

1 LETTERS FROM A FARMER.

2 LETTER I.

3 My Dear Countrymen,

4 I am a farmer, settled after a variety of fortunes, near the banks, of the river Delaware, in the province
5 of Pennsylvania. I received a liberal education, and have been engaged in the busy scenes of life: But am
6 now convinced, that a man may be as happy without bustle, as with it. My farm is small, my servants
7 are few, and good; I have a little money at interest; I wish for no more: my employment in my own
8 affairs is easy; and with a contented grateful mind, I am compleating the number of days allotted to me
9 by divine goodness.

10 Being master of my time, I spend a good deal of it in a library, which I think the most valuable part of
11 my small estate; and being acquainted with two or three gentlemen of abilities and learning, who
12 honour me with their friendship, I believe I have acquired a greater share of knowledge in history, and
13 the laws and constitution of my country, than is generally attained by men of my class, many of them
14 not being so fortunate as I have been in the opportunities of getting information.

15 From infancy I was taught to love humanity and liberty. Inquiry and experience have since confirmed
16 my reverence for the lessons then given me, by convincing me more fully of their truth and excellence.
17 Benevolence towards mankind excites wishes for their welfare, and such wishes endear the means of
18 fulfilling them. Those can be found in liberty alone, and therefore her sacred cause ought to be
19 espoused by every man, on every occasion, to the utmost of his power: as a charitable but poor person
20 does not withhold his mite, because he cannot relieve all the distresses of the miserable, so let not any
21 honest man suppress his sentiments concerning freedom, however small their influence is likely to be.
22 Perhaps he may "touch some wheel" that will have an effect greater than he expects.

23 These being my sentiments, I am encouraged to offer to you, my countrymen, my thoughts on some
24 late transactions, that in my opinion are of the utmost importance to you. Conscious of my defects, I
25 have waited some time, in expectation of seeing the subject treated by persons much better qualified

1 for the task; but being therein disappointed, and apprehensive that longer delays will be injurious, I
2 venture at length to request the attention of the public, praying only for one thing,—that is that these
3 lines may be read with the same zeal for the happiness of British America, with which they were wrote.
4 With a good deal of surprise I have observed, that little notice has been taken of an act of parliament, as
5 injurious in its principle to the liberties of these colonies, as the Stamp-act was: I mean the act for
6 suspending the legislation of New-York.

7 The assembly of that government complied with a former act of parliament, requiring certain
8 provisions to be made for the troops in America, in every particular, I think, except the articles of salt,
9 pepper, and vinegar. In my opinion they acted imprudently, considering all circumstances, in not
10 complying so far, as would have given satisfaction, as several colonies did: but my dislike of their
11 conduct in that instance, has not blinded me so much, that I cannot plainly perceive, that they have
12 been punished in a manner pernicious to American freedom, and justly alarming to all the colonies.
13 If the British Parliament has a legal authority to order, that we shall furnish a single article for the
14 troops here, and to compel obedience to that order; they have the same

15 There is one consideration arising from this suspicion, which is not generally attended to, but shews
16 its importance very clearly. It was not necessary that this suspension should be caused by an act of
17 parliament. The crown might have restrained the governor of New-York, even from calling the
18 assembly together, by its prerogative in the royal governments. This step, I suppose, would have been
19 taken, if the conduct of the assembly of New-York, had been regarded as an act of disobedience to the
20 crown alone: but it is regarded as an act of "disobedience to the authority of the British Legislature."

21 This gives the suspension a consequence vastly more affecting. It is a parliamentary assertion of
22 the supreme authority of the British legislature over these colonies in the part of taxation; and is
23 intended to COMPEL New-York unto a submission to that authority. It seems therefore to me as much
24 a violation of the liberty of the people of that province, and consequently of all these colonies, as if the
25 parliament had sent a number of regiments to be quartered upon them till they should comply. For it

1 is evident, that the suspension is meant as a compulsion; and the method of compelling is totally
2 indifferent. It is indeed probable, that the sight of red coats, and the beating of drums would have been
3 most alarming, because people are generally more influenced by their eyes and ears than by their
4 reason: But whoever seriously considers the matter, must perceive, that a dreadful stroke is aimed at
5 the liberty of these colonies: For the cause of one is the cause of all. If the parliament may lawfully
6 deprive New-York of any of its rights, it may deprive any, or all the other colonies of their rights; and
7 nothing can possibly so much encourage such attempts, as a mutual inattention to the interest of each
8 other. To divide, and thus to destroy, is the first political maxim in attacking those who are powerful by
9 their union. He certainly is not a wise man, who folds his arms and reposeth himself at home, seeing
10 with unconcern the flames that have invaded his neighbour's house, without any endeavours to
11 extinguish them.

12 When Mr. Hampden's ship-money cause, for three shillings and four-pence, was tried, all the people
13 of England, with anxious expectation, interested themselves in the important decision; and when the
14 slightest point touching the freedom of a single colony is agitated,
15 I earnestly wish, that all the rest may with equal ardour support their sister. Very much may be said
16 on this subject, but I hope, more at present is unnecessary.

17 With concern I have observed that two assemblies of this province have sat and adjourned, without
18 taking any notice of this act. It may perhaps be asked, what would have been proper for them to do? I
19 am by no means fond of inflammatory measures. I detest them.—I should be sorry that any thing
20 should be done which might justly displease our sovereign or our mother-country. But a firm, modest
21 exertion of a free spirit, should never be wanting on public occasions. It appears to me, that it would
22 have been sufficient for the assembly, to have ordered our agents to represent to the King's ministers,
23 their sense of the suspending act, and to pray for its repeal. Thus we should have borne our testimony
24 against it; and might therefore reasonably expect that on a like occasion, we might receive the same
25 assistance from the other colonies.

1 "Concordia res parvæ crescunt."

2 Small things grow great by concord.—

3 A FARMER.

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1 LETTER II.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 There is another late act of parliament, which seems to me to be as destructive to the liberty of these
4 colonies, as that inserted in my last letter; that is, the act for granting the duties on paper, glass, &c. It
5 appears to me to be unconstitutional.

6 The parliament unquestionably possesses a legal authority to regulate the trade of Great-Britain, and
7 all its colonies. Such an authority is essential to the relation between a mother country and its colonies;
8 and necessary for the common good of all. He, who considers these provinces as states distinct from
9 the British Empire, has very slender notions of justice or of their interests. We are but parts of a whole;
10 and therefore there must exist a power somewhere, to preside, and preserve the connection in due
11 order.

12 This power is lodged in the parliament; and we are as much dependant on Great-Britain, as a perfectly
13 free people can be on another.

14 I have looked over every statute relating to these colonies, from their first settlement to this time; and
15 I find every one of them founded on this principle, till the Stamp-act administration All before are
16 calculated to preserve or promote a mutually beneficial intercourse between the several constituent
17 parts of the empire; and though many of them imposed duties on trade, yet those duties were always
18 imposed with design to restrain the commerce of one part, that was injurious to another, and thus to
19 promote the general welfare. The raising a revenue thereby was never intended. Thus, the king by his
20 judges in his courts of justice, imposes fines, which all together amount to a considerable sum, and
21 contribute to the support of government: but this is merely a consequence arising from restrictions,
22 which only meant to keep peace, and prevent confusion; and surely a man would argue very loosely,
23 who should conclude from hence, that the King has a right to levy money in general upon his subjects;
24 Never did the British parliament, till the period abovementioned, think of imposing duties in
25 America FOR THE PURPOSE OF RAISING A REVENUE.

1 Mr. Greenville's sagacity first introduced this language, in the preamble to the 4th of Geo. III. Ch. 15,
2 which has these words—"And whereas it is just and necessary that a revenue be raised in your
3 Majesty's said dominions in America, for defraying the expences of defending, protecting and securing
4 the same: We your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the commons of Great Britain, in
5 parliament assembled, being desirous to make some provision in the present session of parliament,
6 towards raising the said revenue in America, have resolved to give and grant unto your Majesty the
7 several rates and duties herein after mentioned," &c.

8 A few months after came the Stamp-act, which reciting this, proceeds in the same strange mode of
9 expression, thus—"And whereas it is just and necessary, that provision be made for raising a further
10 revenue within your majesty's dominions in America, towards defraying the said expences, we your
11 Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of Great-Britain, &c. GIVE and GRANT," &c. as
12 before.

13 The last act, granting duties upon paper, &c. carefully pursues these modern precedents.

14 The preamble is, "Whereas it is expedient that a revenue should be raised in your Majesty's dominions
15 in America, for making a more certain and adequate provision for the defraying the charge of the
16 administration of justice, and the support of civil government in such provinces, where it shall be
17 found necessary; and towards the further defraying the expences of defending, protecting and
18 securing the said dominions, we your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of Great-
19 Britain, &c. give and grant," &c. as before.

20 Here we may observe an authority expressly claimed to impose duties on these colonies;
21 not for the regulation of trade; not for the preservation or promotion of a mutually beneficial
22 intercourse between the several constituent parts of the empire, heretofore the sole objects of
23 parliamentary institutions; but for the single purpose of levying money upon us.

24 This I call an innovation; and a most dangerous innovation. It may perhaps be objected, that Great-
25 Britain has a right to lay what duties she pleases upon her exports, and it makes no difference to us,

1 whether they are paid here or there.

2 To this I answer. These colonies require many things for their use, which the laws of Great-

3 Britain prohibit them from getting any where but from her. Such are paper and glass. That we may be

4 legally bound to pay any general duties on these commodities, relative to the regulation of trade, is

5 granted; but we being obliged by her laws to take them from Great Britain, any special duties imposed

6 on their exportation to us only, with intention to raise a revenue from us only, are as much taxes upon

7 us, as those imposed by the Stamp-act.

8 What is the difference in substance and right, whether the same sum is raised upon us by the rates

9 mentioned in the Stamp-act, on the use of the paper, or by these duties, on the importation of it. It is

10 nothing but the edition of a former book, with a new title page.

11 Suppose the duties were made payable in Great-Britain?

12 It signifies nothing to us, whether they are to be paid here or there. Had the Stamp-act directed, that

13 all the paper should be landed in Florida, and the duties paid there, before it was brought to the British

14 Colonies, would the act have raised less money upon us, or have been less destructive of our rights? By

15 no means: For as we were under a necessity of using the paper, we should have been under the

16 necessity of paying the duties. Thus, in the present case, a like necessity will subject us, if this act

17 continues in force, to the payment of the duties now imposed.

18 Why was the Stamp-act then so pernicious to freedom? It did not enact, that every man in the

19 colonies should buy a certain quantity of paper—No: It only directed, that no instrument of writing

20 should be valid in law, if not made on stamp paper, &c.

21 The makers of that act knew full well, that the confusions that would arise upon the disuse of writings

22 would COMPEL the colonies to use the stamp paper, and therefore to pay the taxes imposed. For this

23 reason the Stamp-act was said to be a law THAT WOULD EXECUTE ITSELF. For the very same reason,

24 the last act of parliament, if it is granted to have any force here, will execute itself, and will be

25 attended with the very same consequences to American Liberty.

1 Some persons perhaps may say, that this act lays us under no necessity to pay the duties imposed,
2 because we may ourselves manufacture the articles on which they are laid: whereas by the Stamp-act
3 no instrument of writing could be good, unless made on British paper, and that too stampd.
4 Such an objection amounts to no more than this, that the injury resulting to these colonies, from the
5 total disuse of British paper and glass, will not be so afflicting as that which would have resulted from
6 the total disuse of writing among them; for by that means even the stamp-act might have been eluded.
7 Why then was it universally detested by them as slavery itself? Because it presented to these devoted
8 provinces nothing but a choice of calamities, imbibtered by indignities, each of which it was unworthy of
9 freemen to bear. But is no injury a violation of right but the greatest injury? If the eluding the payment
10 of the duties imposed by the stamp-act, would have subjected us to a more dreadful inconvenience,
11 than the eluding the payment of those imposed by the late act; does it therefore follow, that the last is
12 no violation of our rights, though it is calculated for the same purpose that the other was, that is, to
13 raise money upon us, WITHOUT OUR CONSENT?
14 This would be making right to consist, not in an exemption from injury, but from a certain degree of
15 injury.
16 But the objectors may further say, that we shall sustain no injury at all by the disuse of British paper
17 and glass. We might not, if we could make as much as we want. But can any man, acquainted with
18 America, believe this possible? I am told there are but two or three glass-houses on this continent, and
19 but very few paper-mills; and suppose more should be erected, a long course of years must elapse,
20 before they can be brought to perfection. This continent is a country of planters, farmers, and
21 fishermen; not of manufacturers. The difficulty of establishing particular manufactures in such a
22 country, is almost insuperable, for one manufacture is connected with others in such a manner, that it
23 may be said to be impossible to establish one or two, without establishing several others. The
24 experience of many nations may convince us of this truth.
25 Inexpressible therefore must be our distresses in evading the late acts, by the disuse of British paper

1 and glass. Nor will this be the extent of our misfortunes, if we admit the legality of that act.

2 Great-Britain has prohibited the manufacturing iron and steel in these colonies, without any objection
3 being made to her right of doing it. The like right she must have to prohibit any other manufacture
4 among us. Thus she is possessed of an undisputed precedent on that point. This authority, she will say,
5 is founded on the original intention of settling these colonies; that is, that she should manufacture for
6 them, and that they should supply her with materials. The equity of this policy, she will also say, has
7 been universally acknowledged by the colonies, who never have made the least objection to statutes for
8 that purpose; and will further appear by the mutual benefits flowing from this usage, ever since the
9 settlement of these colonies.

10 Our great advocate, Mr. Pitt, in his speeches on the debate concerning the repeal of the Stamp-act,
11 acknowledged, that Great-Britain could restrain our manufactures. His words are these—"This
12 kingdom, as the supreme governing and legislative power, has always bound the colonies by her
13 regulations and restrictions in trade, in navigation, in manufactures—in every thing, except that of
14 taking their money out of their pockets, WITHOUT THEIR CONSENT." Again he says, "We may bind
15 their trade, CONFINE THEIR MANUFACTURES, and exercise every power whatever, except that of
16 taking money out of their pockets, WITHOUT THEIR CONSENT."

17 Here then, let my countrymen, ROUSE yourselves, and behold the ruin hanging over their heads. If
18 they ONCE admit, that Great-Britain may lay duties upon her exportations to us, for the purpose of
19 levying money on us only, she then will have nothing to do, but to lay those duties on the articles
20 which she prohibits us to manufacture—and the tragedy of American liberty is finished. We have been
21 prohibited from procuring manufactures, in all cases, any where but from Great-Britain, (excepting
22 linens, which we are permitted to import directly from Ireland). We have been prohibited, in some
23 cases, from manufacturing for ourselves; We are therefore exactly in the situation of a city besieged,
24 which is surrounded by the works of the besiegers in every part but one.

25 If that is closed up, no step can be taken, but to surrender at discretion. If Great-Britain can order us

1 to come to her for necessities we want, and can order us to pay what taxes she pleases before we take
2 them away, or when we have them here, we are as abject slaves, as France and Poland can shew in
3 wooden shoes, and with uncombed hair.

4 Perhaps the nature of the necessities of the dependant states, caused by the policy of a governing one,
5 for her own benefit, may be elucidated by a fact mentioned in history.

6 When the Carthaginians were possessed of the island of Sardinia, they made a decree, that the
7 Sardinians should not get corn, any other way than from the Carthaginians.

8 Then, by imposing any duties they would, they drained from the miserable Sardinians any sums they
9 pleased; and whenever that oppressed people made the least movement to assert their liberty, their
10 tyrants starved them to death or submission. This may be called the most perfect kind of political
11 necessity.

12 From what has been said, I think this uncontrovertible conclusion may be deduced, that when a ruling
13 state obliges a dependant state to take certain commodities from her alone, it is implied in the nature
14 of that obligation; and is essentially requisite to give it the least degree of justice; and is inseparably
15 united with it, in order to preserve any share of freedom to the dependant state; that those
16 commodities should never be loaded with duties for the sole purpose of levying money on the
17 dependant state.

18 The place of paying the duties imposed by the late act, appears to me therefore to be totally
19 immaterial. The single question is, whether the parliament can legally impose duties to be paid by the
20 people of these colonies only for the sole purpose of raising a revenue, on commodities which she
21 obliges us to take from her alone; or, in other words, whether the parliament can legally take money
22 out of our pockets, without our consent.

23 If they can, our boasted liberty is but

24 “Vox et præterea nihil.” A sound, and nothing else.

25 A FARMER.

1 LETTER III.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 I rejoice to find, that my two former letters to you, have been generally received with so much favour by
4 such of you whose sentiments I have had an opportunity of knowing.

5 Could you look into my heart, you would instantly perceive an ardent affection for your persons, a
6 zealous attachment to your interests, a lively resentment of every insult and injury offered to your
7 honour or happiness, and an inflexible resolution to assert your rights, to the utmost of my weak power,
8 to be the only motives that have engaged me to address you.

9 I am no further concerned in any thing affecting America, than any one of you, and when liberty leaves
10 it I can quit it much more conveniently than most of you: but while divine providence, that gave me
11 existence in a land of freedom, permits my head to think, my lips to speak, and my hand to move, I
12 shall so highly and gratefully value the blessing received, as to take care that my silence and
13 inactivity shall not give my implied assent to any act degrading my brethren and myself from the
14 birthright wherewith heaven itself "hath made us free."

15 Sorry I am to learn, that there are some few persons, shake their heads with solemn motion, and
16 pretend to wonder what can be the meaning of these letters. "Great-Britain, they say, is too powerful to
17 contend with; she is determined to oppress us; it is in vain to speak of right on one side, when there is
18 power on the other; when we are strong enough to resist, we shall attempt it; but now we are not
19 strong enough, and therefore we had better be quiet; it signifies nothing to convince us that our rights
20 are invaded, when we cannot defend them, and if we should get into riots and tumults about the late
21 act, it will only draw down heavier displeasure upon us."

22 What can such men design? What do their grave observations amount to, but this—"that these
23 colonies, totally regardless of their liberties, should commit them, with humble resignation,
24 to chance, time, and the tender mercies of ministers."

25 Are these men ignorant, that usurpations, which might have been successfully opposed at first,

1 acquire strength by continuance, and thus become irresistible? Do they condemn the conduct of these
2 colonies, concerning the Stamp-act? Or have they forgot its successful issue? Ought the colonies at that
3 time, instead of acting as they did, to have trusted for relief, to the fortuitous events of futurity? If it is
4 needless "to speak of rights" now, it was as needless then. If the behaviour of the colonies was prudent
5 and glorious then, and successful too; it will be equally prudent and glorious to act in the same manner
6 now, if our rights are equally invaded, and may be as successful. Therefore it becomes necessary to
7 enquire, whether "our rights are invaded." To talk of "defending" them, as if they could be no otherwise
8 "defended" than by arms, is as much out of the way, as if a man having a choice of several roads to reach
9 his journey's end, should prefer the worst, for no other reason, than because it is the worst.

10 As to "riots and tumults," the gentlemen who are so apprehensive of them, are much mistaken, if they
11 think, that grievances cannot be redressed without such assistance.

12 I will now tell the gentlemen, what is "the meaning of these letters." The meaning of them is, to
13 convince the people of these colonies, that they are at this moment exposed to the most imminent
14 dangers; and to persuade them immediately, vigourously, and unanimously, to exert themselves, in the
15 most firm, but most peaceable manner for obtaining relief.

16 The cause of liberty is a cause of too much dignity, to be sullied by turbulence and tumult. It ought to
17 be maintained in a manner suitable to her nature. Those who engage in it, should breathe a sedate, yet
18 fervent spirit, animating them to actions of prudence, justice, modesty, bravery, humanity, and
19 magnanimity.

20 To such a wonderful degree were the antient Spartans, as brave and as free a people as ever existed,
21 inspired by this happy temperature of soul, that rejecting even in their battles the use of trumpets,
22 and other instruments for exciting heat and rage, they marched up to scenes of havock and horror,
23 with the sound of flutes, to the tunes of which their steps kept pace—"exhibiting, as Plutarch says, at
24 once a terrible and delightful sight, and proceeding with a deliberate valour, full of hope and good
25 assurance, as if some divinity had insensibly assisted them."

1 I hope, my dear countrymen, that you will in every colony be upon your guard against those who may
2 at any time endeavour to stir you up, under pretences of patriotism, to any measures disrespectful to
3 our sovereign and our mother country. Hot, rash, disorderly proceedings, injure the reputation of a
4 people as to wisdom, valour and virtue, without procuring them the least benefit. I pray God, that he
5 may be pleased to inspire you and your posterity to the latest ages with that spirit, of which I have an
6 idea, but find a difficulty to express: to express in the best manner I can, I mean a spirit that shall so
7 guide you, that it will be impossible to determine, whether an American's character is most
8 distinguishable for his loyalty to his sovereign, his duty to his mother country, his love of freedom, or
9 his affection for his native soil.

10 Every government, at some time or other, falls into wrong measures; these may proceed from mistake
11 or passion.—But every such measure does not dissolve the obligation between the governors and the
12 governed; the mistake may be corrected; the passion may pass over.

13 It is the duty of the governed, to endeavour to rectify the mistake, and appease the passion. They have
14 not at first any other right, than to represent their grievances, and to pray for redress, unless an
15 emergency is so pressing, as not to allow time for receiving an answer to their applications which
16 rarely happens. If their applications are disregarded, then that kind of opposition becomes justifiable,
17 which can be made without breaking the laws, or disturbing the public peace. This consists in the
18 prevention of the oppressors reaping advantage from their oppressions, and not in their punishment.
19 For experience may teach them what reason did not; and harsh methods, cannot be proper, till milder
20 ones have failed.

21 If at length it becomes undoubted, that an inveterate resolution is formed to annihilate the liberties of
22 the governed, the English history affords frequent examples of resistance by force. What particular
23 circumstances will in any future case justify such resistance, can never be ascertained till they
24 happen. Perhaps it may be allowable to say, generally, that it never can be justifiable, until the people
25 are FULLY CONVINCED, that any further submission will be destructive to their happiness.

1 When the appeal is made to the sword, highly probable it is, that the punishment will exceed the
2 offence; and the calamities attending on war out weigh those preceding it. These considerations of
3 justice and prudence, will always have great influence with good and wise men.

4 To these reflections on this subject, it remains to be added, and ought for ever to be remembred; that
5 resistance in the case of colonies against their mother country, is extremely different from the
6 resistance of a people against their prince. A nation may change their King or race of Kings, and retain
7 their antient form of government, be gainers by changing. Thus Great-Britain, under the illustrious
8 house of Brunswick, a house that seems to flourish for the happiness of mankind, has found a felicity,
9 unknown in the reigns of the Stuarts. But if once we are separated from our mother country, what
10 new form of government shall we accept, or when shall we find another Britain to supply our loss?
11 Torn from the body to which we are united by religion, liberty, laws, affections, relations, language,
12 and commerce, we must bleed at every vein.

13 In truth, the prosperity of these provinces is founded in their dependance on Great-Britain; and when
14 she returns to "her old good humour, and old good nature," as Lord Clerendon expresses it, I hope they
15 will always esteem it their duty and interest, as it most certainly will be, to promote her welfare by all
16 the means in their power.

17 We cannot act with too much caution in our disputes. Anger produces anger; and differences that
18 might be accommodated by kind and respectful behaviour, may by imprudence be changed to an
19 incurable rage.

20 In quarrels between countries, as well as in those between individuals, when they have risen to a
21 certain heighth, the first cause of dissention is no longer remembred, the minds of the parties being
22 wholly engaged in recollecting and resenting the mutual expressions of their dislike. When feuds have
23 reached that fatal point, all considerations of reason and equity vanish; and a blind fury governs, or
24 rather confounds all things. A people no longer regards their interest, but the gratification of their
25 wrath. The sway of the Cleon's, and Clodius's, the designing and detestable flatters of the prevailing

1 passion, becomes confirmed.

2 Wise and good men in vain oppose the storm, and may think themselves fortunate, if, endeavouring to
3 preserve their ungrateful fellow citizens, they do not ruin themselves.

4 Their prudence will be called baseness; their moderation, guilt; and if their virtue does not lead them to
5 destruction, as that of many other great and excellent persons has done, they may survive, to receive
6 from their expiring country, the mournful glory of her acknowledgment, that their councils, if
7 regarded, would have saved her.

8 The constitutional modes of obtaining relief, are those which I would wish to see pursued on the present
9 occasion, that is, by petitioning of our assemblies, or, where they are not permitted to meet, of the
10 people to the powers that can afford us relief.

11 We have an excellent prince, in whose good dispositions towards us we may confide. We have a
12 generous, sensible, and humane nation, to whom we may apply. They may be deceived: they may, by
13 artful men, be provoked to anger against us; but I cannot yet believe they will be cruel or unjust; or
14 that their anger will be implacable. Let us behave like dutiful children, who have received unmerited
15 blows from a beloved parent. Let us complain to our parents; but let our complaints speak at the same
16 time, the language of affliction and veneration.

17 If, however, it shall happen by an unfortunate course of affairs, that our applications to his Majesty
18 and the parliament for the redress, prove ineffectual, let us then take another step, by withholding
19 from Great-Britain, all the advantages she has been used to receive from us. Then let us try, if our
20 ingenuity, industry, and frugality, will not give weight to our remonstrances. Let us all be united with
21 one spirit in one cause. Let us invent; let us work; let us save; let us at the same time, keep up our
22 claims, and unceasingly repeat our complaints; but above all, let us implore the protection of that
23 infinite good and gracious Being, "by whom kings reign and princes decree justice."

24 "Nil desperandum." Nothing is to be despaired of.

25 A FARMER.

1 LETTER IV.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 An objection, I hear, has been made against what I offer in my second letter, which I would willingly
4 clear up before I proceed. "There is," say these objectors "a material difference between the Stamp-act
5 and the late act for laying a duty on paper, &c. that justifies the conduct of those who opposed the
6 former, and yet are willing to submit to the latter. The duties imposed by the Stamp-act, were internal
7 taxes, but the present are external, which therefore the parliament may have a right to impose."—To
8 this I answer, with a total denial of the power of parliament to lay upon these colonies any tax whatever.
9 This point being so important to this and to all succeeding generations, I wish to be clearly understood.
10 To the word "Tax," I annex that meaning which the constitution and history of England require to be
11 annexed to it; that it is, an imposition on the subject for the sole purpose of levying money.

12 In the early ages of our monarchy, the services rendered to the crown, for the
13 general good, were personal; but in progress of time, such institutions being found inconvenient,
14 certain gifts and grants of their own property were made by the people, under the several names of
15 aids, tallages, talks, taxes, subsidies, &c. These were made as may be collected even from the names
16 for public service, "upon need and necessity," all these sums were levied upon the people by virtue of
17 their voluntary gift. The design of them was to support the national honour and interest. Some of
18 those grants comprehended duties arising from trade, being imports on merchandizes. These Chief
19 Justice Coke classes "under subsidies" and "parliamentary aids." They are also called "customs." But
20 whatever the name was, they were always considered as gifts of the people to the crown, to be
21 employed for public uses.

22 Commerce was at a low ebb, and most surprising instances may be produced, how little it was
23 attended to, for a succession of ages. The terms that have been mentioned, and among the rest that of
24 "tax," had obtained a national, parliamentary meaning, drawn from the principles of the constitution,
25 long before any Englishmen thought of regulations of trade "by imposing duties."

1 Whenever we speak of taxes among Englishmen, let us therefore speak of them with reference to the
2 intentions with which, and the principles on which they have been established. This will give certainty
3 to our expression, and safety to our conduct: but if when we have in view the liberty of these colonies,
4 and the influence of "taxes" laid without our consent, we proceed in any other course, we pursue a Juno
5 indeed, but shall only catch a cloud.

6 In the national parliamentary sense insisted on, the word "tax" was certainly understood by the
7 congress at New-York, whose resolves may be said to form the American "bill of rights." I am satisfied
8 that the congress was of opinion, that no impositions could be legally laid on the people of these colonies
9 for the purpose of levying money, but by themselves or their representatives.

10 The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth resolves are thus expressed.

11 III. "That it is inseparably essential to the freedom of a people and the undoubted right of Englishmen,
12 that no tax be imposed on them, but with their own consent, given personally or by their
13 representatives."

14 IV. "That the people of the colonies are not, and from their local circumstances cannot be represented
15 in the House of Commons, in Great-Britain."

16 V. "That the only representatives of the people of the colonies, are the persons chosen therein by
17 themselves; and that no taxes ever have been, or can be constitutionally imposed on them, but by their
18 respective legislatures."

19 VI. "That all supplies to the crown being free gifts of the people, it is unreasonable and inconsistent
20 with the principles and spirit of the British constitution, for the people of Great-Britain to grant to his
21 Majesty the property of the colonies."

22 Here is no distinction made, between internal and external taxes. It is evident from the short
23 reasoning thrown into these resolves that every imposition "to grant to his Majesty the property of the
24 colonies," was thought a "tax;" and that every such imposition if laid any other way "but with their
25 consent, given personally, or by their representatives," was not only "unreasonable, and inconsistent

1 with the principles and spirit of the British constitution," but destructive "to the freedom of a people."
2 This language is clear and important. A "tax" means an imposition to raise money. Such persons
3 therefore as speak of internal and external "taxes," I pray may pardon me, if I object to that expression
4 as applied to the privileges and interests of these colonies.
5 There may be external and internal impositions, founded on different principles, and having different
6 tendencies; every "tax" being an imposition, tho' every imposition is not a "tax." But all "taxes" are
7 founded on the same principle, and have the same tendency.
8 "External impositions for the regulation of our trade, do not grant to his Majesty the property of the
9 colonies." They only prevent the colonies acquiring property in things not necessary, and in a manner
10 judged to be injurious to the welfare of the whole empire. But the last statute respecting us, "grants to
11 his Majesty the property of these colonies," by laying duties on manufactures of Great-Britain, which
12 they must take, and which he settled them, in order that they should take.
13 What "tax" can be more "internal" than this? Here is money drawn without their consent from a
14 society, who have constantly enjoyed a constitutional mode of raising all money among themselves.
15 The payment of this tax they have no possible method of avoiding, as they cannot do without the
16 commodities on which it is laid, and they cannot manufacture these commodities themselves; besides,
17 if this unhappy country should be so lucky as to elude this act, by getting parchment enough to use in
18 the place of paper, or reviving the antient method of writing on wax and bark, and by inventing
19 something to serve instead of glass, her ingenuity would stand her in little stead; for then the
20 parliament would have nothing to do, but to prohibit manufactures, or to lay a tax on hats and woollen
21 cloths, which they have already prohibited the colonies from supplying each other with; or on
22 instruments and tools of steel and iron, which they have prohibited the provincials from
23 manufacturing at all And then what little gold and silver they have, must be torn from their hands, or
24 they will not be able in a short time, to get an ax[23] for cutting their firewood, nor a plough for
25 raising their food.—In what respect therefore, I beg leave to ask, is the late act preferable to the Stamp-

1 act, or more consistent with the liberties of the colonies? "I regard them both with equal apprehension,
2 and think they ought to be in the same manner opposed."

3 "Habemus quidem senatus consultum—tanquam gladium in vagina repositum"

4 We have a statute like a sword in the scabbard.

5 A FARMER.

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1 LETTER V.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 Perhaps the objection to the late act, imposing duties upon paper, &c. might have been safely rested on
4 the arguments drawn from the universal conduct of parliaments and ministers, from the first existence
5 of these colonies, to the administration of Mr. Grenville.

6 What but the indisputable, the acknowledged exclusive right of the colonies to tax themselves, could be
7 the reason, that in this long period of more than one hundred and fifty years, no statute was ever
8 passed for the sole purpose of raising a revenue on the colonies? And how clear, how cogent must that
9 reason be, to which every parliament and every minister, for so long a time submitted, without a single
10 attempt to innovate?

11 England in part of that course of years, and Great Britain, in other parts, was engaged in fierce and
12 expensive wars; troubled with some tumultuous and bold parliaments; governed by many daring and
13 wicked ministers; yet none of them ever ventured to touch the PALLADIUM of American Liberty.
14 Ambition, avarice, faction, tyranny, all revered it.

15 Whenever it was necessary to raise money on the colonies, the requisitions of the crown were made,
16 and dutifully complied with. The parliament from time to time regulated their trade, and that of the
17 rest of the empire, to preserve their dependencies, and the connection of the whole in good order.

18 The people of Great-Britain in support of their privileges, boast much of their antiquity.

19 Yet it may well be questioned, if there is a single privilege of a British subject, supported by longer,
20 more solemn, or more uninterrupted testimony, than the exclusive right of taxation in these colonies.

21 The people of Great-Britain consider that kingdom as the sovereign of these colonies, and would now
22 annex to that sovereignty a prerogative never heard of before. How would they bear this, was the case
23 their own? What would they think of a new prerogative claimed by the crown? We may guess what
24 their conduct would be from the transports of passion into which they fell about the late embargo, laid
25 to remove the most emergent necessities of state, admitting of no delay; and for which there were

1 numerous precedents. Let our liberties be treated with the same tenderness, and it is all we desire.

2 Explicit as the conduct of parliaments, for so many ages, is, to prove that no money can be levied on

3 these colonies, by parliament for the purpose of raising a revenue; yet it is not the only evidence in our

4 favour.

5 Every one of the most material arguments against the legality of the Stamp-act operates with equal

6 force against the act now objected to; but as they are well known, it seems unnecessary to repeat them

7 here.

8 This general one only shall be considered at present. That tho' these colonies are dependant on Great-

9 Britain; and tho' she has a legal power to make laws for preserving that dependance; yet it is not

10 necessary for this purpose, nor essential to the relation between a mother-country and her colonies,

11 as was eagerly contended by the advocates for the Stamp-act, that she should raise money upon them

12 without their consent.

13 Colonies were formerly planted by warlike nations, to keep their enemies in awe; to relieve their

14 country overburthened with inhabitants; or to discharge a number of discontented and troublesome

15 citizens. But in more modern ages, the spirit of violence being in some measure, if the expression may

16 be allowed, sheathed in commerce, colonies have been settled by the nations of Europe for the

17 purposes of trade. These purposes were to be attained by the colonies raising for their mother country

18 those things which she did not produce herself; and by supplying themselves from her with things

19 they wanted. These were the national objects in the commencement of our colonies, and have been

20 uniformly so in their promotion.

21 To answer these grand purposes, perfect liberty was known to be necessary; all history proving, that

22 trade and freedom are nearly related to each other. By a due regard to this wise and just plan, the

23 infant colonies exposed in the unknown climates, and unexplored wildernesses of this new world,

24 lived, grew, and flourished.

25 The parent country with undeviating prudence and virtue, attentive to the first principles of

1 colonization, drew to herself the benefits she might reasonably expect, and preserved to her children
2 the blessings, on which those benefits were founded. She made laws obliging her colonies to carry to her
3 all those products which she wanted for her own use; and all those raw materials which she chose
4 herself to work up. Besides this restriction, she forbade them to procure manufactures from any other
5 part of the globe; or even the products of European countries, which alone could rival her, without being
6 first brought to her. In short, by a variety of laws, she regulated their trade in such a manner, as she
7 thought most conducive to their mutual advantage, and her own welfare.

8 A power was reserved to the crown of repealing any laws that should be enacted. The executive
9 authority of government was all lodged in the crown and its representatives; and an appeal was secured
10 to the crown from all judgments in the administration of justice.

11 For all these powers established by the mother country over the colonies; for all these immense
12 emoluments derived by her from them; for all their difficulties and distresses in fixing themselves,
13 what was the recompense made them? A communication of her rights in general, and particularly of
14 that great one, the foundation of all the rest—that their property, acquired with so much pain and
15 hazard, should not be disposed of by any one but themselves—or to use the beautiful and emphatic
16 language of the sacred scriptures, "that they should sit every man under his vine, and under his fig
17 tree, and none should make them afraid." [25]

18 Can any man of candour and knowledge deny, that these institutions, form an affinity between Great-
19 Britain and her colonies, that sufficiently secures their dependance upon her? or that for her to levy
20 taxes upon them, is to reverse the nature of things? or that she can pursue such a measure, without
21 reducing them to a state of vassalage?

22 If any person cannot conceive the supremacy of Great Britain to exist, without the power of laying
23 taxes to levy money upon us, the history of the colonies and of Great-Britain since their settlement
24 will prove the contrary. He will there find the amazing advantages arising to her from them—The
25 constant exercise of her supremacy—and their filial submission to it, without a single rebellion, or

1 even the thought of one, from the first emigration to this moment—and all these things have happened,
2 without an instance of Great-Britain laying taxes to levy money upon them.
3 How many British authors have remonstrated that the present wealth, power and glory of their
4 country are founded on these colonies?
5 As constantly as streams tend to the ocean, have they been pouring the fruits of all their labours into
6 their mother's lap. Good Heaven! And shall a total oblivion of former tendernesses and blessings be
7 spread over the minds of a wise people, by the sordid acts of intriguing men, who covering their selfish
8 projects under pretences of public good, first enrage their countrymen into a frenzy of passion, and
9 then advance their own influence and interest, by gratifying that passion, which they themselves have
10 barely excited?
11 Hitherto Great-Britain has been contented with her prosperity. Moderation has been the rule of her
12 conduct. But now a generous and humane people that so often has protected the liberty of strangers, is
13 inflamed into an attempt to tear a privilege from her own children, which, if executed, must in their
14 opinion, sink them into slaves: And for what? For a pernicious power, not necessary to her, as her own
15 experience may convince her; but horribly dreadful and detestable to them.
16 It seems extremely probable, that when cool, dispassionate posterity shall consider the affectionate
17 intercourse, the reciprocal benefits, and the unsuspecting confidence, that have subsisted between
18 these colonies and their parent country, for such a length of time, they will execrate with the bitterest
19 curses the infamous memory of those men, whose pestilential ambition, unnecessarily, wantonly, first
20 opened the sources of civil discord, between them; first turned their love into jealousy; and first taught
21 these provinces, filled with grief and anxiety, to enquire,
22 "Mens ubi materna est?"
23 Where is maternal affection.
24 A FARMER.

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1 LETTER VI.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 It may perhaps be objected against the arguments that have been offered to the public concerning the
4 legal power of the parliament, that it has always exercised the power of imposing duties for the
5 purposes of raising a revenue on the productions of these colonies carried to Great-Britain, which may
6 be called a tax on them. To this I answer; that is no more a violation of the rights of the colonies, than
7 their being ordered to carry certain of their productions to Great-Britain, which is no violation at all; it
8 being implied in the relation between them, that the colonies should not carry such commodities to
9 other nations, as should enable them to interfere with the mother country. The duties imposed on these
10 commodities when brought to her, are only a consequence of her paternal right; and if the point is
11 thoroughly examined, will be found to be laid on the people of the mother country, and not at all
12 dangerous to the liberties of the colonies.

13 Whatever these duties are, they must proportionably raise the price of the goods, and consequently
14 the duties must be paid by the consumers. In this light they were considered by the parliament in the
15 25 Char. II. Chap. 7, sec. 2, which says, that the productions of the plantations were carried from one
16 to another free from all customs "while the subjects of this your kingdom of England have paid great
17 customs and impositions for what of them have been spent here, &c." Such duties therefore can never
18 be injurious to the liberties of the colonies.

19 Besides, if Great-Britain exports these commodities again, the duties will injure her own trade, so that
20 she cannot hurt us without plainly and immediately hurting herself; and this is our check against her
21 acting arbitrarily in this respect.

22 It may, perhaps, be further objected, "that it being granted that statutes made for regulating trade are
23 binding upon us, it will be difficult for any persons but the makers of the laws to determine, which of
24 them are made for the regulating of trade, and which for raising a revenue; and that from hence may
25 arise confusion."

1 To this I answer, that the objection is of no force in the present case, or such as resemble it, because the
2 act now in question is formed expressly for the sole purpose of raising a revenue.

3 However, supposing the design of the parliament had not been expressed, the objection seems to me of
4 no weight, with regard to the influence, which those who may make it, might expect it ought to have on
5 the conduct of the colonies.

6 It is true, that impositions for raising a revenue, may be hereafter called regulations of trade, but
7 names will not change the nature of things. Indeed we ought firmly to believe, what is an undoubted
8 truth, confirmed by the unhappy experience of many states heretofore free, that unless the most
9 watchful attention be exerted, a new servitude may be slipped upon us under the sanction of usual and
10 respectable terms.

11 Thus the Cæsars ruined Roman liberty, under the titles of tribunical and dictatorial authorities,—old
12 and venerable dignities, known in the most flourishing times of freedom. In imitation of the same
13 policy, James II. when he meant to establish popery, talked of liberty of conscience, the most sacred of
14 all liberties; and had thereby almost deceived the dissenters into destruction.

15 All artful rulers, who strive to extend their own power beyond its just limits, endeavour to give to their
16 attempts, as much semblance of legality as possible. Those who succeed them may venture to go a
17 little farther; for each new encroachment will be strengthened by a former, "That which is now
18 supported by examples, growing old, will become an example itself," and thus support fresh
19 usurpations.

20 A free people, therefore, can never be too quick in observing, nor too firm in opposing the beginnings
21 of alterations, either in form or reality, respecting institutions formed for their security. The first leads
22 to the last; on the other hand nothing is more certain, than that forms of liberty may be retained,
23 when the substance is gone. In government as well as in religion, "the letter killeth, but the spirit
24 giveth life."

25 I will beg leave to enforce this remark by a few instances. The crown, by the constitution, has the

1 prerogative of creating peers; the existence of that order in due number and dignity, is essential to the
2 constitution; and if the crown did not exercise that prerogative, the peerage must have long since
3 decreased so much, as to have lost its proper influence. Suppose a prince for some unjust purposes,
4 should from time to time advance many needy profligate wretches, to that rank, that all the
5 independance of the house of Lords should be destroyed, there would then be a manifest violation of the
6 constitution, under the appearance of using legal prerogative.

7 The house of Commons claim the privilege of forming all money-bills, and will not suffer either of the
8 other branches of the legislature to add to or alter them; contending that their power, simply extends to
9 an acceptance or rejection of them. This privilege appears to be just; but under pretence of this just
10 privilege, the house of Commons has claimed a licence of tacking to money bills, clauses relating to
11 many things of a totally different kind, and have thus forced them, in a manner, on the crown and
12 lords. This seems to be an abuse of that privilege, and it may be vastly more abused. Suppose a future
13 house; influenced by some displaced discontented demagogues, in a time of danger, should tack to a
14 money bill something so injurious to the king and peers, that they would not assent to it and yet the
15 Commons should obstinately insist on it; the whole kingdom would be exposed to ruin, under the
16 appearance of maintaining a valuable privilege.

17 In these cases it might be difficult for a while to determine, whether the King intended to exercise his
18 prerogative in a constitutional manner or not; or whether the Commons insisted on the demand
19 factitiously, or for the public good: But surely the conduct of the crown, or of the house, would in time
20 sufficiently explain itself.

21 Ought not the people therefore to watch to observe facts? to search into causes? to investigate
22 designs? and have they not a right of judging from the evidence before them, on no slighter points
23 than their liberty and happiness? It would be less than trifling, wherever a British government is
24 established, to make use of any other arguments to prove such a right. It is sufficient to remind the
25 reader of the day on which King William landed at Torbay.

1 I will now apply what has been said to the present question. The nature of any impositions laid by
2 parliament on the colonies, must determine the design in laying them. It may not be easy in every
3 instance to discover that design. Whenever it is doubtful, I think submission cannot be dangerous; nay,
4 it must be right: for, in my opinion, there is no privilege the colonies claim, which they ought, in duty
5 and prudence, more earnestly to maintain and defend, than the authority of the British parliament to
6 regulate the trade of all her dominions. Without this authority, the benefits she enjoys from our
7 commerce, must be lost to her: The blessings we enjoy from our dependance upon her, must be lost to
8 us; her strength must decay; her glory vanish; and she cannot suffer, without our partaking in her
9 misfortune.—"Let us therefore cherish her interest as our own, and give her every thing that it
10 becomes FREEMEN to give or to receive."

11 The nature of any impositions she may lay upon us, may in general be known, considering how far
12 they relate to the preserving, in due order, the connexion between the several parts of
13 the British empire. One thing we may be assured of, which is this; whenever a statute imposes duties
14 on commodities, to be paid only upon their exportation from Great-Britain to these colonies, it is not a
15 regulation of trade, but a design to raise a revenue upon us. Other instances may happen, which it may
16 not be necessary to dwell on. I hope these colonies will never, to their latest existence, want
17 understanding sufficient to discover the intentions of those who rule over them, nor the resolution
18 necessary for asserting their interests. They will always have the same right that all free states have,
19 of judging when their privileges are invaded, and of using all prudent measures for preserving them.
20 "Quocirca vivite fortes Fortiaque adversis opponite pectora rebus"

21 Wherefore keep up your spirits, and gallantly oppose this adverse course of affairs.

22 A FARMER.

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1 LETTER VII.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 This letter is intended more particularly for such of you, whose employment in life may have prevented
4 your attending to the consideration of some points that are of great and public importance. For many
5 such persons there must be even in these colonies, where the inhabitants in general are more
6 intelligent than any other people, as has been remarked by strangers, and it seems with reason.

7 Some of you perhaps, filled as I know your breasts are with loyalty to our most excellent prince, and
8 with love to our dear mother country, may feel yourselves inclined by the affections of your hearts, to
9 approve every action of those whom you so much venerate and esteem.

10 A prejudice thus flowing from goodness of disposition is amiable indeed. I wish it could be indulged
11 without danger. Did I think this possible, the error should have been adopted, not opposed by me. But
12 in truth, all men are subject to the passions and frailties of nature; and therefore whatever regard we
13 entertain for the persons of those who govern us, we should always remember that their conduct as
14 rulers may be influenced by human infirmities.

15 When any laws injurious to these colonies are passed, we cannot, with the least propriety, suppose
16 that any injury was intended us by his Majesty or the Lords. For the assent of the crown and peers to
17 law seems, as far as I am able to judge, to have been vested in them, more for their own security than
18 for any other purpose. On the other hand, it is the particular business of the people to enquire and
19 discover what regulations are useful for themselves, and to digest and present them in the form of bills
20 to the other orders, to have them enacted into laws—Where these laws are to bind themselves, it may
21 be expected that the house of Commons will very carefully consider them: But when they are making
22 laws, that are not designed to bind themselves, we cannot imagine that their deliberations will be as
23 cautious and scrupulous as in their own case.

24 I find that this clause "privately got into an act," for the benefit of Capt. Cole, "to the vast loss of the
25 nation," is foisted into the 3d Anne, chap. 5, intituled, "An act for granting to her Majesty a further

1 subsidy on wines and merchandizes imported," with which it has no more connexion, than with 34th
2 Edw. I. 34th and 35th of Henry VIII. or the 25th of Car. II. which provide that no person shall be taxed
3 but by himself or his representative.]

4 I am told that there is a wonderful address frequently used in carrying points in the house of commons,
5 by persons experienced in these affairs—that opportunities are watched—and sometimes votes are past,
6 that if all the members had been present, would have been rejected by a great majority. Certain it is,
7 that when a powerful and artful man has determined on any measure against these colonies, he has
8 always succeeded in his attempt. Perhaps therefore it will be proper for us, whenever any oppressive
9 act affecting us is past, to attribute it to the inattention of the members of the house of commons, and to
10 the malevolence or ambition of some factious great man, rather than to any other cause.

11 Now I do verily believe, that the late act of parliament imposing duties on paper, &c. was formed by Mr.
12 Grenville and his party, because it is evidently a part of that plan, by which he endeavoured to render
13 himself popular at home; and I do also believe that not one half of the members of the house of
14 commons, even of those who heard it read, did perceive how destructive it was to American freedom.
15 For this reason, as it is usual in Great-Britain, to consider the King's speech, as the speech of the
16 ministry, it may be right here to consider this act as the act of a party.—Perhaps I should speak more
17 properly if I was to use another term.—There are two ways of laying taxes.—One is by imposing a
18 certain sum on particular kinds of property, to be paid by the user or consumer, or by taxing the
19 person at a certain sum; the other is, by imposing a certain sum on particular kinds of property to be
20 paid by the seller.

21 When a man pays the first sort of tax, he knows with certainty that he pays so much money for a tax.
22 The consideration for which he pays it is remote, and it may be does not occur to him. He is sensible
23 too that he is commanded and obliged to pay it as a tax; and therefore people are apt to be displeased
24 with this sort of tax.

25 The other sort of tax is submitted to in a very different manner. The purchaser of any article very

1 seldom reflects that the seller raises his price so as to indemnify him for the tax he has paid. He knows
2 the prices of things are continually fluctuating, and if he thinks about the tax, he thinks at the same
3 time in all probability, that he might have paid as much, if the article he buys had not been taxed. He
4 gets something visible and agreeable for his money, and tax and price are so confounded together, that
5 he cannot separate, or does not chuse to take the trouble of separating them.

6 This mode of taxation therefore is the mode suited to arbitrary and oppressive governments. The love
7 of liberty is so natural to the human heart, that unfeeling tyrants think themselves obliged to
8 accommodate their schemes as much as they can to the appearance of justice and reason, and to
9 deceive those whom they resolve to destroy or oppress, by presenting to them a miserable picture of
10 freedom, when the inestimable original is lost.

11 This policy did not escape the cruel and rapacious Nero. That monster, apprehensive that his crimes
12 might endanger his authority and life, thought proper to do some popular acts to secure the obedience
13 of his subjects. Among other things, says Tacitus, "he remitted the twenty-fifth part of the price on the
14 sale of slaves, but rather in shew than reality; for the seller being ordered to pay it, it became a part of
15 the price to the buyer."

16 This is the reflection of the judicious historian: but the deluded people gave their infamous emperor
17 full credit for his false generosity. Other nations have been treated in the same manner the Romans
18 were. The honest industrious Germans who are settled in different parts of this continent can inform
19 us, that it was this sort of tax that drove them from their native land to our woods, at that time the
20 seats of perfect and undisturbed freedom.

21 Their princes inflamed by the lust of power and the lust of avarice, two furies, that the more hungry
22 they grow, transgressed the bounds, they ought in regard to themselves, to have observed. To keep up
23 the deception in the minds of subjects "there must be," says a very learned author "some proportion
24 between the impost and the value of the commodity; wherefore there ought not to be an excessive
25 duty upon merchandizes of little value. There are countries in which the duty exceeds seventeen or

1 eighteen times the value of the commodity. In this case the prince removes the illusion. His subjects
2 plainly see they are dealt with in an unreasonable manner, which renders them most exquisitely
3 sensible of their slavish situation."

4 From hence it appears that subjects may be ground down into misery by this sort of taxation as well as
5 the other. They may be as much impoverished if their money is taken from them in this way, as in the
6 other; and that it will be taken, may be more evident, by attending to a few more considerations.

7 The merchant, or importer who pays the duty at first, will not consent to be so much money out of
8 pocket. He, therefore, proportionably raises the price of his goods. It may then be said to be a contest
9 between him and the person offering to buy, who shall lose the duty. This must be decided by the nature
10 of the commodities and the purchasers demand for them. If they are mere luxuries, he is at liberty to
11 do as he pleases, and if he buys, he does it voluntarily:

12 But if they are absolute necessities, or conveniences which use and custom have made requisite for
13 the comfort of life, and which he is not permitted, by the power imposing the duty, to get elsewhere,
14 there the seller has a plain advantage, and the buyer must pay the duty. In fact, the seller is nothing
15 less than the collector of the tax for the power that imposed it. If these duties then are extended to
16 necessities and conveniences of life in general, and enormously increased, the people must at length
17 become indeed "most exquisitely sensible of their slavish situation."

18 Their happiness, therefore, entirely depends on the moderation of those who have authority to impose
19 the duties.

20 I shall now apply these observations to the late act of parliament. Certain duties are thereby imposed
21 on paper and glass, &c. imported into these colonies. By the laws of Great-Britain we are prohibited to
22 get these articles from any other part of the world. We cannot at present, nor for many years to come,
23 though we should apply ourselves to these manufactures with the utmost industry, make enough
24 ourselves for our own use. That paper and glass are not only convenient, but absolutely necessary for
25 us, I imagine very few will contend. Some, perhaps, who think mankind grew wicked and luxurious as

1 soon as they found out another way of communicating their sentiments than by speech, and another
2 way of dwelling than in caves, may advance so whimsical an opinion. But I presume nobody will take
3 the unnecessary trouble of refuting them.

4 From these remarks I think it evident, that we must use paper and glass, that what we use must
5 be British, and that we must pay the duties imposed unless those who sell these articles are so generous
6 as to make us presents of the duties they pay, which is not to be expected.

7 Some persons may think this act of no consequence, because the duties are so small. A fatal error. That
8 is the very circumstance most alarming to me. For I am convinced that the authors of this law, would
9 never have obtained an act to raise so trifling a sum, as it must do, had they not intended by it to
10 establish a precedent for future use. To console ourselves with the smallness of the duties, is to walk
11 deliberately into the snare that is set for us, praising the neatness of the workmanship. Suppose the
12 duties, imposed by the late act, could be paid by these distressed colonies, with the utmost ease, and
13 that the purposes, to which they are to be applied, were the most reasonable and equitable that could
14 be conceived, the contrary of which I hope to demonstrate before these letters are concluded, yet even
15 in such a supposed case, these colonies ought to regard the act with abhorrence. For who are a free
16 people? not those over whom government is reasonably and equitably exercised but those who live
17 under a government, so constitutionally checked and controuled, that proper provision is made
18 against its being otherwise exercised. The late act is founded on the destruction of this constitutional
19 security.

20 If the parliament have a right to lay a duty of four shillings and eight pence on a hundred weight of
21 glass, or a ream of paper, they have a right to lay a duty of any other sum on either. They may raise the
22 duty as the author before quoted says, has been done in some countries, till it "exceeds seventeen or
23 eighteen times the value of the commodity." In short, if they have a right to levy a tax of one
24 penny upon us, they have a right to levy a million upon us. For where does their right stop? At any
25 given number of pence, shillings, or pounds? To attempt to limit their right, after granting it to exist

1 at all, is as contrary to reason, as granting it to exist at all is contrary to justice. If they have any right
2 to tax us, then, whether our own money shall continue in our own pockets, or not, depends no longer
3 on us, but on them. "There is nothing which we can call our own", or to use the words of Mr. Locke,
4 "What property have" we "in that, which another may, by right, take, when he pleases, to himself."
5 These duties, which will inevitably be levied upon us, and which are now levying upon us, are expressly
6 laid for the sole purpose of taking money. This is the true definition of taxes. They are therefore taxes.
7 This money is to be taken from us. We are therefore taxed. Those who are taxed without their own
8 consent, given by themselves, or their representatives, are slaves. We are taxed without our own
9 consent given by ourselves, or our representatives. We are therefore—I speak it with grief—I speak it
10 with indignation—we are slaves.

11 "Miserabile vulgus."

12 A miserable tribe.

13 A FARMER.

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1 LETTER VIII.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 In my opinion, a dangerous example is set in the last act relating to these colonies. The power of
4 parliament to levy money upon us for raising a revenue, is therein avowed and exerted. Regarding the
5 act on this single principle, I must again repeat, and I think it my duty to repeat, that to me it appears
6 to be unconstitutional.

7 No man, who considers the conduct of parliament since the repeal of the Stamp-act, and the disposition
8 of many people at home, can doubt, that the chief object of attention there, is, to use Mr. Grenville's
9 expression, "providing that the dependance and obedience of the colonies be asserted and maintained."
10 Under the influence of this notion, instantly on repealing the Stamp-act, an act passed, declaring the
11 power of parliament to bind these colonies in all cases whatever. This, however, was only planting a
12 barren tree, that cast a shade indeed over the colonies, but yielded no fruit. It being determined to
13 enforce the authority on which the Stamp-act was founded, the parliament having never renounced
14 the right, as Mr. Pitt advised them to do; and it being thought proper to disguise that authority in such
15 a manner, as not again to alarm the colonies; some little time was required to find a method, by which
16 both these points should be united. At last the ingenuity of Mr. Greenville and his party accomplished
17 the matter, as it was thought, in "An act for granting certain duties in the British colonies and
18 plantations in America, for allowing drawbacks, &c. which is the title of the act laying duties on paper,
19 &c."

20 The parliament having several times before imposed duties to be paid in America, it was expected no
21 doubt, that the repetition of such a measure would be passed over as an usual thing. But to have done
22 this, without expressly asserting and maintaining "the power of parliament to take our money without
23 our consent," and to apply it as they please, would not have been sufficiently declarative of its
24 supremacy, nor sufficiently depressive of American freedom.

25 Therefore it is, that in this memorable act we find it expressly "provided" that money shall be levied

1 upon us without our consent, for purposes, that render it, if possible, more dreadful than the Stamp-act.
2 That act, alarming as it was, declared, the money thereby to be raised, should be applied "towards
3 defraying the expences of defending, protecting and securing the British colonies and plantations in
4 America:" And it is evident from the whole act, that by the word "British" were intended colonies and
5 plantations settled by British people, and not generally, those subject to the British crown. That act
6 therefore seemed to have something gentle and kind in its intention, and to aim only at our own welfare:
7 But the act now objected to, imposes duties upon the British colonies, "to defray the expences of
8 defending, protecting and securing his Majesty's dominions in America."
9 What a change of words! What an incomputable addition to the expences intended by the Stamp-act!
10 "His Majesty's dominions" comprehended not only the British colonies; but also the conquered
11 provinces of Canada and Florida, and the British garrisons of Nova-Scotia; for these do not deserve the
12 name of colonies.
13 What justice is there in making us pay for "defending, protecting and securing" these places? What
14 benefit can we, or have we ever derived from them? None of them was conquered for us; nor will "be
15 defended, protected and secured" for us.
16 In fact, however advantageous the subduing or keeping any of these countries may be to Great-Britain,
17 the acquisition is greatly injurious to these colonies. Our chief property consists in lands. These would
18 have been of a much greater value, if such prodigious additions had not been made to the British
19 territories on this continent. The natural increase of our own people, if confined within the colonies,
20 would have raised the value still higher and higher, every fifteen or twenty years. Besides, we should
21 have lived more compactly together, and have been therefore more able to resist any enemy.
22 But now the inhabitants will be thinly scattered over an immense region, as those who want
23 settlements, will chuse to make new ones, rather than pay great prices for old ones.
24 These are the consequences to the colonies of the hearty assistance they gave to Great-Britain in the
25 late war.—A war, undertaken solely for her own benefit. The objects of it were, the securing to herself

1 the rich tracts of land on the back of these colonies, with the Indian trade, and Nova-Scotia with the
2 fishery. These, and much more has that kingdom gained; but the inferior animals that hunted with the
3 Lion, have been amply rewarded for all the sweat and blood their loyalty cost them, by the honour of
4 having sweated and bled in such company.

5 I will not go so far as to say, that Canada and Nova-Scotia are curbs on New-England; the chain of forts
6 through the back woods, on the middle provinces; and Florida, on the rest: but I will venture to say, that
7 if the products of Canada, Nova-Scotia and Florida, deserve any consideration, the two first of them are
8 only rivals of our northern colonies and the other of our southern.

9 It has been said, that without the conquest of these countries, the colonies could not have been
10 "protected, defended, and secured;" If that is true, it may with as much propriety be said, that Great-
11 Britain could not have been "defended, protected, and secured" without that conquest: for the colonies
12 are parts of her empire, which it is as much concerns her as them to keep out of the hands of any other
13 power.

14 But these colonies when they were much weaker, defended themselves, before this conquest was made;
15 and could again do it, against any that might properly be called their enemies. If France and Spain
16 indeed should attack them, as members of the British empire perhaps they might be distressed; but it
17 would be in a British quarrel.

18 The largest account I have seen of the number of people in Canada, does not make them exceed
19 90,000. Florida can hardly be said to have any inhabitants—It is computed that there are in our
20 colonies, 3,000,000.—Our force therefore must encrease with a disproportion to the growth of their
21 strength, that would render us very safe.

22 This being the state of the case, I cannot think it just, that these colonies, labouring under so many
23 misfortunes, should be loaded with taxes, to maintain countries not only not useful, but hurtful to
24 them. The support of Canada and Florida cost yearly, it is said, half a million sterling. From hence we
25 may make some guess of the load that is to be laid upon us; for we are not only to "defend, protect, and

1 secure" them, but also to make "an adequate provision for defraying the charge of the administration of
2 justice and the support of civil government, in such provinces where it shall be found necessary.
3 Not one of the provinces of Canada, Nova-Scotia, or Florida, has ever defrayed these expences within
4 itself: And if the duties imposed by the last statute are collected, all of them together, according to the
5 best information I can get, will not pay one-quarter as much as Pennsylvania alone. So that the British
6 colonies are to be drained of the rewards of their labour, to cherish the scorching sands of Florida, and
7 the icy rocks of Canada and Nova-Scotia, which never will return to us one farthing that we send to
8 them.

9 Great-Britain—I mean the ministry in Great-Britain, has cantoned Canada and Florida out into five or
10 six governments, and may form as many more. She now has fourteen or fifteen regiments on this
11 continent; and may send over as many more. To make "an adequate provision" for all these expences,
12 is, no doubt, to be the inheritance of the colonies.

13 Can any man believe that the duties upon paper, &c. are the last that will be laid for these purposes? It
14 is in vain to hope, that because it is imprudent to lay duties on the
15 exportation of manufactures from a mother country to colonies, as it may promote manufactures
16 among them, that this consideration will prevent them.

17 Ambitious, artful men have made the measure popular, and whatever injustice or destruction will
18 attend it in the opinion of the colonists, at home it will be thought just and salutary.

19 The people of Great-Britain will be told, and they have been told, that they are sinking under an
20 immense debt—that great part of this debt has been contracted in defending the colonies—that these
21 are so ungrateful and undutiful, that they will not contribute one mite to its payment—nor even to the
22 support of the army now kept up for their "protection and security"—that they are rolling in wealth,
23 and are of so bold and republican a spirit, that they are aiming at independence—that the only way to
24 retain them in "obedience" is to keep a strict watch over them, and to draw off part of their riches in
25 taxes—and that every burden laid upon them is taking off so much from Great-Britain—These

1 assertions will be generally believed, and the people will be persuaded that they cannot be too angry
2 with their colonies, as that anger will be profitable to themselves.

3 In truth, Great-Britain alone receives any benefit from Canada, Nova-Scotia, and Florida; and therefore
4 she alone ought to maintain them.—The old maxim of the law is drawn from reason and justice, and
5 never could be more properly applied, than in this case.

6 "Qui sentit, commodum, sentire debet et onus."

7 They who feel the benefit, ought to feel the burden.

8 A FARMER.

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1 LETTER IX.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 I have made some observations on the purposes for which money is to be levied upon us by the late act
4 of parliament. I shall now offer to your consideration some further reflections on that subject; and,
5 unless I am greatly mistaken, if these purposes are accomplished, according to the exprest intention of
6 the act, they will be found effectually to supersede that authority in our respective assemblies, which is
7 most essential to liberty. The question is not whether some branches shall be lopt off—The ax is laid to
8 the root of the tree; and the whole body must infallibly perish, if we remain idle spectators of the work.
9 No free people ever existed, or ever can exist, without, keeping, to use a common but strong expression,
10 "the purse strings" in their own hands. Where this is the case, they have a constitutional check upon
11 the administration, which may thereby be brought into order without violence: but where such a
12 power is not lodged in the people, oppression proceeds uncontrouled in its career, till the governed,
13 transported into rage, seeks redress in the midst of blood and confusion.

14 The elegant and ingenious Mr. Hume, speaking of the Anglo-Norman government, says "princes and
15 ministers were too ignorant to be themselves sensible of the advantages attending an equitable
16 administration; and there was no established council or assembly which could protect the people, and,
17 by withdrawing supplies, regularly and peaceably admonish the King of his duty, and ensure the
18 execution of the laws."

19 Thus this great man, whose political reflections are so much admired, makes this power one of the
20 foundations of liberty.

21 The English history abounds with instances, proving that this is the proper and successful way to
22 obtain redress of grievances. How often have Kings and ministers endeavoured to throw off this legal
23 curb upon them, by attempting to raise money by a variety of inventions, under pretence of law,
24 without having recourse to parliament?

25 And how often have they been brought to reason, and peaceably obliged to do justice, by the exertion

1 of this constitutional authority of the people, vested in their representatives?

2 The inhabitants of these colonies have on numberless occasions, reaped the benefits of this authority

3 lodged in their assemblies.

4 It has been for a long time, and now is, a constant instruction to all governors, to obtain a permanent

5 support for the officers of government. But as the author of the administration of the colonies says,

6 "this order of the crown is generally, if not universally, rejected by the legislatures of the colonies."

7 They perfectly know how much their grievances would be regarded, if they had no other method of

8 engaging attention, than by complaining. Those who rule, are extremely apt to think well of the

9 constructions made by themselves, in support of their own power. These are frequently erroneous and

10 pernicious to those they govern—Dry remonstrances, to shew that such constructions are wrong and

11 oppressive, carry very little weight with them, in the opinion of persons, who gratify their own

12 inclinations in making these constructions. They cannot understand the reasoning that opposes their

13 power and desire: but let it be made their interest to understand such reasoning—and a wonderful

14 light is instantly thrown on the matter; and then rejected remonstrances become as clear as "proof of

15 holy writ."

16 The three most important articles, that our assemblies, or any legislatures can provide for, are, first

17 the defence of the society: secondly—the administration of justice: and, thirdly, the support of civil

18 government.

19 Nothing can properly regulate the expence of making provision for these occasions, but the necessities

20 of the society; its abilities; the conveniency of the modes of levying money among them; the manner in

21 which the laws have been executed; and the conduct of the officers of government; all which are

22 circumstances that cannot possibly be properly known, but by the society itself; or, if they should be

23 known, will not, probably, be properly considered, but by that society.

24 If money may be raised upon us, by others, without our consent, for our "defence," those who are the

25 judges in levying it, must also be the judges in applying it. Of consequence, the money said to be taken

1 from us for our defence, may be employed to our injury. We may be chained in by a line of fortifications:
2 obliged to pay for building and maintaining them; and be told that they are for our defence. With what
3 face can we dispute the fact, after having granted, that those who apply the money, had a right to levy
4 it; for, surely, it is much easier for their wisdom to understand how to apply it in the best manner, than
5 how to levy it in the best manner. Besides, the right of levying is of infinitely more consequence, than
6 that of applying it. The people of England, that would burst out into fury, if the crown should attempt to
7 levy money by its own authority, have assigned to the crown the application of money.

8 As to "the administration of justice"—the judges ought, in a well regulated state, to be equally
9 independant of the legislative powers. Thus, in England, judges hold their commissions from the crown
10 "during good behaviour;" and have salaries, suitable to their dignity, settled on them by parliament.
11 The purity of the courts of law, since this establishment, is a proof of the wisdom with which it was
12 made.

13 But, in these colonies, how fruitless has been every attempt to have the judges appointed during good
14 behaviour; yet whoever considers the matter will soon perceive, that such commissions are beyond all
15 comparison more necessary in these colonies, than they are in England.

16 The chief danger to the subject there, arose from the arbitrary designs of the crown; but here, the time
17 may come, when we may have to contend with the designs of the crown, and of a mighty kingdom.

18 What then will be our chance, when the laws of life and death, are to be spoken by judges, totally
19 dependant on that crown and kingdom—sent over,

20 perhaps, from thence—filled with British prejudice—and backed by a standing army, supported out of
21 our own pockets, to "assert and maintain" our own "dependance and obedience."

22 But supposing, that through the extreme lenity that will prevail in the government, through all future
23 ages, these colonies never will behold any thing like the campaign of chief justice Jeffereys, yet what
24 innumerable acts of injustice may be committed, and how fatally may the principles of liberty be
25 sapped by a succession of judges utterly independant of the people? Before such judges, the supple

1 wretches, who cheerfully join in avowing sentiments inconsistent with freedom, will always meet with
2 smiles: while the honest and brave men, who disdain to sacrifice their native land to their own
3 advantage, but on every occasion, boldly vindicate her cause, will constantly be regarded with frowns.
4 There are two other considerations, relating to this head, that deserve the most serious attention.
5 By the late act the officers of the customs are impowered "to enter into any house, warehouse, shop,
6 cellar, or other place, in the British colonies or plantations in America, to search for, or seize prohibited
7 or unaccustomed goods," &c. on "writs granted by the inferior or supreme court of justice, having
8 jurisdiction within such colony or plantation respectively."
9 If we only reflect that the judges of these courts are to be during pleasure—that they are to have
10 "adequate provision" made for them, which is to continue during their complisant behaviour—that they
11 may be stranger to these colonies—what an engine of oppression may this authority be in such hands?
12 I am well aware that writs of this kind may be granted at home, under the seal of the court of
13 exchequer: But I know also that the greatest asserters of the rights of Englishmen, have always
14 strenuously contended, that such a power was dangerous to freedom, and expressly contrary to the
15 common law, which ever regarded a man's house, as his castle, or a place of perfect security.
16 If such a power is in the least degree dangerous there, it must be utterly destructive to liberty here.—
17 For the people there have two securities against the undue exercise of this power by the crown, which
18 are wanting with us, if the late act takes place. In the first place, if any injustice is done there, the
19 person injured may bring his action against the offender, and have it tried by independant judges, who
20 are[38] no parties in committing the injury. Here he must have it tried before dependant judges, being
21 the men who granted the writ.
22 To say that the cause is to be tried by a jury can never reconcile men, who have any idea of freedom to
23 such a power.—For we know, that sheriffs in almost every colony on this continent, are totally
24 dependant on the crown; and packing of juries has been frequently practiced even in the capital of the
25 British empire. Even if juries are well inclined, we have too many instances of the influence of

1 overbearing unjust judges upon them. The brave and wise men who accomplished the revolution,
2 thought the independency of judges essential to freedom.

3 The other security which the people have at home, but which we shall want here, is this.—If this power
4 is abused there, the parliament, the grand resource of the oppressed people, is ready to afford relief.
5 Redress of grievances must precede grants of money. But what regard can we expect to have paid to
6 our assemblies, when they will not hold even the puny privilege of French parliaments—that of
7 registering the edicts, that take away our money, before they are put in execution.

8 The second consideration above hinted at, is this—There is a confusion in our laws that is quite
9 unknown in Great-Britain. As this cannot be described in a more clear or exact manner, than has been
10 done by the ingenious author of the history of New-York, I beg leave to use his words. "The state of our
11 laws opens a door to much controversy. The uncertainty which respect them, renders property
12 precarious, and greatly exposes us to the arbitrary decision of unjust judges.

13 The common law of England is generally received, together with such statutes, as were enacted before
14 we had a legislature of our own; but our courts exercise a sovereign authority, in determining what
15 parts of the common and statute law ought to be extended: For it must be admitted, that the difference
16 of circumstances necessarily requires us, in some cases, to reject the determination of both. In many
17 instances they have also extended even acts of parliament, passed since we had a distinct legislature,
18 which is greatly adding to our confusion. The practice of our courts is no less uncertain than the law.
19 Some of the English rules are adopted, others rejected. Two things therefore seem to be absolutely
20 necessary for the public security. First the passing an act for settling the extent of the English laws.
21 Secondly, that the courts ordain a general set of rules for the regulation of the practice."

22 How easy will it be under this "state of our laws" for an artful judge to act in the most arbitrary
23 manner, and yet cover his conduct under specious pretences, and how difficult will it be for the injured
24 people to obtain redress, may be readily perceived. We may take a voyage of three thousand miles to
25 complain; and after the trouble and hazard we have undergone, we may be told, that the collection of

1 the revenue and maintenance of the prerogative, must not be discouraged.—And if the misbehaviour
2 is so gross as to admit of no justification, it may be said that it was an error in judgment only, arising
3 from the confusion of our laws, and the zeal of the King's servants to do their duty.

4 If the commissions of judges are during the pleasure of the crown, yet if their salaries are during the
5 pleasure of the people, there will be some check upon their conduct. Few men will consent to draw on
6 themselves the hatred and contempt of those among whom we live, for the empty honour of being
7 judges. It is the sordid love of gain that tempts men to turn their backs on virtue, and pay their homage
8 where they ought not.

9 As to the third particular, the "support of civil government," few words will be sufficient.

10 Every man of the least understanding must know, that the executive power may be exercised in a
11 manner so disagreeable and harassing to the people, that it is absolutely requisite, they should be
12 enabled by the gentlest method which human policy has yet been ingenious enough to invent, that is
13 by the shutting their hands, to "admonish" (as Mr. Hume says) certain persons "of their duty."

14 What shall we now think, when, upon looking into the late act, we find the assemblies of these
15 provinces thereby stript of their authority on these several heads? The declared intention of that act
16 is, "that a revenue should be raised in his Majesty's dominions in America, for making a more certain
17 and adequate provision for defraying the charge of the administration of justice, and the support of
18 civil government, in such provinces where it shall be found necessary; and towards further defraying
19 the expences of defending, protecting, and securing the said dominions," &c.

20 Let the reader pause here one moment, and reflect—whether the colony in which he lives, has not
21 made such "certain and adequate provisions" for these purposes, as is by the colony judged suitable to
22 its abilities, and all other circumstances. Then let him reflect—whether, if this act takes place, money
23 is not to be raised on that colony without its consent to make provision for these purposes, which it
24 does not judge to be suitable to its abilities, and all other circumstances. Lastly, let him reflect—
25 whether the people of

1 that country are not in a state of the most abject slavery, whose property may be taken from them
2 under the notion of right, when they have refused to give it. For my part, I think I have good reason for
3 vindicating the honour of the assemblies on this continent, by publicly asserting, that they have made
4 as "certain and adequate provision" for the purposes above-mentioned, as they ought to have made; and
5 that it should not be presumed, that they will not do it hereafter. Why then should these most important
6 truths be wrested out of their hands? Why should they not now be permitted to enjoy that authority,
7 which they have exercised from the first settlement of these colonies? Why should they be scandalized
8 by this innovation, when their respective provinces are now, and will be for several years, labouring
9 under loads of debts imposed on them for the very purposes now spoken of? Why should the
10 inhabitants of all these colonies be with the utmost indignity treated, as a herd of despicable wretches,
11 so utterly void of common sense, that they will not even make "adequate provision" for the
12 "administration of justice" and "the support of civil government" among them, for their "own defence"—
13 though without such "provision" every people must inevitably be overwhelmed with anarchy and
14 destruction? Is it possible to form an idea of slavery more complete, more miserable, more disgraceful,
15 than that of a people, where justice is administered, government exercised, and a standing army
16 maintained, at the expence of the people, and yet without the least dependance upon them? If we can
17 find no relief from this infamous situation, let Mr. Grenville set his fertile fancy again to work, and as
18 by one exertion of it, he has stripped us of our property and liberty, let him by another deprive us of
19 our understanding too, that unconscious of what we have been or are, and ungoaded by tormenting
20 reflections, we may tamely bow down our necks with all the stupid serenity of servitude, to any
21 drudgery, which our lords and masters may please to command.—

22 When the "charges of the administration of justice,"—"the support of civil government;"—and "the
23 expences of defending protecting and securing" us, are provided for, I should be glad to know upon
24 what occasion the crown will ever call our assemblies together. Some few of them may meet of their
25 own accord, by virtue of their charters: But what will they have to do when they are met? To what

1 shadows will they be reduced? The men, whose deliberations heretofore had an influence on every
2 matter relating to the liberty and happiness of themselves and their constituents, and whose authority
3 in domestic affairs, at least, might well be compared to that of Roman senators, will now find their
4 deliberations of no more consequence than those of constables.—They may perhaps be allowed to make
5 laws for yoking of hogs, or pounding of stray cattle. Their influence will hardly be permitted to extend
6 so high as the keeping roads in repair, as that business may more properly be executed by those who
7 receive the public cash.

8 One most memorable example in history is so applicable to the point now insisted on, that it will form a
9 just conclusion of the observations that have been made.

10 Spain was once free. Their Cortes resembled our parliament. No money could be raised on the subject,
11 without their consent. One of their Kings having received a grant from them to maintain a war against
12 the Moors, desired, that if the sum which they had given, should not be sufficient, he might be allowed
13 for that emergency only, to have more money, without assembling the Cortes. The request was
14 violently opposed by the best and wisest men in the assembly. It was however, complied with by the
15 votes of a majority; and this single concession was a precedent for other concessions of the like kinds,
16 until, at last, the crown obtained a general power for raising money in cases of necessity. From that
17 period the Cortes ceased to be useful, and the people ceased to be free.

18 “Venienti occurrite morbo.”

19 Oppose a disease at its beginning.—

20 A FARMER.

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1 LETTER X.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 The consequences, mentioned in the last letter, will not be the utmost limits of our misery and infamy.

4 We feel too sensibly that any[39] ministerial measures, relating to these colonies, are soon carried
5 successfully thro' the parliament. Certain prejudices operate there so strongly against us, that it might
6 justly be questioned, whether all the provinces united, will ever be able effectually to call to an account,
7 before the parliament, any minister who shall abuse the power by the late act given to the crown in
8 America. He may divide the spoils torn from us, in what manner he pleases; and we shall have no way
9 of making him responsible. If he should order, that every Governor, should have a yearly salary of
10 5000l. sterling, every chief justice of 3000l. every inferior officer in proportion; and should then
11 reward the most profligate, ignorant, or needy dependants on himself, or his friends with places of the
12 greatest trust because they were of the greatest profit, this would be called an arrangement in
13 consequence of the "adequate provision for defraying the charge of the administration of justice, and
14 the support of the civil government." And if the taxes should prove at any time insufficient to answer
15 all the expences of the numberless offices, which ministers may please to create, surely the house of
16 Commons would be too "modest" to contradict a minister who should tell them, it was become
17 necessary to lay a new tax upon the colonies, for the laudable purpose of "defraying the charges of the
18 administration of justice, and the support of civil government" among them. Thus in fact we shall be
19 taxed by ministers.

20 We may perceive, from the example of Ireland, how eager ministers are to seize upon any settled
21 revenue, and apply it in supporting their own power.—Happy are the men, and happy are the people,
22 who grow wise by the misfortune of others. Earnestly, my dear countrymen, do I beseech the author of
23 all good gifts, that you may grow wise in this manner: And, if I may be allowed to take the liberty, I beg
24 leave to recommend to you in general, as the best method of obtaining wisdom, diligently to study the
25 histories of other countries. You will there find all the arts, that can possibly be practiced by cunning

1 rulers, or false patriots among yourselves, so fully delineated, that changing names, the account would
2 serve for your own times.

3 It is pretty well known on this continent, that Ireland has, with a regular consistence of injustice, been
4 cruelly treated by ministers in the article of pensions; but there are some alarming circumstances
5 relating to that subject, which I wish to have better known among us. The revenue of the crown there,
6 arises principally from the excise granted "for pay of the army, and defraying other public charges in
7 defence and preservation of the kingdom"—from the tonnage and additional poundage granted "for
8 protecting the trade of the kingdom at sea, and augmenting the public revenue" from the hearth-money
9 granted, as a "public revenue for public charges and expences." There are some other branches of the
10 revenue, concerning which there is not any express appropriation of them for public service, but
11 which were plainly so intended.

12 Of these branches of the revenue, the crown is only a trustee for the public. They are unalienable; they
13 are inapplicable to any other purposes, but those for which they were established; and therefore are
14 not legally chargeable with pensions.

15 There is another kind of revenue, which is a private revenue. This is not limited to any public uses; but
16 the crown has the same property in it, that any person has in his estate.

17 This does not amount at the most to fifteen thousand pounds a year, probably not to seven; and it is the
18 only revenue that can legally be charged with pensions. If ministers were accustomed to regard the
19 rights or happiness of the people, the pensions in Ireland would not exceed the sum just mentioned:
20 but long since have they exceeded that limit, and in December, 1765, a motion was made in the House
21 of Commons in that kingdom, to address his Majesty, on the great increase of pensions on the Irish
22 establishment, amounting to the sum of £.158,685 in the last two years.

23 Attempts have been made to gloss over these gross incroachments, by this specious argument,—"That
24 expending a competent part of the public revenue in pensions, from a principle of charity or
25 generosity, adds to the dignity of the crown, and is, therefore, useful to the public." To give this

1 argument any weight, it must appear that the pensions proceed from "charity or generosity" only—And
2 that it "adds to the dignity of the crown" to act directly contrary to law.

3 From this conduct towards Ireland, in open violation of law, we may easily foresee what we may expect,
4 when a minister will have the whole revenue of America, in his own hands, to be disposed of at his own
5 pleasure. For all the monies raised by the late act are to be "applied, by virtue of warrants under the
6 sign manual, countersigned by the high treasurer, or any three of the commissioners of the treasury."
7 The "residue" indeed, is to be paid "into the receipt of the exchequer, and to be disposed of by
8 parliament." So that a minister will have nothing to do but to take care that there shall be no "residue,"
9 and he is superior to all controul.

10 Besides the burden of pensions in Ireland, which have enormously encreased within these few years,
11 almost all the offices, in that poor kingdom, have, since the commencement of the present century, and
12 now are bestowed upon strangers. For though the merit of those born there justly raises them to
13 places of high trust, when they go abroad, as all Europe can witness, yet he is an uncommonly lucky
14 Irishman, who can get a good post in his native country.

15 When I consider the manner in which that island has been uniformly depressed for so many years
16 past, with this pernicious particularity of their parliament continuing as long as the crown pleases, I
17 am astonished to observe such a love of liberty still animating that loyal and generous nation; and
18 nothing can raise higher my idea of the integrity and public spirit of the people who have preserved
19 the sacred fire of freedom from being extinguished though the altar, on which it burned, has been
20 thrown down.

21 In the same manner shall we unquestionably be treated, as soon as the late taxes, laid upon us, shall
22 make posts in the "government," and the "administration of justice," here, worth the attention of
23 persons of influence in Great Britain. We know enough already to satisfy us of this truth. But this will
24 not be the worst part of our case.

25 The principals in all great offices will reside in England, make some paltry allowance to deputies for

1 doing the business here. Let any man consider what an exhausting drain this must be upon us, when
2 ministers are possessed of the power of affixing what salaries they please to posts, and he must be
3 convinced how destructive the late act must be. The injured kingdom, lately mentioned, can tell us the
4 mischiefs of absentees; and we may perceive already the same disposition taking place with us. The
5 government of New York has been exercised by a deputy. That of Virginia is now held so; and we know
6 of a number of secretaryships, collectorships, and other offices held in the same manner.

7 True it is, that if the people of Great-Britain were not too much blinded by the passions, that have been
8 artfully excited in their breasts, against their dutiful children, the colonists, these considerations would
9 be nearly as alarming to them as to us. The influence of the crown was thought, by wise men many
10 years ago, too great, by reason of the multitude of pensions and places bestowed by it; these have
11 vastly increased since and perhaps it would be no difficult matter to prove that the people have
12 decreased.

13 Surely, therefore, those who wish the welfare of their country, ought seriously to reflect what may be
14 the consequence of such a new creation of offices, in the disposal of the crown. The army, the
15 administration of justice, and the civil government here, with such salaries as the crown shall please
16 to annex, will extend ministerial influence, as much beyond its former bounds, as the late war did the
17 British dominions.

18 But whatever the people of Great-Britain may think on this occasion, I hope the people of these
19 colonies will unanimously join in this sentiment, that the late act of parliament is injurious to their
20 liberty; and that this sentiment will unite them in a firm opposition to it, in the same manner as the
21 dread of the Stamp-act did.

22 Some persons may imagine the sums to be raised by it, are but small, and therefore may be inclined to
23 acquiesce under it. A conduct more dangerous to freedom, as before has been observed, can never be
24 adopted. Nothing is wanted at home but a precedent, the force of which shall be established, by the
25 tacit submission of the colonies. With what zeal was the statute erecting the post-office, and another

1 relating to the recovery of debts in America, urged and tortured, as precedents in the support of the
2 Stamp-act, though wholly inapplicable. If the parliament succeeds in this attempt, other statutes will
3 impose other duties. Instead of taxing ourselves as we have been accustomed to do from the first
4 settlement of these provinces; all our useful taxes will be converted into parliamentary taxes on our
5 importations; and thus the parliament will levy upon us such sums of money as they chuse to take,
6 without any other limitation than their pleasure.

7 We know how much labour and care have been bestowed by these colonies, in laying taxes in such a
8 manner, that they should be most easy to the people, by being laid on the proper articles; most equal, by
9 being proportioned to every man's circumstances; and cheapest by the method directed for collecting
10 them.

11 But parliamentary taxes will be laid on us without any consideration, whether there is any eassier
12 mode. The only point regarded will be, the certainty of levying the taxes, and not the convenience of
13 the people, on whom they are to be levied, and therefore all statutes on this head will be such as will be
14 most likely, according to the favourite phrase, "to execute themselves."

15 Taxes in every free state have been, and ought to be as exactly proportioned, as is possible, to the
16 abilities of those who are to pay them. They cannot otherwise be just. Even a Hottentot could
17 comprehend the unreasonableness, of making a poor man pay as much for defending the property of a
18 rich man, as the rich man pays himself.

19 Let any person look into the late act of parliament, and he will immediately perceive, that the
20 immense estates of Lord Fairfax, Lord Baltimore, and our proprietors, which are amongst "his
21 Majesty's other dominions" to be "defended, protected and secured" by that act will not pay a single
22 farthing of the duties thereby imposed, except Lord Fairfax wants some of his windows glazed. Lord
23 Baltimore, and our proprietors are quite secure, as they live in England.

24 I mention these particular cases as striking instances, how far the late act is a deviation from that
25 principle of justice, which has so constantly distinguished our own laws on this continent.

1 The third consideration with our continental assemblies in laying taxes has been the method of
2 collecting them. This has been done by a few officers under the inspection of the respective assemblies,
3 with moderate allowances. No more was raised from the subject, than was used for the intended
4 purposes. But by the late act, a minister may appoint as many officers as he pleases for collecting the
5 taxes; may assign them what salaries he thinks "adequate" and they are to be subject to no inspection
6 but his own.

7 In short, if the late act of parliament takes effect, these colonies must dwindle down into "common
8 corporations," as their enemies in the debates concerning the repeal of the Stamp-act, strenuously
9 insisted they were: and it is not improbable, that some future historians will thus record our fall.

10 "The eighth year of this reign was distinguished by a very memorable event, the American colonies
11 then submitting for the first time, to be taxed by the British parliament. An attempt of this kind had
12 been made two years before, but was defeated by the vigorous exertions of the several provinces in
13 defence of their liberties. Their behaviour on that occasion rendered their name very celebrated for a
14 short time all over Europe; all states being extremely attentive to a dispute between Great-Britain and
15 so considerable a part of her dominions. For as she was thought to be grown too powerful by the
16 successful conclusion of the late war she had been engaged in, it was hoped by many, that as it had
17 happened before to other kingdoms, civil discords would afford opportunities of revenging all the
18 injuries supposed to be received from her. However the cause of dissention was removed by a repeal of
19 the statute, that had given offense. This affair rendered the submissive conduct of the colonies so soon
20 after, the more extraordinary; there being no difference between the modes of taxation which they
21 opposed, and that to which they submitted, but this, that by the first, they were to be continually
22 reminded that they were taxed, by certain marks stampd on every piece of paper or parchment, they
23 used. The authors of that statute triumphed greatly on this conduct of the colonies, and insisted that if
24 the people of Great-Britain, had persisted in enforcing it, the Americans would have been in a few
25 months so fatigued with the efforts of patriotism, that they would quickly have yielded obedience.

1 "Certain it is, that though they had before their eyes so many illustrious examples in their mother
2 country, of the constant success attending firmness and perseverance in opposition to dangerous
3 encroachments on liberty, yet they quietly gave up a point of the last importance. From thence the
4 decline of their freedom began, and its decay was extremely rapid; for as money was always raised
5 upon them by the parliament, their assemblies grew immediately useless and in a short time
6 contemptible; and in less than one hundred years, the people sunk down into that tameness and
7 supineness of spirit by which they still continue to be distinguished."

8 Et majores vestros et posteros cogitate.

9 Remember your ancestors and your posterity.

10 A FARMER.

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1 LETTER XI.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 I have several times, in the course of these letters, mentioned the late act of parliament, as being the
4 foundation of future measures injurious to these colonies; and the belief of this truth I wish to prevail,
5 because I think it necessary to our safety.

6 A perpetual jealousy respecting liberty, is absolutely requisite in all free states. The very texture of
7 their constitution, in mixt governments, demands it. For the cautions with which power is distributed
8 among the several orders, imply, that each has that share which is proper for the general welfare, and
9 therefore, that any further imposition must be pernicious. Machiavel employs a whole chapter in his
10 discourses, to prove that a state, to be long lived, must be frequently corrected, and reduced to its first
11 principles.

12 But of all states that have existed, there never was any, in which this jealousy could be more proper
13 than in these colonies. For the government here is not only mixt, but dependant, which circumstance
14 occasions a peculiarity in its form, of a very delicate nature.

15 Two reasons induce me to desire, that this spirit of apprehension may be always kept up among us, in
16 its utmost vigilance. The first is this, that as the happiness of these provinces indubitably consists in
17 their connection with Great-Britain, any separation between them is less likely to be occasioned by
18 civil discords, if every disgusting measure is opposed singly, and while it is new: for in this manner of
19 proceeding, every such measure is most likely to be rectified. On the other hand, oppressions and
20 dissatisfactions being permitted to accumulate—if ever the governed throw off the load, they will do
21 more. A people does not reform with moderation. The rights of the subject therefore cannot be too
22 often considered, explained, or asserted: and whoever attempts to do this, shews himself, whatever
23 may be the rash and peevish reflections of pretended wisdom, and pretended duty, a friend to those
24 who injudiciously exercise their power, as well as to them, over whom it is so exercised.

25 Had all the points of prerogative claimed by Charles I. been separately contested and settled in

1 preceding reigns, his fate would in all probability have been very different, and the people would have
2 been content with that liberty which is compatible with regal
3 authority. But he thought, it would be as dangerous for him to give up the powers which at any time had
4 been by usurpation exercised by the crown, as those that were legally vested in it. This produced an
5 equal excess on the part of the people. For when their passions were excited by multiplied grievances,
6 they thought it would be as dangerous for them, to allow the powers that were legally vested in the
7 crown, as those which at any time had been by usurpation exercised by it. Acts, that might by
8 themselves have been upon many considerations excused or extenuated, derived a contagious
9 malignancy and odium from other acts, with which they were connected.

10 They were not regarded according to the simple force of each, but as parts of a system of oppression.
11 Every one therefore, however small in itself, being alarming, as an additional evidence of tyrannical
12 designs. It was in vain for prudent and moderate men to insist, that there was no necessity to abolish
13 royalty. Nothing less than the utter destruction of monarchy, could satisfy those who had suffered,
14 and thought they had reason to believe, they always should suffer under it.

15 The consequences of these mutual distrusts are well known: But there is no other people mentioned in
16 history, that I recollect, who have been so constantly watchful of their liberty, and so successful in
17 their struggles for it, as the English. This consideration leads me to the second reason, why I "desire
18 that the spirit of apprehension may be always kept up among us in its utmost vigilance."

19 The first principles of government are to be looked for in human nature. Some of the best writers have
20 asserted, and it seems with good reason, that "government is founded on opinion."

21 Custom undoubtedly has a mighty force in producing opinion, and reigns in nothing more arbitrarily
22 than in public affairs. It gradually reconciles us to objects even of dread and detestation; and I cannot
23 but think these lines of Mr. Pope, as applicable to vice in politics, as to vice in ethics.

24 'Vice is a monster of so horrid mien,
25 As to be hated, needs but to be seen;

1 Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
2 We first endure, then pity, then embrace.'

3 When an act injurious to freedom has been once done, and the people bear it, the repetition of it is most
4 likely to meet with submission. For as the mischief of the one was found to be tolerable, they will hope
5 that of the second will prove so too; and they will not regard the infamy of the last, because they are
6 stained with that of the first.

7 Indeed, nations in general, are not apt to think until they feel; and therefore nations in general have lost
8 their liberty: For as violations of the rights of the governed, are commonly not only specious, but small
9 at the beginning, they spread over the multitude in such a manner, as to touch individuals but slightly.
10 Thus they are disregarded. The power or profit that arises from these violations, centering in few
11 persons, is to them considerable. For this reason the governors having in view their particular
12 purposes, successively preserve an uniformity of conduct for attaining them. They regularly increase
13 and multiply the first injuries, till at length the inattentive people are compelled to perceive the
14 heaviness of their burdens.—They begin to complain and enquire—but too late.—They find their
15 oppressors so strengthened by success, and themselves so entangled in examples of express authority
16 on the part of their rulers, and of tacit recognition on their own part, that they are quite confounded:
17 For millions entertain no other idea of the legality of power, than that it is founded on the exercise of
18 power. They voluntarily fatten their chains, by adopting a pusillanimous opinion, "that there will be too
19 much danger in attempting a remedy," or another opinion no less fatal, "that the government has a
20 right to treat them as it does."

21 They then seek a wretched relief for their minds, by persuading themselves, that to yield their
22 obedience is to discharge their duty. The deplorable poverty of spirit, that prostrates all the dignity
23 bestowed by divine providence on our nature—of course succeeds.

24 From these reflections I conclude, that every free State should incessantly watch, and instantly take
25 alarm on any condition being made to the power exercised over them, innumerable instances might be

1 produced to shew, from what slight beginnings the most extensive consequences have flowed: but I shall
2 select two only from the history of England.

3 Henry the seventh was the first monarch of that kingdom, who established a standing body of armed
4 men. This was a band of 50 archers, called yeomen of the guard: And this institution, notwithstanding
5 the smallness of the number, was, to prevent discontent "disguised under the pretence of majesty and
6 grandeur." In 1684, the standing forces were so much augmented, that Rapin says—"The King, in order
7 to make his people fully sensible of their new slavery, affected to muster his troops, which amounted to
8 4000 well armed and disciplined men." I think our army, at this time, consists of more than seventy
9 regiments.

10 The method of taxing by excise was first introduced amidst the convulsions of civil wars. Extreme
11 necessity was pretended, and its short continuance promised. After the restoration, an excise upon
12 beer, ale and other liquors, was granted to the King, one half in fee, the other for life, as an equivalent
13 for the court of wards. Upon James the second's accession, the parliament gave him the first excise,
14 with an additional duty on wine, tobacco, and some other things. Since the revolution it has been
15 extended to salt, candles, leather, hides, hops, soap, paper, paste-board, mill-boards, scaleboards,
16 vellum, parchment, starch, silks, calicoes, linens, stuffs, printed, stained, &c. wire, wrought plate,
17 coffee, tea, chocolate, &c.

18 Thus a standing army and excise have, from the first slender origins, tho' always hated, always feared,
19 always opposed, at length swelled up to their vast present bulk.

20 These facts are sufficient to support what I have said. 'Tis true that all the mischiefs apprehended by
21 our ancestors from a standing army and excise, have not yet happened: but it does not follow from
22 thence, that they will not happen. The inside of a house may catch fire, and the most valuable
23 apartments be ruined, before the flames burst out. The question in these cases is not, what evil has
24 actually attended particular measures—but what evil, in the nature of things, is likely to attend them.
25 Certain circumstances may for some time delay effects, that were reasonably expected, and that must

1 ensue. There was a long period, after the Romans had prorogued the command to Q. Publilius Philo,
2 before that example destroyed their liberty. All our kings, from the revolution to the present reign have
3 been foreigners. Their ministers generally continued but a short time in authority; and they themselves
4 were mild and virtuous princes.

5 A bold, ambitious Prince, possessed of great abilities, firmly fixed in the throne by descent, served by
6 ministers like himself, and rendered either venerable or terrible by the glory of his successes, may
7 execute what his predecessors did not dare to attempt. Henry IV. tottered in his seat during his whole
8 reign. Henry V. drew the strength of the kingdom into France, to carry on his wars there, and left the
9 Commons at home, protesting, "that the people were not bound to serve out of the realm."

10 It is true, that a strong spirit of liberty subsists at present in Great-Britain, but what reliance is to be
11 placed in the temper of a people, when the prince is possessed of an unconstitutional power, our own
12 history can sufficiently inform us. When Charles II. had strengthened himself by the return of the
13 garrison of Tangier, "England (says Rapin) saw on a sudden an amazing revolution; saw herself
14 stripped of all her rights and privileges, excepting such as the King should vouchsafe to grant her; and
15 what is more astonishing, the English themselves delivered up these very rights and privileges to
16 Charles II. which they had so passionately, and, if I may say it, furiously defended against the designs
17 of Charles I." This happened only thirty-six years after this last prince had been beheaded.

18 Some persons are of opinion, that liberty is not violated, but by such open acts of force; but they seem
19 to be greatly mistaken. I could mention a period within these forty years, when almost as great a
20 change of disposition was produced by the secret measures of a long administration, as by Charles's
21 violence. Liberty, perhaps is never exposed to so much danger, as when the people believe there is the
22 least; for it may be subverted, and yet they not think so.

23 Public-disgusting acts are seldom practised by the ambitious, at the beginning of their designs. Such
24 conduct silences and discourages the weak, and the wicked, who would otherways have been their
25 advocates or accomplices. It is of great consequence, to allow those, who, upon any account, are

1 inclined to favour them, something specious to say in their defence. The power may be fully established,
2 though it would not be safe for them to do whatever they please. For there are things, which, at some
3 times, even slaves will not bear. Julius Cæsar and Oliver Cromwell did not dare to assume the title of
4 King. The grand Seignior dares not lay a new tax. The King of France dares not be a protestant. Certain
5 popular points may be left untouched, and yet freedom be extinguished. The commonality of Venice
6 imagine themselves free, because they are permitted to do, what they ought not. But I quit a subject,
7 that would lead me too far from my purpose.

8 By the late act of parliament, taxes are to be levied upon us, for "defraying the charge of the
9 administration of justice, the support of civil government—and the expences of defending his Majesty's
10 dominions in America."

11 If any man doubts what ought to be the conduct of these colonies on this occasion, I would ask them
12 these questions.

13 Has not the parliament expressly avowed their intention of raising money from us for certain
14 purposes? Is not this scheme popular in Great-Britain? Will the taxes, imposed by the late act, answer
15 those purposes? If it will, must it not take an immense sum from us? If it will not, is it to be expected,
16 that the parliament will not fully execute their intention, when it is pleasing at home, and not opposed
17 here? Must not this be done by imposing new taxes? Will not every addition, thus made to our taxes,
18 be an addition to the power of the British legislature, by increasing the number of officers employed in
19 the collection? Will not every additional tax therefore render it more difficult to abrogate any of them?
20 When a branch of revenue is once established, does it not appear to many people invidious and
21 undutiful, to attempt to abolish it? If taxes, sufficient to accomplish the intention of the Parliament,
22 are imposed by the Parliament, what taxes will remain to be imposed by our assemblies? If no
23 material taxes remain to be imposed by them, what must become of them, and the people they
24 represent? "If any person considers, these things, and yet not thinks our liberties are in danger, I
25 wonder at that person's security."

1 One other argument is to be added, which, by itself, I hope, will be sufficient to convince the most
2 incredulous man on this continent, that the late act of Parliament is only designed to be a precedent,
3 whereon the future vassalage of these colonies may be established.

4 Every duty thereby laid on articles of British manufacture, is laid on some commodity upon the
5 exportation of which from Great-Britain, a drawback is payable. Those drawbacks in most of the
6 articles, are exactly double to the duties given by the late act. The Parliament therefore might in half
7 a dozen lines have raised much more money only by stopping the drawbacks in the hands of the officers
8 at home, on exportation to these colonies, than by this solemn imposition of taxes upon us, to be
9 collected here. Probably, the artful contrivers of this act formed it in this manner, in order to reserve to
10 themselves, in case of any objections being made to it, this specious pretence—"That the drawbacks are
11 gifts to the colonies; and that the act only lessens those gifts." But the truth is, that the drawbacks are
12 intended for the encouragement and promotion of British manufactures and commerce, and are
13 allowed on exportation to any foreign parts, as well as on exportation to these provinces. Besides, care
14 has been taken to slide into the act some articles on which there are no drawbacks. However, the
15 whole duties laid by the late act on all the articles therein specified, are so small, that they will not
16 amount to as much as the drawbacks which are allowed on part of them only. If, therefore, the sum to
17 be obtained by the late act had been the sole object in forming it, there would not have been any
18 occasion for the "Commons of Great-Britain to give and grant to his Majesty, rates and duties for
19 raising a revenue in his Majesty's dominions in America, for making a more certain and adequate
20 provision for defraying the charge of the administration of justice, the support of civil government,
21 and the expences of defending the said dominions"—Nor would there have been any occasion for an
22 expensive board of commissioners, and all the other new charges to which we are made liable.

23 Upon the whole, for my part, I regard the late act as an experiment made of our disposition. It is a bird
24 sent over the waters, to discover, whether the waves, that lately agitated this part of the world with
25 such violence, are yet subsided. If this adventurer gets footing here, we shall quickly be convinced,

1 that it is not a phenix; for we shall soon see it followed by others of the same kind. We shall find it rather

2 to be of the breed described by the poet—

3 "Infelix vates."

4 A direful foreteller of future calamities.

5 A FARMER.

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1 LETTER XII.

2 Beloved Countrymen,

3 Some states have lost their liberty by particular accidents; but this calamity is generally owing to the
4 decay of virtue. A people is travelling fast to destruction, when individuals consider their interests as
5 distinct from those of the public. Such notions are fatal to their country, and to themselves. Yet how
6 many are there so weak and sordid as to think they perform all the offices of life, if they earnestly
7 endeavour to increase their own wealth, power, and credit, without the least regard for the society,
8 under the protection of which they live; who, if they can make an immediate profit to themselves, by
9 lending their assistance to those, whose projects plainly tend to the injury of their country, rejoice in
10 their dexterity, and believe themselves intitled to the character of able politicians. Miserable men! of
11 whom it is hard to say, whether they ought to be most the objects of pity or contempt, but whose
12 opinions are certainly as detestable as their practices are destructive.

13 Though I always reflect with a high pleasure on the integrity and understanding of my countrymen,
14 which, joined with a pure and humble devotion to the great and gracious author of every blessing they
15 enjoy, will, I hope, ensure to them, and their posterity, all temporal and eternal happiness; yet when I
16 consider, that in every age and country there have been bad men, my heart, at this threatening period,
17 is so full of apprehension, as not to permit me to believe, but that there may be some on this continent,
18 against whom you ought to be upon your guard. Men, who either hold or expect to hold certain
19 advantages by setting examples of servility to their countrymen—Men who trained to the
20 employment, or self-taught by a natural versatility of genius, serve as decoys for drawing the innocent
21 and unwary into snares. It is not to be doubted but that such men will diligently bestir themselves, on
22 this and every like occasion, to spread the infection of their meanness as far as they can. On the plans
23 they have adopted, this is their course. This is the method to recommend themselves to their patrons.
24 They act consistently, in a bad cause.
25 They run well in a mean race.

1 From them we shall learn, how pleasant and profitable a thing it is, to be, for our submissive behaviour,
2 well spoken of in St. James's, or St. Stephen's; at Guildhall, or the Royal Exchange. Specious fallacies
3 will be drest up with all the arts of delusion, to persuade one colony to distinguish herself from another,
4 by unbecoming condescensions, which will serve the ambitious purpose of great men at home, and
5 therefore will be thought by them, to entitle their assistants in obtaining them, to considerable rewards.
6 Our fears will be excited; our hopes will be awakened. It will be insinuated to us with a plausible
7 affectation of wisdom and concern, how prudent it is to please the powerful—how dangerous to provoke
8 them—and then comes in the perpetual incantation, that freezes up every generous purpose of the soul,
9 in cold—inactive—expectation "that if there is any request to be made, compliance will obtain a
10 favourable attention."

11 Our vigilance and our union are success and safety. Our negligence and our division are distress and
12 death. They are worse—they are shame and slavery.

13 Let us equally shun the benumbing stillness of overweening sloth, and the feverish activity of that ill-
14 informed zeal, which buries itself in maintaining little, mean, and narrow opinions. Let us, with a truly
15 wise generosity and charity, banish and discourage all illiberal distinctions, which may arise from
16 differences in situation, forms of government, or modes of religion. Let us consider ourselves as men—
17 Freemen—Christian men—separated from the rest of the world, and firmly bound together by the same
18 rights, interests, and dangers. Let these keep our attention inflexibly fixed on the great objects, which
19 we must continually regard, in order to preserve those rights, to promote those interests, and to avert
20 those dangers.

21 Let these truths be indelibly impressed on our minds—that we cannot be happy without being free—
22 that we cannot be free without being secure in our property—that we cannot be secure in our property,
23 if, without our consent, others may, as by right, take it away—that taxes imposed on us by parliament,
24 do thus take it away—that duties laid for the sole purposes of raising money, are taxes—that attempts
25 to lay such duties should be instantly and firmly opposed—that this opposition can never be effectual,

1 unless it is the united effort of these provinces—that, therefore, benevolence of temper toward each
2 other, and unanimity of counsels are essential to the welfare of the whole—and lastly, that, for this
3 reason, every man amongst us, who, in any manner, would encourage either dissention, diffidence, or
4 indifference between these colonies, is an enemy to himself and to his country.

5 The belief of these truths, I verily think, my countrymen, is indispensably necessary to your happiness.
6 I beseech you, therefore, "Teach them diligently unto your children, and talk of them when you sit in
7 your houses, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up."

8 What have these colonies to ask, while they continue free? Or what have they to dread, but insidious
9 attempts to subvert their freedom? Their prosperity does not depend on ministerial favours doled out
10 to particular provinces. They form one political body, of which each colony is a member. Their
11 happiness is founded on their constitution; and is to be promoted by preserving that constitution in
12 unabated vigour throughout every part. A spot, a speck of decay, however small the limb on which it
13 appears, and however remote it may seem from the vitals, should be alarming. We have all the rights
14 requisite for our prosperity. The legal authority of Great-Britain may indeed lay hard restrictions upon
15 us; but, like the spear of Telephus, it will cure as well as wound. Her unkindness will instruct and
16 compel us, after some time, to discover, in our industry and frugality, surprising remedies—if our
17 rights continue inviolated. For as long as the products of our labours and the rewards of our care, can
18 properly be called our own, so long will it be worth our while to be industrious and frugal. But if when
19 we plow—sow—reap—gather—and thresh, we find, that we plow—sow—reap—gather—and thresh for
20 others, whose pleasure is to be the sole limitation, how much they shall take, and how much they shall
21 leave, why should we repeat the unprofitable toil? Horses and oxen are content with that portion of
22 the fruits of their work, which their owners assign to them, in order to keep them strong enough to
23 raise successive crops; but even these beasts will not submit to draw for their masters, until they are
24 subdued with whips and goads. Let us take care of our rights, and we therein take care of our
25 property. "Slavery is ever preceded by sleep." Individuals may be dependant on ministers, if they

1 please. States should scorn it—And, if you are not wanting to yourselves, you will have a proper
2 regard paid you by those, to whom if you are not respectable, you will infallibly be contemptible. But if
3 we have already forgot the reasons that urged us, with unexampled unanimity, to exert ourselves two
4 years ago; if our zeal for the public good is worn out before the homespun cloaths which it caused us to
5 have made—if our resolutions are so faint, as by our present conduct to condemn our own late
6 successful example—if we are not affected by any reverence for the memory of our ancestors, who
7 transmitted to us that freedom in which they had been blest—if we are not animated by any regard for
8 posterity, to whom, by the most sacred obligations, we are bound to deliver down the invaluable
9 inheritance—Then, indeed, any minister—or any tool of a minister—or any creature of a tool of a
10 minister—or any lower instrument of administration, if lower there may be, is a personage, whom it
11 may be dangerous to offend.

12 I shall be extremely sorry if any man mistakes my meaning in any thing I have said. Officers
13 employed by the crown, are, while according to the laws they conduct themselves, entitled to legal
14 obedience and sincere respect. These it is a duty to render them, and these no good or prudent person
15 will withhold. But when these officers, thro' rashness or design, endeavour to enlarge their authority
16 beyond its due limits, and expect improper concessions to be made to them, from regard for the
17 employments they bear, their attempts should be considered as equal injuries to the crown and people,
18 and should be courageously and constantly opposed. To suffer our ideas to be confounded by names, on
19 such occasions, would certainly be an inexcusable weakness, and probably, an irremediable error.
20 We have reason to believe, that several of his Majesty's present ministers are good men, and friends to
21 our country; and it seems not unlikely, that by a particular concurrence of events, we have been
22 treated a little more severely than they wished we should be. They might not think it prudent to stem
23 a torrent. But what is the difference to us, whether arbitrary acts take their rise from ministers, or
24 are permitted by them? Ought any point to be allowed to a good minister, that should be denied to a
25 bad one? The mortality of ministers is a very frail mortality. A * * * may succeed a Shelburne—a * * *

1 may succeed a Conway.

2 We find a new kind of minister lately spoken of at home—"The minister of the house of Commons." The
3 term seems to have particular propriety when referred to these colonies, with a different meaning
4 annexed to it, from that in which it is taken there. By the word "minister" we may understand not only a
5 servant of the crown, but a man of influence among the Commons, who regard themselves as having a
6 share of the sovereignty over us. The minister of the house may, in a point respecting the colonies, be so
7 strong, that the minister of the crown in the house, if he is a distinct person, may not chuse, even where
8 his sentiments are favourable to us, to come to a pitched battle upon our account. For tho' I have the
9 highest opinion of the deference of the house for the King's minister; yet he may be so good natured as
10 not to put it to the test, except it be for the mere and immediate profit of his master or himself.

11 But whatever kind of minister he is, that attempts to innovate a single iota in the privileges of these
12 colonies, him I hope you will undauntedly oppose, and that you will never suffer yourselves to be
13 either cheated or frightened into any unworthy obsequiousness. On such emergencies you may surely
14 without presumption believe that ALMIGHTY GOD himself will look down upon your righteous contest
15 with gracious approbation. You will be a "Band of brother's" cemented by the dearest ties—and
16 strengthened with inconceivable supplies of force and constancy, by that sympathetic ardour which
17 animates good men, confederated in a good cause. Your honour and welfare will be, as they now are,
18 most intimately concerned; and besides—you are assigned by Divine Providence, in the appointed
19 order of things, the protectors of unborn ages, whose fate depends upon your virtue. Whether they
20 shall arise the noble and indisputable heirs of the richest patrimonies, or the dastardly and hereditary
21 drudges of imperious task-masters, you must determine.

22 To discharge this double duty to yourselves and to your posterity; you have nothing to do, but to call
23 forth into use the good sense and spirit, of which you are possessed. You have nothing to do, but to
24 conduct your affairs peaceably—prudently—firmly—jointly. By these means you will support the
25 character of freemen, without losing that of faithful subjects—a good character in any government—

1 one of the best under a British government. You will prove that Americans have that true magnanimity
2 of soul, that can resent injuries without falling into rage; and that tho' your devotion to Great-Britain is
3 the most affectionate, yet you can make proper distinctions, and know what you owe to yourselves as
4 well as to her—you will, at the same time that you advance your interests, advance your reputation—
5 you will convince the world of the justice of your demands, and the purity of your intentions—while all
6 mankind must with unceasing applauses confess, that you indeed deserve liberty, who so well
7 understand it, so passionately love it, so temperately enjoy it, and so wisely, bravely, and virtuously,
8 assert, maintain, and defend it.

9 "Certe ego libertatem quæ mihi a parente meo tradita est, experiar, verum id frustra, an ob rem faciam,
10 in vestra manu situm est, quirites."

11 "For my part, I am resolved strenuously to contend for the liberty delivered down to me from my
12 ancestors; but whether I shall do this effectually or not, depends on you, my countrymen."

13 How little soever one is able to write, yet, when the liberties of one's country are threatened, it is still
14 more difficult to be silent.

15 A FARMER.

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