

THE  
SENTIMENTS

OF A

*British American.*

*[by Cambridge Teacher]*

---

*Asellum in prato timidus pascibat senex.  
Is, hostium clamore subito territus,  
Suadebat asino fugere, ne possent capi.  
At ille lentus : quæso num binas mihi  
Clitellas impositurum victorem putas ?  
Senex negavit. Ergo quid refert mea  
Cui serviam ? clitellas dum portem meas.*

PHÆDRUS.

---

B O S T O N :

Printed and Sold by EDES & GILL, next to the  
Prison in Queen-Street. 1764.

[ Price Six Pence. ]



## T H E

### SENTIMENTS of a *British American*.

**I**T well becomes the wisdom of a great nation, having been highly successful in their foreign wars, and added a large extent of country to their dominions ; to consider with a critical attention, their internal state, lest their prosperity should destroy them.

Great-Britain, at this day, is arrived to an height of glory and wealth, which no European nation hath ever reached, since the decline of the Roman empire. Every body knows, that it is not indebted to itself alone, for this envied power : That it's colonies, placed in a distant quarter of the earth, have had their share of efficiency, in its late successes ; as indeed they have also contributed to the advancing and increasing its grandeur from their very first beginnings.

In the forming and settling therefore the internal polity of the kingdom ; these have reason to expect, that *their* interest should be considered and attended to ; that *their* rights, if they have any, should be preserved to them : and that *they* should have no reason to complain, that they have been lavish of their blood and treasure in the late war, only to bind the shackles of slavery on themselves and their children. No

No people have been more wisely jealous of their liberties and privileges, than the British nation. It is observed by *Vattel*, that "their present happy constitution hath cost them seas of blood ; but they have not purchased it too dear."

The colonies, making a part of this great Empire, having the same British rights inherent in them, as the inhabitants of the Island itself ; they cannot be disfranchised, or wounded in their privileges, but the whole body politic, must in the end feel with them.

The writer of this, being a native of an English colony, will take it for granted ; that the colonies are not the meer property of the mother state ; that they have the same rights as other British subjects. He will also suppose, that no design is formed to enslave them ; and that the justice of the British parliament, will finally do right, to every part of their dominions.

These things presupposed, he intends to consider the late act, made in the fourth year of his present Majesty, entitled, *An Act for granting certain duties in the British colonies and plantations in America, &c.* to show the real subjects of grievance therein to the Colonists ; and that the interest of Great-Britain itself may finally be greatly affected thereby. There is the more reason that this freedom should be indulged after the act is passed ; inasmuch as the colonies, though greatly interested therein, had no opportunity of being heard, while it was pending.

The first objection is, that a tax is thereby laid on several commodities, to be raised and levied in  
the

the plantations, and to be remitted home to England. This is esteemed a grievance, inasmuch as the same are laid, without the consent of the representatives of the colonists. It is esteemed an essential British right, that no person shall be subject to any tax : but what in person, or by his representative, he hath a voice in laying. The British parliament, have many times vindicated this right, against the attempts of Kings to invade it. And though perhaps it may be said, that the house of commons, in a large sense, are the representatives of the colonies, as well as of the people of Great-Britain : yet it is certain that these have no voice in their election. Nor can it be any alleviation of their unhappiness ; that if this right is taken from them, it is taken by that body, who have been the great patrons and defenders of it, in the people of Great-Britain.

Besides, the colonies have ever supported a subordinate government among themselves.

Being placed at such a distance from the capital, it is absolutely impossible they should continue a part of the kingdom in the same sense, as the corporations there are. For this reason, from their beginning there hath been a subordinate legislature among them, subject to the controul of the mother state : and from the necessity of the case, there must have been such ; their circumstances and situation being in many respects so different from that of the parent state, they could not have subsisted without this. Now the colonies have always been taxed by their own representatives, and in their respective legislatures ;  
and

and have supported an entire domestic government among themselves. Is it just then, they should be doubly taxed ? That they should be obliged to bear the whole charges of their domestic government, and should be as subject to the taxes of the British parliament, as those who have no domestic government to support ?

The reason given for this extraordinary taxation, namely, that this war was undertaken for the security of the colonies, and that they ought therefore to be taxed, to pay the charge thereby incurred ; it is humbly apprehended is without foundation. For—

(1.) It was of no less consequence to Great-Britain, than it was to the colonies, that these should not be over-run, and conquered by the French. Suppose they had prevailed, and gotten all the English colonies into their possession : How long would Great-Britain have survived their fate ! Put the case, that the town of *Portsmouth*, or any other sea-port had been besieged, and the like sums expended in its defence, could any have thought that town ought to be charged with the expence ?

(2.) The colonies contributed their full proportion to those conquests, which adorn and dignify the late and present reign. One of them in particular, raised in one year seven thousand men to be commanded by his Majesty's general ; besides maintaining many guards and garrisons on their own frontiers. All of them by their expences and exertions in the late war, have incurred heavy debts, which it will take them many years to pay.

(3.) The

(3.) The colonies are no particular gainers by these acquisitions. None of the conquered territory is annexed to them. All are acquisitions accruing to the Crown. On account of their *commerce*, they are no gainers: The northern colonies are even *sufferers* by these cessions.\* It is true they have more security, from having their throats cut by the French, while the peace lasts: but so have also all his Majesty's subjects.

(4.) Great Britain gaineth immensely by these acquisitions. The command of the whole American fur trade, and the increased demand for their woolen manufactures from their numerous new subjects, in a country too cold to keep sheep: These are such immense gains, as in a commercial light, would refund the kingdom, if every farthing of the expence of reducing Canada, were paid out of the Exchequer.

But to say the truth, it is not only by the taxation itself, that the colonists deem themselves aggrieved by the act we are considering. For—

2. The power therein given to courts of admiralty, alarms them greatly. The common law is the birth-right of every subject: and trial by jury a most darling privilege. So deemed our ancestors in ancient times, long before the colonies were begun to be planted. Many struggles had they with courts of admiralty, which like the element they take their name from, have divers times attempted

\* I desire this may not be misunderstood. In this view I suppose them sufferers, namely, that as the West-Indies were not large eno' to take off the produce the northern colonies could export to them, before the conquest of Canada, now that country is added, it makes the disproportion much greater.

attempted to inundate the land. Hence the statutes of *Richard 2<sup>d</sup>*, of *Henry 4<sup>th</sup>*, and divers other public acts : Hence the watchful eye, the reverend sages of the common law have kept over these courts. Now by the act we are considering, the colonists are deprived of these privileges : Of the common law, for these judges are supposed to be conversant only of the civil law : Of juries, for all here is put in the breast of one man. He judges both law and fact, and his decree is final ; at least it cannot be reversed on this side the atlantic. In this particular, the colonists are put under a quite different law from all the rest of the king's subjects : Jurisdiction, is no where else given to courts of admiralty, of matters so foreign from their connuance. In some things the colonists have been long subject to this cruel yoke, and have indeed fully experienced its galling nature. Loud complaints have been long made by them of the oppressions of these courts, their exorbitant fees, and the little justice the subject may expect from them in cases of seizures. Let me mention one thing that is notorious ; These courts have assumed (I know not by what law) a commission of five per cent to the judge on all seizures condemned. What chance does the subject stand for his right upon the best claim, when the judge, condemning, is to have an hundred, or perhaps five hundred pounds, and, acquitting, less than twenty shillings ? If the colonists should be thought partial witnesses in this case, let those of the inhabitants of Great-Britain.

who

who have had the misfortune to be suitors, or to have any business in these dreadful courts, be enquired of.

There have been times, when the legislature of Great-Britain appeared to be as sensible of the bad conduct of these courts, as we are now. I mean when the statute of 6 Ann, chap. 37, and some later ones to the same purpose, were made, wherein the remedy they have given, is as extraordinary as the power given those courts. For in those statutes, the judge of admiralty is subjected to a penalty of five hundred pounds, to be recovered by the aggrieved suitor, at common law. These only refer to cases of prizes, and give no remedy in cases of seizures ; where their power is not only decisive, but in many respects uncontrollable. Mean time can the colonists help wondring and grieving, that the British legislature should vest with such high powers *over them*, courts in whom they appear to have so little confidence ?

But in the act we are considering, the power of these courts, is even much enlarged, and made still more grievous. For it is thereby enacted, that the seisor may inform, in any court of admiralty for the particular colony, or in any court of admiralty to be appointed over all America, at his pleasure. Thus a malicious seisor may take the goods of any man, ever so lawfully and duly imported, and carry the trial of the cause to a thousand miles distance ; where for meer want of ability to follow, the claimer shall be incapable of defending his right ; at the same time an hardship is laid upon the claimer, his claim is not to be admitted



or heard, until he find sureties to prosecute, who are to be of known ability in the place where security is given. And he being unknown in a place so distant from home, whatever be his estate, shall be incapable of producing such sureties.

3. The empowering commanders of the king's ships, to seize and implead, as is done in this act, and a former act, and by special commission from the commissioners of the customs ; is another great hardship on the colonies. The knowledge, of all the statutes relating to the customs, of the prohibitions on exports and imports, and of various intricate cases arising on them ; requires a good lawyer. How can this science, ever be expected from men educated in a totally different way ; brought up upon the boisterous element ; and knowing no law a-board their ships, but their own will ? Here perhaps it will be said, this is not peculiar to the colonies. The power to these commanders is given in all parts of the dominions, as well as in the colonies : Why should they complain of being under the same law as the other subjects ? I answer ; There is this great and essential difference between the cases ; In Great-Britain no jurisdiction is given to any other than the common law courts ; there too the subjects are near the throne, where when they are oppressed, their complaints may soon be heard and redressed : But with respect to the colonies, far different is the case ! Here, it is their own courts that try the cause ! Here the subject is far distant from the throne ! His complaints cannot soon be heard and redressed. The boisterous commander may take for his motto,

*Procul*

*Procul a Jove, a fulmine procul.*

The present decree, however unjust, deprives him even of the means of seeking redress. The judge with his troop, and the proud captain, have divided his wealth ; and he hath nothing to do, but to hang himself, or to go a begging in a country of beggars.

There is yet another very great objection the colonists make to this act, of no less weight than the other three. It is this,

4. Whereas it is good law, that all officers seizing goods, seize at their peril ; and if the goods they seize are not liable to forfeiture, they must pay the claimant his cost, and are liable to his action besides : Which two things have been looked upon as proper checks of exorbitant wanton power in the officer : Both these checks are taken off. They, the officers may charge the revenue with the cost, with the consent of four of the commissioners of the customs. And if the judge of admiralty will certify, that there was probable cause of seizure, no action shall be maintained by the claimant ; though his goods on tryal appear to be ever so duly imported, and liable to no sort of forfeiture ; and he hath been forced to expend ever so much in the defence of them. This last regulation is in the act peculiarly confined to America.

Much more might be said on these subjects ; but I aim at brevity.

Let it now be observed, that the interest of Great-Britain, is finally greatly affected by these new regulations. We will not here insist on the  
parental

parental tenderness due from Great-Britain to us, and suggest she must suffer, from sympathy with her children, who have been guilty of no undutiful behaviour towards her ; but on the contrary, have greatly increased her wealth and grandeur : and in this last war, have impoverished themselves in fighting her battles. We will suppose her for this little moment, to have forgot the bowels of a mother.

Neither will we dwell long on the importance of the precedent. The consideration of a million and half of British Subjects disfranchised, or put under regulations aliene from our happy constitution ; What pretence it may afford to after ministers, to treat the inhabitants of the island itself after the same manner. We will suppose for the present, that at a thousand leagues distance, cross the water, the inhabitants of the capital will not be endangered, by a conflagration of all the colonies.

Nor will we mention, any possible danger from the alienation of the affections of the colonies, from their mother country, in case of a new war. We will suppose them to have that reverence for the English name, they are allowed to retain, that they will be as lavish of what blood and treasure remains to them, now they are cut off from all these privileges, as when they could please themselves with the surest hope, of holding them inviolable.

What we are now considering, is how the meer, present, self, interest of Great-Britain, is affected by these new regulations.

Now

Now every body knows, that the greatest part of the trade of Great-Britain, is with her colonies. This she enjoyeth, exclusive of any other European country, and hath entirely at her own command. Further it may be made out, that the greatest part of the profits of the trade of the colonies, at least on the continent, centres in G. Britain. The colonists, settled in a wide and sparse manner, are perpetually demanding the linnen, woollen and other manufactures of Great Britain. They are not yet settled in so contiguous a manner, as to be able to manufacture sufficient for their own supplies. And while they can pay for those of Great-Britain, with any proper remittances, their demands will be perpetually increasing. Great-Britain besides, is the mart which supplieth the colonies with all the produce of the other countries in Europe, which the colonies use.

Considering the vast numbers supported by these manufactures, vended in the colonies, and by the articles of foreign trade brought into the kingdom, and thence exported and consumed in the plantations: doubtless even the luxury of the colonists is the gain of G. Britain. So thought wise ministers in the late reign: on which ground, they repealed two or three sumptuary laws, made in the colonies, for restraining that luxury.

Now, as the colonies have no gold or silver mines in them, it is certain that all their remittances they make must be from their trade: And it is obvious, that when the sources of their remittances are cut off, the demands for these goods,  
by

by which so many thousands are supported, must cease. And whoever considereth with any degree of attention the new regulations, and is acquainted with the state of the colonies, must see that the evident tendency of them is to cut off all these sources, and to destroy altogether the trade of the colonists.

One grand source of these remittances is the fishery, which by the duty of three pence a gallon on molasses, must entirely be at an end. That branch can never bear the high duties imposed, nor subsist without the molasses which the trade to the foreign islands furnisheth.—Not only by their connection with this, but by the meer effect of the new regulations, all the other trade of the colonists must be at an end. These regulations must break and subdue the hearts of the traders here. *TRADE* is a nice and delicate lady; she must be courted and won by soft and fair addresses. She will not bear the rude hand of a ravisher. Penalties encreased, heavy taxes laid on, the checks of oppression and violence removed; these things must drive her from her present abode.

Hence, one or other of these consequences will follow, either (1.) The colonies will universally go into such manufactures as they are capable of doing within themselves. Or (2.) They will do without them; and being reduced to meer necessities, will be clothed like their predecessors the Indians, with the skins of beasts, and sink into like barbarism.

barbarism. They must then adopt Jack Straw Verses, \*

*When Adam delved, and Eve span,  
Who was then the Gentleman.*

Now, either of these events taking place, how will it affect the island of Great-Britain? The answer is obvious——The exports to the colonies, wholly stopped, or greatly diminished, the demands for those manufactures in Great-Britain, must be in proportion lessened; The subsistence of those manufacturers, merchants and traders, whom this demand supports, is then gone: They who live from supplying these manufacturers, &c. must decay and die with them. Lastly, as trade may be compared to a grand chain, made up of innumerable links; it is doubtful whether the British trade, great as it is, can bear the striking out so many, without greatly endangering the whole.

What now is the equivalent for all this to the nation? A tenth part of one year's tax, at the extent two years tax upon the colonies, (for after that time all their money will be gone) to be lodged in the exchequer, and thence issued as the parliament shall direct. Doth not this resemble the conduct of the good wife in the fable, who killed her hen that every day laid her a *Golden Egg*?

THESE

\* I imagine many sanguine readers on the British side the water, will think this is all exaggeration. Such may be informed, that even now these things begin to appear. For two or three years past, exchange from the Massachusetts to England has been above par, and bills earnestly bought up: now the bills the government have to dispose of, tho' set at a less exchange than the last year, and tho' certain advice is receiv'd that the money is in the bank, cannot vend.

THESE are the sentiments of a British American, which he ventures to expose to the public, with an honest well-meant freedom. Born in one of the colonies, and descended from ancestors, who were among the first planters of that colony; he is not ashamed to avow a love to the country that gave him birth ; yet he hath ever exulted in the name of Briton. He hath ever thought all the inhabitants in the remotest dominions of Great Britain, interested in the wealth, the prosperity, and the glory of the capital. And he desireth ever to retain these filial sentiments.

If the objections he proposeth are of any weight, he trusts the meanness and distance of the proposer, shall not diminish that weight—that those great minds who can comprehend the whole vast machine, in one view, will not deem it below them, to inspect a single small wheel that is out of order.

He concludes all, with his most ardent wishes, that the happy island of Great-Britain may grow in wealth, in power, and glory, to yet greater degrees ; that the conquests it makes over foreign enemies, may serve the more to protect the internal liberties of it's subjects : that her colonies now happily extended, may grow in filial affection and dutiful submission to her their mother : And that she in return may never forget her parental affections. That the whole English empire, united by the strongest bands of love and interest, formidable to the tyrants and oppressors of the earth, may retain it's own virtue, and happily possess immortality.—

The *E N D*.