eminences the American riflemen shot into the inside of the works with success: The garrison buried themselves in a great measure under ground, and obstinately refused to capitulate, till the necessity was so pressing that every man who attempted to fire on the besiegers, was immediately shot down.

At length when farther resistance would have been madness, the fort with about 300 men surrendered, on honorable terms of capitulation. The Americans during the siege had about forty men killed and wounded. After the surrender, Lieutenant Colonel Grierson of the British militia, was shot by the Americans. A reward of 100 guineas was offered, but in vain, for the perpetrator of the perfidious deed. Lieutenant Colonel Brown, would probably have shared the same fate, had not his conquerors furnished him with an escort to the royal garrison in Savannah. Individuals whose passions were inflamed by injuries, and exasperated, with personal animosity, were eager to gratify revenge in violation of the laws of war. Murders had produced murders. Plundering, assassinations, and house burnings, had become common. Zeal for the King or the Congress were the ostensible motives of action; but in several of both sides, the love of plunder, private pique, and a savageness of disposition, led to actions which were disgraceful to human nature. Such was the state of parties in the vicinity of Savannah river, and such the exasperation of whigs against tories, and of tories against whigs; and so much had they suffered from and inflicted on each other, that the laws of war, and the precepts of humanity afforded but a feeble security for the observance of capitulations on either side. The American officers exerted themselves to procure to their prisoners that safety which many of the inhabitants, influenced by a remembrance of the sufferings of themselves, and of their friends, were unwilling to allow them.

While operations were carrying on against the small posts, Greene proceeded with his main army and laid siege to Ninety-six, in which Lieutenant Colonel Cruger, with upwards of 500 men was advantageously posted. On the left of the besiegers was a work, erected in the form of a star. On the right was a strong blockade fort, with two block houses in it. The town was also picqueted in with strong picquets, and surrounded with a ditch, and a bank,
near the height of a common parapet. The besiegers were more numerous than the besieged, but the disparity was not great.

The siege was prosecuted with indefatigable industry. The garrison defended themselves with spirit and address. On the morning after the siege began, a party sallied from the garrison, and drove the advance of the besiegers from their works. The next night, two strong block batteries were erected at the distance of 350 yards. Another battery 20 feet high, was erected within 220 yards, and soon after a fourth one was erected within 100 yards of the main fort, and lastly, a rifle battery was erected 30 feet high, within 30 yards of the ditch; from all of which the besiegers fired into the British works. The abbatis was turned, and a mine and two trenches were so far extended, as to be within six feet of the ditch. At that interesting moment, intelligence was conveyed into the garrison, that Lord Rawdon was near at hand, with about 2000 men for their relief. These had arrived in Charleston from Ireland after the siege began, and were marched for Ninety-six, on the seventh day after they landed.

In these circumstances, Gen. Greene had no alternative but to raise the siege, or attempt the reduction of the place by assault. The latter was attempted. Though the assailants displayed great resolution, they failed of success. On this General Greene raised the siege, and retreated over Saluda. His loss in the assault and previous conflicts was about 150 men. Lieutenant Colonel Cruger deservedly gained great reputation by this successful defence. He was particularly indebted to Major Greene, who had bravely and judiciously defended that redoubt, for the reduction of which, the greatest exertions had been made.

Truly distressing was the situation of the American army. When they were nearly masters of the whole country, they were compelled to seek safety by retreating to its remotest extremity. In this gloomy situation Greene was advised to retire with his remaining force to Virginia. To suggestions of this kind he nobly replied. “I will recover South-Carolina or die in the attempt.” This distinguished officer whose genius was most vigorous in those perilous extremities, when feeble minds abandon themselves to despair, adopted the only expedient now left him, that of avoiding an engagement till the British force should be divided. Lord Rawdon who by rapid marches was near Ninety-six, at the time of the assault, pursued the Americans as far as the Enoree river; but without overtaking them. Desisting from this fruitless pursuit he drew off a part of his force from Ninety-six, and fixed a detachment at the Congaree. General Greene on hearing that the British force was divided, faced about to give them battle. Lord Rawdon no less surprised than alarmed at this unexpected movement of his lately retreating foe, abandoned the Congaree in two days after he had reached it, and marched to Orangeburgh. General Greene in his turn pursued and offered him battle. His lordship would not venture out and his adversary was too weak to attack him in his encampment, with any prospect of success.

Reasons similar to those which induced the British to evacuate Camden, weighed with them about this time, to withdraw their troops from Ninety-six. While the American army lay near Orangeburgh, Lieutenant Colonel Cruger, having evacuated the post he had gallantly defended, was marching with the troops of that garrison, through the
forks of Edisto, to join lord Rawdon at Orangeburgh. General Greene being unable to prevent their junction, and still less so to stand before their combined force, retired to the high hills of Santee. The evacuation of Camden having been effected by striking at the posts below it, the same manoeuvre was now attempted to induce the British to leave Orangeburgh. With this view Generals Sumter and Marion, with their brigades, and the [252] legion cavalry, were detached to Monk’s corner and Dorchester. They moved down different roads, and commenced separate and successful attacks, on convoys and detachments in the vicinity of Charleston. In this manner was the war carried on. While the British kept their forces compact, they could not cover the country, and the American General had the prudence to avoid fighting. When they divided their army, their detachments were attacked and defeated. While they were in the upper country, light parties of Americans annoyed their small posts in the lower settlements. The people soon found that the late conquerors were not able to afford them their promised protection. The spirit of revolt became general, and the royal interest daily declined.

The British having evacuated all their posts to the northward of Santee and Congaree, and to the westward of Edisto, conceived themselves able to hold all that fertile country, which is in a great measure enclosed by these rivers. They therefore once more resumed their station, near the junction of the Wateree and Congaree. This induced Gen. Greene to concert farther measures for forcing them down towards Charleston. He therefore crossed the Wateree and Congaree, and collected his whole force on the south side of the latter, intending to act offensively. On his approach the British retired about 40 miles nearer Charleston, and took post at the Eutaw springs. Gen. Greene advanced with 2000 men, to attack them in their encampment at this place. His force was drawn up in two lines: The first was composed of militia, and the second of continental troops. As the Americans advanced they fell in with two parties of the British, three or four miles a head of their main army. These being briskly attacked soon retired. The militia continued to pursue and fire, till the action became general, and till they were obliged to give way. They were well supported by the continental troops. In the hottest of the action Col. O. Williams, and Lieut. Col. Campbel with the Maryland and Virginia continental charged with trailed arms. Nothing could surpass the intrepidity of both officers and men on this occasion. They rushed on [253] in good order through a heavy cannonade, and a shower of musketry, with such unshaken resolution, that they bore down all before them. Lieut. Col. Campbel, while bravely leading his men on to that successful charge, received a mortal wound. After he had fallen he enquired who gave way, and being informed that the British were fleeing in all quarters, replied “I die contented,” and immediately expired. The British were vigorously pursued, and upwards of 500 of them were taken prisoners. On their retreat they took post in a strong brick house, and in a picquetted garden: From these advantageous positions they renewed the action. Four six pounders were ordered up before the house, from under cover of which the British were firing. The Americans were compelled to leave these pieces and retire, but they left a strong picquet on the field of battle, and only retreated to the nearest water in their rear. In the evening of the next day, Lieut. Col. Stuart who commanded the British on this occasion, left seventy of his wounded men and a thousand stand of arms, and moved from the Eutaws towards Charleston. The
loss of the British inclusive of prisoners, was upwards of 1100 men; that of the Americans above 500, in which number were sixty officers.

Congress honored Gen. Greene for his good conduct in this action with a British standard and a golden medal. They also voted their thanks to the different corps and their commanders.

Soon after this engagement, the Americans retired to their former position on the high hills of Santee, and the British took post in the vicinity of Monks-Corner. In the close of the year Gen. Greene moved down into the lower country, and about the same time the British abandoned their outposts, and retired with their whole force to the quarter house on Charleston-neck. The defence of the country was given up, and the conquerors, who had lately carried their arms to the extremities of the State, seldom aimed at any thing more than to secure themselves in the vicinity of the capital.

The crops, which had been planted in the spring of the year under British auspices, and with the expectation of affording them supplies, fell into the hands of the Americans and administered to them a seasonable relief. The battle of Eutaw may be considered as closing the national war in South-Carolina. A few excursions were afterwards made by the British, and sundry small enterprizes were executed, but nothing of more general consequence than the loss of property, and of individual lives. Thus ended the campaign of 1781, in South-Carolina. At its commencement the British were in force over all the State: at its close they durst not, but with great precaution, venture 20 miles from Charleston. History affords but few instances of commanders, who have achieved so much with equal means, as was done by Gen. Greene in the short space of a twelve month. He opened the campaign with gloomy prospects, but closed it with glory. His unpaid and half naked army had to contend with veteran soldiers, supplied with every thing that the wealth of Britain or the plunder of Carolina could procure. Under all these disadvantages, he compelled superior numbers to retire from the extremity of the State, and confine themselves in the capital and its vicinity. Had not his mind been of the firmest texture he would have been discouraged, but his enemies found him as formidable on the evening of a defeat, as on the morning after a victory.
CHAPTER XXIV


It has already been mentioned that Lord Cornwallis, soon after the battle of Guildford, marched to Wilmington in North-Carolina. When he had completed that march, various plans of operation were presented to his view. It was said in favour of his proceeding southwardly, that the country between Wilmington and Camden was barren and of difficult passage—that an embarkation for Charleston would be both tedious and disgraceful [255]—that a junction with the royal forces in Virginia, and the prosecution of solid operations in that quarter, would be the most effectual plan for effecting and securing the submission of the more southern States. Other arguments of apparently equal force urged his return to South-Carolina. Previous to his departure for Virginia, he had received information that Gen. Greene had begun his march for Camden, and he had reason from past experience to fear that if he did not follow him, the inhabitants by a second revolt, would give the American army a superiority over the small force left under Lord Rawdon. Though his lordship was very apprehensive of danger from that quarter, he hoped either that Lord Rawdon would be able to stand his ground, or that Gen. Greene would follow the royal army to Virginia, or in the most unfavourable event he flattered himself, that by the conquest of Virginia, the recovery of South-Carolina would be at any time practicable.

His lordship having too much pride to turn back, and preferring the extensive scale of operations which Virginia presented, to the narrow one of preserving past conquests, determined to leave Carolina to its fate. Before the end of April, he therefore proceeded on his march, from Wilmington towards Virginia. To favour the passage of the many rivers, with which the country is intersected, two boats were mounted on carriages and taken along with his army. The King’s troops proceeded several days without opposition, and almost without intelligence. The Americans made an attempt at Swift-creek and afterwards at Fishing-creek to stop their progress, but without any effect. The British took the shortest road to Halifax, and on their arrival there defeated several parties of the Americans and took some stores, with very little loss on their side. The Roanoke, the Meherrin, and the Nottaway rivers were successively crossed by the royal army, and with little or no opposition from the dispersed inhabitants. In less than a month the march from Wilmington to Petersburg was completed. The latter had been fixed upon as the place of rendezvous, in a private correspondence with Gen. Philips. By this [256] combination of the royal force previously employed in Virginia, with the troops which had marched from Wilmington, Lord Cornwallis was at the head of a very powerful army. This junction was scarcely completed, when Lord Cornwallis received Lord Rawdon’s report of the advantage he had gained over Gen. Greene, on the 25th April 1781.
of the preceding month. About the same time he received information that three British regiments had sailed from Cork for Charleston.

These two events eased his mind of all anxiety for South-Carolina, and inspired him with brilliant hopes of a glorious campaign. He considered himself as having already subdued both the Carolinas, and as being in a fair way to increase his military fame, by the addition of Virginia to the list of his conquests. By the late combination of the royal forces under Philips and Cornwallis, and by the recent arrival of a reinforcement of 1500 men directly from New-York, Virginia became the principal theatre of operations for the remainder of the campaign. The formidable force, thus collected in one body, called for the vigorous exertions of the friends of independence. The defensive operations, in opposition to it, were principally entrusted to the Marquis de la Fayette. Early in the year he had been detached from the main American army on an expedition, the object of which was a co-operation with the French fleet in capturing Gen. Arnold. On the failure of this, the Marquis marched back as far as the head of Elk. There he received an order to return to Virginia to oppose the British forces, which had become more formidable by the arrival of a considerable reinforcement, under Gen. Phillips. He proceeded without delay to Richmond, and arrived there the day before the British reached Manchester, on the opposite side of James river. Thus was the capital of Virginia, at that time filled with almost all the military stores of the State, saved from imminent danger. So great was the superiority of numbers on the side of the British, that the Marquis had before him a labor of the greatest difficulty, and was pressed with many embarrassments.

In the first moments of the rising tempest, and till he could provide against its utmost rage, he began to retire with his little army, which consisted only of about 1000 regulars, 2000 militia, and 60 dragoons.

Lord Cornwallis advanced from Petersburg to James river which he crossed at Westown, and thence marching through Hanover county crossed the South Anna or Pamunkey river. The Marquis followed his motions, but at a guarded distance. The superiority of the British army, especially of their cavalry, which they easily supplied with good horses from the stables and pastures of private gentlemen in Virginia, enabled them to traverse the country in all directions. Two distant expeditions were therefore undertaken. The one was to Charlottesville, with the view of capturing Governor and Assembly of the State. The other to Point of Fork to destroy stores. Lt. Col. Tarleton to whom the first was committed, succeeded so far as to disperse the Assembly, capture seven of its members, and to destroy a great quantity of stores at and near Charlottesville. The other expedition which was committed to Lt. Col. Simcoe, was only in part successful, for the Americans had previously removed the most of their stores from Point of Fork. In the course of these marches and counter marches, immense quantities of property were destroyed and sundry unimportant skirmishes took place. The British made many partial conquests, but these were seldom of longer duration than their encampments. The young Marquis, with a degree of prudence that would have done honor to an older soldier, acted so cautiously on the defensive and made so judicious a choice of posts, and shewed so much vigor and design in his movements, as to prevent any advantage being taken of his weakness. In his circumstances, not to be destroyed, was triumph. He effected a junction at Racoonford with Gen. Wayne, who was at the head of 800 Pennsylvanians. While this
junction was forming the British got between the American army and its stores, which had been removed from Richmond, to Albemarle old court house. The possession of these was an object [258] with both armies. The Marquis by forced marches got within a few miles of the British army, when they were two days march from Albemarle old court house. The British general considered himself as sure of his adversary for he knew that the stores were his object; and he conceived it impracticable for the Marquis to get between him and the shore; but by a road in passing which he might be attacked to advantage. The Marquis had the address to extricate himself from this difficulty, by opening in the night a nearer road to Albemarle old court house which had been long disused and was much embarrassed.

To the surpize of lord Cornwallis, the Marquis fixed himself the next day between the British army and the American stores. Lord Cornwallis, finding his schemes frustrated fell back to Richmond. About this time the Marquis’ army was reinforced by Steuben’s troops, and by militia from the parts adjacent. He followed lord Cornwallis, and had the address to impress him with an idea that the American army was much greater than it really was. His lordship therefore retreated to Williamsburg. The day after the main body of the British army arrived there, their rear was attacked by an American light corps under Col. Butler and sustained a considerable loss.

About the time lord Cornwallis reached Williamsburg he received intelligence from New-York, setting forth the danger to which the royal army in that city was exposed from a combined attack, that was said to be threatened by the French and Americans. Sir Henry Clinton therefore required a detachment from Earl Cornwallis, if he was not engaged in any important enterprise, and recommended to him a healthy station, with an ample defensive force, till the danger of New-York was dispersed. Lord Cornwallis thinking it expedient to comply with this requisition, and judging that his command afterwards would not be adequate to maintain his present position at Williamsburg, determined to retire to Portsmouth. For the execution of this project, it was necessary to cross James river. The Marquis de la Fayette, conceiving this to be a favourable opportunity for acting [259] offensively, advanced on the British. Gen. Wayne relying on the information of a countryman, that the main body of the British had crossed James river, pushed forwards with about 800 light troops to harass their rear. Contrary to his expectations, he found the whole British army drawn up ready to oppose him. He instantly conceived that the best mode of extricating himself from his perilous situation would be, to assume a bold countenance, and engage his adversaries before he attempted to retreat. He therefore pressed on for some time, and urged an attack with spirit before he fell back. Lord Cornwallis, perhaps suspecting an ambuscade, did not pursue. By this bold manoeuvre Wayne got off but with little loss.

In the course of these various movements, the British were joined by few of the inhabitants, and scarcely by any of the natives. The Virginians for the most part either joined the Americans, or what was much more common, kept out of the way of the British. To purchase safety by submission was the policy of very few, and these were
for the most part natives of Britain. After Earl Cornwallis had crossed James river, he marched for Portsmouth. He had previously taken the necessary steps for complying with the requisition of Sir Henry Clinton, to send a part of his command to New-York. But before they sailed, an express arrived from Sir Henry Clinton with a letter, expressing his preference of Williamsburgh to Portsmouth for the residence of the army, and his desire that Old-Point-Comfort or Hampton road should be secured as a station for line of battle ships. The commander in chief, at the same time, allowed his lordship to detain any part or the whole of the forces under his command, for completing this service. On examination, Hampton road was not approved of as a station for the navy. It being a principal object of the campaign to fix on a strong permanent post or place of arms in the Chesapeake for the security of both the army and navy, and Portsmouth and Hampton road having both been pronounced unfit for that purpose, York-Town and Gloucester Points were considered as most likely to accord with the views of the royal commanders. Portsmouth was therefore evacuated, and its garrison transferred to York-Town.

Lord Cornwallis availed himself of Sir Henry Clinton’s permission to retain the whole force under his command, and impressed with the necessity of establishing a strong place of arms in the Chesapeake, applied himself with industry to fortify his new posts, so as to render them tenable by his present army, amounting to 7000 men, against any force that he supposed likely to be brought against them.

At this period the officers of the British navy expected that their fleet in the West-Indies would join them, and that solid operations in Virginia would in a short time recommence with increased vigor.

While they were indulging these hopes Count de Grasse with a French fleet of 28 sail of the line from the West-Indies entered the Chesapeake, and about the same time intelligence arrived, that the French and American armies which had been lately stationed in the more northern States, were advancing towards Virginia. Count de Grasse, without loss of time, blocked up York river with three large ships and some frigates, and moored the principal part of his fleet in Lynhaven-bay. Three thousand two hundred French troops, brought in this fleet from the West-Indies, commanded by the Marquis de St. Simon, were disembarked and soon after formed a junction with the continental troops under the Marquis de la Fayette, and the whole took post at Williamsburg. An attack on this force was intended, but before all the arrangements subservient to its execution were fixed upon, letters of an early date in September were received by lord Cornwallis from Sir Henry Clinton, announcing that he would do his utmost to reinforce the royal army in Chesapeak, or make every diversion in his power, and that Admiral Digby was hourly expected on the coast. On the receipt of this intelligence Earl Cornwallis, not thinking himself justified in hazarding an engagement, abandoned the resolution of attacking the combined force of Fayette and St. Simon. It is the province of history to relate what has happened, and not to indulge conjectures in the boundless field of contingencies; otherwise it might be added that Earl Cornwallis, by this change of opinion, lost a favourable opportunity of extricating himself from a combination of hostile force, which by farther concentration...
soon became irresistible. On the other hand if an attack had been made, and that had proved unsuccessful, he would have been charged with rashness in not waiting for the promised cooperation. On the same uncertain ground of conjecturing what ought to have been done, it might be said that the knowledge Earl Cornwallis had of public affairs would have justified him in abandoning York-Town, in order to return to South-Carolina. It seems as though this would have been his wisest plan; but either from an opinion that his instructions to stand his ground were positive, or that effectual relief was probable, his lordship thought proper to risque every thing on the issue of a siege. An attempt was made to burn or dislodge the French ships in the river, but none to evacuate his posts at this early period, when that measure was practicable.

Admiral Greaves with 20 sail of the line, made an effort for the relief of lord Cornwallis, but without effecting his purpose. When he appeared off the capes of Virginia, M. de Grasse went out to meet him, and an indecisive engagement took place. The British were willing to renew the action; but de Grasse for good reasons declined it. His chief object in coming out of the capes was to cover a French fleet of eight line of battle ships, which was expected from Rhode-Island. In conformity to a preconcerted plan, Count de Barras commander of this fleet, had sailed for the Chesapeak, about the time de Grasse sailed from the West-Indies for the same place. To avoid the British fleet, he had taken a circuit by Bermuda. For fear that the British fleet might intercept him on his approach to the capes of Virginia; de Grasse came out to be at hand for his protection. While Greaves and de Grasse were manoeuvering near the mouth of the Chesapeak, Count de Barras passed the former in the night, and got within the capes of Virginia. This gave the fleet of his most Christian Majesty a decided superiority. Admiral Greaves soon took his departure, and M. de Grasse re-entered the Chesapeak. All this time [262] conformably to the well digested plan of the campaign, the French and the American forces were marching through the middle states on their way to York-town. To understand their proper connexion, the great events shortly to be described, it is necessary to go back and trace the remote causes which brought on this grand combination of fleets and armies which put a period to the war.

The fall of Charleston in May 1780, and the complete rout of the American southern army in August following, together with the increasing inability of the Americans to carry on the war, gave a serious alarm to the friends of independence. In this low ebb of their affairs, a pathetic statement of their distresses was made to their illustrious ally the King of France. To give greater efficacy to their solicitations, Congress appointed Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens their special minister, and directed him after repairing to the court of Versailles, to urge the necessity of speedy and effectual succour, and in particular to solicit for a loan of money, and the cooperation of a French fleet, in attempting some important enterprise against the common enemy. His great abilities as an officer, had been often displayed; but on this occasion, the superior talents of the statesman and negotiator were called forth into action. Animated as he was with the ardor of the warmest patriotism, and feeling most sensibly for the distresses of his country, his whole soul was exerted to interest the
court of France in giving a vigorous aid to their allies. His engaging manners and insinuating address, procured a favourable reception to his representations. He won the hearts of those who were at the helm of public affairs, and inflamed them with zeal to assist a country whose cause was so ably pleaded, and whose sufferings were so pathetically represented. At this crisis his most Christian Majesty gave his American allies, a subsidy of six millions of livres, and became their security for ten millions more borrowed for their use in the United Netherlands. A naval co-operation was promised and a conjunct expedition against their common foes was projected.

[263] The American war was now so far involved in the consequences of naval operations, that a superior French fleet, seemed to be the only hinge on which it was likely soon to take a favorable turn. The British army being parcelled in the different sea ports of the United States, any division of it blocked up by a French fleet, could not long resist the superior combined force, which might be brought to operate against it. The Marquis de Castries who directed the marine of France, with great precision calculated the naval force, which the British could concentrate on the coast of the United States, and disposed his own in such a manner as ensured him a superiority. In conformity to these principles, and in subserviency to the design of the campaign, M. de Grasse sailed in March 1781, from Brest with 25 sail of the line, several thousand land forces, and a large convoy amounting to more than 200 ships. A small part of this force was destined for the East-Indies, but M. de Grasse with the greater part sailed for Martinique. The British fleet then in the West-Indies, had been previously weakened by the departure of a squadron for the protection of the ships, which were employed in carrying to England the booty which had been taken at St. Eustatius. The British Admirals Hood and Drake, were detached to intercept the outward bound French fleet commanded by M. de Grasse, but a junction between his force and eight ships of the line and one of 50 guns, which were previously at Martinique and St. Domingo, was nevertheless effected. By this combination of fresh ships from Europe, with the French fleet previously in the West-Indies, they had a decided superiority. M. de Grasse having finished his business in the West-Indies, sailed in the beginning of August with a prodigious convoy. After seeing this out of danger he directed his course for the Chesapeake, and arrived there as has been related on the thirtieth of the same month. Five days before his arrival in the Chesapeake, the French fleet in Rhode-Island sailed for the same place. These fleets notwithstanding their original distance from the scene of action and from each other, coincided in their operations in an extraordinary manner, [264] far beyond the reach of military calculation. They all tended to one object and at one and the same time, and that object was neither known nor suspected by the British, till the proper season for counteraction was elapsed. This co-incidence of favourable circumstances extended to the marches of the French and American land forces. The plan of operations had been so well digested, and was so faithfully executed by the different commanders, that Gen. Washington and Count Rochambeau, had passed the British head quarters in New-York, and were considerably advanced in their way to York-town, before Count de Grasse had reached the American coast. This was effected in the following manner, Monsr. de Barras appointed to the command of the French squadron at Newport, arrived at Boston with dispatches for Count de Rochambeau. An interview soon after took place at Weathersfield, between Gen. Washington, Knox and du Portail on the
part of the Americans, and Count de Rochambeau and the Chavalier Chastelleux, on
the part of the French. At this interview, an eventual plan of the whole campaign was
fixed. This was to lay siege to New-York in concert with a French fleet, which was to
arrive on the coast in the month of August. It was agreed that the French troops
should march towards the North-river. Letters were addressed by Gen. Washington to
the executive officers of New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New-
Jersey, requiring them to fill up their battalions, and to have their quotas 6200 militia
in readiness, within a week of the time they might be called for. Conformably to these
outlines of the campaign, the French troops marched from Rhode-Island in June, and
early in the following month joined the American army. About the time this junction
took place, Gen. Washington marched his army from their winter encampment near
Peeks-kill, to the vicinity of Kingsbridge. General Lincoln fell down the North-river
with a detachment in boats, and took possession of the ground where fort
Independence formerly stood. An attack was made upon him but was soon
discontinued. The British about this time, retired with almost the whole of their force
to [265] York-Island.

Gen. Washington hoped to be able to commence operations against New-York, about the middle, or at farthest the latter end
of July. Flat bottomed boats sufficient to transport 5000 men were built near Albany,
and brought down Hudson’s river to the neighbourhood of the American army before
New-York. Ovens were erected opposite to Staten-Island, for the use of the French
troops. Every movement was made which was introductory to the commencement of
the siege. It was not a little mortifying to Gen. Washington, to find himself on the 2d
of August to be only a few hundreds stronger, than he was on the day his army first
moved from their winter quarters. To have fixed on a plan of operations, with a
foreign officer at the head of a respectable force: To have brought that force from a
considerable distance, in confident expectation of reinforcements sufficiently large to
commence effective operations against the common enemy, and at the same time to
have engagements in behalf of the state violated in direct opposition to their own
interest, and in a manner derogatory to his personal honour, was enough to have
excited storms and tempests, in any mind less calm than that of Gen. Washington. He
bore this hard trial with his usual magnanimity, and contented himself with repeating
his requisitions to the states, and at the same time urged them by every tie, to enable
him to fulfil engagements entered into on their account, with the commander of the
French troops.

That tardiness of the states, which at other times had brought them near the brink of
ruin, was now the accidental cause of real service. Had they sent forward their recruits
for the regular army, and their quotas of militia as was expected, the siege of New-
York would have commenced, in the latter end of July, or early in August. While the
season was wasting away in expectation of these reinforcements, lord Cornwallis as
has been mentioned, fixed himself near the capes of Virginia.

His situation there, the arrival of a reinforcement of 3000
Germans from Europe to New-York, the superior strength of that
garrison, the failure of the states in filling up their [266] battalions and embodying
their militia,
and especially recent intelligence from Count de Grasse, that his destination was fixed to the Chesapeake, concurred about the middle of August, to make a total change of the plan of the campaign.

The appearance of an intention to attack New-York was nevertheless kept up. While this deception was played off, the allied army crossed the North-river, and passed on by the way of Philadelphia, through the intermediate country, to York-town. An attempt to reduce the British force in Virginia promised success with more expedition, and to secure an object of nearly equal importance as the reduction of New-York. No one can undertake to say what would have been the consequence, if the allied forces had persevered in their original plan; but it is evident from the event, that no success could have been greater, or more conducive to the establishment of their schemes, than what resulted from their operations in Virginia.

While the attack of New-York was in serious contemplation, a letter from General Washington detailing the particulars of the intended operations of the campaign, being intercepted, fell into the hands of Sir Henry Clinton. After the plan was changed, the royal commander was so much under the impression of the intelligence contained in the intercepted letter, that he believed every movement towards Virginia to be a feint, calculated to draw off his attention from the defence of New-York. Under the influence of this opinion he bent his whole force to strengthen that post, and suffered the French and American armies to pass him without any molestation. When the best opportunity of striking at them was elapsed, then for the first time he was brought to believe that the allies had fixed on Virginia, for the theatre of their combined operations. As truth may be made to answer the purposes of deception, so no feint of attacking New-York, could have been more successful than the real intention.

In the latter end of August the American army began their march to Virginia, from the neighbourhood of New-York. Gen. Washington had advanced as far as Chester, before he received the news of the arrival of the fleet, commanded by Monsr. de Grasse. The French troops marched at the same time, and for the same place. In the course of this summer they passed through all the extensive settlements which lie between Newport and York-Town. It seldom, if ever happened before, that an army led through a foreign country, at so great a distance from their own, among a people of different principles, customs, language, and religion, behaved with so much regularity. In their march to York-Town they had to pass through 500 miles of a country abounding in fruit, and at a time when the most delicious productions of nature, growing on and near the public highways, presented both opportunity and temptation to gratify their appetites. Yet so complete was their discipline, that in this long march, scarce an instance could be produced of a peach or an apple being taken, without the consent of the inhabitants.

Gen. Washington and Count Rochambeau reached Williamsburg on the 14th of September. They with Generals Chastelleux, Du Portail, and Knox proceeded to visit Count de Grasse on board his ship the Ville de Paris, and agreed on a plan of operations.
The Count afterwards wrote to Washington, that in case a British fleet appeared, "he conceived that he ought to go out and meet them at sea, instead of risking an engagement in a confined situation." This alarmed the General. He sent the Marquis de la Fayette, with a letter to dissuade him from the dangerous measure. This letter and the persuasions of the Marquis had the desired effect.

The combined forces proceeded on their way to York-town, partly by land, and partly down the Chesapeake. The whole, together with a body of Virginia militia, under the command of General Nelson, amounting in the aggregate to 12,000 men, rendezvoused at Williamsburg on the 25th of September, and in five days after, moved down to the investiture of York-town. The French fleet at the same time moved to the mouth of York-river, [268] and took a position which was calculated to prevent Lord Cornwallis, either from retreating, or receiving succour by water. Previously to the march from Williamsburg to York-town, Washington gave out in general orders as follows. "If the enemy should be tempted to meet the army on its march, the General particularly enjoins the troops to place their principal reliance on the bayonet, that they may prove the vanity of the boast, which the British make of their peculiar prowess, in deciding battles with that weapon."

The combined army halted in the evening, about two miles from York-town, and lay on their arms all night. On the next day Colonel Scammell, an officer of uncommon merit, and of the most amiable manners, in approaching the outer works of the British, was mortally wounded and taken prisoner. About this time Earl Cornwallis received a letter from Sir Henry Clinton, announcing the arrival of Admiral Digby with three ships of the line from Europe, and the determination of the General and flag officers in New-York to embark 5000 men in a fleet, which would probably sail on the 5th of October—that this fleet consisted of 23 sail of the line, and that joint exertions of the navy and army would be made for his relief. On the night after the receipt of this intelligence, Earl Cornwallis quitted his outward position, and retired to one more inward.

The works erected for the security of York-town on the right, were redoubts and batteries, with a line of stockade in the rear. A marshy ravine lay in front of the right, over which was placed a large redoubt. The morass extended along the center, which was defended by a line of stockade, and by batteries: On the left of the center was a hornwork with a ditch, a row of fraize and an abbatis. Two redoubts were advanced before the left. The combined forces advanced and took possession of the ground from which the British had retired. About this time the legion cavalry and mounted infantry, passed over the river to Gloucester, General de Choisy invested the British post on that side so fully, as to cut off all communication between it and the country. In the mean time the royal [269] army was straining every nerve to strengthen their works and their artillery was constantly employed in impeding the operations of the combined army. On the 9th and 10th of October, the French and Americans opened their batteries. They kept up a brisk and well directed fire from heavy cannon, from mortars and howitzers. The shells of the besiegers reached the ships in the harbour, the Charon of 44 guns and a transport ship were burned. On the 10th a messenger arrived with a dispatch from Sir Henry Clinton.
to Earl Cornwallis, dated on the 30th of September, which stated various circumstances tending to lessen the probability of relief being obtained, by a direct movement from New-York. Earl Cornwallis was at this juncture advised to evacuate York-town, and after passing over to Gloucester, to force his way into the country. Whether this movement would have been successful, no one can with certainty pronounce, but it could not have produced any consequences more injurious to the royal interest, than those which resulted from declining the attempt. On the other hand had this movement been made, and the royal army been defeated or captured in the interior country, and in the mean time had Sir Henry Clinton with the promised relief, reached York-town, the precipitancy of the noble Earl, would have been perhaps more the subject of censure, than his resolution of standing his ground and resisting to the last extremity.

From this uncertain ground of conjectures, I proceed to relate real events. The besiegers commenced their second parallel 200 yards from the works of the besieged. Two redoubts which were advanced on the left of the British, greatly impeded the progress of the combined armies. It was therefore proposed to carry them by storm. To excite a spirit of emulation, the reduction of the one was committed to the French, of the other to the Americans. The assailants marched to the assault with unloaded arms; having passed the abbatiss and palisades, they attacked on all sides, and carried the redoubt in a few minutes with the loss of 8 killed and 28 wounded, Lieutenant Colonel Laurens personally took the commanding officer prisoner.

His humanity and that of his associates, so overcame their resentments that they spared the British, though they were charged when they went to the assault, to remember New-London (the recent massacres at which place shall be hereafter related) and to retaliate by putting the men in the redoubt to the sword. Being asked why they had disobeyed orders by bringing them off as prisoners, they answered, “We could not put them to death, when they begged for their lives.” About five of the British were killed and the rest were captured. Colonel Hamilton who conducted the enterprise, in his report to the Marquis de la Fayette mentioned to the honour of his detachment, “that incapable of imitating examples of barbarity, and forgetting recent provocations, they spared every man who ceased to resist.”

The French were equally successful on their part. They carried the redoubt assigned to them with rapidity, but lost a considerable number of men. These two redoubts were included in the second parallel, and facilitated the subsequent operations of the besiegers. The British could not with propriety risque repeated sallies.

One was projected at this time consisting of 400 men, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Abercrombie. He proceeded so far as to force two redoubts, and to spike eleven pieces of cannon. Though the officers and soldiers displayed great bravery in this enterprise, yet their success produced no essential advantage. The cannon were soon unspiked and rendered fit for service.

By this time the batteries of the besiegers were covered with nearly a hundred pieces of heavy ordnance, and the works of the besieged were so damaged, that they could scarcely shew a single gun. Lord Cornwallis had now no hope left but from offering...
terms of capitulation or attempting an escape. He determined on the latter. This though less practicable than when first proposed, was not altogether hopeless. Boats were prepared to receive the troops in the night, and to transport them to Gloucester-Point. After one whole embarkation had crossed, a violent storm of wind and rain dispersed the boats employed on this business, and frustrated the whole scheme. The royal army, thus weakened by division, was exposed to increased danger.

[271] Orders were sent to those who had passed, to re-cross the river to York-Town. With the failure of this scheme the last hope of the British army expired. Longer resistance could answer no good purpose, and might occasion the loss of many valuable lives. Lord Cornwallis therefore wrote a letter to Gen. Washington, requesting a cessation of arms for 24 hours, and that commissioners might be appointed to digest terms of capitulation. It is remarkable while Lieut. Col. Laurens, the officer employed by Gen. Washington on this occasion, was drawing up these articles, that his father was closely confined in the tower of London, of which Earl Cornwallis was Constable. By this singular combination of circumstances, his lordship became a prisoner, to the son of his own prisoner.

The posts of York and Gloucester were surrendered by a capitulation, the principal articles of which were as follows: The troops to be prisoners of war to Congress, and the naval force to France. The officers to retain their side arms and private property of every kind; but all property, obviously belonging to the inhabitants of the United States, to be subject to be reclaimed. The soldiers to be kept in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania, and to be supplied with the same rations, as are allowed to soldiers in the service of Congress. A proportion of the officers to march into the country with the prisoners; the rest to be allowed to proceed on parole to Europe, to New-York, or to any other American maritime post in possession of the British. The honor of marching out with colors flying, which had been refused to Gen. Lincoln on his giving up Charleston, was now refused to Earl Cornwallis; and General Lincoln was appointed to receive the submission of the royal army at York-Town, precisely in the same way his own had been conducted, about 18 months before. Lord Cornwallis endeavoured to obtain permission for the British and German troops to return to their respective countries, under no other restrictions than an engagement not to serve against France or America. He also tried to obtain an indemnity for those of the inhabitants who had joined them; but he was obliged to recede from the former, [272] and also to consent that the loyalists in his camp should be given up, to the unconditional mercy of their countrymen. His lordship nevertheless obtained permission for the Bonetta sloop of war to pass unexamined to New-York. This gave an opportunity of screening such of them, as were most obnoxious to the Americans.

The regular troops of France and America, employed in this siege, consisted of about 7000 of the former, and 5500 of the latter; and they were assisted by about 4000 militia. On the part of the combined army about 300 were killed or wounded. On the part of the British about 500; and 70 were taken in the redoubts, which were carried by assault on the 14th of October. The troops of every kind that surrendered prisoners of war exceeded 7000 men, but so great was the number of sick and wounded, that there were only 3800 capable of bearing arms. The French and American engineers
and artillery, merited and received the highest applause. Brigadiers General Du Portail and Knox were both promoted to the rank of Major Generals, on account of their meritorious services. Lieut. Col. Gorion and Captain Rochefontaine of the corps of engineers, respectively received brevets, the former to the rank of a Colonel, and the latter to the rank of a Major.

Congress honored Gen. Washington, Count de Rochambeau, Count de Grasse and the officers of the different corps, and the men under them, with thanks for their services in the reduction of lord Cornwallis. The whole project was conceived with profound wisdom, and the incidents of it had been combined with singular propriety. It is not therefore wonderful, that from the remarkable coincidence in all its parts, it was crowned with unvaried success.

A British fleet and an army of 7000 men, destined for the relief of lord Cornwallis, arrived off the Chesapeak on the 24th of October; but on receiving advice of his lordship’s surrender, they returned to Sandy-hook and New-York. Such was the fate of that General, from whose gallantry and previous successes the speedy [273] conquests of the southern States had been so confidently expected.

No event during the war bid fairer for oversetting the independence of at least a part of the confederacy, than his complete victory at Camden; but by the consequences of that action, his lordship became the occasion of rendering that a revolution, which from his previous success was in danger of terminating in a rebellion. The loss of his army may be considered as the closing scene of the continental war in North America.

The troops under the command of lord Cornwallis had spread waste and ruin over the face of all the country for four hundred miles on the sea coast, and for two hundred miles to the west-ward. Their marches from Charleston to Camden, from Camden to the river Dan, from the Dan through North-Carolina to Wilmington, from Wilmington to Petersburg, and from Petersburg through many parts of Virginia, till they finally settled in York-Town, made a route of more than eleven hundred miles. Every place through which they passed in these various marches, experienced the effects of their rapacity. Their numbers enabled them to go whithersoever they pleased, their rage for plunder disposed them to take whatever they had the means of removing, and their animosity to the Americans led them often to the wanton destruction of what they could neither use nor carry off. By their means thousands had been involved in distress. The reduction of such an army occasioned unusual transports of joy, in the breasts of the whole body of the people. Well authenticated testimony asserts that the nerves of some were so agitated, as to produce convulsions, and that at least one man expired under the tide of pleasure which flowed in upon him, when informed of his lordship’s surrender*. The people throughout the United States displayed a social triumph and exultation, which no private prosperity is ever able fully to inspire.

General Washington, on the day after the surrender, ordered “that those who were [274] under arrest should be pardoned and set at liberty.” His orders closed as follows, “divine service shall be performed to Morrow in the different brigades and divisions. The commander in chief recommends, that all the troops that are not upon duty do assist at it with a serious deportment, and
that sensibility of heart, which the recollection of the surprising and particular
interposition of providence in our favour claims.”
Congress on receiving the official account of the great events,
which had taken place at York-town, resolved to go in
procession to church and return public thanks to Almighty God for the advantages
they had gained. They also issued a proclamation for “religiously observing through
the United States the 13th of December as a day of thanksgiving and prayer.” The
singularly interesting event of captivating a second royal army, produced strong
emotions, which broke out in all the variety of ways with which the most rapturous
joy usually displays itself.

While the combined armies were advancing to the siege of York-town, an excursion
was made from New-York, which was attended with no small loss to the Americans.
Gen. Arnold who had lately returned from Virginia, was appointed to conduct an
expedition, the object of which, was the town of New-London in his native country.
The troops employed therein, were landed in two detachments on each side of the harbour. The one was commanded by Lieut. Col. Eyre and the other by General Arnold. The latter met with little opposition, fort Trumbull and a redoubt which was intended to cover the harbour, not being tenable were evacuated, and the men crossed the river to fort Griswold on Groton hill. This was furiously attacked by Lieut. Col. Eyre: The garrison defended themselves with great resolution, but after a severe conflict of forty minutes, the fort was carried by the assailants. The Americans had not more than six or seven men killed, when the British carried their lines, but a severe execution took place afterwards, though resistance had ceased. An officer of the conquering troops enquired on his entering the fort who commanded. Col. Ledyard answered. [275] “I did, but you do now.” And presented him his sword.
The Col. was immediately run through the body and killed.
Between 30 and 40 were wounded, and about 40 were carried off prisoners. On the side of the British 48 were killed and 145 wounded: Among the latter was Major Montgomery, and among the former was Colonel Eyre. About 15 vessels loaded with the effects of the inhabittants, retreated up the river, and four others remained in the harbour unhurt, but allexcepting these were burned by the communication of fire from the burning stores. Sixty dwelling houses and 84 stores were reduced to ashes; the loss which the Americans sustained by the destruction of naval stores, of provisions and merchandise, was immense. Gen. Arnold having completed the object of the expedition, returned in eight days to New-York. The Americans lost many valuable men, and much of their possessions by this incursion, but the cause for which they contended was uninjured. Expeditions which seemed to have no higher object than the destruction of property, alienated their affections still farther from British government. They were not so extensive as to answer the ends of conquest, and the momentary impression resulting from them, produced no lasting intimidation. On the other hand, they excited a spirit of revenge against the authors of such accumulated distresses.

The year 1781 terminated, in all parts of the United States, in favour of the Americans. It began with weakness in Carolina, mutiny in New-Jersey, and devastation in Virginia; nevertheless in its close, the British were confined to their
strong holds in or near New-York, Charleston and Savannah, and their whole army in Virginia was captured. They in the course of the year had acquired much plunder by which individuals were enriched, but their nation was in no respect benefited. The whole campaign passed away on their part without one valuable conquest, or the acquisition of any post or place, from which higher purposes were answered, than destroying public stores or distressing individuals, and enriching the officers and privates of their army and navy.

The important services rendered by France to the Americans, [276] cemented the union of the two nations with additional ties.

The orderly inoffensive behaviour of the French troops in the United States, contrasted with the havoc of property made by the British in their marches and excursions, was silently turning the current of popular esteem in favour of the former, and working a revolution in the minds of the inhabitants, greatly conducive to the establishment of that which had taken place in the government. The property of the inhabitants of Rhode-Island, received no damage of any account from the French troops, during their eleven months residence among them. The soldiers were rather a guard than a nuisance: The citizens met with no interruption when prosecuting their lawful business, either by night or day, and were treated with every mark of attention and respect. While the progress of the British army, in a circuitous march of 1100 miles from Charleston to Yorktown, was marked with rapine and desolation; the march of the French troops from Rhode-Island to the same place, a distance nearly equal in a right line, was productive of no inconvenience to the intermediate inhabitants. They were welcome guests wherever they came, for they took nothing by fraud or force, but punctually paid for all they wanted with hard money. In a contest where the good will of the people had so powerful an influence on its final issue, such opposite modes of conduct could not fail of producing their natural effects. The moderation and justice of the French, met with its reward in the general good will of the people, but the violence and rapine of the British, contributed among other things, to work the final overthrow of all their schemes in America.

On the last day of this year Henry Laurens was released from his long confinement in the tower of London.

He had been committed there, as already related, on the 6th of October 1780, “On suspicion of high treason,” after being examined in the presence of lord Stormont, lord George Germaine, lord Hillsborough, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Justice Addington, and others. The commitment was accompanied with a warrant to the Lieutenant [277] of the tower to receive and confine him. Their lordships orders were “To confine him a close prisoner: to be locked up every night; to be in the custody of two warders; not to suffer him to be out of their sight one moment, day nor night: to allow him no liberty of speaking to any person, nor to permit any person to speak to him; to deprive him of the use of pen and ink; to suffer no letter to be brought to him, nor any to go from him.” Mr. Laurens was then fifty five years old, and severely afflicted with the gout and other infirmities. In this situation he was conducted to apartments in the tower, and was shut up in two small rooms which together made about twenty feet square, with a warder for his constant companion, and a fixed bayonet under his window, without any friend to converse with and without any prospect or even the means of correspondence. Being debarred the use of pen and ink, he procured pencils, which proved an useful
substitute. After a month’s confinement, he was permitted to walk out on limited ground, but a warder with a sword in his hand followed close behind. This indulgence was occasionally taken for about three weeks, when lord George Gordon, who was also a prisoner in the tower, unluckily met and asked Mr. Laurens to walk with him. Mr. Laurens declined the offer and instantly returned to his apartment. Governor Gore caught at this transgression of orders, and locked him up for 37 days, though the attending warder exculpated him from all blame. At the end of that time the Governor relented so far, as to permit his prisoner to walk on the parade before the door, but this honor, as coming from him, was refused. General Vernon, on hearing of what had passed, gave orders that Mr. Laurens should be permitted to walk out, and this exercise was in consequence thereof resumed, after an intermission of two months and a half.

About this time an old friend and mercantile correspondent, having solicited the Secretaries of State for Mr. Laurens’ enlargement on parole, and having offered his whole fortune as security for his good conduct, sent him the following message:

“Their lordships say, if you will [278] point out any thing for the benefit of Great Britain, in the present dispute with the Colonies, you shall be enlarged.” This proposition filled him with indignation, and provoked a sharp reply, part of which was in the following words: “I perceive from the message you sent me, that if I were a rascal I might presently get out of the tower, but I am not. You have pledged your word and fortune for my integrity. I will never dishonour you nor myself. I can foresee what will come to pass, happen to me what may. I fear no possible consequences.”

The same friend soon after visited Mr. Laurens, and being left alone with him, addressed him as follows, “I converse with you this morning, not particularly as your friend, but as the friend of Great Britain. I have certain propositions to make, for obtaining your liberty, which I advise you should take time to consider.” Mr. Laurens desired to know what they were, and added “That an honest man required no time to give an answer, in a case where his honor was concerned;” “[“If”] said he, “the Secretaries of State will enlarge me upon parole, I will strictly conform to my engagement to do nothing directly or indirectly to the hurt of this kingdom. I will return to America, or remain in any part of England which may be assigned, and surrender myself when demanded.” It was answered “No, Sir, you must stay in London among your friends: The ministers will often have occasion to send for and consult you: You can write two or three lines to the ministers, and barely say you are sorry for what is past: A pardon will be granted: Every man has been wrong, at some time or other of his life, and should not be ashamed to acknowledge it.” Mr. Laurens replied “I will never subscribe to my own infamy, and to the dishonour of my children.” He was then told of long and painful confinement, and hints were thrown out of the possible consequences of his refusal: To which he replied “I am afraid of no consequences but such as would flow from dishonourable acts.”

In about a week after this interview, Major General James Grant who had long been acquainted with Mr. [279] Laurens, and had served with him near twenty years before, on an expedition against the Cherokee
Indians, visited him in the tower, and talked much of the inconveniences of his situation, and then addressed him thus, “Colonel Laurens, I have brought paper and pencil to take down any propositions you have to make to administration, and I will deliver them myself.” Mr. Laurens replied, “I have pencil and paper, but not one proposition, beyond repeating a request to be enlarged on parole. I had well weighed what consequences might follow before I entered into the present dispute. I took the path of justice and honour, and no personal evils can cause me to shrink.”

About this time Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens, the eldest son of Henry Laurens arrived in France, as the special minister of Congress. The father was requested to write to the son to withdraw himself from the court of France, and assurances were given that it would operate in his favour. To these requests he replied, “my son is of age, and has a will of his own; if I should write to him in the terms you request, it would have no effect: He would only conclude, that confinement and persuasion had softened me. I know him to be a man of honour: He loves me dearly, and would lay down his life to save mine; but I am sure he would not sacrifice his honour to save my life, and I applaud him.”

Mr. Laurens penciled an address to the secretaries of State for the use of pen and ink, to draw a bill of exchange on a merchant in London who was in his debt, for money to answer his immediate exigencies, and to request that his youngest son might be permitted to visit him, for the purpose of concerting a plan for his farther education and conduct in life. This was delivered to their lordships; but they, though they had made no provision for the support of their prisoner, returned no answer. Mr. Laurens was thus left to languish in confinement under many infirmities, and without the means of applying his own resources on the spot, for his immediate support.

[280] As soon as Mr. Laurens had completed a year in the tower, he was called upon to pay £9 7∫ 10 sterling to the two warders for attending on him. To which he replied, “I was sent to the tower by the secretaries of State without money (for aught they knew)—their lordships have never supplied me with any thing—It is now upwards of three months since I informed their lordships that the fund I had hitherto subsisted upon was nearly exhausted, and prayed for leave to draw a bill on Mr. John Nutt, who was in my debt, which they have been pleased to refuse by the most grating of all denials a total silence, and now a demand is made for £9 7∫ 10. If their lordships will permit me to draw for money where it is due to me, I will continue to pay my own expences, but I will not pay the warders whom I never employed, and whose attendance I shall be glad to dispense with.”

Three weeks after, the secretaries of State consented that Mr. Laurens should have the use of pen and ink, for the purpose of drawing a bill of exchange, but they were taken away the moment that business was done.

About this time Henry Laurens jun. wrote an humble request to lord Hillsborough for permission to see his father, which his lordship refused to grant. He had at first been permitted to visit his father, and converse with him for a short time; but these interviews were no longer permitted. They nevertheless occasionally met on the lines
and saluted each other, but durst not exchange a single word, lest it might occasion a
second confinement, similar to that to which lord George Gordon had been accessory.

As the year 1781 drew near a close, Mr. Laurens’ sufferings in the tower became
generally known, and excited compassion in his favour, and odium against the authors
of his confinement. It had been also found by the inefficacy of many attempts, that no
concessions could be obtained from him. It was therefore resolved to release him, but
difficulties arose about the mode. Mr. Laurens would not consent to any act, which
implied that he was a British subject, and he had been committed as such, on charge
of high treason.

Ministers to extricate themselves [281] from this difficulty, at
length proposed to take bail for his appearance at the court of
King’s-Bench. When the words of the recognizance, “Our Sovereign Lord the King,”
were read to Mr. Laurens, he replied in open court “Not my Sovereign,” and with this
declaration he, with Mr. Oswald and Mr. Anderson as his securities, entered into an
obligation for his appearance at the court of King’s-Bench the next Easter term, and
for not departing thence without leave of the court. Thus ended a long and a painful
farce. Mr. Laurens was immediately released. When the time of his appearance at
court drew near, he was not only discharged from all obligations to attend, but was
requested by lord Shelburne to go to the continent, in subserviency to a scheme for
making peace with America. Mr. Laurens, startled at the idea of being released
without any equivalent, as he had uniformly held himself to be a prisoner of war,
replied that “He durst not accept himself as a gift, and that as Congress had once
offered Lieut. Gen. Burgoyne for him, he had no doubt of their now giving Lieut.
Gen. Earl Cornwallis for the same purpose.”
APPENDIX NO. III

Of The Treatment Of Prisoners, And Of The Distresses Of The Inhabitants.

Many circumstances occurred to make the American war particularly calamitous. It was originally a civil war in the estimation of both parties, and a rebellion to its termination, in the opinion of one of them. Unfortunately for mankind doubts have been entertained of the obligatory force of the law of nations in such cases. The refinement of modern ages has stripped war of half its horrors, but the systems of some illiberal men have tended to re-produce the barbarism of Gothic times, by withholding the benefits of that refinement from those who are effecting revolutions. An enlightened philanthropist embraces the whole human race and enquires, [282] not whether an object of distress is or is not an unit of an acknowledged nation. It is sufficient that he is a child of the same common parent, and capable of happiness or misery. The prevalence of such a temper would have greatly lessened the calamities of the American war, but while from contracted policy, unfortunate captives were considered as not entitled to the treatment of prisoners, they were often doomed without being guilty, to suffer the punishment due to criminals.

The first American prisoners were taken on the 17th of June 1775. These were thrown indiscriminately into the jail at Boston, without any consideration of their rank. Gen. Washington wrote to Gen. Gage on this subject, to which the latter answered by asserting that the prisoners had been treated with care and kindness, though indiscriminately “as he acknowledged no rank that was not derived from the King.” To which Gen. Washington replied “You affect, Sir, to despise all rank not derived from the same source with your own; I cannot conceive one more honorable, than that which flows from the uncorrupted choice of a brave and free people, the purest source and original fountain of all power.”

Gen. Carleton during his command conducted towards the American prisoners with a degree of humanity, that reflected the greatest honor on his character. Before he commenced his operations on the lake in 1776, he shipped off those of them who were officers for New-England, but previously supplied them with every thing requisite to make their voyage comfortable. The other prisoners, amounting to 800, were sent home by a flag after exacting an oath from them, not to serve during the war unless exchanged. Many of these being almost naked were comfortably cloathed by his orders, previously to their being sent off.

The capture of Gen. Lee proved calamitous to several individuals. Six Hessian field officers were offered in exchange for him, but this was refused. It was said by the British, that Lee was a deserter from their service, and as such could not expect the indulgences usually given to prisoners of war.
The Americans replied, that as [283] he had resigned his British commission previously to his accepting one from the Americans, he could not be considered as a deserter. He was nevertheless confined, watched, and guarded. Congress thereupon resolved, that Gen. Washington be directed to inform Gen. Howe, that should the proffered exchange of Gen. Lee for six field officers not be accepted, and the treatment of him as above mentioned be continued, the principles of retaliation should occasion five of the said Hessian field officers, together with Lt. Col. Archibald Campbell to be detained, in order that the said treatment which Gen. Lee received, should be exactly inflicted on their persons. The Campbell thus designated as the subject of retaliation, was a humane man, and a meritorious officer, who had been captured by some of the Massachusetts’s privateers near Boston, to which, from the want of information, he was proceeding soon after the British had evacuated it. The above act of Congress was forwarded to Massachusetts with a request that they would detain Lt. Col. Campbell and keep him in safe custody till the further order of Congress. The council of Massachusetts’s exceeded this request, and sent him to Concord jail, where he was lodged in a gloomy dungeon of twelve or thirteen feet square. The attendance of a single servant on his person was denied him, and every visit from a friend refused.

The prisoners captured by Sir William Howe in 1776, amounted to many hundreds. The officers were admitted to parole, and had some waste houses assigned to them as quarters; but the privates were shut up in the coldest season of the year in churches, sugar houses, and such like large open buildings. The severity of the weather, and the rigor of their treatment, occasioned the death of many hundreds of these unfortunate men. The filth of the places of their confinement, in consequence of fluxes which prevailed among them, was both offensive and dangerous. Seven dead bodies have been seen in one building, at one time, and all lying in a situation shocking to humanity. The provisions served out to them were deficient in quantity, and of an unwholsome quality.

These suffering prisoners were [284] generally pressed to enter into the British service, but hundreds submitted to death, rather than procure a melioration of their circumstances by enlisting with the enemies of their country. After Gen. Washington’s successes at Trenton and Princeton, the American prisoners fared somewhat better. Those who survived were ordered to be sent out for exchange, but some of them fell down dead in the streets, while attempting to walk to the vessels. Others were so emaciated that their appearance was horrible. A speedy death closed the scene with many.

The American board of war, after conferring with Mr. Boudinot the commissary-general of prisoners, and examining evidences produced by him, reported among other things,

That there were 900 privates and 300 officers of the American army, prisoners in the city of New-York, and about 500 privates and 50 officers prisoners in Philadelphia. That since the beginning of October all these prisoners, both officers and privates, had been confined in prison ships or the Provost: That from the best evidence the subject could admit of, the general allowance of prisoners, at most did not exceed four ounces of meat per day, and often so damaged as not to be eatable: That it had been a
common practice with the British, on a prisoner’s being first captured, to keep him
three, four or five days without a morsel of meat, and then to tempt him to enlist to
save his life: That there were numerous instances of prisoners of war, perishing in all
the agonies of hunger.

About this time there was a meeting of merchants in London, for the purpose of raising a sum of money to relieve the distresses of the American prisoners, then in England. The sum subscribed for that purpose amounted in two months to £4647 15s. Thus while human nature was dishonoured by the cruelties of some of the British in America, there was a laudable display of the benevolence of others of the same nation in Europe. The American sailors, when captured by the British, suffered more than even the soldiers, which fell into their hands.

The former were confined on board prison ships. [285] They were there crowded together in such numbers, and their accommodations were so wretched, that diseases broke out and swept them off in a manner, that was sufficient to excite compassion in breasts of the least sensibility. It has been asserted, on as good evidence as the case will admit, that in the last six years of the war upwards of eleven thousand persons died on board the Jersey, one of these prison ships, which was stationed in east river near New-York. On many of these, the rights of sepulture were never, or but very imperfectly conferred. For some time after the war was ended their bones lay whitening in the sun, on the shores of Long Island.

The operations of treason laws added to the calamities of the war. Individuals on both sides, while they were doing no more than they supposed to be their duty, were involved in the penal consequences of capital crimes. The Americans in conformity to the usual policy of nations, demanded the allegiance of all who resided among them, but several of these preferred the late royal government and were disposed, when opportunity offered, to support it. While they acted in conformity to these sentiments, the laws enacted for the security of the new government, condemned them to death. Hard is the lot of a people involved in civil war; for in such circumstances the lives of individuals may not only be legally forfeited, but justly taken from those, who have acted solely from a sense of duty. It is to be wished that some more rational mode than war might be adopted for deciding national contentions; but of all wars, those which are called civil are most to be dreaded. They are attended with the bitterest resentments, and produce the greatest quantity of human woes. In the American war, the distresses of the country were aggravated, from the circumstance that every man was obliged, some way or other, to be in the public service. In Europe, where military operations are carried on by armies hired and paid for the purpose, the common people partake but little of the calamities of war: but in America, where the whole people were enrolled as a militia, and where both sides endeavoured to strengthen themselves by oaths and [286] by laws, denouncing the penalties of treason on those who aided or abetted the opposite party, the sufferings of individuals were renewed, as often as fortune varied her standard. Each side claimed the co-operation of the inhabitants, and was ready to punish when it was withheld. Where either party had a decided superiority the common people were comparatively undisturbed; but
the intermediate space between the contending armies, was subject to the alternate ravages of both.

In the first institution of the American governments, the boundaries of authority were not properly fixed; Committees exercised legislative, executive and judicial powers. It is not to be doubted, that in many instances these were improperly used, and that private resentments were often covered under the specious veil of patriotism. The sufferers in passing over to the royalists, carried with them a keen remembrance of the vengeance of committees, and when opportunity presented, were tempted to retaliate. From the nature of the case, the original offenders were less frequently the objects of retaliation, than those who were entirely innocent. One instance of severity begat another, and they continued to encrease in a proportion that doubled the evils of common war. From one unadvised step, individuals were often involved in the loss of all their property. Some from present appearances, apprehending that the British would finally conquer, repaired to their standard. Their return after the partial storm which intimidated them to submission, had blown over, was always difficult and often impossible. From this single error in judgement, such were often obliged to seek safety by continuing to support the interest of those to whom, in an hour of temptation, they had devoted themselves. The embarrassments on both sides were often so great, that many in the humbler walks of life, could not tell what course was best to pursue. It was happy for those who having made up their minds on the nature of the contest, invariably followed the dictates of their consciences, for in every instance they enjoyed self-approbation.

Though they could not be deprived of this reward, they were not always successful in saving their property. They who varied with the times, in like manner often missed their object, for to such it frequently happened that they were plundered by both, and lost the esteem of all. A few saved their credit and their property; but of these, there was not one for every hundred of those, who were materially injured either in the one or the other. The American whigs were exasperated against those of their fellow citizens who joined their enemies, with a resentment which was far more bitter, than that which they harboured against their European adversaries. Feeling that the whole strength of the states was scarcely sufficient to protect them against the British, they could not brook the desertion of their countrymen to invading foreigners. They seldom would give them credit for acting from principle, but generally supposed them to be influenced either by cowardice or interest, and were therefore inclined to proceed against them with rigor. They were filled with indignation at the idea of fighting for the property of those who deserted their country, and were therefore clamorous, that it should be seized for public service. The royalists raised the cry of persecution and loudly complained that merely for supporting the government, under which they were born, and to which they owed a natural allegiance, they were doomed to suffer all the penalties due to capital offenders. Those of them who acted from principle felt no consciousness of guilt, and could not look but with abhorrence upon a government, which inflicted such severe punishments on what they deemed a laudable line of conduct. Humanity would shudder at a particular recital of the calamities which the whigs inflicted on the tories, and the tories on the whigs. It is particularly remarkable that on both sides, they for the most part consoled themselves with the belief, that they were acting or suffering in a good cause. Though the rules of moral right and
wrong never vary, political innocence and guilt, changes so much with circumstances, that the innocence of the sufferer, and of the party that punishes, are often compatible. The distresses of the American prisoners in the southern states, prevailed particularly towards the close of the war.

Colonel [288] Campbell, who reduced Savannah, though he had personally suffered from the Americans, treated all who fell into his hands with humanity. Those who were taken at Savannah and at Ashe’s defeat, suffered very much from his successors in South Carolina. The American prisoners with a few exceptions, had but little to complain of till after Gates’ defeat. Soon after that event, sundry of them, though entitled to the benefits of the capitulation of Charleston, were separated from their families and sent into exile; others in violation of the same solemn agreement were crowded into prison ships, and deprived of the use of their property. When a general exchange of prisoners was effected, the wives and children of those inhabitants who adhered to the Americans, were exiled from their homes to Virginia and Philadelphia. Upwards of one thousand persons were thrown upon the charity of their fellow citizens in the more northern states. This severe treatment was the occasion of retaliating on the families of those who had taken part with the British. In the first months of the year 1781, the British were in force in the remotest settlements of South-Carolina, but as their limits were contracted in the course of the year, the male inhabitants who joined them, thought proper to retire with the royal army towards the capital. In retaliation for the expulsion of the wives and children of the whig Americans from the state, Governor Rutledge ordered the brigadiers of militia, to send within the British lines, the families of such of the inhabitants as adhered to their interest. In consequence of this order, and more especially in consequence of the one which occasioned it, several hundreds of helpless women and children were reduced to great distress.

The refugees who had fled to New-York, were formed into an association under Sir Henry Clinton, for the purposes of retaliating on the Americans, and for reimbursing the losses they had sustained from their countrymen. The depredations they committed in their several excursions would fill a volume, and would answer little purpose but to excite compassion and horror. Towards the close of the war, they began to retaliate on a bolder [289] scale.

Captain Joshua Huddy who commanded a small party of Americans at a block house, in Monmouth County New-Jersey was, after a gallant resistance, taken prisoner by a party of these refugees. He was brought to New-York and there kept in close custody fifteen days, and then told “that he was ordered to be hanged.” Four days after, he was sent out with a party of refugees, and hanged on the hights of Middleton. The following label was affixed to his breast “We the refugees having long with grief beheld the cruel murders of our brethren, and finding nothing but such measures daily carrying into execution; we therefore determine not to suffer without taking vengeance for the numerous cruelties, and thus begin, and have made use of Capt. Huddy as the first object to present to your view, and further determine to hang man for man, while there is a refugee existing: Up goes Huddy for Philip White.” The Philip White in retaliation for whom Huddy was hanged, had been taken by a party of the Jersey militia, and was killed in attempting to make his escape.
Gen. Washington resolved on retaliation for this deliberate murder, but instead of immediately executing a British officer he wrote to Sir Henry Clinton, that unless the murderers of Huddy were given up, he should be under the necessity of retaliating. The former being refused, Capt. Asgill was designated by lot for that purpose. In the mean time the British instituted a court martial for the trial of Capt. Lippencutt, who was supposed to be the principal agent, in executing Capt. Huddy. It appeared in the course of this trial that Gov. Franklin, the President of the board of associated loyalists, gave Lippencutt verbal orders for what he did, and that he had been designated as a proper subject for retaliation, having been, as the refugees stated, a persecutor of the loyalists, and particularly as having been instrumental in hanging Stephen Edwards, who had been one of that description. The court having considered the whole matter gave their opinion

That as what Lippencutt did was not the effect of malice or ill will, but proceeded from a conviction that it was his duty to obey the orders [290] of the board of directors of associated loyalists, and as he did not doubt their having full authority to give such orders, he was not guilty of the murder laid to his charge, and therefore they acquitted him.

Sir Guy Carleton, who a little before this time had been appointed commander in chief of the British army, in a letter to Gen. Washington, accompanying the tryal of Lippencutt, declared “that notwithstanding the acquittal of Lippencutt, he reprobated the measure, and gave assurances of prosecuting a farther enquiry.” Sir Guy Carleton about the same time, broke up the board of associated loyalists, which prevented a repetition of similar excesses. The war also drawing near a close, the motives for retaliation as tending to prevent other murders, in a great measure ceased. In the mean time Gen. Washington received a letter from the Count de Vergenes interceding for Capt. Asgill, which was also accompanied with a very pathetic one, from his mother Mrs. Asgill to the Count.

Copies of these several letters were forwarded to Congress, and soon after they resolved, “that the commander in chief be directed to set Capt. Asgill at liberty.” The lovers of humanity rejoined that the necessity for retaliation was superseded, by the known humanity of the new commander in chief, and still more by the well founded prospect of a speedy peace. Asgill who had received every indulgence, and who had been treated with all possible politeness, was released and permitted to go into New-York.
CHAPTER XXVI


After the capture of Lord Cornwallis, General Washington, with the greatest part of his force returned to the vicinity of New-York. He was in no condition to attempt the reduction of that post, and the royal army had good reasons for not urging hostilities without their lines.

An obstruction of the communication between town and country, some indecisive skirmishes [291] and predatory excursions, were the principal evidences of an existing state of war. This in a great measure was also the case in South-Carolina. From December 1781, General Greene had possession of all the state except Charleston and the vicinity.

The British sometimes sallied out of their lines for the acquisition of property and provisions, but never for the purposes of conquest. In opposing one of these near Combahee Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens, an accomplished officer of uncommon merit, was mortally wounded. Nature had adorned him with a large proportion of her choicest gifts, and these were highly cultivated by an elegant, useful and practical education. His patriotism was of the most ardent kind. The moment he was of age, he broke off from the amusements of London, and on his arrival in America, instantly joined the army. Wherever the war raged most, there was he to be found. A dauntless bravery was the least of his virtues, and an excess of it his greatest foible. His various talents fitted him to shine in courts or camps, or popular assemblies. He had a heart to conceive, a head to contrive, a tongue to persuade, and a hand to execute schemes of the most extensive utility to his country, or rather to mankind, for his enlarged philanthropy knowing no bounds, embraced the whole human race. This excellent young man, who was the pride of his country, the idol of the army, and an ornament of human nature, lost his life in the 27th year of his age, in an unimportant skirmish with a foraging party, in the very last moments of the war.

At the commencement of the year 1782, the British had more extensive range in Georgia, than in any other of the United States, but of this they were soon abridged. From the unsuccessful issue of the assault on Savannah in 1779, that State had eminently suffered the desolations of war. Political hatred raged to such a degree that the blood of its citizens was daily shed by the hands of each other, contending under the names of whigs and tories. A few of the friends of the revolution kept together in the western settlements, and exercised the powers of independent government. The whole [292] extent between these and the capital, was subject to the alternate ravages of both parties. After the surrender of lord Cornwallis, General Greene being reinforced by the Pennsylvanira line, was enabled to detach General Wayne with a part of the southern army to Georgia. General Clarke who commanded in Savannah, on hearing of their advance, sent orders to his officers in the out posts, to burn as far as they could, all the provisions in the country, and then to retire within the lines at the
capital. The country being evacuated by the British, the Governor came with his council from Augusta to Ebenezer, and re-established government in the vicinity of the sea coast.

Colonel Brown at the head of a considerable force marched out of the garrison of Savannah, with the apparent intention of attacking the Americans. General Wayne by a bold manoeuvre got in his rear, attacked him at 12 o’clock at night, and routed his whole party. A large number of Creek Indians, headed by a number of their chiefs and a British officer, made a furious attack on Wayne’s infantry in the night. For a few minutes they possessed themselves of his field pieces, but they were soon recovered. In the mean time Colonel White with a party of the cavalry came up, and pressed hard upon them. Both sides engaged in close quarters. The Indians displayed uncommon bravery, but were at length completely routed. Shortly after this affair, a period was put to the calamities of war, in that ravaged state. In about three months after the capture of lord Cornwallis was known in Great-Britain, the parliament resolved to abandon all offensive operations in America. In consequence thereof, every idea of conquest being given up, arrangements were made for withdrawing the royal forces from Georgia and South-Carolina.

Peace was restored to Georgia, after it had been upwards of three years in possession of the British, and had been ravaged nearly from one extreme to the other. It is computed that the state lost by the war, one thousand of its citizens, besides four thousand slaves.

In about five months after the British left Georgia, they in like manner withdrew their force, from South-Carolina. The inhabitants of Charleston, who had remained therein, while it was possessed by the British, felt themselves happy in being delivered from the severities of a garrison life. The exiled citizens collected from all quarters and took possession of their estates. Thus in less than three years from the landing of the British in South-Carolina, they withdrew all their forces from it. In that time the citizens had suffered an accumulation of evils. There was scarcely an inhabitant however obscure in character, or remote in situation, whether he remained firm to one party or changed with the times, who did not partake of the general distress.

In modern Europe the revolutions of public affairs seldom disturb the humble obscurity of private life, but the American revolution involved the interest of every family, and deeply affected the fortunes and happiness of almost every individual in the United States. South-Carolina lost a great number of its citizens, and upwards of 20,000 of its slaves. Property was sported with by both parties. Besides those who fell in battle or died of diseases brought on by the war, many were inhumanly murdered by private assassinations. The country abounded with widows and orphans. The severities of a military life co-operating with the climate, destroyed the healths and lives of many hundreds of the invading army. Excepting those who enriched themselves by plunder, and a few successful speculators, no private advantage was gained by individuals on either side, but an experimental conviction of the folly and madness of war.
Though in the year 1782 the United States afforded few great events, the reverse was the case with the other powers involved in the consequences of the American war.

Minorca after a tedious siege surrendered to the Duke de Crillon in the service of his most Catholic Majesty. About the same time the settlements of Demarara and Essequibo, which in the preceding year had been taken by the British, were taken from them by the French. The gallant Marquis de Bouille added to the splendor of his former fame by reducing St. Eustatia and St. Kitts, the former [294] at the close of the year 1781, and the latter early in the year 1782.

The islands of Nevis and Monserrat followed the fortune of St. Kitts. The French at this period seemed to be established in the West Indies, on a firm foundation. Their islands were full of excellent troops, and their marine force was truly respectable. The exertions of Spain were also uncommonly great. The strength of these two monarchies had never before been so conspicuously displayed, in that quarter of the globe. Their combined navies amounted to threescore ships of the line, and these were attended with a prodigious multitude of frigates and armed vessels. With this immense force they entertained hopes of wresting from his Britannic Majesty a great part of his West-India islands.

In the mean time, the British ministry prepared a strong squadron, for the protection of their possessions in that quarter. This was commanded by Admiral Rodney and amounted, after a junction with Sir Samuel Hood’s squadron, and the arrival of three ships from Great Britain, to 36 sail of the line.

It was the design of Count de Grasse, who commanded the French fleet at Martinque amounting to 34 sail of the line, to proceed to Hispaniola and join the Spanish Admiral Don Solano, who with sixteen ships of the line and a considerable land force was waiting for his arrival, and to make in concert with him an attack on Jamaica.

The British admiral wished to prevent this junction, or at least to force an engagement before it was effected. Admiral Rodney came up with Count de Grasse, soon after he had set out to join the Spanish fleet at Hispaniola. Partial engagements took place on the three first days, after they came near to each other. In these, two of the French ships were so badly damaged, that they were obliged to quit the fleet.

On the next day a general engagement took place: This began at seven in the morning, and continued till past six in the evening. There was no apparent superiority on either side till between twelve and one o’clock, when Admiral Rodney broke the French line of battle, by bearing down upon their centre, and [295] penetrating through it.

The land forces, destined for the expedition against Jamaica, amounting to 5500 men, were distributed on board the French fleet. Their ships were therefore so crowded, that the slaughter on board was prodigious. The battle was fought on both sides with equal spirit, but with a very unequal issue. The French for near a century, had not in any naval engagement been so completely worsted. Their fleet was little less than ruined. Upwards of 400 men were killed on board one of their ships, and the whole number of their killed and
wounded amounted to several thousands, while the loss of the British did not much exceed 1100 men. The French lost in this action, and the subsequent pursuit, eight ships of the line. On board the captured ships, was the whole train of artillery, with the battering cannon and travelling carriages, intended for the expedition against Jamaica. One of them was the Ville de Paris, so called from the city of Paris, having built her at its own expense, and made a present of her to the King. She had cost four millions of livres, and was esteemed the most magnificent ship in France; she carried 110 guns and had on board 1300 men. This was truly an unfortunate day to Count de Grasse. Though his behaviour throughout the whole action was firm and intrepid, and his resistance continued till he and two more were the only men left standing upon the upper deck, he was at last obliged to strike. It was no small addition to his misfortunes that he was on the point of forming a junction, which would have set him above all danger. Had this taken place, the whole British naval power in the West-Indies, on principles of ordinary calculation, would have been insufficient to have prevented him from carrying into effect, schemes of the most extensive consequence.

The ships of the defeated fleet fled in a variety of directions. Twenty three or twenty four sail made the best of their way to Cape François. This was all that remained in a body of that fleet, which was lately so formidable. By this signal victory, the designs of France and Spain were frustrated.

No farther enterprises were undertaken against the fleets or possessions of Great Britain in the West-Indies, and such measures only were embraced, as seemed requisite for the purposes of safety. When the news of Admiral Rodney’s victory reached Great Britain, a general joy was diffused over the nation. Before there had been much despondency. Their losses in the Chesapeake and in the West-Indies, together with the increasing number of their enemies, had depressed the spirits of the great body of the people; but the advantages gained on the 12th of April, placed them on high ground, either for ending or prosecuting the war. It was fortunate for the Americans, that this success of the British was posterior to their loss in Virginia. It so elevated the spirits of Britain, and so depressed the hopes of France, that had it taken place prior to the surrender of lord Cornwallis, that event would have been less influential in disposing the nation to peace. As the catastrophe of York-Town closed the national war in North-America, so the defeat of de Grasse, in a great measure, put a period to hostilities in the West-Indies.

Other decisive events soon followed, which disposed another of the belligerent powers to a pacification. Gibraltar though successively relieved, still continued to be besieged. The reduction of Minorca inspired the Spanish nation with fresh motives to perseverance. The Duke de Crillon, who had been recently successful in the siege of Minorca, was appointed to conduct the siege of Gibraltar, and it was resolved to employ the whole strength of the Spanish monarchy in seconding his operations. No means were neglected, nor expence spared, that promised to forward the views of the besiegers. From the failure of all plans, hitherto adopted for effecting the reduction of Gibraltar, it was resolved to adopt new ones. Among the various projects for this purpose, one which had been formed by the Chevalier D’Arcon, was deemed the most worthy of trial. This was to construct such floating batteries as could neither be sunk.
nor fired. With this view their bottoms were made of the thickest timber, and their sides of wood and cork long soaked in water, with a large layer of wet sand between.

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To prevent the effects of red hot balls, a number of pipes were contrived to carry water through every part of them, and pumps were provided to keep these constantly supplied with water. The people on board were to be sheltered from the fall of bombs by a cover of rope netting, which was made sloping and overlaid with wet hides.

These floating batteries, ten in number, were made out of the hulls of large vessels, cut down for the purpose, and carried from 28 to ten guns each, and were seconded by 8o large boats mounted with guns of heavy metal, and also by a multitude of frigates, ships of force, and some hundreds of small craft.

General Elliott the intrepid defender of Gibraltar, was not ignorant that inventions of a peculiar kind were prepared against him, but knew nothing of their construction. He nevertheless provided for every circumstance of danger that could be foreseen or imagined. The 13th day of Sept. was fixed upon by the besiegers for making a grand attack, when the new invented machines, with all the united powers of gunpowder and artillery in their highest state of improvement, were to be called into action. The combined fleets of France and Spain in the bay of Gibraltar amounted to 48 sail of the line. Their batteries were covered with 154 pieces of heavy brass cannon. The numbers employed by land and sea against the fortress were estimated at one hundred thousand men. With this force and by the fire of 300 cannon, mortars, and howitzers, from the adjacent isthmus, it was intended to attack every part of the British works at one and the same instant. The surrounding hills were covered with people assembled to behold the spectacle. The canonade and bombardment was tremendous. The showers of shot and shells from the land batteries, and the ships of the besiegers, and from the various works of the garrison, exhibited a most dreadful scene. Four hundred pieces of the heaviest artillery were playing at the same moment. The whole Peninsula seemed to be overwhelmed in the torrents of fire, which were incessantly poured upon it.

The Spanish floating batteries for some time answered [298] the expectations of their framers. The heaviest shells often rebounded from their tops, while thirty two pound shot, made no visible impression upon their hulls. For some hours, the attack and defence were so equally supported, as scarcely to admit any appearance of superiority on either side. The construction of the battering ships was so well calculated, for withstanding the combined force of fire and artillery, that they seemed for some time to bid defiance to the powers of the heaviest ordnance. In the afternoon the effects of hot shot became visible. At first there was only an appearance of smoke, but in the course of the night, after the fire of the garrison had continued about 15 hours, two of the floating batteries were in flames, and several more were visibly beginning to kindle. The endeavors of the besiegers were now exclusively directed to bring off the men from the burning vessels, but in this they were interrupted. Captain Curtis who lay ready with 12 gun boats, advanced and fired upon them with such order and expedition, as to throw them into confusion before they had finished their business. They fled with their boats, and abandoned to
their fate great numbers of their people. The opening of day light disclosed a most
dreadful spectacle. Many were seen in the midst of the flames crying out for help,
while others were floating upon pieces of timber, exposed to equal danger from the
opposite element. The generous humanity of the victors equalled their valor, and was
the more honorable, as the exertions of it exposed them to no less danger than those of
active hostility. In endeavoring to save the lives of his enemies, Capt. Curtis nearly
lost his own. While for the most benevolent purpose, he was along side the floating
batteries one of them blew up, and some heavy pieces of timber fell into his boat, and
pierced through its bottom. By similar perilous exertions, near 400 men were saved
from inevitable destruction. The exercise of humanity to an enemy, under such
circumstances of immediate action, and impending danger, conferred more true honor
than could be acquired by the most splendid series of victories. It in some degree
obscured the impression made to the disadvantage [299] of human nature, by the
madness of mankind in destroying each other by wasteful wars. The floating batteries
were all consumed. The violence of their explosion was such, as to burst open doors,
and windows at a great distance. Soon after the destruction of the floating batteries,
lord Howe with 35 ships of the line, brought to the brave garrison an ample supply of
every thing wanted, either for their support or their defence. This complete relief of
Gibraltar, was the third decisive event in the course of a twelve month, which
favoured the re-establishment of a general peace.

The capture of the British army in Virginia—the defeat of Count de Grasse, and the
destruction of the Spanish floating batteries, inculcated on Great Britain, France and
Spain, the policy of sheathing the sword, and stopping the effusion of human blood.
Each nation found on a review of past events, that though their losses were great, their
gains were little or nothing. By urging the American war, Great Britain had increased
her national debt one hundred millions of pounds sterling, and wasted the lives of at
least 50,000 of her subjects. To add to her mortification she had brought all this on
herself, by pursuing an object the attainment of which seemed to be daily less
probable, and the benefits of which, even though it could have been attained, were
very problematical. While Great Britain, France and Spain were successively brought
to think favourably of peace, the United States of America had the consolation of a
public acknowledgment of their independence, by a second power of Europe.
This was effected in a great measure by the address of John
Adams. On the capture of Henry Laurens, he had been
commissioned to be the minister plenipotentiary of Congress, to the States General of
the United Provinces, and was also empowered to negociate a loan of money among
the Hollanders.

Soon after his arrival he presented to their High Mightinesses a
memorial, in which he informed them that the United States of
America, had thought fit to send him a commission with full power and instructions,
to confer with them concerning a treaty of amity and commerce, and [300] that they
had appointed him to be their Minister Plenipotentiary to reside near them. Similar
information, was the same time communicated to the Statholder the Prince of Orange.

About a year after the presentation of this memorial, it was
resolved “that the said Mr. Adams was agreeable to their High
Mightinesses, and that he should be acknowledged in quality of Minister

Jan. 1, 1781
Apr. 19, 1781
Apr. 22, 1782
Plenipotentiary.” Before this was obtained much pains had been taken and much ingenuity had been exerted, to convince the rulers and people of the States General, that they had an interest in connecting themselves with the United States. These representations, together with some recent successes in their contests on the sea with Great Britain, and their evident commercial interest, encouraged them to venture on being the second power of Europe, to acknowledge American Independence.

Mr. Adams having gained this point, proceeded on the negotiation of a treaty of amity and commerce between the two countries. This was a few months concluded, to the reciprocal satisfaction of both parties. The same success which attended Mr. Adams in these negociations, continued to follow him in obtaining a loan of money, which was a most seasonable supply to his almost exhausted country.

Mr. Jay had for nearly three years past exerted equal abilities, and equal industry with Mr. Adams, in endeavouring to negociate a treaty between the United States and his most Catholic Majesty, but his exertions were not crowned with equal success.

To gain the friendship of the Spaniards, Congress passed sundry resolutions, favouring the wishes of his most Catholic Majesty to re-annex the two Floridas to his dominions. Mr. Jay was instructed to contend for the right of the United States to the free navigation of the river Mississippi, and if an express acknowledgement of it could not be obtained, he was restrained from acceding to any stipulation, by which it should be relinquished. But in February 1781, when Lord Cornwallis was making rapid progress in overrunning the southern States, and when the mutiny of the Pennsylvania line and other unfavourable circumstances depressed the spirits of the Americans, Congress, on the recommendation of Virginia, directed him to recede from his instructions, so far as they insist on the free navigation of that part of the river Mississippi, which lies below the thirty first degree of North Latitude, and on a free port or ports below the same: provided such cession should be unalterably insisted on by Spain, and provided the free navigation of the said river above the said degree of North Latitude should be acknowledged and guarantied by his Catholic Majesty, in common with his own subjects.

These propositions were made to the ministers of his most Catholic Majesty, but not accepted. Mr. Jay in his own name informed them “That if the acceptance of this offer should, together with the proposed alliance, be postponed to a general peace, the United States would cease to consider themselves bound by any propositions or offers he might then make in their behalf.”

Spain having delayed to accept of these terms, which originated more in necessity than in policy, till the crisis of American independence was past, Congress apprehensive that their offered relinquishment of the free navigation of the Mississippi should at that late hour be accepted, instructed their minister “To forbear making any overtures to the court of Spain, or entering into any stipulations, in consequence of any which he
had previously made.” The ministers of his most Catholic Majesty, from indecision and tardiness of deliberation, let slip an opportunity of gaining a favourite point, which from the increasing numbers of the western settlements of the United States, seems to be removed at a daily increasing distance. Humiliating offers, made and rejected in the hour of distress, will not readily be renewed in the day of prosperity.

It was expected not only by the sanguine Americans, but by many in England, that the capture of lord Cornwallis would instantly dispose the nation to peace; but whatever might have been the wish or the interest of the people, the American war was too much the favourite of ministry to be relinquished, without a struggle for its continuance.

Just after intelligence arrived of the capitulation of York-Town, the King of Great Britain, in his speech to Parliament, declared “That he should not answer the trust committed to the sovereign of a free people, if he consented to sacrifice either to his own desire of peace, or to their temporary ease and relief, those essential rights and permanent interests, upon the maintenance and preservation of which the future strength and security of the country must forever depend.” The determined language of this speech, pointing to the continuance of the American war, was echoed back by a majority of both Lords and Commons.

In a few days after, it was moved in the house of commons that a resolution should be adopted declaring it to be their opinion “That all farther attempts to reduce the Americans to obedience by force would be ineffectual, and injurious to the true interests of Great Britain.” Though the debate on this subject was continued till two o’clock in the morning, and though the opposition received additional strength, yet the question was not carried. The same ground of argument was soon gone over again, and the American war underwent, for the fourth time since the beginning of the session, a full discussion; but no resolution, disapproving its farther prosecution, could yet obtain the assent of a majority of the members. The advocates for peace becoming daily more numerous, it was moved by Gen. Conway “That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, that he will be pleased to give directions to his ministers not to pursue any longer the impracticable object of reducing his Majesty’s revolted colonies by force to their allegiance, by a war on the continent of America.” This brought forth a repetition of the former arguments on the subject, and engaged the attention of the house till two o’clock in the morning. On a division, the motion for the address was lost by a single vote.

In the course of these debates, while the minority were gaining ground, the ministry were giving up one point after another. They at first consented that the war should not be carried on to the same extent as formerly—then that there should be no internal continental war—next that there should be no other war than what was necessary for the defence of the posts already in their possession—and last of all, none but against the French in America.

The ministry as well as the nation began to be sensible of the impolicy of continental operations, but hoped that they might gain their point, by prosecuting hostilities at sea.
Every opposition was therefore made by them against the total direliction of a war, on the success of which they had so repeatedly pledged themselves, and on the continuance of which they held their places. General Conway in five days after, brought forward another motion expressed in different words, but to the same effect with that which he had lost by a single vote. This caused a long debate which lasted till two o’clock in the morning. It was then moved to adjourn the debate till the 13th of March. There appeared for the adjournment 215, and against it 234.

The original motion, and an address to the king formed upon the resolution were then carried without a division, and the address was ordered to be presented by the whole house.

To this his majesty answered, “that in pursuance of their advice, he would take such measures as should appear to him the most conducive to the restoration of harmony, between Great Britain and the revolted colonies.” The thanks of the house were voted for this answer. But the guarded language thereof, not inconsistent with farther hostilities against America; together with other suspicious circumstances, induced General Conway to move another resolution, expressed in the most decisive language. This was to the following effect. “That the house would consider as enemies to his majesty and the country, all those who should advise or by any means attempt the further prosecution of offensive war, on the continent of North-America, for the purpose of reducing the colonies to obedience by force.” This motion [304] after a feeble opposition was carried without a division, and put a period to all that chicanery by which ministers meant to distinguish between a prosecution of offensive war in North-America, and a total direliction of it. This resolution and the preceding address, to which it had reference, may be considered as the closing scene of the American war. As it was made a parliamentary war, by an address from parliament for its prosecution in February 1775[, i]t now was no longer so, by an address from the most numerous house of the same parliament in February 1782, for its discontinuance. A change of ministry was the consequence of this total change of that political system which, for seven years, had directed the affairs of Great Britain. A new administration was formed under the auspices of the Marquis of Rockingham, and was composed of characters who opposed the American war.

It has been said that the new minister stipulated with the court before he entered into office, that there should be peace with the Americans, and that the acknowledgement of their independence should not be a bar to the attainment of it. Soon after the Marquis of Rockingham, on whom Great Britain relied with a well placed confidence, for extrication from surrounding embarrassments departed this life, and his much lamented death, for some time obscured the agreeable prospects which had lately begun to dawn on the nation. On the decease of the noble Marquis, Earl Shelburne was appointed his successor. To remove constitutional impediments to negotiate with the late British colonies, an act of parliament was passed, granting to the crown powers for negotiating or concluding a general or particular peace or truce with the whole, or with any part of the colonies, and for setting aside all former laws, whose operations where in controvention to that purpose.
Sir Guy Carleton, who was lately appointed to the command of the royal army in North-America, was instructed to use his endeavours for carrying into effect the wishes of Great-Britain, for an accommodation with the Americans. He therefore dispatched a letter to General Washington, informing him of the late proceedings of [305] parliament, and of the dispositions so favourable to America, which were prevalent in Great Britain, and at the same time solicited a passport for his secretary, Mr. Morgan to pay a visit to Congress. His request was refused. The application for it, with its concomitant circumstances were considered as introductory to a scheme for opening negotiations with Congress or the states, without the concurrence of their allies. This caused no small alarm and gave rise to sundry resolutions, by which several states declared, that a proposition from the enemy to all or any of the United States for peace or truce, separate from their allies was inadmissible. Congress not long after resolved “that they would not enter into the discussion of any overtures for pacification, but in confidence and in concert with his most Christian Majesty, and as a proof of this, they recommended to the several States to pass laws, that no subject of his Britannic Majesty coming directly or indirectly from any part of the British dominions, be admitted into any of the United States during the war.” This decisive conduct extinguished all hopes that Great Britain might have entertained, of making a separate peace with America. Two of the first sovereigns of Europe, the Empress of Russia, and the Emperor of Germany, were the mediators in accomplishing the great work of peace. Such was the state of the contending parties, that the intercession of powerful mediators was no longer necessary. The disposition of Great Britain, to recognize the independence of the United States, had removed the principal difficulty, which had hitherto obstructed a general pacification. It would be curious to trace the successive steps by which the nation was brought to this measure, so irreconcilable to their former declarations. Various auxiliary causes might be called in to account for this great change of the public mind of Great Britain, but the sum of the whole must be resolved into this simple proposition, “That it was unavoidable.” A state of perpetual war was inconsistent with the interest of a commercial nation. Even the longer continuance of hostilities was forbidden by every principle of wise policy.

[306] The avowed object of the alliance between France and America, and the steady adherence of both parties to enter into no negotiations without the concurrence of each other, reduced Great Britain to the alternative of continuing a hopeless unproductive war, or of negotiating under the idea of recognizing American independence. This great change of the public mind in Great Britain, favourable to American independence, took place between November 1781, and March 1782. In that interval Mr. Laurens was released from his confinement in the tower. Before and after his release, he had frequent opportunities of demonstrating to persons in power, that from his personal knowledge of the sentiments of Congress, and of their instructions to their ministers, every hope of peace, without the acknowledgement of independence was illusory. Seven years experience had proved to the nation that the conquest of the American States was impracticable; they now received equal conviction, that the recognition of their independence, was an indispensible preliminary to the termination of a war, from the continuance of which, neither profit nor honor was to be acquired. The pride of Great Britain for a long time
resisted, but that usurping passion was obliged to yield to the superior influence of interest. The feelings of the great body of the people were no longer to be controuled by the honor of ministers, or romantic ideas of national dignity. At the close of the war, a revolution was effected in the sentiments of the inhabitants of Great Britain, not less remarkable than what in the beginning of it, took place among the citizens of America.

Independence which was neither thought of nor wished for by the latter in the year 1774, and 1775, became in the year 1776 their favorite object. A recognition of this, which throughout the war, had been with few exceptions the object of abhorrence to the British nation, became in the year 1782, a popular measure in Great Britain, as the means of putting an end to a ruinous war.

The commissioners for negotiating peace on the part of the United States, were John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and Henry Laurens. On the part of Great Britain, Mr. Fitzherbert, and Mr. Oswald.

Provisional articles of peace, between Great Britain and the United States were agreed upon by these gentlemen, which were to be inserted in a future treaty of peace, to be finally concluded between the parties, when that between Great Britain and France took place. By these the independence of the states was acknowledged in its fullest extent. Very ample boundaries were allowed them, which comprehended the fertile and extensive countries on both sides of the Ohio, and on the east side of the Mississippi, in which was the residence of upwards of twenty nations of Indians, and particularly of the five nations, who had long been the friends and allies of Great Britain. An unlimited right of fishery on the banks of Newfoundland, and on other places where both nations had heretofore been accustomed to fish, was likewise confirmed to the Americans. From the necessity of the case, the loyalists were sacrificed, nothing further than a simple recommendation for restitution, being stipulated in their favour. Five days after these provisional articles were signed, the British parliament met. They underwent a severe parliamentary discussion. It was said by the opposition that independence being recognized, every thing ceded by Great Britain required an equivalent; but that while they gave up the many posts they held in the United States, an immense extent of north and western territory, a participation in the fur trade, and in the fisheries, nothing was stipulated in return.

It must be acknowledged, that the ministers of Congress procured for their countrymen better terms than they had reason to expect; but from a combination of circumstances, it was scarcely possible to end the war without similar concessions on the part of Great Britain. By the alliance between France and America, there could be no peace without independence. That once granted, most of the other articles followed of course. It is true the boundaries agreed upon, were more extensive than the States, when colonies had claimed, yet the surplus ceded could have been of little or no use to Great Britain, and might if retained have given an occasion to a future war.

[308] The case of the loyalists was undoubtedly a hard one, but unavoidable, from the complex constitution of the United States. The American ministers engaged as far as they were authorised, and Congress did all that they constitutionally could; but this
was no more than simply to recommend their case to the several States, for the purpose of making them restitution. To have insisted on more, under such circumstances, would have been equivalent to saying that there should be no peace. It is true much more was expected from the recommendations of Congress, than resulted from them; but this was not the consequence of deception, but of misunderstanding the principles of the confederation. In conformity to the letter and spirit of the treaty, Congress urged in strong terms the propriety of making restitution to the loyalists, but to procure it was beyond their power. In the animation produced by the war, when the Americans conceived their liberties to be in danger, and that their only safety consisted in obeying their foederal head, they yielded a more unreserved obedience to the recommendations of Congress, than is usually paid to the decrees of the most arbitrary sovereigns. But the case was widely different, when at the close of the war, a measure was recommended, in direct opposition to their prejudices. It was the general opinion of the Americans, that the continuance of the war, and the asperity with which it had been carried on, was more owing to the machinations of their own countrymen, who had taken part with royal government, than to their British enemies. It is certain that the former had been most active in predatory excursions, and most forward in scenes of blood and murder. Their knowledge of the country enabled them to do mischief, which would never have occurred to European soldiers. Many powerful passions of human nature operated against making restitution to men, who were thus considered as the authors of so great a share of the general distress.

There were doubtless among the loyalists many worthy characters—friends to peace, and lovers of justice: To such, restitution was undoubtedly due, and to many [309] such it was made; but it is one of the many calamities incident to war, that the innocent, from the impossibility of discrimination, are often involved in the same distress with the guilty. The return of the loyalists to their former places of residence, was as much disrelished by the whig citizens of America, as the proposal for reimbursing their confiscated property. In sundry places committees were formed, which in an arbitrary manner, opposed their peaceable residence. The sober and dispassionate citizens exerted themselves in checking these irregular measures; but such was the violence of party spirit, and so relaxed were the sinews of government, that in opposition to legal authority, and the private interference of the judicious and moderate, many indecent outrages were committed on the persons and property of the returning loyalists. Nor were these all the sufferings of those Americans who had attached themselves to the royal cause. Being compelled to depart their native country, many of them were obliged to take up their abodes in the inhospitable wilds of Nova Scotia, or on the barren shores of the Bahama Islands. Parliamentary relief was extended to them, but this was obtained with difficulty, and distributed with a partial hand. Some who invented plausible tales of loyalty and distress received much more than they ever possessed; but others, less artful, were not half reimbursed for their actual losses. The bulk of the sufferings, subsequent to the peace among the Americans, fell to the share of the merchants, and others, who owed money in England. From the operations of the war remittances were impossible. In the mean time payments were made in America by a depreciating paper, under the sanction of a law which made it a legal tender. The unhappy persons, who in this manner suffered payment, could not apply it to the extinguishment of their foreign
debts. If they retained in their hands the paper which was paid to them, it daily
decreased in value: If they invested it in public securities, from the deficiency of
funds, their situation was no better: If they purchased land, such was the
superabundance of territory ceded by the peace, that it fell greatly [310] in value.
Under all these embarrassments, the American debtor was by
treaty bound to make payments in specie of all his *bonafide*
debts, due in Great Britain. The British merchant was materially injured by being kept
for many years out of his capital, and the American was often ruined by being
ultimately held to pay in specie, what he received in paper. Enough was suffered on
both sides to make the inhabitants, as well in Great Britain as in America, deprecate
war as one of the greatest evils incident to humanity.
APPENDIX NO. IV

The State Of Parties; The Advantages And Disadvantages Of The Revolution; Its Influence On The Minds And Morals Of The Citizens.

Previous to the American revolution, the inhabitants of the British colonies were universally loyal. That three millions of such subjects should break through all former attachments, and unanimously adopt new ones, could not reasonably be expected. The revolution had its enemies, as well as its friends, in every period of the war. Country religion, local policy, as well as private views, operated in disposing the inhabitants to take different sides. The New-England provinces being mostly settled by one sort of people, were nearly of one sentiment. The influence of placemen in Boston together with the connexions which they had formed by marriages, had attached sundry influential characters in that capital to the British interest, but these were but as the dust in the balance, when compared with the numerous independent whig yeomanry of the country. The same and other causes produced a large number in New-York, who were attached to royal government. That city had long been head quarters of the British army in America, and many intermarriages, and other connexions, had been made between British officers, and some of their first families. The practice of entailing estates had prevailed in New-York to a much greater extent, than in any of the other provinces. The governors thereof had long been in the habit of indulging their favorites with extravagant grants of land. This had introduced the distinction of landlord and tenant. There was therefore in New-York an aristocratic party, respectable for numbers, wealth and influence, which had much to fear from independence. The city was also divided into parties by the influence of two ancient and numerous families, the Livingstones and Delanceys. These having been long accustomed to oppose each other at elections, could rarely be brought to unite, in any political measures. In this controversy, one almost universally took part with America, the other with Great Britain.

The Irish in America, with a few exceptions were attached to independence. They had fled from oppression in their native country, and could not brook the idea that it should follow them. Their national prepossessions in favour of liberty, were strengthened by their religious opinions. They were Presbyterians, and people of that denomination, for reasons hereafter to be explained, were mostly whigs. The Scotch on the other hand, though they had formerly sacrificed much to liberty in their own country, were generally disposed to support the claims of Great-Britain. Their nation for some years past had experienced a large proportion of royal favour. A very absurd association was made by many, between the cause of John Wilkes and the cause of America. The former had rendered himself so universally odious to the Scotch, that many of them were prejudiced against a cause, which was so ridiculously, but generally associated, with that of a man who had grossly insulted their whole nation.
The illiberal reflections cast by some Americans on the whole body of the Scotch, as favourers of arbitrary power, restrained high spirited individuals of that nation, from joining a people who suspected their love of liberty. Such of them as adhered to the cause of independence, were ready in their attachment. The army and the Congress ranked among their best officers, and most valuable members, some individuals of that nation.

Such of the Germans, in America, as possessed the means of information, were generally determined whigs, but many of them were too little informed, to be able to chuse their side on proper ground. They, especially such of them as resided in the interior country, were from their not understanding the English language, far behind most of the other inhabitants, in a knowledge of the merits of the dispute. Their disaffection was rather passive than active: A considerable part of it arose from principles of religion, for some of their sects deny the lawfulness of war. No people have prospered more in America than the Germans. None have surpassed, and but few have equalled them, in industry and other republican virtues.

The great body of tories in the southern states, was among the settlers on their western frontier. Many of these were disorderly persons, who had fled from the old settlements, to avoid the restraints of civil government. Their numbers were encreased by a set of men called regulators. The expence and difficulty of obtaining the decision of courts, against horse-thieves and other criminals, had induced sundry persons, about the year 1770, to take the execution of the laws into their own hands, in some of the remote settlements, both of North and South-Carolina. In punishing crimes, forms as well as substance, must be regarded. From not attending to the former, some of these regulators, though perhaps aiming at nothing but what they thought right, committed many offences both against law and justice. By their violent proceedings regular government was prostrated. This drew on them the vengeance of royal governors. The regulators having suffered from their hands, were slow to oppose an established government, whose power to punish they had recently experienced. Apprehending that the measures of Congress were like their own regulating schemes, and fearing that they would terminate in the same disagreeable consequences, they and their adherents were generally opposed to the revolution.

Religion also divided the inhabitants of America. The presbyterians and independents, were almost universally attached to the measures of Congress. Their religious societies are governed on the republican plan.

From independence they had much to hope, but from Great Britain if finally successful, they had reason to fear the establishment of a church hierarchy. Most of the episcopal ministers of the northern provinces, were pensioners on the bounty of the British government. The greatest part of their clergy, and many of their laity in these provinces, were therefore disposed to support a connexion with Great Britain. The episcopal clergy in these southern provinces being under no such bias, were often among the warmest whigs. Some of them foreseeing the downfall of religious establishments from the success of the Americans, were less active, but in general
where their church was able to support itself, their clergy and laity, zealously espoused the cause of independence. Great pains were taken to persuade them, that those who had been called dissenters, were aiming to abolish the episcopal establishment, to make way for their own exaltation, but the good sense of the people, restrained them from giving any credit to the unfounded suggestion. Religious controversy was happily kept out of view: The well informed of all denominations were convinced, that the contest was for their civil rights, and therefore did not suffer any other considerations to interfere, or disturb their union.

The quakers with a few exceptions were averse to independence. In Pennsylvania they were numerous, and had power in their hands. Revolutions in government are rarely patronised by any body of men, who foresee that a diminution of their own importance, is likely to result from the change. Quakers from religious principles were averse to war, and therefore could not be friendly to a revolution, which could only be effected by the sword. Several individuals separated from them on account of their principles, and following the impulse of their inclinations, joined their countrymen in arms.

The services America received from two of their society, Generals Greene and Mifflin, made some amends for the embarrassment, which the disaffection of the great body of their people occasioned to the exertions of the active friends of independence. The age and temperament of individuals had often an influence in fixing their political character. Old men were seldom warm whigs. They could not relish the great changes which were daily taking place. Attached to ancient forms and habits, they could not readily accommodate themselves to new systems. Few of the very rich were active in forwarding the revolution. This was remarkably the case in the eastern and middle States; but the reverse took place in the southern extreme of the confederacy. There were in no part of America, more determined whigs than the opulent slaveholders in Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. The active and spirited part of the community, who felt themselves possessed of talents, that would raise them to eminence in a free government, longed for the establishment of independent constitutions: But those who were in possession or expectation of royal favour, or of promotion from Great Britain, wished that the connexion between the Parent State and the colonies, might be preserved. The young, the ardent, the ambitious and the enterprising were mostly whigs, but the phlegmatic, the timid, the interested and those who wanted decision were, in general, favourers of Great Britain, or at least only the lukewarm inactive friends of independence. The whigs received a great reinforcement from the operation of continental money. In the year 1775, 1776, and in the first months of 1777, while the bills of Congress were in good credit, the effects of them were the same, as if a foreign power had made the United States a present of twenty million of silver dollars. The circulation of so large a sum of money, and the employment given to great numbers in providing for the American army, increased the numbers and invigorated the zeal of the friends to the revolution: on the same principles, the American war was patronised in England, by the many contractors and agents for transporting and supplying the British army.

In both cases the inconveniences of interrupted commerce were lessened by the employment which war and a domestic
circulation of money substituted in its room. The convulsions of war afforded excellent shelter for desperate debtors. The spirit of the times revolted against dragging to jails for debt, men who were active and zealous in defending their country, and on the other hand, those who owed more than they were worth, by going within the British lines, and giving themselves the merit of suffering on the score of loyalty, not only put their creditors to defiance, but sometimes obtained promotion or other special marks of royal favour.

The American revolution, on the one hand, brought forth great vices; but on the other hand, it called forth many virtues, and gave occasion for the display of abilities which, but for that event, would have been lost to the world. When the war began, the Americans were a mass of husbandmen, merchants, mechanics and fishermen; but the necessities of the country gave a spring to the active powers of the inhabitants, and set them on thinking, speaking and acting, in a line far beyond that to which they had been accustomed. The difference between nations is not so much owing to nature, as to education and circumstances. While the Americans were guided by the leading strings of the mother country, they had no scope nor encouragement for exertion. All the departments of government were established and executed for them, but not by them. In the years 1775 and 1776 the country, being suddenly thrown into a situation that needed the abilities of all its sons, these generally took their places, each according to the bent of his inclination. As they severally pursued their objects with ardor, a vast expansion of the human mind speedily followed. This displayed itself in a variety of ways. It was found that the talents for great stations did not differ in kind, but only in degree, from those which were necessary for the proper discharge of the ordinary business of civil society. In the bustle that was occasioned by the war, few instances could be produced of any persons who made a figure, or who rendered essential services, but from among those who had given specimens of similar talents [316] in their respective professions. Those who from indolence or dissipation, had been of little service to the community in time of peace, were found equally unserviceable in war. A few young men were exceptions to this general rule. Some of these, who had indulged in youthful follies, broke off from their vicious courses, and on the pressing call of their country became useful servants of the public: but the great bulk of those, who were the active instruments of carrying on the revolution, were self-made, industrious men. These who by their own exertions, had established or laid a foundation for establishing personal independence, were most generally trusted, and most successfully employed in establishing that of their country. In these times of action, classical education was found of less service than good natural parts, guided by common sense and sound judgement.

Several names could be mentioned of individuals who, without the knowledge of any other language than their mother tongue, wrote not only accurately, but elegantly, on public business. It seemed as if the war not only required, but created talents. Men whose minds were warmed with the love of liberty, and whose abilities were improved by daily exercise, and sharpened with a laudable ambition to serve their distressed country, spoke, wrote, and acted, with an energy far surpassing all expectations which could be reasonably founded on their previous acquirements.
The Americans knew but little of one another, previous to the revolution. Trade and business had brought the inhabitants of their seaports acquainted with each other, but the bulk of the people in the interior country were unacquainted with their fellow citizens. A continental army, and Congress composed of men from all the States, by freely mixing together, were assimilated into one mass. Individuals of both, mingling with the citizens, disseminated principles of union among them. Local prejudices abated. By frequent collision asperities were worn off, and a foundation was laid for the establishment of a nation, out of discordant materials.

Interrummarriages between men and women of different States were much more common than before the war, and became an additional cement to the union. Unreasonable jealousies had existed between the inhabitants of the eastern and of the southern States: but on becoming better acquainted with each other, these in a great measure subsided. A wiser policy prevailed. Men of liberal minds led the way in discouraging local distinctions, and the great body of the people, as soon as reason got the better of prejudice, found that their best interests would be most effectually promoted by such practices and sentiments as were favourable to union. Religious bigotry had broken in upon the peace of various sects, before the American war. This was kept up by partial establishments, and by a dread that the church of England through the power of the mother country, would be made to triumph over all other denominations. These apprehensions were done away by the revolution. The different sects, having nothing to fear from each other, dismissed all religious controversy. A proposal for introducing bishops into America before the war, had kindled a flame among the dissenters; but the revolution was no sooner accomplished, than a scheme for that purpose was perfected, with the consent and approbation of all those sects who had previously opposed it. Pulpits which had formerly been shut to worthy men, because their heads had not been consecrated by the imposition of the hands of a Bishop or of a Presbytery, have since the establishment of independence, been reciprocally opened to each other, whensoever the public convenience required it. The world will soon see the result of an experiment in politics, and be able to determine whether the happiness of society is increased by religious establishments, or diminished by the want of them.

Though schools and colleges were generally shut up during the war, yet many of the arts and sciences were promoted by it. The geography of the United States before the revolution was but little known; but the marches of armies, and the operations of war, gave birth to many geographical enquiries and discoveries, which otherwise would not have been made.

A passionate fondness for studies of this kind, and the growing importance of the country, excited one of its sons, the Rev. Mr. Morse, to travel through every State of the Union, and amass a fund of topographical knowledge, far exceeding anything heretofore communicated to the public. The necessities of the States led to the study of Tactics, Fortification, Gunnery, and a variety of other arts connected with war, and diffused a knowledge of them among a peaceable people, who would otherwise have had no inducement to study them.

The abilities of ingenious men were directed to make farther improvements in the art of destroying an enemy. Among these, David Bushnell of Connecticut invented a
machine for submarine navigation, which was found to answer the purpose of rowing horizontally, at any given depth under water, and of rising or sinking at pleasure. To this was attached a magazine of powder, and the whole was contrived in such a manner, as to make it practicable to blow up vessels by machinery under them. Mr. Bushnell also contrived sundry other curious machines for the annoyance of British shipping; but from accident they only succeeded in part. He destroyed one vessel in charge of Commodore Symonds, and a second one near the shore of Long-Island.

Surgery was one of the arts which was promoted by the war. From the want of hospitals and other aids, the medical men of America, had few opportunities of perfecting themselves in this art, the thorough knowledge of which can only be acquired by practice and observation. The melancholy events of battles, gave the American students an opportunity of seeing, and learning more in one day, than they could have acquired in years of peace. It was in the hospitals of the United States, that Dr. Rush first discovered the method of curing the lock jaw by bark and wine, added to other invigorating remedies, which has since been adopted with success in Europe, as well as in the United States.

The science of government, has been more generally diffused among the Americans by means of the revolution.

The policy of Great Britain, in throwing [319] them out of her protection, induced a necessity of establishing independent constitutions. This led to reading and reasoning on the subject. The many errors that were at first committed by unexperienced statesmen, have been a practical comment on the folly of unbalanced constitutions, and injudicious laws. The discussions concerning the new constitution, gave birth to much reasoning on the subject of government, and particularly to a series of letters signed Publius, but really the work of Alexander Hamilton, in which much political knowledge and wisdom were displayed, and which will long remain a monument of the strength and acuteness of the human understanding in investigating truth.

When Great Britain first began her encroachments on the colonies there were few natives of America who had distinguished themselves as speakers or writers, but the controversy between the two countries multiplied their number.

The stamp act, which was to have taken place in 1765, employed the pens and tongues of many of the colonists, and by repeated exercise improved their ability to serve their country. The duties imposed in 1767, called forth the pen of John Dickinson, who in a series of letters signed a Pennsylvania Farmer, may be said to have sown the seeds of the revolution. For being universally read by the colonists, they universally enlightened them on the dangerous consequences, likely to result from their being taxed by the parliament of Great Britain.

In establishing American independence, the pen and the press had merit equal to that of the sword. As the war was the people’s war, and was carried on without funds, the exertions of the army would have been insufficient to effect the revolution, unless the great body of the people had been prepared for it, and also kept in a constant disposition to oppose Great Britain. To rouse and unite the inhabitants, and to
persuade them to patience for several years, under present sufferings, with the hope of obtaining remote advantages for their posterity, was a work of difficulty: This was effected in a great measure by the tongues and pens of the well informed citizens, and on it depended the success of military operations.

To enumerate the names of all those who were successful labourers in this arduous business, is impossible. The following list contains in nearly alphabetical order, the names of the most distinguished writers in favour of the rights of America.

John Adams, and Samuel Adams, of Boston; Bland, of Virginia; John Dickinson, of Pennsylvania; Daniel Dulany, of Annapolis; William Henry Drayton, of South-Carolina; Dr. Franklin, of Philadelphia; John Jay, and Alexander Hamilton, of New-York; Thomas Jefferson, and Arthur Lee of Virginia; Jonathan Hyman, of Connecticut; Governor Livingston, of New-Jersey; Dr. Mayhew, and James Otis, of Boston; Thomas Paine, Dr. Rush, Charles Thompson, and James Wilson, of Philadelphia; William Tennant, of South-Carolina; Josiah Quincy, and Dr. Warren, of Boston. These and many others laboured in enlightening their countrymen, on the subject of their political interests, and in animating them to a proper line of conduct, in defence of their liberties. To these individuals may be added, the great body of the clergy, especially in New-England. The printers of news-papers, had also much merit in the same way. Particularly Eedes and Gill, of Boston; Holt, of New-York; Bradford, of Philadelphia; and Timothy, of South-Carolina.

The early attention which had been paid to literature in New-England, was also eminently conducive to the success of the Americans in resisting Great Britain. The university of Cambridge was founded as early as 1636, and Yale college in 1700. It has been computed, that in the year the Boston port act was passed, there were in the four eastern colonies, upwards of two thousand graduates of their colleges dispersed through their several towns, who by their knowledge and abilities, were able to influence and direct the great body of the people to a proper line of conduct, for opposing the encroachments of Great Britain on their liberties. The colleges to the southward of New-England, except that of William and Mary in Virginia, were but of modern date; but they had been of a standing sufficiently long, to have trained for public service, a considerable number of the youth of the country. The college of New-Jersey, which was incorporated about 28 years before the revolution, had in that time educated upwards of 300 persons, who, with a few exceptions, were active and useful friends of independence. From the influence which knowledge had in securing and preserving the liberties of America, the present generation may trace the wise policy of their fathers, in erecting schools and colleges. They may also learn that it is their duty to found more, and support all such institutions. Without the advantages derived from these lights of this new world, the United States would probably have fallen in their unequal contest with Great Britain. Union which was essential to the success of their resistance, could scarcely have taken place, in the measures adopted by an ignorant multitude. Much less could wisdom in council, unity in system, or perseverance in the prosecution of a long and self denying war, be expected from an uninformed people. It is a well known fact, that persons unfriendly to the revolution, were always most numerous in those parts of the United States,
which had either never been illuminated, or but faintly warmed by the rays of science. The uninformed and the misinformed, constituted a great proportion of those Americans, who preferred the leading strings of the Parent State, though encroaching on their liberties, to a government of their own countrymen and fellow citizens.

As literature had in the first instance favoured the revolution, so in its turn, the revolution promoted literature. The study of eloquence and of the Belles lettres, was more successfully prosecuted in America, after the disputes between Great Britain and her colonies began to be serious, than it ever had been before. The various orations, addresses, letters, dissertations and other literary performances which the war made necessary, called forth abilities where they were, and excited the rising generation to study arts, which brought with them their own reward. Many incidents afforded materials for the favours of the [322] muses, to display their talents. Even burlesquing royal proclamations, by parodies and doggerel poetry, had great effects on the minds of the people. A celebrated historian has remarked, that the song of Lillibullero forwarded the revolution of 1688 in England. It may be truly affirmed, that similar productions produced similar effects in America. Francis Hopkinson rendered essential service to his country, by turning the artillery of wit and ridicule on the enemy. Philip Freneau laboured successfully in the same way. Royal proclamations and other productions which issued from royal printing presses, were by the help of a warm imagination, arrayed in such dresses as rendered them truly ridiculous. Trumbull with a vein of original Hudibrastic humour, diverted his countrymen so much with the follies of their enemies, that for a time they forgot the calamities of war. Humphries twined the literary with the military laurel, by superadding the fame of an elegant poet, to that of an accomplished officer. Barlow increased the fame of his country and of the distinguished actors in the revolution, by the bold design of an epic poem ably executed, on the idea that Columbus foresaw in vision, the great scenes that were to be translated on the theatre of that new world, which he had discovered. Dwight struck out in the same line, and at an early period of life finished, an elegant work entitled the conquest of Canaan, on a plan which has rarely been attempted. The principles of their mother tongue, were first unfolded to the Americans since the revolution, by their countryman Webster. Pursuing an unbeaten track, he has made discoveries in the genius and construction of the English language, which had escaped the researches of preceding philologists. These and a group of other literary characters have been brought into view by the revolution. It is remarkable, that of these, Connecticut has produced an unusual proportion. In that truly republican state, every thing conspires to adorn human nature with its highest honours.

From the later periods of the revolution till the present time, schools, colleges, societies and institutions for promoting literature, arts, manufactures, agriculture, and [323] for extending human happiness, have been increased far beyond any thing that ever took place before the declaration of independence. Every state in the union, has done more or less in this way, but Pennsylvania has done the most. The following institutions have been very lately founded in that state, and most of them in the time of the war or since the peace. An university in the city of Philadelphia; a college of physicians in the same place; Dickinson college at Carlisle; Franklin college at Lancaster; the Protestant Episcopal academy in Philadelphia; academies at York-
town, at Germantown, at Pittsburgh and Washington; and an academy in Philadelphia for young ladies; societies for promoting political enquiries; for the medical relief of the poor, under the title of the Philadelphia Dispensary; for promoting the abolition of slavery, and the relief of free negroes unlawfully held in bondage; for propagating the gospel among the Indians, under the direction of the United Brethren; for the encouragement of manufactures and the useful arts; for alleviating the miseries of prisons. Such have been some of the beneficial effects, which have resulted from that expansion of the human mind, which has been produced by the revolution, but these have not been without alloy.

To overset an established government unhinges many of those principles, which bind individuals to each other. A long time, and much prudence, will be necessary to reproduce a spirit of union and that reverence for government, without which society is a rope of sand. The right of the people to resist their rulers, when invading their liberties, forms the corner stone of the American republics. This principle, though just in itself, is not favourable to the tranquility of present establishments. The maxims and measures, which in the years 1774 and 1775 were successfully inculcated and adopted by American patriots, for oversetting the established government, will answer a similar purpose when recurrence is had to them by factious demagogues, for disturbing the freest governments that were ever devised.

[324] War never fails to injure the morals of the people engaged in it. The American war, in particular, had an unhappy influence of this kind. Being begun without funds or regular establishments, it could not be carried on without violating private rights; and in its progress, it involved a necessity for breaking solemn promises; and plighted public faith. The failure of national justice, which was in some degree unavoidable, increased the difficulties of performing private engagements, and weakened that sensibility to the obligations of public and private honor, which is a security for the punctual performance of contracts.

In consequence of the war, the institutions of religion have been deranged, the public worship of the Deity suspended, and a great number of the inhabitants deprived of the ordinary means of obtaining that religious knowledge, which tames the fierceness, and softens the rudeness of human passions and manners. Many of the temples dedicated to the service of the most High, were destroyed, and these from a deficiency of ability and inclination, are not yet rebuilt. The clergy were left to suffer, without proper support. The depreciation of the paper currency was particularly injurious to them. It reduced their salaries to a pittance, so insufficient for their maintenance, that several of them were obliged to lay down their profession, and engage in other pursuits. Public preaching, of which many of the inhabitants were thus deprived, seldom fails of rendering essential service to society, by civilising the multitude and forming them to union. No class of citizens have contributed more to the revolution than the clergy, and none have hitherto suffered more in consequence of it. From the diminution of their number, and the penury to which they have been subjected, civil government has lost many of the advantages it formerly derived from the public instructions of that useful order of men.
On the whole, the literary, political, and military talents of the citizens of the United States have been improved by the revolution, but their moral character is inferior to what it formerly was. So great is the change [325] for the worse, that the friends of public order are fondly called upon to exert their utmost abilities, in extirpating the vicious principles and habits, which have taken deep root during the late convulsions.
CHAPTER XXVII


While the citizens of the United States were anticipating the blessings of peace, their army which had successfully stemmed the tide of British victories, was unrewarded for its services. The States which had been rescued by their exertions from slavery, were in no condition to pay them their stipulated due. To dismiss officers and soldiers, who had spent the prime of their days in serving their country, without an equivalent for their labors, or even a sufficiency to enable them to gain a decent living, was a hard but unavoidable case.

An attempt was made by anonymous and seditious publications to inflame the minds of the officers and soldiers, and induce them to unite in redressing their own grievances, while they had arms in their hands. As soon as General Washington was informed of the nature of these papers, he requested the General and field officers, with one officer from each company, and a proper representation from the staff of the army, to assemble on an early day. He rightly judged that it would be much easier to divert from a wrong to a right path, than to recal fatal and hasty steps, after they had once been taken. The period, previously to the meeting of the officers, was improved in preparing them for the adoption of moderate measures. Gen. Washington sent for one officer after another, and enlarged in private, on the fatal consequences, and particularly on the loss of character to the whole army, which would result from intemperate resolutions. When the officers were convened the commander in chief addressed them in a speech well calculated to calm their mind. He also pledged himself to exert all his abilities and influence in their favor, and requested them to rely on the faith of their country, and conjured them “as they valued their honor—as they respected the rights of humanity, and as they regarded the military and national character of America, to express their utmost detestation of the man, who was attempting to open the floodgates of civil discord, and deluge their rising empire with blood.” Gen. Washington then retired. The minds of those who had heard him were in such an irritable state, that nothing but their most ardent patriotism and his unbounded influence, prevented the proposal of rash resolutions which if adopted, would have

March 10, 1783

March 15, 1783

March 1783
sullied the glory of seven years service. No reply whatever was made to the General’s Speech. The happy moment was seized, while the minds of the officers softened by the eloquence of their beloved commander, were in a yielding state, and a resolution was unanimously adopted by which they declared “that no circumstances of distress or danger, should induce a conduct that might tend to sully the reputation and glory they had acquired, that the army continued to have an unshaken confidence, in the justice of Congress and their country. That they viewed with abhorrence and rejected with disdain, the infamous propositions in the late anonymous address to the officers of the army. ["] Too much praise cannot be given to Gen. Washington, for the patriotism and decision which marked his conduct, in the whole of this serious transaction. Perhaps in no instance did the United States receive from heaven a more signal deliverance, through the hands of the commander in chief.

Soon after these events, Congress completed a resolution which had been for some time pending, that the officers of their army, who preferred a sum in gross to an annuity, [327] should be entitled to receive to the amount of five years full pay, in money or securities at six per cent. per annum, instead of the half pay for life, which had been previously promised to them.

To avoid the inconveniences of dismissing a great number of soldiers in a body, furloughs were freely granted to individuals, and after their dispersion they were not enjoined to return. By this arrangement a critical moment was got over. A great part of an unpaid army, was disbanded and dispersed over the States, without tumult or disorder. The privates generally betook themselves to labor and crowned the merit of being good soldiers, by becoming good citizens. Several of the American officers, who had been bred mechanics resumed their trades. In old countries the disbanding a single regiment, even though fully paid, has often produced serious consequences, but in America where arms had been taken up for self defence, they were peaceably laid down as soon as they became unnecessary. As soldiers had been easily and speedily formed in 1775, out of farmers, planters, and mechanics, with equal ease and expedition in the year 1783, they dropped their adventitious character, and resumed their former occupations. About 80 of the Pennsylvania levies formed an exception to the prevailing peaceable disposition of the army. These in defiance of their officers, set out from Lancaster and marched to Philadelphia to seek a redress of their grievances, from the executive council of the state.

The mutineers in opposition to advice and intreaties, persisted in their march, till they arrived at Philadelphia. They were there joined by some other troops, who were quartered in the barracks. The whole amounting to upwards of 300 men, marched with fixed bayonets and drums, to the statehouse, in which Congress and the supreme executive council of Pennsylvania held their sessions. They placed guards at every door, and sent in a written message to the President and Council of the state, and threatened to let loose an enraged soldiery upon them, if they were not gratified as to their demand within 20 minutes. The situation of Congress, though they were [328] not the particular object of the soldiers resentment, was far from being agreeable. After being about three hours under duresse they retired, but previously resolved that the authority of the United States had been grossly insulted. Soon after they left Philadelphia, and fixed on Princeton as the place
of their next meeting. General Washington immediately ordered a large detachment of his army, to march for Philadelphia. Previously to their arrival, the disturbances were quieted without bloodshed. Several of the mutineers were tried and condemned, two to suffer death, and four to receive corporal punishment, but they were all afterwards pardoned.

Towards the close of the year, Congress issued a proclamation, in which the armies of the United States were applauded, “for having displayed in the progress of an arduous and difficult war, every military and patriotic virtue, and in which the thanks of their country were given them, for their long, eminent and faithful services.” Congress then declared it to be their pleasure, “that such part of their foederal armies, as stood engaged to serve during the war, should from and after the third day of November next, be absolutely discharged from the said service.”

On the day preceding their dismission, General Washington issued his farewell orders, in the most endearing language. After giving them his advice respecting their future conduct, and bidding them an affectionate farewell, he concluded with these words,

May ample justice be done them here, and may the choicest of Heaven’s favours, both here and hereafter, attend those, who under the divine auspices have secured innumerable blessings for others. With these wishes, and this benediction, the commander in chief is about to retire from service; the curtain of separation will soon be drawn, and the military scene, to him, will be closed forever.

With great exertions of the superintendent of finance; four months pay, in part of several years arrearages, were given to the army. This sum, though trifling, was all the immediate recompense the States were able to make to those brave men, who had conducted their country through an eight years war, to peace and independence.

[329] The evacuation of New-York, took place in about three weeks after the American army was discharged.

For a twelvemonth preceding, there had been an unrestrained communication between that city, though a British garrison, and the adjacent country. The bitterness of war passed away, and civilities were freely interchanged between those, who had lately fought for opportunities to destroy each other. General Washington and Governor Clinton, with their suites, made a public entry into the city of New-York, as soon as the royal army was withdrawn. The Lieutenant Governor, and members of the council, the officers of the American army, and the citizens, followed in an elegant procession. It was remarked that an unusual proportion of those who in 1776, had fled from New-York, were by death cut off from partaking in the general joy, which flowed in upon their fellow citizens, on returning to their ancient habitations. The ease and affluence which they enjoyed in the days of their prosperity, made the severities of exile inconvenient to all, and fatal to many, particularly to such as were advanced in life. Those who survived, both felt and expressed the overflows of joy, on finding their sufferings and services rewarded with the recovery of their country; the expulsion of their enemies, and the establishment of their independence. In the evening there was a display of fireworks,
which exceeded every thing of the kind before seen in the United States. They
commenced by a dove’s descending with an olive branch, and setting fire to a marron
battery.

The hour now approached in which it became necessary for General Washington to
take leave of his officers, who had been endeared to him by a long series of common
sufferings and dangers. This was done in a solemn manner. The officers having
previously assembled for the purpose, General Washington joined them, and calling
for a glass of wine, thus addressed them, “with an Heart full of love and gratitude, I
now take leave of you, I most devoutly wish that your latter days may be as
prosperous and happy, as your former ones have been glorious and honourable.”
The officers came up successively, [330] and he took an
affectionate leave of each of them. When this affecting scene
was over, Washington left the room, and passed through the corps of light infantry, to
the place of embarkation. The officers followed in a solemn mute procession, with
dejected countenances. On his entering the barge to cross the north river, he turned
towards the companions of his glory, and by waving his hat, bid them a silent adieu.
Some of them answered this last signal of respect and affection with tears, and all of
them hung upon the barge which conveyed him from their sight, till they could no
longer distinguish in it the person of their beloved commander in chief.

A proposal was made to perpetuate the friendship of the officers, by forming
themselves into a society, to be named after the famous Roman patriot Cincinnatus.
The extreme jealousy of the new republics suspected danger to their liberties, from the
union of the leaders of their late army, and especially from a part of their institution,
which held out to their posterity, the honour of being admitted members of the same
society. To obviate all grounds of fear, the general meeting of the society,
recommended an alteration of their institution, which has been adopted by eight of the
state societies. By this recommendation it was proposed to expunge every thing that
was hereditary, and to retain little else than their original name, and a social charitable
institution for perpetuating their personal friendships, and relieving the wants of their
indigent brethren. General Washington on the approaching dissolution of the
American army, by a circular letter to the Governors or Presidents of the individual
states, gave his parting advice to his countrymen; and with all the charms of
elocuence, inculcated the necessity of union, justice, subordination and of such
principles and practices, as their new situation required.

The army being disbanded, the commander in chief proceeded to Annapolis, then the
seat of Congress, to resign his commission. On his way thither, he delivered to the
Comptroller in Philadelphia an account of the expenditure of all the public money he
had ever received. [331] This was in his own hand writing, and every entry was made
in a very particular manner. The whole sum, which in the course of the war had
passed through his hands, amounted only to £14,479 18 9 sterling. Nothing was
charged or retained as a reward for personal services, and actual disbursements had
been managed with such oeconomy and fidelity, that they were all covered by the
above moderate sum.
In every town and village, through which the General passed, he was met by public and private demonstrations of gratitude and joy. When he arrived at Annapolis, he informed Congress of his intention to ask leave to resign the commission he had the honor to hold in their service, and desired to know their pleasure in what manner it would be most proper to be done. They resolved that it should be in a public audience. When the day fixed for that purpose arrived, a great number of distinguished personages attended the interesting scene. At a proper moment, General Washington addressed Thomas Mifflin the President, in the following words:

Mr. President,

The great events on which my resignation depended, having at length taken place, I have now the honor of offering my sincere congratulations to Congress, and of presenting myself before them to surrender into their hands, the trust committed to me, and to claim the indulgence of retiring from the service of my country.

Happy in the confirmation of our independence and sovereignty, and pleased with the opportunity afforded the United States of becoming a respectable nation, I resign with satisfaction the appointment I accepted with diffidence; a diffidence in my abilities to accomplish so arduous a task, which however was superseded by a confidence in the rectitude of our cause, the support of the Supreme Power of the union, and the patronage of Heaven.

The successful termination of the war has verified the most sanguine expectations, and my gratitude for the interposition of Providence, and the assistance I have received from my countrymen, increases with every review of the momentous contest.

[332] While I repeat my obligations to the army in general, I should do injustice to my own feelings not to acknowledge, in this place, the peculiar services, and distinguished merits of the persons who have been attached to my person during the war: it was impossible the choice of confidential officers to compose my family should have been more fortunate: permit me, sir, to recommend in particular those who have continued in the service to the present moment, as worthy of the favourable notice and patronage of Congress.

I consider it as an indispensible duty to close this last solemn act of my official life, by commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God, and those who have the superintendance of them, to His holy keeping.

Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theatre of action; and bidding an affectionate farewell to this august body, under whose orders I have long acted, I here offer my commission, and take my leave of all the employments of public life.

To this the President returned the following answer:
The United States in Congress assembled, receive with emotions too affecting for utterance, the solemn resignation of the authorities under which you have led their troops with success, through a perilous and doubtful war.

Called upon by your country to defend its invaded rights, you accepted the sacred charge before it had formed alliances, and whilst it was without friends or a government to support you.

You have conducted the great military contest with wisdom and fortitude, invariably regarding the rights of the civil power through all disasters and changes: you have by the love and confidence of your fellow citizens enabled them to display their martial genius, and transmit their fame to posterity; you have persevered, till these United States, aided by a magnanimous King and nation, have been enabled, under a just Providence, to close the war in freedom, safety and independence; on which happy event we sincerely join you in congratulations.

[333] Having defended the standard of liberty in this new world—having taught a lesson useful to those who inflict, and to those who feel oppression, you retire from the great theatre of action, with the blessing of your fellow citizens, but the glory of your virtues will not terminate with your military command, it will continue to animate remotest ages. We feel with you, our obligations to the army in general, and will particularly charge ourselves with the interest of those confidential officers, who have attended your person to this affecting moment.

We join you in commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God, beseeching Him to dispose the hearts and minds of its citizens, to improve the opportunity afforded them, of becoming a happy and respectable nation; and for you, we address to Him our earnest prayers, that a life so beloved may be fostered with all His care: That your days may be happy as they have been illustrious, and that He will finally give you that reward which this world cannot give.

The great scenes that crouded in upon the imagination of the General, and of the President, so affected them both, that they almost lost the power of utterance. The mingled emotions that agitated the minds of the spectators, on seeing the commander in chief of their armies, resigning all public employments, and his country acknowledging his services, and loading him with their blessings were beyond description. Immediately on resigning his commission, Mr. Washington, “hastened with ineffable delights,” (to use his own words) to his seat at Mount Vernon, on the banks of the Potowmac in Virginia. Here the historian would wish to make a pause, while he described, the simple and heartfelt joy of neighbours and domestics, who welcomed him to his home. Let it not be deemed foreign to his present subject, to do homage to the feelings and character of the amiable partner of his conjugal happiness, upon this occasion. She deserved this tide of unparalled female honour and felicity, for she loved her country, and bore with more than Roman—with christian patience and fortitude, the pains to which his [334] long absence,
and the perils of his health and life had exposed her. Fain would the historian pursue the illustrious hero of the revolution, a little further, and attempt to describe his feelings upon his first review of the events of the war, from the quiet station which he now occupied. But this digression would lead him far from the objects of his history.

To pass suddenly from the toils of the first public commission in the United States, to the care of a farm; to exchange the instruments of war, for the implements of husbandry, and to become at once, the patron and example of ingenious and profitable agriculture, would to most men have been a difficult task. But to the elevated mind of the late commander in chief, of the armies of the United States, it was natural and delightful; and should these pages descend to posterity, and war continue ages hence to be the means of establishing national justice, let the commanders of armies learn from the example of General Washington, that the same which is acquired by the sword, without guilt or ambition, may be preserved without power, or splendor, in private life.

Though the war was over, much remained for Congress to do. The proper disposition of their unsettled western and northern frontier, became an object of serious attention. The eastern states had been settled uniformly in townships, but the middle and southern states by indiscriminate location. On a comparison of the merits of these different methods of settling a new country, Congress gave a decided preference to the former. Conformably to these principles, an ordinance was passed on the 20th of May 1785, for disposing of that part of the western territory, which bounds on Pennsylvania. Many settlers soon migrated to this country. Civil Government was established among them. A Governor and Judges were appointed and paid by Congress. They fixed their capital to which they gave the name of Marietta, at the conflux of the Muskingum and Ohio. In the first years of their settlement, Congress ordained that they should be governed as a colony of the United States, but engaged, that as soon as they had attained a population, equal to that of the smallest of the old states, they should be received [335] into the union on equal terms. By this liberal policy, the blessings of a free government, may be gradually extended to the remotest bounds of the United States.

These arrangements for promoting domestic tranquillity were accompanied by others, for forming commercial connexions with sovereigns of Europe. Towards the close of the war, Dr. Franklin had concluded a treaty between the United States, and the King of Sweden. He Mr. Adams and Mr. Jefferson were appointed joint commissioners for forming commercial treaties with foreign powers. They succeeded in their negotiation with the King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Morocco. Mr. Adams was also appointed Minister Plenipotentiary from the United States, to the Court of Great Britain; and was instructed to solicit a treaty between these two powers, but the Ministers of his Britannic Majesty, declined entering into any treaty with him. They assigned the inability of Congress, to compel the different states to observe general commercial regulations, as a reason for declining the proposed connexion. From mismanagement, the United States with respect to trade were in fact nearly as dependent on Great Britain, after the peace, as before the war. They had lost the privileges of British subjects with regard to some branches of commerce, but suffered most of the inconveniences of that political condition, in consequence of their
inability to regulate their commerce by one will. In this deranged state of public affairs, Great Britain could expect little more from a treaty with the United States, than what her merchants already possessed. She continued to reap the benefits of an extensive trade with America, without a reciprocity of advantages. Mr. Adams finding his labours ineffectual, desired leave to return to America, which was granted.

To provide funds for paying their continental debt, engaged the attention of Congress, for some time before, and after the peace. The amount of this at the close of the war as nearly as could be calculated, was about forty millions of dollars. In prosecuting the necessary means for discharging it, the inefficacy of the articles of confederation soon became apparent. By these, Congress although bound to pay, possessed no power of raising a revenue. Its constitutional authority extended no farther, than to make requisitions on the several states for their quotas, to be ascertained in a relative proportion to the value of their lands. A proposition was made to the several states near to the close of the war, to invest Congress with a power to levy an impost of five per cent, at the time and place of importation, on the value of all goods imported from foreign countries, till the whole of their public debt should be extinguished. Danger being now nearly over, selfish passions began to operate. Objections were made, to trusting the purse and the sword into the hands of the same body of men, and that too, for an indefinite period of time. To obviate these scruples, Congress on a reconsideration, proposed to limit the grant of a continental impost to 25 years, and to confine the application of its neat proceeds exclusively, to the discharge of existing debts. On these principles, a system of revenue for funding and ultimately paying the whole public debt was completed, and offered to the states for their ratification. By this, it was proposed to raise 2 millions and a half of dollars annually, to defray the interest of the continental debt. It was expected that the impost would bring in the first year one million of dollars, and increase every year afterwards. The states were respectively called upon to raise the balance, according to proportions assigned them, from some permanent established fund subject to the disposal of Congress. A proposition was also made, to change the federal rule of apportioning the public debt, from the value of land, to the more practicable one of numbers of inhabitants in the different states. The whole system was transmitted to the state legislatures, and accompanied by an animated address, enforcing the propriety of its immediate adoption. Some of the states adopted it in the whole; others only in part, and some not at all. The states whose population was great, and whose lands were of an inferior quality, objected to changing the federal rule of apportionment, from the value of lands to numbers. Some of the states which from their having convenient ports, were called importing states, found it to be more for their immediate advantage, to raise money by impost for their separate use, than for the benefit of the union. They who received foreign goods through neighbouring states, and which were called consuming states, complained that by the revolution they had only changed masters, for that instead of being taxed by Great Britain without their consent, they were virtually taxed in like manner by their sister states, who happened to be more favourably situated for importing foreign goods. From these jarring interests, and from the want of a disposition to support a supreme head, and to give up local advantages for the general benefit, the revenue system of Congress was never put in operation. Its failure was the source of many evils. No efficient funds being provided to pay the interest of the national debt, the public
securities of the United States fell in their value to ten for one, and became an article of speculation. The war-worn soldier who received at the close of the contest only an obligation for the payment of his hard earned dues, was from necessity often obliged to transfer his rights for an insignificant sum. The monied man who had trusted his country in the hour of her distress, was deprived not only of his interest, on which he counted for his daily support, but of a great part of the value of his capital. The non-payment of public debts, sometimes inferred a necessity, and always furnished an apology, for not discharging private contracts. Confidence between man and man received a deadly wound. Public faith being first violated, private engagements lost much of their obligatory force. Gen. Washington who nobly refused any thing for himself, had eloquently though unsuccessfully pleaded the cause of the army, and other public creditors, in his circular letter to the governors before his resignation, and predicted the evils which followed from the rejection of the revenue system of Congress. His observations were as follows:

As to the second article which respects the performance of public justice, Congress have in their late address to the United States almost exhausted the subject. They have explained their ideas so fully, and have enforced the obligations [338] the states are under to render complete justice to all the public creditors, with so much dignity and energy, that in my opinion no real friend to the honor and independency of America, can hesitate a single moment respecting the propriety of complying with the just and honorable measures proposed. If their arguments do not produce conviction, I know of nothing that will have greater influence, especially when we recollect that the system referred to, being the result of the collected wisdom of the continent, must be esteemed, if not perfect, certainly the least objectionable of any that could be devised, and that if it shall not be carried into immediate execution, a national bankruptcy with all its deplorable consequences will take place, before any different plan can possibly be proposed or adopted. So pressing are the present circumstances, and such is the alternative now offered to the states.

Congress continued to send forth annual requisitions, for the sums wanted for the public service, and indulged the hope that the states would e’er long be convinced, of the necessity of adopting an efficient system of general revenue: But their requisitions as well as their system of revenue, were disregarded by some of the states, and but partially complied with by others. From this failure of public justice, a deluge of evils overflowed the United States. These were also increased by an unfavorable balance of trade. The ravages of armies, and the interruption of a free communication, between Europe and America during the war, had multiplied the wants of the latter, to a degree which exceeded all previous calculations. An inundation of European manufactures, was therefore one of the first effects which followed the establishment of peace. These were purchased by the Americans far beyond their means of payment. Adventurers grasping at the profits of trading with the new formed states, exported to America goods to a great amount, exceeding what either prudence or policy could justify. The Americans soon found themselves involved in a debt, to the discharge of which their resources were unequal. In several instances, these debts were contracted on credit by persons to whom the United States were indebted. [339] These presuming on the justice of their country, had involved themselves in private engagements,
hoping that what they received from the public would furnish them with the means of payment. Such were doubly distressed.

The sufferings of the inhabitants were increased in consequence of the obstructions of their trade. That intercourse with the West-India Islands, from which, when colonies they derived large supplies of gold and silver, was forbidden to them in their new capacity of independent states. Their fisheries received a severe check, from their being excluded from several ports in which, when colonies, they had found a ready sale for the fruits of their industry, which they drew from the ocean. These evils were still farther aggravated by the stoppage of the bounty on whale oil, to which, when British subjects they were entitled. To add to their other misfortunes, they could no longer sail with safety in the Mediterranean, a privilege which they had always enjoyed, while they were a part of the British empire. Unable to defend themselves from the Algerine corsairs, they were obliged either to quit that beneficial trade, or ensure it at a ruinous premium.

The United States from the want of power in their common head, were incapacitated from acting in concert, so as to avail themselves of their natural advantages. Congress called once more upon the States to enlarge their powers, and particularly to entrust them with the regulation of commerce for a limited number of years. Some states fully complied with this call, but others fettered their grants with such conditions, as prevented the formation of an uniform system.

From the combined operation of these causes trade languished; credit expired; gold and silver vanished; and in consequence thereof, real property was depreciated to an extent equal to that of the depression of continental money, in the 2d or 3d year of its emission. Instead of imitating the wise policy of Great Britain, in making an artificial medium of circulation, by funding their debts, several of the states to alleviate the differences arising from the want of money, adopted the fallacious expedient of emitting paper, to supply the place of gold and silver. But the remedy increased the disease. If the funding plan had been adopted, the sum due by the United States, was so much within their resources, that by the establishment of efficient funds, for the punctual discharge of the interest, the public debt might have easily been made a public blessing. It would have been a capital for the extension of agriculture, commerce and manufactures, as well as an honest and effectual substitute for real coin. But these advantages, which would have lessened much of the sufferings of the inhabitants, were lost by the imbecillity of the general government, and the want of concert in the state legislatures.

When the people on the return of peace supposed their troubles to be ended, they found them to be only varied. The calamities of war were followed by another class of evils, different in their origin, but not less injurious in their consequences. The inhabitants feeling the pressure of their sufferings, and not knowing precisely from what source they originated, or how to remedy them, became uneasy, and many were ready to adopt any desperate measures that turbulent leaders might recommend. In this irritable state, a great number of the citizens of Massachusetts, sore with their enlarged portion of public calamity, were induced by seditious demagogues, to make an open resistance to the operations of their own free government. Insurrections took
place in many parts, and laws were trampled upon by the very men whose deputies
had enacted them, and whose deputies might have repealed them. By the moderation
of the legislature, and especially by the bravery and good conduct of Generals
Lincoln, and Shepherd, and the firmness of the well affected militia, the insurgents
were speedily quelled, and good order restored, with the loss of about six of the
freemen of the state.

The untoward events which followed the re-establishment of peace, though evils of
themselves, were overruled for great national good. From the failure of their
expectations of an immediate increase of political happiness, [341] the lovers of
liberty and independence began to be less sanguine in their hopes from the American
revolution, and to fear that they had built a visionary fabric of government, on the
fallacious ideas of public virtue; but that elasticity of the human mind, which is
nurtured by free constitutions, kept them from desponding. By an exertion of those
inherent principles of self-preservation, which republics possess, a recurrence was had
to the good sense of the people, for the rectification of fundamental disorders. While
the country, free from foreign force and domestic violence, enjoyed tranquillity, a
proposition was made by Virginia to all the other States to meet in convention, for the
purpose of digesting a form of government, equal to the exigencies of the union. The
first motion for this purpose was made by Mr. Madison, and he had the pleasure of
seeing it acceded to by twelve of the States, and finally to issue in the establishment
of a New Constitution, which bids fair to repay the citizens of the United States for
the toils, dangers and wastes of the revolution. The fundamental distinction between
the articles of confederation and the new constitution lies in this; the former acted
only on States, the latter on individuals; the former could neither raise men nor money
by its own authority, but lay at the discretion of thirteen different legislatures, and
without their unanimous concurrence was unable to provide for the public safety, or
for the payment of the national debt. The experience of several years had proved the
impossibility of a government answering the end of its institution, which was
dependent on others for the means necessary for attaining these ends. By the new
classification, one legislative, executive, and judicial power pervades the whole union.
This ensures an uniform observance of treaties, and gives a stability to the general
government, which never could be attained while the acts and requisitions of
Congress were subject to the revision of thirteen legislatures, and while thirteen
distinct and unconnected judiciaries, had a constitutional right to decide on the same
subject. The people of the United States gave no new powers to their rulers, but made
a [342] more judicious arrangement of what they had formerly ceded. They enlarged
the powers of the general government, not by taking from the people, but from the
State legislatures. They took from the latter a power of levying duties on the
importation of merchandise from foreign countries, and transferred it to Congress for
the common benefit of the union. They also invested the general government with a
power to regulate trade, levy taxes and internal duties on the inhabitants. That these
enlarged powers might be used only with caution and deliberation, Congress, which
formerly consisted of only one body, was made to consist of two; one of which was to
be chosen by the people in proportion to their numbers, the other by the State
legislatures. The execution of the acts of this compounded legislature was committed
to a Supreme Magistrate, with the title of President. The constitution, of which these
were the principal features, was submitted to the people for ratification. Animated
debates took place on the propriety of establishing or rejecting it. Some States, who from their local situation were benefited by receiving import duties into their treasuries, were averse from the giving of them up to the union. Others, who were consuming but not importing States, had an interested inducement of an opposite kind, to support the proposed new constitution. The prospects of increased employment for shipping, and the enlargement of commerce, weighed with those States which abounded in sailors and ships, and also with seaport towns, to advocate the adoption of the new system; but those States or parts of States, which depended chiefly on agriculture, were afraid that zeal for encouraging an American marine, by narrowing the grounds of competition among foreigners for purchasing and carrying their produce, would lessen their profits. Some of this description therefore conceived that they had a local interest in refusing the new system.

Individuals who had great influence in state legislatures, or who held profitable places under them, were unwilling to adopt a government which, by diminishing the power of the states, would eventually diminish their own [343] importance: others who looked forward to seats in the general government, or for offices under its authority, had the same interested reason for supporting its adoption. Some from jealousy of liberty, were afraid of giving too much power to their rulers; others, from an honest ambition to aggrandize their country, were for paving the way to national greatness by melting down the separate States into a national mass. The former feared the New Constitution; the latter gloried in it. Almost every passion which could agitate the human breast, interested States and individuals for and against the adoption of the proposed plan of government. Some whole classes of people were in its favor. The mass of public creditors expected payment of their debts from the establishment of an efficient government, and were therefore decidedly for its adoption. Such as lived on salaries, and those who, being clear of debt, wished for a fixed medium of circulation and the free course of law, were the friends of a constitution which prohibited the issuing of paper money and all interference between debtor and creditor. In addition to these, the great body of independent men, who saw the necessity of an energetic general government, and who, from the jarring interests of the different States, could not foresee any probability of getting a better one than was proposed, gave their support to what the federal convention had projected, and their influence effected its establishment. After a full consideration, and thorough discussion of its principles, it was ratified by the conventions of eleven of the original thirteen States, and the accession of the other two is soon expected.* The ratification of it was celebrated in most of the capitals of the States with elegant processions, which far exceeded any thing of the kind ever before exhibited in America. Time and experience only can fully discover the effects of this new distribution of the powers of government; but in theory it seems well calculated to unite liberty with safety, and to lay the foundation of national greatness, while it abridges none of the rights of the States, or of the people.

[344] The new constitution having been ratified by eleven of the States, and senators and representatives having been chosen agreeably to the articles thereof, they met at New-York and commenced proceedings under it. The old Congress; and confederation, like the continental money, expired without a sigh or groan. A new Congress, with more
ample powers and a new constitution; partly national and partly federal, succeeded in
their place to the great joy of all who wished for the happiness of the United States.

Though great diversity of opinions had prevailed about the new constitution, there
was but one opinion about the person who should be appointed its supreme executive
officer. The people, as well anti-federalists as federalists, (for by these names the
parties for and against the new constitution were called) unanimously turned their
eyes on the late commander of their armies, as the most proper person to be their first
President. Perhaps there was not a well informed individual in the United States, (Mr.
Washington himself only excepted) who was not anxious that he should be called to
the executive administration of the proposed new plan of government. Unambitious of
farther honors he had retired to his farm in Virginia, and hoped to be excused from all
farther public service; but his country called him by an unanimous vote to fill the
highest station in its gift. That honest zeal for the public good, which had uniformly
influenced him to devote both his time and talents to the service of his country, got
the better of his love of retirement, and induced him once more to engage in the great
business of making a nation happy. “The intelligence of his election being
communicated to him, while on his farm in Virginia, he set out soon after for New-
York.” On his way thither, the road was crouded with numbers anxious to see the
Man of the people. Escorts of militia, and of gentlemen of the first character and
station, attended him from State to State, and he was every where received with the
highest honors which a grateful and admiring people could confer. Addresses of
congratulation were presented to him by the inhabitants of almost every place of
consequence through which he [345] passed, to all of which he returned such modest
unassuming answers as were in every respect suitable to his situation. So great were
the honors, with which he was loaded, that they could scarcely have failed to produce
haughtiness in the mind of any ordinary man; but nothing of the kind was ever
discovered in this extraordinary personage. On all occasions he behaved to all men
with the affability of one citizen to another. He was truly great in deserving the
plaudits of his country, but much greater in not being elated with them.

Of the numerous addresses which were presented on this occasion, one subscribed by
Dennis Ramsay the Mayor of Alexandria, in the name of the people of that city, who
were the neighbours of Mr. Washington, was particularly and universally admired. It
was in the following words:

To George Washington, Esq.

President of the United States, &c.

Again your country commands your care. Obedient to its wishes, unmindful of your
ease, we see you again relinquishing the bliss of retirement; and this too, at a period of
life, when nature itself seems to authorize a preference of repose!

Not to extol your glory as a soldier; not to pour forth our gratitude for past services;
not to acknowledge the justice of the unexampled honour which has been conferred
upon you by the spontaneous and unanimous suffrage of three millions of freemen, in
your election to the supreme magistracy; nor to admire the patriotism which directs
your conduct, do your neighbours and friends now address you; themes less splendid but more endearing, impress our minds. The first and best of citizens must leave us; our aged must lose their ornament; our youth their model; our agriculture its improver; our commerce its friend; our infant academy its protector; our poor their benefactor; and the interior navigation of the Potowmack (an event replete with the most extensive utility, already, by your unremitted exertions, brought into partial use) its institutor and promoter.

[346] Farewell! Go! and make a grateful people happy; a people, who will be doubly grateful, when they contemplate this recent sacrifice for their interest.

To that Being, who maketh and unmaketh at his will, we commend you; and after the accomplishment of the arduous business to which you are called, may he restore to us again, the best of men, and the most beloved fellow citizen!”

To this Mr. Washington returned the following answer:

Gentlemen,

Although I ought not to conceal, yet I cannot describe the painful emotions which I felt in being called upon to determine whether I would accept or refuse the presidency of the United States. The unanimity in the choice, the opinion of my friends, communicated from different parts of Europe, as well as from America, the apparent wish of those who were not entirely satisfied with the constitution in its present form; and an ardent desire on my own part to be instrumental in connecting the good will of my countrymen towards each other; have induced an acceptance. Those who know me best (and you, my fellow citizens, are from your situation, in that number) know better than any others, my love of retirement is so great, that no earthly consideration, short of a conviction of duty, could have prevailed upon me to depart from my resolution “never more to take any share in transactions of a public nature.” For, at my age, and in my circumstances, what prospects or advantages could I propose to myself, from embarking again on the tempestuous and uncertain ocean of public life?

I do not feel myself under the necessity of making public declarations, in order to convince you, gentlemen, of my attachment to yourselves, and regard for your interests; the whole tenor of my life has been open to your inspection; and my past actions, rather than my present declarations, must be the pledge of my future conduct.

In the mean time, I thank you most sincerely for the expressions of kindness, contained in your valedictory address. It is true, just after having bade adieu to my domestic connexions, this tender proof of your [347] friendship is but too well calculated, still further to awaken my sensibility, and increase my regret at parting from the enjoyment of private life.

All that now remains for me, is to commit myself and you to the protection of that beneficent Being, who on a former occasion hath happily brought us together, after a long and distressing separation; perhaps the same gracious providence will again indulge me. Unutterable sensations must then be left to more expressive silence; while
from an aching heart, I bid you all, my affectionate friends, and kind neighbours, farewell!

Gray’s bridge over the Schuylkill which Mr. Washington had to pass, was highly decorated with laurels and evergreens. At each end of it were erected magnificent arches composed of laurels, emblematical of the ancient Roman triumphal arches; and on each side of the bridge, was a laurel shrubbery. As Mr. Washington passed the bridge, a youth ornamented with sprigs of laurel, assisted by machinery let drop above his head, though unperceived by him, a civic crown of laurel. Upwards of 20,000 citizens lined the fences, fields and avenues between the Schuylkill and Philadelphia. Through these he was conducted to the city, by a numerous and respectable body of the citizens, where he partook of an elegant entertainment provided for him. The pleasures of the day were succeeded by a handsome display of fireworks in the evening.

When Mr. Washington crossed the Delaware, and landed on the Jersey shore, he was saluted with three cheers by the inhabitants of the vicinity. When he came to the brow of the hill, on his way to Trenton, a triumphal arch was erected on the bridge, by the direction of the ladies of the place. The crown of the arch was highly ornamented with imperial laurels and flowers, and on it was displayed in large figures, December 26th 1776. On the sweep of the arch, beneath was this inscription, The defender of the Mothers, will also protect their Daughters. On the north side were ranged a number of young misses dressed in white, with garlands of flowers on their heads, and baskets of flowers on their arms; in the second row stood the young ladies, and behind them the married ladies of the town. The instant he passed the arch, the young misses began to sing the following ode:

Welcome mighty chief once more,
Welcome to this grateful shore:
Now no mercenary foe
Aims again the fatal blow,
Aims at thee the fatal blow.
Virgins fair, and matrons grave,
These thy conquering arm did save,
Build for thee triumphal bowers,
Strew, ye fair, his way with flowers,
Strew your Hero’s way with flowers.

As they sung the last lines, they strewed their flowers on the road before their beloved deliverer. His situation on this occasion, contrasted with what he had in Dec. 1776 felt on the same spot, when the affairs of America were at the lowest ebb of depression, filled him with sensations that cannot be described. He was rowed across the bay from Elizabeth-Town to New-York, in an elegant barge by thirteen pilots. All the vessels in the harbour hoisted their flags. Stairs were erected and decorated for his reception. On his landing, universal joy diffused itself through every order of the people, and he was received and congratulated by the Governor of the State, and officers of the corporation. He was conducted from the landing place to the house which had been fitted up for his reception, and was followed by an elegant procession of militia in
their uniforms, and by great numbers of citizens. In the evening, the houses of the inhabitants were brilliantly illuminated. A day was fixed, soon after his arrival, for his taking the oath of office, which was in the following words: “I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend, the constitution of the United States.” On this occasion he was wholly clothed in American manufactures. In the morning of the day appointed for this purpose, the clergy of different denominations assembled their congregations in the respective places of worship, and offered up public prayers for the President and people of the United States. About [349] noon a procession, followed by a multitude of citizens, moved from the President’s house to Federal Hall. When they came within a short distance from the Hall, the troops formed a line on both sides of the way, through which Mr. Washington, accompanied by the Vice-President Mr. John Adams, passed into the Senate chamber. Immediately after, accompanied by both houses, he went into the gallery fronting Broad Street, and before them and an immense concourse of citizens, took the oath prescribed by the constitution, which was administered by R. R. Livingston, the Chancellor of the State of New-York. An awful silence prevailed among the spectators during this part of the ceremony. It was a minute of the most sublime political joy. The Chancellor then proclaimed him President of the United States. This was answered by the discharge of 13 guns, and by the effusions of shouts, from near 10,000 grateful and affectionate hearts. The President bowed most respectfully to the people, and the air resounded again with their acclamations. He then retired to the Senate chamber, where he made the following speech to both houses:

Fellow Citizens of the Senate, and of the House of Representatives.

Among the vicissitudes incident to life, no event could have filled me with greater anxieties, than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the 14 day of the present month. On the one hand, I was summoned by my country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years; a retreat which was rendered every day more necessary as well as more dear to me, by the addition of habit to inclination, and of frequent interruptions in my health, to the gradual waste committed on it by time. On the other hand, the magnitude and difficulty of the trust to which the voice of my country called me, being sufficient to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens, a distrustful scrutiny into his qualifications, could not but overwhelm with despondence, one, who, inheriting inferior [350] endowments from nature, and unpractised in the duties of civil administration, ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own deficiencies. In this conflict of emotions, all I dare aver, is, that it has been my faithful study to collect my duty from a just appreciation of every circumstance, by which it might be affected. All I dare hope, is, that, if in executing this task, I have been too much swayed by a grateful rememberance of former instances, or by an affectionate sensibility to this transcendant proof of the confidence of my fellow citizens; and have thence too little consulted my incapacity as well as disinclination, for the weighty and untried cares before me; my error will be palliated by the motives which misled me, and its
consequences be judged by my country, with some share of the partiality in which
they originated.

Such being the impressions under which I have in obedience to the public summons,
repaired to the present station; it would be peculiarly improper to omit in this first
official act my fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the
universe—who presides in the councils of nations—and whose providential aids can
supply every human defect—that His benediction may consecrate to the liberties and
happiness of the people of the United States, a government instituted by themselves
for these essential purposes: and may enable every instrument employed in its
administration, to execute with success, the functions allotted to his charge. In
tendering this homage to the Great Author of every public and private good, I assure
myself that it expresses your sentiments not less than my own; nor those of my fellow
citizens at large, less than either. No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore
the invisible Hand, which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the
United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an
independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential
agency. And in the important revolution just accomplished in the system of their
united government, the tranquil deliberations, and voluntary consent of so many
distinct communities, from which the event has resulted, cannot be [351] compared
with the means by which most governments have been established, without some
return of pious gratitude, along with an humble anticipation of the future blessings
which the past seem to presage. These reflections arising out of the present crisis,
have forced themselves too strongly on my mind to be suppressed. You will join with
me, I trust, in thinking, that there are none under the influence of which, the
proceedings of a new and free government can more auspiciously commence.

By the article establishing the executive department, it is made the duty of the
president “to recommend to your consideration, such measures as he shall judge
necessary and expedient.” The circumstances under which I now meet you will acquit
me from entering into that subject, farther than to refer to the great constitutional
charter under which you are assembled, and which, in defining your powers,
designates the objects to which your attention is to be given. It will be more consistent
with those circumstances, and far more congenial with the feelings which actuate me,
to substitute, in place of a recommendaton of particular measures, the tribute that is
developed to devise and adopt them. In those honorable qualifications, I behold the surest
pledges that as on one side no local prejudices, or attachments—no separate views,
nor party animosities, will misdirect the comprehensive and equal eye which ought to
watch over this great assemblage of communities and interests; so, on another, that
the foundations of our national policy will be laid in the pure and immutable
principles of private morality; and the pre-eminence of free government, be
exemplified by all the attributes which can win the affections of its citizens, and
command the respect of the world. I dwell on this prospect with every satisfaction
which an ardent love for my country can inspire. Since there is no truth more
thoroughly established, than that there exists in the oeconomy and course of nature, an
indissoluble union between virtue and happiness; between duty and advantage,
between the genuine maxims of an honest and magnanimous [352] people, and the
solid rewards of public prosperity and felicity. Since we ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven, can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained. And since the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the republican model of government, are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.

Besides the ordinary objects submitted to your care, it will remain with your judgment to decide, how far an exercise of the occasional power delegated by the 5th article of the constitution, is rendered expedient at the present juncture by the nature of objections which have been urged against the system, or by the degree of inquietude which has given birth to them.

Instead of undertaking particular recommendations on this subject, in which I could be guided by no lights derived from official opportunities, I shall again give way to my entire confidence in your discernment and pursuit of the public good.

For I assure myself that whilst you carefully avoid every alteration which might endanger the benefits of an united and effective government, or which ought to await the future lesson of experience; a reverence for the characteristic rights of freemen, and a regard for the public harmony, will sufficiently influence your deliberations on the question, how far the former can be more impregnably fortified, or the latter be safely and advantageously promoted.

To the preceding observations I have one to add, which will be most properly addressed to the House of Representatives. It concerns myself, and will therefore be as brief as possible.

When I was first honored with a call into the service of my country, then on the eve of an arduous struggle for its liberties, the light in which I contemplated my duty required, that I should renounce every pecuniary compensation. From this resolution I have in no instance departed. And being still under the impressions which produced it, I must decline as inapplicable to myself, any share in the personal emoluments, which may be indispensibly included in a permanent provision for the executive department; and must accordingly pray, that the pecuniary estimates for the station in which I am placed, may, during my continuance in it, be limited to such actual expenditures as the public good may be thought to require.

Having thus imparted to you my sentiments, as they have been awakened by the occasion which brings us together—I shall take my present leave: but not without resorting once more to the benign Parent of the human race, in humble supplication, that since He has been pleased to favor the American people with opportunities for deliberating in perfect tranquility, and dispositions for deciding with unparalleled unanimity on a form of government, for the security of their union, and the advancement of their happiness: so His Divine blessing may be equally conspicuous in the enlarged views, the temperate consultations, and the wise measures, on which the success of this government must depend.
The President, of Congress, then attended on divine service.

In the evening a very ingenious and splendid shew of fire works was exhibited. Betwixt the fort and the bowling green stood conspicuous, a superb and brilliant transparent painting, in the centre of which was the portrait of the President represented under the emblem of fortitude, on his right hand was justice, representing the Senate of the United States, and on his left, Wisdom, representing the house of Representatives.

This memorable day completed the organization of the new constitution. By this establishment the rising generation will have an opportunity of observing the result of an experiment in politics, which before has never been fairly made. The experience of former ages, has given many melancholy proofs, that popular governments have seldom answered in practice, to the theories and warm wishes of their admirers. The present inhabitants of independent America, now have an opportunity to wipe off this aspersion, to assert the dignity of human nature, and the capacity of mankind for self-government.

[354] Citizens of the United States! you have a well balanced constitution established by general consent, which is an improvement on all republican forms of government heretofore established. It possesses the good qualities of monarchy, but without its vices. The wisdom and stability of an aristocracy, but without the insolence of hereditary masters. The freedom and independence of a popular assembly acquainted with the wants and wishes of the people, but without the capacity of doing those mischiefs which result from uncontrolled power in one assembly. The end and object of it is public good. If you are not happy it will be your own fault. No knave or fool can plead an hereditary right to sport with your property or your liberties. Your laws and your lawgivers must all proceed from yourselves. You have the experience of nearly six thousand years, to point out the rocks on which former republics have been dashed to pieces. Learn wisdom from their misfortunes. Cultivate justice both public and private. No government will or can endure which does not protect the rights of its subjects. Unless such efficient regulations are adopted, as will secure property as well as liberty, one revolution will follow another. Anarchy, monarchy or despotism, will be the consequence. By just laws and the faithful execution of them, public and private credit will be restored, and the restoration of credit will be a mine of wealth to this young country. It will make a fund for agriculture, commerce and manufactures, which will soon enable the United States to claim an exalted rank among the nations of the earth. Such are the resources of your country, and so trifling are your debts, compared with your resources, that proper systems wisely planned and faithfully executed, will soon fill your extensive territory with inhabitants, and give you the command of such ample capitals, as will enable you to run the career of national greatness, with advantages equal to the oldest kingdoms of Europe. What they have been slowly growing to, in the course of near two thousand years you may hope to equal within one century. If you continue under one government, built on the solid foundations of public justice, and public virtue, there is no point of national greatness to which you may not aspire with a well founded hope of [355] speedily attaining it. Cherish and support a reverence for government, and cultivate union between the East and the South, the Atlantic and the Mississippi. Let the greatest good of the greatest
number be the pole star of your public and private deliberations. Shun wars, they
beget debt, add to the common vices of mankind, and produce others, which are
almost peculiar to themselves. Agriculture, manufactures and commerce, are your
proper business. Seek not to enlarge your territory by conquest. It is already
sufficiently extensive. You have ample scope for the employment of your most active
minds, in promoting your own domestic happiness. Maintain your own rights and let
all others remain in quiet possession of theirs. Avoid discord, faction, luxury and the
other vices which have been the bane of commonwealths. Cherish and reward the
philosophers, the statesmen and the patriots, who devote their talents and time at the
expence of their private interests, to the toils of enlightening and directing their fellow
citizens, and thereby rescue citizens and rulers of republics, from the common and too
often merited charge of ingratitude. Practise industry, frugality, temperance,
moderation, and the whole lovely train of republican virtues. Banish from your
borders the liquid fire of the West-Indies, which while it entails poverty and disease,
presents industry and foments private quarrels. Venerate the plough, the hoe, and all
the implements of agriculture. Honour the men who with their own hands maintain
their families, and raise up children who are inured to toil, and capable of defending
their country. Reckon the necessity of labour not among the curses, but the blessings
of life. Your towns will probably e’re long be engulphed in luxury and effeminacy. If
your liberties and future prospects depended on them, your career of liberty would
probably be short; but a great majority of your country must, and will be yeomanry,
who have no other dependence than on Almighty God for his usual blessing on their
daily labour. From the great excess of the number of such independent farmers in
these States, over [356] and above all other classes of inhabitants, the long
continuance of your liberties may be reasonably presumed.

Let the hapless African sleep undisturbed on his native shore, and give over wishing
for the extermination of the ancient proprietors of this land. Universal justice is
universal interest. The most enlarged happiness of one people, by no means requires
the degradation or destruction of another. It would be more glorious to civilise one
tribe of savages than to exterminate or expel a score. There is territory enough for
them and for you. Instead of invading their rights, promote their happiness, and give
them no reason to curse the folly of their fathers, who suffered yours to sit down on a
soil which the common Parent of us both had previously assigned to them; but above
all, be particularly careful that your own descendents do not degenerate into savages.
Diffuse the means of education, and particularly of religious instruction, through your
remotest settlements. To this end, support and strengthen the hands of public teachers,
and especially of worthy clergymen. Let your voluntary contributions confute the
dishonourable position, that religion cannot be supported but by compulsory
establishments. Remember that there can be no political happiness without liberty;
that there can be no liberty without morality; and that there can be no morality
without religion.

It is now your turn to figure on the face of the earth, and in the annals of the world.
You possess a country which in less than a century will probably contain fifty
millions of inhabitants. You have, with a great expence of blood and treasure, rescued
yourselves and your posterity from the domination of Europe. Perfect the good work
you have begun, by forming such arrangements and institutions as bid fair for
ensuring to the present and future generations the blessings for which you have successfully contended.

May the Almighty Ruler of the Universe, who has raised you to Independence, and given you a place among the nations of the earth, make the American Revolution an Era in the history of the world, remarkable for the progressive increase of human happiness!
An Alphabetical List Of The Members Of Congress, Who Attended From The Several States, From The 5th November, 1774, To The 3d Of March, 1789.
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Potts, Richard
Ramsay, Nathaniel
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Rumsey, Benjamin
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Stone, Thomas
Tilghman, Matthew
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THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME

This book was set in Caslon 224, a typeface derived from one originally cut by the distinguished English letter-founder William Caslon (1692–1766) and known for its legibility, delicacy, and variety of design. The Declaration of Independence was printed in the Caslon letter, and until about the time of the American Revolution, when local foundries began to produce type, most books, newspapers, and broadsides printed in North America used the Caslon letter.

This book is printed on paper that is acid-free and meets the requirements of the American National Standard for Permanence of Paper for Printed Library materials, Z39.48, 1992. (archival)

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[*]This, though true, was no premeditated barbarity. The circumstances were as follows: Mr. Jones, her lover, from an anxiety for her safety, engaged some Indians to remove her from among the Americans, and promised to reward the person who should bring her safe to him, with a barrel of rum. Two of the Indians, who had conveyed her some distance, on the way to her intended husband, disputed, which of them should present her to Mr. Jones. Both were anxious for the reward. One of them killed her with his tomahawk, to prevent the other from receiving it. Burgoyne obliged the Indians to deliver up the murderer, and threatened to put him to death. His life was only spared, upon the Indians agreeing to terms, which the general thought would be more efficacious than an execution, in preventing similar mischiefs.

[*]This detail was furnished by Mr. Williamson, surgeon-general of the North-Carolina militia, who after the battle went into Camden with a flag.
The door keeper of Congress an aged man died suddenly, immediately after hearing of the capture of lord Cornwallis’ army. This death was universally ascribed to a violent emotion of political joy.

North-Carolina since writing the above, has acceded to the union.