

Will you punish them for the madness you have occasioned? Rather let prudence and temper come first from this side. I will undertake for America that she will follow the example. There are two lines in a ballad of Prior's, of a man's behavior to his wife, so applicable to you and your colonies that I cannot help repeating them:

"Be to her faults a little blind;  
Be to her virtues very kind."

Upon the whole, I will beg leave to tell the House what is my opinion. It is that the Stamp Act be repealed absolutely, totally, and immediately.

#### ON REMOVING TROOPS FROM BOSTON

[On the 20th of January, 1775, Lord Dartmouth, Secretary of State, laid before the House of Lords various papers relating to American affairs. Upon this occasion Lord Chatham moved an "address to his Majesty for the immediate removal of his troops from Boston," and supported it by the following speech.]

THE measures of last year, my lords, which have produced the present alarming state of America, were founded upon misrepresentation. They were violent, precipitate, and vindictive. The nation was told that it was only a faction in Boston which opposed all lawful government; that an unwarrantable injury had been done to private property, for which the justice of Parliament was called upon to order reparation; that the least appearance of firmness would awe the Americans into submission, and upon only passing the Rubicon we should be "*sine clade victor*."<sup>1</sup>

That the people might choose their representatives under the influence of those misrepresentations, the Parliament was

<sup>1</sup> Victorious without slaughter.

precipitately dissolved. Thus the nation was to be rendered instrumental in executing the vengeance of administration on that injured, unhappy, traduced people.

But now, my lords, we find that, instead of suppressing the opposition of the faction at Boston, these measures have spread it over the whole continent. They have united that whole people by the most indissoluble of all bands—intolerable wrongs. The just retribution is an indiscriminate, unmerciful proscription of the innocent with the guilty, unheard and untried. The bloodless victory is an impotent general with his dishonored army, trusting solely to the pickaxe and the spade for security against the just indignation of an injured and insulted people.

My lords, I am happy that a relaxation of my infirmities permits me to seize this earliest opportunity of offering my poor advice to save this unhappy country, at this moment tottering to its ruin. But, as I have not the honor of access to his Majesty, I will endeavor to transmit to him, through the constitutional channel of this House, my ideas on American business, to rescue him from the misadvice of his present ministers. I congratulate your lordships that the business is at last entered upon by the noble lord's [Lord Dartmouth] laying the papers before you. As I suppose your lordships are too well apprised of their contents, I hope I am not premature in submitting to you my present motion. [The motion was read.]

I wish, my lords, not to lose a day in this urgent, pressing crisis. An hour now lost in allaying ferments in America may produce years of calamity. For my own part I will not desert for a moment the conduct of this weighty business, from the first to the last. Unless nailed to my bed by the extremity of sickness I will give it unremitting attention. I

will knock at the door of this sleeping and confounded ministry and will rouse them to a sense of their danger.

When I state the importance of the colonies to this country and the magnitude of danger hanging over this country from the present plan of misadministration practised against them, I desire not to be understood to argue for a reciprocity of indulgence between England and America. I contend not for indulgence, but justice to America; and I shall ever contend that the Americans justly owe obedience to us in a limited degree—they owe obedience to our ordinances of trade and navigation; but let the line be skilfully drawn between the objects of those ordinances and their private internal property. Let the sacredness of their property remain inviolate. Let it be taxable only by their own consent, given in their provincial assemblies, else it will cease to be property. As to the metaphysical refinements, attempting to show that the Americans are equally free from obedience and commercial restraints, as from taxation for revenue, as being unrepresented here, I pronounce them futile, frivolous, and groundless.

When I urge this measure of recalling the troops from Boston. I urge it on this pressing principle, that it is necessarily preparatory to the restoration of your peace and the establishment of your prosperity. It will then appear that you are disposed to treat amicably and equitably; and to consider, revise, and repeal, if it should be found necessary (as I affirm it will), those violent acts and declarations which have disseminated confusion throughout your empire.

Resistance to your acts was necessary as it was just; and your vain declarations of the omnipotence of Parliament and your imperious doctrines of the necessity of submission will be found equally impotent to convince or to enslave your fel-

low subjects in America, who feel that tyranny, whether ambitioned by an individual part of the legislature or the bodies who compose it, is equally intolerable to British subjects.

The means of enforcing this thralldom are found to be as ridiculous and weak in practice as they are unjust in principle. Indeed, I cannot but feel the most anxious sensibility for the situation of General Gage, and the troops under his command; thinking him, as I do, a man of humanity and understanding; and entertaining, as I ever will, the highest respect, the warmest love for the British troops. Their situation is truly unworthy; penned up—pining in inglorious inactivity. They are an army of impotence. You may call them an army of safety and of guard; but they are, in truth, an army of impotence and contempt; and, to make the folly equal to the disgrace, they are an army of irritation and vexation.

But I find a report creeping abroad that ministers censure General Gage's inactivity. Let them censure him—it becomes them—it becomes their justice and their honor. I mean not to censure his inactivity. It is a prudent and necessary inaction; but it is a miserable condition, where disgrace is prudence, and where it is necessary to be contemptible. This tameness, however contemptible, cannot be censured; for the first drop of blood shed in civil and unnatural war might be "*immedicabile vulnus*."<sup>1</sup>

I therefore urge and conjure your lordships immediately to adopt this conciliating measure. I will pledge myself for its immediately producing conciliatory effects, by its being thus well timed; but if you delay till your vain hope shall be accomplished of triumphantly dictating reconciliation, you

<sup>1</sup> An incurable wound.

delay forever. But, admitting that this hope (which in truth is desperate) should be accomplished, what do you gain by the imposition of your victorious amity? You will be untrusted and unthanked. Adopt, then, the grace, while you have the opportunity, of reconciliation—or at least prepare the way. Allay the ferment prevailing in America by removing the obnoxious hostile cause—obnoxious and unserviceable; for their merit can be only inaction: “*Non dimicare est vincere,*”<sup>1</sup> their victory can never be by exertions. Their force would be most disproportionately exerted against a brave, generous, and united people with arms in their hands and courage in their hearts: three millions of people, the genuine descendants of a valiant and pious ancestry, driven to those deserts by the narrow maxims of a superstitious tyranny.

And is the spirit of persecution never to be appeased? Are the brave sons of those brave forefathers to inherit their sufferings as they have inherited their virtues? Are they to sustain the infliction of the most oppressive and unexampled severity beyond the accounts of history or description of poetry: “*Rhadamanthus habet durissima regna, castigatque auditque.*”<sup>2</sup> So says the wisest poet, and perhaps the wisest statesman and politician. But our ministers say the Americans must not be heard. They have been condemned unheard. The indiscriminate hand of vengeance has lumped together innocent and guilty, with all the formalities of hostility has blocked up the town [Boston], and reduced to beggary and famine thirty thousand inhabitants.

<sup>1</sup> Not to fight is to conquer.

<sup>2</sup> The passage is from the *Æneid* of Virgil, book vi, 366, 367.

Gnosius hæc Rhadamanthus habet durissima regna,  
Castigatque auditque dolos.

O'er these dire realms  
The Cretan Rhadamanthus holds his sway,  
And lashes guilty souls, whose wiles and crimes  
He hears.

But his Majesty is advised that the union in America cannot last. Ministers have more eyes than I, and should have more ears; but with all the information I have been able to procure I can pronounce it a union solid, permanent, and effectual. Ministers may satisfy themselves, and delude the public, with the report of what they call commercial bodies in America. They are *not* commercial. They are your packers and factors. They live upon nothing, for I call commission nothing. I speak of the ministerial authority for this American intelligence—the runners for government, who are paid for their intelligence.

But these are not the men, nor this the influence, to be considered in America when we estimate the firmness of their union. Even to extend the question and to take in the really mercantile circle will be totally inadequate to the consideration. Trade, indeed, increases the wealth and glory of a country; but its real strength and stamina are to be looked for among the cultivators of the land. In their simplicity of life is found the simpleness of virtue, the integrity and courage of freedom.

These true, genuine sons of the earth are invincible; and they surround and hem in the mercantile bodies, even if these bodies (which supposition I totally disclaim) could be supposed disaffected to the cause of liberty. Of this general spirit existing in the British nation (for so I wish to distinguish the real and genuine Americans from the pseudo-traders I have described)—of this spirit of independence, animating the *nation* of America, I have the most authentic information. It is not new among them. It is, and has ever been, their established principle, their confirmed persuasion. It is their nature and their doctrine.

I remember, some years ago, when the repeal of the Stamp

Act was in agitation, conversing in a friendly confidence, with a person of undoubted respect and authenticity, on that subject, and he assured me with a certainty which his judgment and opportunity gave him that these were the prevalent and steady principles of America — that you might destroy their towns and cut them off from the superfluities, perhaps the conveniences of life, but that they were prepared to despise your power and would not lament their loss while they have — what, my lords? — their *woods* and their *liberty*. The name of my authority, if I am called upon, will authenticate the opinion irrefragably.<sup>1</sup>

If illegal violences have been, as it is said, committed in America, prepare the way, open the door of possibility for acknowledgment and satisfaction; but proceed not to such coercion, such proscription; cease your indiscriminate inflictions; amerce not thirty thousand — oppress not three millions for the fault of forty or fifty individuals. Such severity of injustice must forever render incurable the wounds you have already given your colonies; you irritate them to unappeasable rancor. What though you march from town to town, and from province to province; though you should be able to enforce a temporary and local submission (which I only suppose, not admit), how shall you be able to secure the obedience of the country you leave behind you in your progress, to grasp the dominion of eighteen hundred miles of continent, populous in numbers, possessing valor, liberty, and resistance?

This resistance to your arbitrary system of taxation might have been foreseen. It was obvious from the nature of things, and of mankind; and, above all, from the Whiggish spirit flourishing in that country. The spirit which now resists your taxation in America is the same which formerly opposed

<sup>1</sup> It was Dr. Franklin.

loans, benevolences, and ship-money in England; the same spirit which called all England "on its legs," and by the Bill of Rights vindicated the English Constitution; the same spirit which established the great fundamental, essential maxim of your liberties, *that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent*.

This glorious spirit of Whiggism animates three millions in America who prefer poverty with liberty to gilded chains and sordid affluence; and who will die in defence of their rights as men, as freemen. What shall oppose this spirit, aided by the congenial flame glowing in the breast of every Whig in England, to the amount, I hope, of double the American numbers? Ireland they have to a man. In that country, joined as it is with the cause of the colonies, and placed at their head, the distinction I contend for is and must be observed.

This country superintends and controls their trade and navigation; but they *tax themselves*. And this distinction between external and internal control is sacred and insurmountable; it is involved in the abstract nature of things. Property is private, individual, absolute. Trade is an extended and complicated consideration: it reaches as far as ships can sail or winds can blow: it is a great and various machine. To regulate the numberless movements of its several parts, and combine them into effect for the good of the whole, requires the superintending wisdom and energy of the supreme power in the empire. But this supreme power has no effect toward internal taxation; for it does not exist in that relation; there is no such thing, no such idea in this Constitution, as a supreme power operating upon property.

Let this distinction then remain forever ascertained: taxation is theirs, commercial regulation is ours. As an Ameri-

can I would recognize to England her supreme right of regulating commerce and navigation; as an Englishman by birth and principle I recognize to the Americans their supreme, unalienable right in their property: a right which they are justified in the defence of to the last extremity. To maintain this principle is the common cause of the Whigs on the other side of the Atlantic and on this. "'Tis liberty to liberty engaged," that they will defend themselves, their families, and their country. In this great cause they are immovably allied: it is the alliance of God and nature — immutable, eternal — fixed as the firmament of heaven.

To such united force, what force shall be opposed? What, my lords? A few regiments in America, and seventeen or eighteen thousand men at home! The idea is too ridiculous to take up a moment of your lordships' time. Nor can such a national and principled union be resisted by the tricks of office or ministerial manœuvre. Laying of papers on your table, or counting numbers on a division, will not avert or postpone the hour of danger. It must arrive, my lords, unless these fatal acts are done away; it must arrive in all its horrors, and then these boastful ministers, spite of all their confidence and all their manœuvres, shall be forced to hide their heads. They shall be forced to a disgraceful abandonment of their present measures and principles, which they avow, but cannot defend; measures which they presume to attempt, but cannot hope to effectuate. They cannot, my lords, they cannot stir a step; they have not a move left; they are checkmated!

But it is not repealing this act of Parliament, it is not repealing a piece of parchment, that can restore America to our bosom. You must repeal her fears and her resentments, and you may then hope for her love and gratitude. But now,

insulted with an armed force posted at Boston, irritated with a hostile array before her eyes, her concessions, if you could force them, would be suspicious and insecure; they will be "*irato animo*;"<sup>1</sup> they will not be the sound, honorable passions of freemen; they will be the dictates of fear and extortions of force. But it is more than evident that you cannot force them, united as they are, to your unworthy terms of submission. It is impossible. And when I hear General Gage censured for inactivity, I must retort with indignation on those whose intemperate measures and improvident counsels have betrayed him into his present situation. His situation reminds me, my lords, of the answer of a French general in the civil wars of France — Monsieur Condé opposed to Monsieur Turenne. He was asked how it happened that he did not take his adversary prisoner, as he was often very near him. "*J'ai peur*," replied Condé, very honestly, "*j'ai peur qu'il ne me prenne*."<sup>2</sup>

When your lordships look at the papers transmitted us from America — when you consider their decency, firmness, and wisdom, you can but respect their cause and wish to make it your own. For myself I must declare and avow that in all my reading and observation — and it has been my favorite study — I have read Thucydides, and have studied and admired the master-states of the world — that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the general Congress at Philadelphia. I trust it is obvious to your lordships that all attempts to impose servitude upon such men, to establish despotism over such a mighty continental nation, must be

<sup>1</sup> With an angry spirit.

<sup>2</sup> "I'm afraid he'll take me."