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Some Strictures upon the Sacred Story Recorded in the Book of Esther (1775)

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Oliver Noble

_Some Strictures upon the Sacred Story Recorded in the Book of Esther (1775)_

Oliver Noble (1733/4–92). Born in Hebron, Connecticut, Noble graduated from Yale in 1757, but stayed on as a tutor until he received his second degree in 1759. Later that same year, he was ordained a minister in South Coventry, Connecticut, but disagreements with his congregation led to his dismissal in 1761. Noble’s abilities as a preacher must have been well known, for his next installment occurred in 1762 at a church in Newburyport, Massachusetts, where he preached from the pulpit of the fifth parish until 1784. Again dismissed, Noble moved to Newcastle, New Hampshire, six months later, and there supplied the pulpit until his death in 1792.

Of his four published sermons on such topics as soteriology, the doctrine of assurance, church music, and the conflict with Great Britain, Oliver Noble’s _Some Strictures upon the Sacred Story Recorded in the Book of Esther (1775)—_courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society—is most memorable. The sermon was delivered in Newburyport on the fifth anniversary of the Boston Massacre (1770) and highlights the anxieties and uncertainties of the times. Noble draws his typological parallel from the Old Testament book of Esther to affirm that the events of his day were little more than a reiteration of the events typed out in Medo-Persia more than two millennia before. The biblical account of Esther relates how Haman, grand vizier of King Ahasuerus, deceives his liege and plots to massacre the Israelites of the eastern captivity for reasons of personal enrichment. However, faithful Mordecai and Queen Esther save their people from Haman’s machinations. In Noble’s adaptation of the story, King George III (Ahasuerus) is similarly deceived by the British Parliament (Haman), which tries to disenfranchise his majesty’s faithful colonists (Mordecai and Queen Esther) through the infamous Stamp Act (Haman’s injunction against the Israelites). With such obvious parallels from the Good Book, Noble thundered against Haman’s greed but also prophesied that the present crisis will soon pass over and America be vindicated in the eyes of King George.

Most interesting in this context is that Noble presented the British monarch as a benign ruler, whose cunning advisors kept him ignorant for reasons of personal enrichment. Indeed, until right up to the War, many Americans held fast to their monarch’s benign intentions and blamed parliament for the outbreak of hostilities. Noble’s typological explanation of the war should not lead us to believe for one moment that he was ignorant of its real causes. For indicative of the new age in which he lived, he furnishes his readers with statistical evidence and economic explanations (supplied in footnotes) that traced the present conflict to the insurmountable debt of Great Britain.

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SOME

STRICTURES

UPON THE

Sacred Story recorded in the

Book of ESTHER,

SHOWING

The Power and Oppression of STATE MINISTERS tending to the Ruin and Destruction of GOD's People:—And the remarkable Interpositions of Divine Providence, in Favour of the Oppressed;

IN A

DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT

NEWBURY-PORT, NORTH MEETING-HOUSE,

MARCH 8th, 1775.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE MASSACRE AT BOSTON,

MARCH THE FIFTH, 1770.

By OLIVER NOBLE, M. A.

And Pastor of a church in NEWBURY.

PREACHED AT THE

Request of a Number of Respectable Gentlemen of said Town, AND NOW

Published at the General Desire of the Hearers.

He disappointeth the devices of the crafty,
So THAT their hands cannot perform their enterprise ELIPAX.
And oft, supported so as shall AMAZE,
——Their PROUDEST PERSECUTORS. MILTON.

NEWBURY-PORT; New-England:
Printed by E. LUNT and H. W. TINGES.
MDCLXXV.
To the Reader,

EVERY intelligent reader, will be very sensible, that in handling subjects of this nature—Time to plan and digest the subject, and care to express with spirit, and yet with decent propriety are requisite; especially in times like ours.—The author, sensible of his own inequality to a performance of this kind, and having but four days allowed him for the composition, and that amidst a variety of avocations: Has felt exquisitely, while writing and delivering the ensuing sentiments. And now, they being very suddenly, and unexpectedly demanded for the press, he is no less sensibly touched, under a consideration of those inaccuracies, and indiscretions, that are likely to have dropped from his pen in this hasty production: Some of which, would have been prevented, if more time had been allowed him.—Nothing but, the importunity of the demandants, (for whose judgment he has a value) and a sense, that the public has just right to require every aid, of every member, for the public good in this difficult day, could have induced him to the publication. These considerations will intitle him to the candour of friends to their country; but, from those of a different character, he is sensible he cannot expect equal favour. As this, is designed not to cast any personal reflection whatever, but to excite in the minds of my countrymen, a prudent steadfastness in the cause of Liberty, and a pious trust in GOD, under oppression, and to express the most loyal heart, to his king, and unfeigned love to, and deep concern for his country: So if these ends are in the least degree answered, it rises to the highest expectations, and fulfills the warmest wish of the

Author.
That passage of Inspiration, which I take for the motto of this Discourse, is in the Book of Esther, Chap. viii. Ver. 11.

Wherein the King granted the Jews which were in every city, to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish all the power of the people and province that would assault them.

UCH is the accursed nature of lawless ambition, that the greatest misfortunes of kingdoms, and states, as well as of lesser communities, and individuals, have arisen from, and are owing to an insatiable lust of power in men of abilities, and influence.

Voracious like the grave, they can never have enough, i.e. of power and wealth: And are therefore prompted on by restless desires, to seek the means of accumulating these, and that by expedients, however profitable to themselves, are destructive to their country.

Such false, designing, and detestable patriots have in every age, nation, and country in the world, at one time or other, led their blind confiding country-men, into the very jaws of slavery, vassalage, and ruin.

The lust of power has in all nations, combined the worst passions of the human heart, and the worst projects of the human mind, in league against the liberties of mankind.—From hence,
has arisen so many absolute monarchies in the world, that have considered and treated their subjects, as their cattle; that have reduced thousands and millions, to a brutal vassalage, unworthy the rational and immortal nature of man; to gratify the insatiable ambition, and luxury of a crafty designing few.

Yea, such often, has been the influence, of a combined junto of courtiers and state-jobbers, that the reigning monarch, though naturally of a compassionate and benevolent heart, has been by such instruments, brought into a state of magnificent servitude, and splendid vassalage; and made accessory to the blackest servitude.

It is always the policy of such court-locusts, if possible, to shut fast the eyes, and to seal up the understanding of their prince, both with respect to his interest and danger; the latter of which, consists in court favourites, growing too powerful, and the former in the hearty love and good will, of a numerous, brave and free people.

These designing men, this kind of patriots, always lay their plan with a view, to seck behind the king's authority; if their oppression rouses the nation to assert their right, to screen them from deserved vengeance; or if their sovereign's eyes should be opened to discover their black designs, and his own, and the nation's true interest, and his ears to better councils, to depose, or destroy him.—In a word, if they see they are like to give them his authority, to suck the blood and treasure of their fellow-subjects, they aim that his own shall pay for it.

But an holy, and omnipotent GOD, in his righteous providence, often disappoints these aspiring tyrants, these plagues of mankind, these pests to all society; and causes them to be taken in their own craftiness.

A very striking instance of this we have in the history of this book.—The sacred story concerning Ahasuerus a Persian king, potent in arms, great in extent of territory, mighty in wealth and power,—and Haman, his haughty prime minister,—and his junto of court parasites,—their influence upon the king, in obtaining from him that horrid decree to slaughter the Jews in all the provinces,—the disappointment of the scheme,—the manner how,—and the remarkable interposition of divine providence therein,—is worthy our notice and will afford us matter of instruction suitable to the present occasion.

This king Ahasuerus, appears to be the same with Darius Hystaspes, according to the best, and most ancient historians. And indeed, the subject of this piece of history appears to be soon after the union of the Babylonish, with the Persian empire. This agrees, best with the reign of the before-mentioned prince: for at this time the empire covered the greatest part of Asia, both the Indias, Ethiopia, and most of Africa. The kingdom now was in its zenith of greatness and glory—besides, Herodotus an ancient and good historian, observes of this prince that his Queen's name was Hudosia, which, is the same with Haddassah, the Hebrew name of Esther; the same historian observes, as also Xenophon in his life of Cyrus, that the character of this king was mild and gentle, benevolent and vastly liberal, and greatly disposed to make his subjects happy; but his foibles were, an unbounded ambition, and a great propensity to luxury and sensuality.

As this monarchy had gained the summit of its glory, extent and wealth, it was now at peace with its neighbours abroad, yet luxury and riot began to rage within. It now became prolific in the production of cockatrices and vipers, that began to prey upon the bowels of the empire. It was with this kingdom, just as it is now, and always has been, with states under like circumstances.

Political bodies resemble the human; they have their birth, their youth, their manhood or full strength, their decline, their old age, infirmities and death. Thus it was with Greece and Rome, and other kingdoms; so it will be with the British, and every other kingdom and state in the world.—As it is with the human body, when every joint, ligament, muscle and fibre have come to their full strength, and maturity, it stays not long in that state, it is then fitted for the seizure of disease, for gradual decline; it is weakened by imperceptible strokes, until disease rages and death ensues. The first strokes that a state, or political body receives,
after its arrival to the summit of its glory and strength; is usually from the venality and rapine, of its over-grown members: Under the covert of law, and shew of justice.—When a state, by the influence of minions, and court parasites, those blood-suckers of the constitution, begins, and goes on, to establish unrighteousness by law,—and legislative authority is prostituted, to the iniquitous, and low purpose of aggrandizing individuals, instead of the good of the whole, then it receives a mortal blow; of which wound it will certainly perish, unless timely healed.—For one set of humours will flow in after another, till the juices of the political body are consumed—and death is the consequence: Chicanery and craft, will be played backward, and forward, by designing and ambitious men, for places of profit and honour, until the wealth of a kingdom is exhausted, until its strength is at first weakened, then destroyed, as with a deluge—and poverty and misery come upon its honest industrious inhabitants, like the breaking in of mighty waters. If old Harpies, are ousted, the public gets nothing by the change; a new set of the same character and conduct succeed, ut unda supervenit undam; as in a rolling sea, wave urges wave; until convulsions shake the state, it totters, and then falls. To accomplish this dreadful havock of their species, State Jobbers practice upon the imbecilities of princes, sometimes upon the best: (For all men have their weaknesses and foibles, and happy is the man that has the fewest of them.) These, find the blind side of their prince, they court him, not to his own safety, they flatter him not to the advantage of his subjects; but their own: Which by the way is never consistent with the true interest of the prince, or prosperity and happiness of his subjects. For a great part of the wealth of a state, must in this case, fall a prey to their insatiable avarice.

Thus did the prime minister in the Persian empire, that makes such a figure in the sacred history now under consideration. He flattered his credulous and ambitious prince, that he was something more than human—till he really made him something less—till he caused him counter to his natural disposition—to conduct with savage cruelty, in that bloody edict obtained against the innocent Jews.

Haman that arch-courtier, was ambitious like his master, but without his Benevolence and good nature, yet subtle and crafty to compass his black designs—he, (as Xenophon* observes) places his master among the Gods, that he might be deified himself; and the sacred text intimates as much.—For no doubt this is the homage that Mordecai refuses him.

It is very unlikely that a royal decree should be necessary to procure civil respect, to the prime minister, and so great a court favourite; and it is as unlikely that a man of Mordecai’s good sense and piety, would deny it to him—but the HOMAGE that was decreed him, no doubt was that of worship. This, a crowd of fawning, expecting, cringing Sycophants paid him; but Mordecai bowed not. He that could obtain this from his duped prince, might get anything.

And, now behold! His haughty heart lifted him up!—How it dilates with pride!—But, Oh! mortifying sight Mordecai denies him homage. Mordecai was a Jew, and had learned that divine lesson, thou shalt worship the Lord JEHOVAH, and him only shalt thou serve. And Haman an Amalekite, of the royal seed of AGAG, whom the Lord had bidden them to abhor, and detest. And no wonder, that he, with firmness refuses the demanded homage; For this, the haughty minister determined his ruin.

But it was too small a thing with this Premier, to rise up against a single man and take away his life; this was below his supposed dignity—this was too little a sacrifice to his vanity—this would not sufficiently gratify either his ambition or revenge; he therefore devotes an whole people to the sword, as objects of his vengeance. A vast number, “not less than eight-hundred-thousand souls,” (as an ancient historian observes§) are marked out as objects of his fury—these a very useful and industrious people, were serviceable both to the trade and manufactures of the kingdom, as well as in agriculture; in the destruction of whom, both the king and state must have suffered immense loss. He asks, and obtains the royal assent, and signature, to butcher... a day. Horrid massacre! Shocking to humanity! The picture of infernals! What baseness! What turpitude, is not the human

* Xenophon’s Life of Cyrus. § Herodotus.
mind capable of, when under the power of ambition and revenge? “Man left of God, “without heaven’s restraint, is more savage, than the savage brute; his vile ferocity rises in proportion to his capacity.”

But how did this incarnate Dæmon, get this inhuman, this bloody Degree? Why just as over-grown tyrants, and their creatures, do now, and always have done; by malicious lies and slanders against the honest and useful members of society, whom they mark out as objects of their vengeance, that they may take their spoil for a prey.

This wicked Haman found means to keep the King in ignorance of the character, state, and condition of his own subjects, he scarce knows who, or what these Jews are? Much less their importance to him—he had to learn their character from his court favourite—from Haman the Jews implacable Enemy. And no wonder that the king thinks ill of them—no wonder they stand in a bad light with him—no wonder he considers them as a public nuisance—no wonder that when he had given up his senses and understanding to a tyrannic blood-thirsty Minister of State—that he should give into his hands the objects of his vengeance. This is no new thing under the sun, for greedy courtiers to misrepresent, to their prince, those of their fellow-subjects, that they would plunder and destroy; that by the help of his Exchequer, they may compass their oppression designs, and spread ruin and devastation through the empire, that they and their tools may fatten upon the plunder.

And Haman said unto the King there is a certain people, scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the King’s laws. Therefore it is not for the King’s profit to suffer them, if it please the King let it be written that they may be destroyed, and I will pay into the King’s Exchequer Ten Thousand Talents of Silver—What horrid lies! What abominable slander! He represents to the king, that they were not only a mean contemptible people, but a strange odd set of mortals, not worthy of notice, that might be cut off without noise, crushed without tumult in the state. And yet at the same time so important, as to endanger the state, by corrupting its subjects with their independent principles, as disobedient to the laws of the realm. Now it was well known that they were a peaceable people, differing in nothing but their religion, and form of their worship, and were good subjects. How false—how inconsistent with itself is this account; notwithstanding Haman, (as all designing courtiers do) insinuates himself into the king’s favour, by such inconsistent slanders, under great pretence of friendship to the king, and devotedness to his interest, that he had no other view but to secure the king’s personal safety, and the public good. And how? Why by cutting off eight or nine-hundred thousand of its industrious and honest subjects. A true picture this of court chicanery and ministerial flattery! And to clinch the whole, and to secure the king’s command for his horrid project, he promises to pay an enormous sum! Enough to have startled a courtiers) to find that a single subject should be able to pay such a prodigious sum.—This is no new thing under the sun, for greedy courtiers to misrepresent, to their prince, those of their fellow-subjects, that they would plunder and destroy; that by the help of his Exchequer, they may compass their oppression designs. Is not this astonishing! But the riddle is explained, the mystery is unfolded, he had the public Exchequer at command, and a vast and wealthy Empire to squeeze and plunder at pleasure.

This shows us how dangerous over-grown ministers and courtiers are, both to kings and states, which every wise prince will forever guard against, and every state sound in politics always prevent.

* As Mordecai the Jew was doubtless the sacred historian, it is most likely they were Hebrew talents, about 189lb. 8oz. 15dwt. 18gr. Each talent worth 560l. 3s. 9d at 5s sterl. per oz. nearly, ten thousand of which gives the sum total, viz. 5601810l. 4s. 2d. But Mr. Cruden comptus as something less, worth 450l. ten-thousand of which worth 450000l sterl.
But now behold the Decree obtained! The bloody Plan ripened! Vast numbers devoted, as sheep to the slaughter! The day appointed for the horrid execution! Letters posted with speed throughout the empire, to ministerial tools, and creatures of his power, to be in readiness on the day appointed, to execute the shocking massacre; and no doubt the haughty minister exulting in the triumphs of his glory and success.

But who were the partners of his joy? Who rejoiced with him? Who was glad? Was the Persian empire exulting with joy, in the prospect of soon being rid of a public nuisance? No, not a word of this! Not only the devoted Jews, were in sorrow, clothed with sack-cloth; but horror and deep concern, sat brooding on every countenance; a solemn gloom covers the metropolis, the royal city Shushan, all in deep mourning, but the cruel perpetrators of the horrid plot, and a banditti of ministerial tools through the provinces, dependent on the breath of the minister, breathing the same spirit, and with him hoping to share the plunder. In this situation, divine providence saw fit to continue that great affair for about two months. Every thing wore a gloomy aspect; and no doubt every creature of power was busy in preparing for the bloody scene, Haman not excepted.

Haman prepares a gallows of extraordinary structure, for Mordecai, as principal among the Jews, and chief object of his vengeance, all things promised to turn out to his mind—and he thought he was just ready to satiate his thirst for blood.

But behold! An omnipotent God “reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of Isles be glad. The Lord reigneth, let oppressors tremble.” A merciful God heard the cries of this oppressed people, he looked down from the habitation of his glory and laughed at the baughtiness, and had in derision the plot of the man that exalted himself against God, and conspired the destruction of his people: And was determined to bring him low, and magnify his great Name in punishing the cruel Oppressor. And therefore, now the Lord appointed Queen Esther that his hand might be better seen, and acknowledged,—Behold! the scene changes, and the counsels and devices of the wicked, are turned upon their own heads.

It is now worth while to pause a minute—and attend to the temper and conduct of God’s people, in this critical juncture and dilemma of their affairs. It was a serious and solemn time with them, and no doubt their danger lay with due weight upon their minds. But they did not despair, they did not give themselves over for lost; they firmly believed the being of a God, and that he was their covenant God, and that he was higher than the highest, and that he could with infinite ease, extricate them out of their sore distress; that his arm was not shortened that he could not save, neither his ear heavy that he could not hear. They now humbled themselves before the Lord their Maker, they cried unto him for help in this distress; they caught hold of, and improved every probable human means within their power for their safety; but they put their trust only in the Lord their God.

They ask counsel of, and are guided by their wisest and best men, in the same perils. Mordecai, the principal among the Jews, and object of Haman’s most inveterate hate, conducts with uncommon wisdom and courage.

The first object of his attention, is (after seeking divine help and aid) to open the King’s eyes, which were blinded by court flatters, and ministerial intrigues; that he might know the truth, and understand his own true interest, and that of the empire:—An expression this of true loyalty, and a good example for others in similar circumstances;—and the good Lord in his kind providence ordered a favourable opportunity for this, by advancing Esther his niece, of the seed of the Jews to be Queen of the realm, and the King’s favourite.

Mordecai, treats her with respect, according to her dignity, but talks to her with his usual plainness and authority; he bid her intercede for the Life of her people, and reminds her that her place at court, was not certain to screen herself from Haman’s plot.
She pauses, she considers, and at last resolves; but a great embarrassment arises in her way, she had not been called into the king’s presence for thirty days, and uncertain when she should; besides, a cruel statute, (and unsafe for all princes, as well as their subjects) like a flaming sword, stands in the way of her approaching the throne. For by a statute of the realm, no person might approach the throne, uncalled upon pain of death.

In this, we have an exact picture of court parasites, and ministerial tyrants: They make princes prisoners of state, and shut out (if possible) from the royal presence all persons but themselves, and their creatures, and all petitions but those of their own preferring, or that reach the royal ear through the channel of their favour.

Their policy in this, is, to keep the groans, and complaints of those subjects whom they oppress, from moving the compassion of the royal heart; that, by his ignorance, of their villany they may secure to themselves his favour, and escape the punishment due to their atrocious crimes. And so go on, to pillage and oppress mankind with impunity.—But if a torrent of murmurs, an general complaints, should at any time arise, too mighty for their strength to encounter, or wisdom to quiet, if possible they will throw the public odium upon their master; and screen themselves behind his abused authority; or perhaps in this case, they may sacrifice a few of their obsequious tools, those lesser villains, those jackals, that have barked after the Lyons, to still the popular rage, and to save their own bacon.

But how much more safe, and happy would it be, for both princes and their subjects, if (like Pharamond an ancient prince of France, who had a court gate, that was called The Gate of the Distressed, because there he heard in person, the complaints of the meanest of his subjects) their palaces and ears were open to the complaints of the oppressed, without the parade of state, or ministerial gloss or disguise, against the greatest of their servants.

But Queen Esther and Mordecai, strengthened by a firm faith in God, and clothed with heroic fortitude, were determined to surmount all these difficulties and dangers, to bring their complaint and petition to the royal ear at the peril of their lives, to give him the true state of their affairs, and to acquaint the king with the whole of the hellish plot formed against them at all adventures.

Nothing can discover greater human wisdom, a more through acquaintance with men and things, or more fortitude of soul, than is discovered in the management of this great, delicate and difficult affair. They seem to be under a divine effluence of wisdom and policy.

Thus while they, like men, used the most probable means for their safety, the Lord Jehovah was working for them; and in a remarkable manner paved the way for the destruction of Haman the Jews enemy, by advancing the devoted Mordecai to honour and dignity, and that through the very means by which Haman thought to aggrandize himself. Of the circumstances of the king’s not sleeping, and how he was directed to turn over court records for his amusement, and there find that Mordecai had saved his life, and Haman’s advice on this affair with a view to his own honour; I need not remind you:—These where surprising interpositions of God’s providence, in favour of his oppressed people, and sadly mortifying to the Persian premier.—And had not his heart been callous to a sense of guilt and shame, as well as to the feelings of humanity (like all others of the same stamp) he must have been filled with horror, and trembling seized him, for fear of a sad reverse of fortune.

But, now the important hour comes! And Haman the tyrant and murderer present! When the King’s ear was to be opened to hear the cries of the distressed, and his heart to pity, and afford them help.—Esther the Queen brings her request to the royal ear,—instead of half the kingdom it is only this! Let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request, for we are sold to be slain, and to perish. And Haman thou art the man that hath done this—brought up the rear, in this heavy complaint.

Now the king’s understanding is for once unloosed, and his eyes opened; he is cut to the heart with shame, at the reproof given
him, which was wisely couched in the petition: For at the instigation of the Minister it was that the King sold them, and Haman had only bought them, as Minister of State with the King's money.—Thus were they bought and sold as cattle for the slaughter.—Here we see despotism epitomised!

But the king stung with remorse, that he had been blinded and fooled by a haughty minister, and shocked at his own conduct in that affair, justly devotes the deceiver and murderer to ruin; for bringing guilt and odium upon his Prince, and fear and distress upon his subjects; by slanders and cruel abuse of his power, and influence with him.

Such an example, one would be ready to think, would be sufficient to make all crowned heads cautious of giving implicit faith to courtiers and place-men; sufficient to make them ever jealous of aspiring ambitious ministers, and severe in scrutinizing into their public conduct, and careful to watch their motions in all their actions respecting public affairs; and as effectual in punishing every fraud and deceit of this kind, that tends to alienate the affections of their loyal subjects from them, and to fix upon them the odium of cruelty and oppression.—O that Princes were wise, that they understood this!

But now behold! the bloody Decree reversed! reversed did I say? no, it was not; but rather in a sort superceded by another.—To such a pitch of pride, folly, and madness, had the Persian court arrived, that they had assumed omnipotence and omniscience, essential perfections of JEHOVAH; for it had become a Statute of the realm, that their Laws should not be repealed, or their Decrees revoked.—Egregious folly! And how is it copied, in the conduct of most courts in all great empires; though the principle may not be openly avowed. And thus it comes to pass, that rather than honesty to retract one error, known and fully discovered, they go on to commit an hundred more, as remedies of the former, until the remedy is worse than the DISEASE; until their inexplicable turning, and political windings, have thrown the affairs of the nation, into such an amazing snarl, and labyrinth, as that it is, next to impossible for human wisdom to unravel them: And thus by such designing selfish politics, the state often trembles, and some times the crown totters; or what is worse, if such traitors and tyrants continue their influence, the nation will be Enslaved, and dwindle to barbarism and brutality. How the remedy would have operated in the case before us, had not divine wisdom and power interposed, is hard to say; but the LORD overruled it well; the Lord JEHOVAH is able to bring good out of evil, light out of darkness, and did so now! And is able and ready to do it again.

ESTHER and Mordecai obtain a decree in favour of the Jews, and with a view to their salvation. But let us attend a minute, to the tenor of the decree, and let us see what mighty boon! Is the former decree reversed? No: Are the bloody orders commanded? No, not a word of this. What does the whole amount to? Why, only to what GOD and Nature allowed them, yea, demanded? No; Are the bloody orders reversed? To stand for their LIFE, and to destroy, and to cause to perish; Whom? And what persons? Was it their honest neighbours, that had no hand in the plot? No verily; but all the power and persons, that would ASSAULT them.

The grant amounted to this, and no more, that they might stand on that defence against all court tools, and ministerial creatures and minions, that taking the advantage of the former decree should be found in arms to assault them. And who would not (unless it be a coward or a fool) defend himself, if possible form the assault of a banditti of villains that would cut his throat.

But here let us attend to the sequel, and well notice the issue.—By this last decree the innocent Jews (just now represented, as a contemptible mean spirited set of mortals) and their enemies were put upon an equal footing. For no doubt Haman the Premier, and his junto of court favourites, flatterers, and dependants in the royal city, together with governors of provinces, counsellors, boards of
crush them? Not a word do we find of this! Brave Heroes! Fit only to fill Treasure, by unrighteous establishments out of the honest and industrious. Like all others of the same stamp and character, when it comes to the pinch, and when on but equal ground, like cowards they creep into holes, they tremble and fall before the people, whom they had barbarously devoted to ruin. True courage is found only with the oppressed, they destroy their implacable enemies and obtain salvation.

Now, in this instance, we see the true spirit, genuine courage, and personal bravery of all such oppressive tyrannic men, divested of Flebs, and stripped of arms, those executioners of their black designs against the liberty and property of their fellow-men. For now the scale of power and influence was turned in the Persian court, and Mordecai had the direction of these; but without liberty or instruction, to make use of them, either for the protection of the Jews, or destruction of their enemies. There is not a word in the decree itself, or in the sacred story, that in the least intimates, that the Jews had any help from the army of the Persian empire; but now they and their enemies stood on equal ground, and were to try it out by personal bravery;—and we have before taken notice of the consequence.

It is true that the Jews were the Lord's covenant people, and that they humbled themselves before the Lord their Maker and Redeemer; and earnestly sought his help, while they stood on their own defence. And it is as true, that the Lord was on their side, and wrought wonderfully in every circumstance, by which their salvation was accompanied; and they piously acknowledged the hand of their God in the whole.—But the Lord helped them, in a way of means, in a wise and prudent attempt to help themselves, while they stood on their defence, the Lord omnipotent, appeared for them, and wrought for their salvation. And this is the way in which God always bas, and ever will deliver his people out of their distresses, and from the hand of Violence and oppression. They have no reason to expect the mighty hand of God working for them, while like asses they crouch down, to take on their burdens.
Are not the people of America, also God’s covenant people? And is not the Lord of Hosts their covenant God? God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He is as able and as ready to appear for his distressed covenant people now, as then; and they may hope for, and expect salvation in the same way.

The example of God’s ancient covenant people, when on the brink of ruin may afford us instruction, under present distress; while on the one hand, it admonishes us of the necessity and important of fervent prayer and deep humiliation, and a thorough breaking of our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by turning to the Lord; on the other, not to despair, but commit our cause to God, and stand fast.

All human prudence, and wisdom, are to be exercised, yet if called by divine providence, (which we pray heaven to prevent) we must, we ought, as they did in the case before us, to improve the grant that every man has from the King of Heaven, “to arise, and stand for his Life, to kill and destroy all that assault them”—but none other!

Our case to human appearance, is nothing so deplorable as was the case of the Jews in the instance before us, (though distressing enough)—they did not despair, they conducted like men of wisdom and fortitude, they put their trust in the Lord and were saved. So in this way we may also hope that God will and plead our cause, and his own, against the oppressor—for the Cause of Liberty is the Cause of God; it is the gift of God to man in his very creation, and what he has fitted him for, as a summary of his terrestrial happiness: And whosoever gives it up, and tamely submits to Slavery, like a foolish or wanton Heir, spends the PATRIMONY of his Heavenly Father’s giving, and is a rebel to God and Nature.

The cause of America (now in controversy) is the cause of God, never did Man struggle in a greater, or more glorious cause. It will, it must appear, to Heaven and Earth, that we are not the aggressors in this sad controversy! we ask, we contend for nothing more, than what God and nature gave us, to enjoy our OWN, without rapine or robbery. This we hold not only by the Law of Nature, but by the Faith, and Contract of Kings stipulated in the most Solemn CHARTERS under their Sign and Seal Manual. Our fathers, have earned and we their children have de-
served what we contend for, *Liberty* and *Property*; to enjoy our own, without molestation. When I say we, and our fathers have *deserved* these blessings, I mean not from the hand of *GOD*, we have forfeited them into the hand of his justice, by our back-sliding from him, and covenant breaking, and God is holy and righteous in *his* present controversy with us, and we ought to humble ourselves before him, and implore his mercy;—but we have *deserved* from the hand of *Great Britain* better usage—we have *deserved* their protection, in the enjoyment of our Natural and Charter Privileges; instead of an attempt to wrest both from our hands. Every attempt to *wrest* Liberty and Property from us must be exceeding unrighteous, and fraught with peculiar turpitude, was the only one that suffered in the *restoration*, at the Revolution; but so it was, and our original Charter Rights and Privileges were much curtailed, and the *People* of the Province, had but the shadow of authority left them, in comparison of the former. The most material Privilege left us, was that of raising our own money, or in other words the *Exclusive* right of *Taxing* ourselves, that our purses and property should be under our own direction. This sacred *PALLADIUM*, a British parliament, would now wrench from us with violence, which if they accomplish, with us, property is no more, the very ideas of Liberty and Property are lost, and we are SLAVES; but we have an original right, and inherent right, to the same privileges, with our sister Colony of Connecticut. For this, is the spirit of the first, the original Contract, between the king of England and us; upon which this Province was settled, at the amazing expense and labour of our fathers, and without cost to the crown of England. I consider the parliament of Great Britain, as (of right) having no kind of *dominion* over us, or concern with us, for they were no party in the Contract, there exists not, nor ever did, any kind of Contract or Bargain between us and them; we never chose them to legislate for us, they do not, they *cannot* represent us; therefore instead of the shocking *Claim* to bind us, by their *Acts in all cases whatsoever*, they have no right to bind us in any case whatever: We are, it is true bound to the king, and he to us, according to the spirit and design of the Charter Contract, which we ever have been, and are still willing to fulfill on our part to a jot and tittle, and have right to expect his protection, in the peaceable enjoyment of all our natural Rights and Charter Privileges—and the moment the Charter Contract is violated on the other part, we are again in a state of *nature*, and have a right to set out anew, but the interest of both parties is to maintain the connexion inviolate—and may heaven prevent a disunion. The notion that some maintain in the controversy, is so absurd and childish that it scarce deserves a refutation: That the for we have never forfeited one iota of our Charter Rights, we have been as fast friends to our mother-country, as loyal to our king, and as peaceable and governable a people as any under heaven, and have afforded to *Great Britain* immense wealth.—But they are angry with us, because we WILL NOT BE SLAVES.—Angry did I say, Who are angry? The good people in general of Great Britain—I hope not, we have reason firmly to believe they are not; all the pains taken to blind their eyes and to prejudice their minds with regard to us, by crafty designing men, notwithstanding. But who are angry? Who, but a set of designing Haman’s, and their creatures who want to take our estates, allegiance of a *British* subject, (and the authority of parliament too, if they mean any thing to the purpose in the present controversy) follows him wherever he goes; even to the ends of the earth. This, if it prove any thing, proves *unspeakably* too much; upon this supposition, if a number of Britons should take it into their heads to purchase a tract of land in France, Spain, China, or Japan, and remove there with their families, they would be still subject to the British king, and be yet under parliamentary authority, they must carry their code of British laws with them, and be subject to them however counter to the laws of the state where they reside; the *absurdity* of this is obvious to common understandings. No less ridiculous, is another tenet, advanced in the present controversy—that *New-England* was first discovered by subjects of the crown of England, and therefore ought to be considered as part of the realm, and subject to all its acts, laws and regulations; but suppose it is fact that an English merchant-man, sailed within sight of Cape Cod, or what is more likely some western Cape, or head land, and saw the shore at a distance, would the consequence follow from it? By no means. Supposing an Indian of New-England (as it is now called), should have been so lucky as to have crossed the Atlantic in his birch canoe, and should have discovered England, or some part of the European continent; would that have given the Sachem of his tribe propriety in the soil, or right to the *dominion* of those countries? As much and no more than it the case before us; the truth of the matter is, that the relation of this country, to England was merely ideal, till our fathers purchased it, took possession of it, and connected it with Britain by Charter and solemn Compact. This Charter and Compact, is therefore the only *rule*, by which our dependency upon, and subjection to Great Britain must of right be determined, set aside this, and of right we are absolutely independent of them, or any other state. But this CHARTER connexion is of the last importance to both sides the water and ought to be inviolably maintained, and sacredly adhered to by both Englands.
if not our lives for a prey, that they may riot upon the SPOILS; and prompted by this stimulus, they have used every artifice to blind the nation, and to prejudice our king against us, that they might not see their true interest, that justice and right judgment, might be hid from the king and nation, that they might aggrandize themselves at the expense of the king and nation, and by the ruin of AMERICA.

And if our King is angry with us, it is because Men of the before-mentioned Character have imposed upon him, by sordid Slanders and infamous lies against the good people of America, and of this Province in particular. Therefore his wrath cannot be against the true character of these Colonies, but a false Picture drawn by our enemies, with a view to aggrandize themselves, and promote their black design of enslaving AMERICA. But could our kind and benevolent Sovereign, but look through America with his own eyes, could he visit every Colony in Person, could he know the fervour of their love and loyalty, could he see, and personally take notice of their amazing patience and fortitude, under unparalleled indignities and sufferings cast upon them by his tyrannic and oppressive servants, could he see their heroic virtue, resolution, and prudent Steadfastness in the Cause of LIBERTY, could he be acquainted with the greatness of their souls, and firm and unshaken resolution, not to survive the loss of the rights of nature, and their Charter Privileges; and could he but know the inexpressible MEANNESS as well as falsehood and malice of their adversaries, in all their calumny against us, with which they have wounded the royal ear: I say if he had a just view of these things, how would his royal heart melt with pity at our oppression! What noble sentiments of Americans, would arise in his mighty soul! What affection! What parental tenderness! How would his heart dilate with joy to find, that he had so many noble spirited subjects in this part of the world, Fired equally with love to their King and Country. Who so well understand the nature of true Liberty, and spirit of good government, and who can so well defend them, and how firm would his determination be, that those should have Liberty, that so well understand it, so prudently enjoy it, and so bravely defend it; and how would he frown Indignant, upon American enemies, that have so basely betrayed their trust, and abused their Sovereign.

And I yet firmly believe, and humbly trust in that GOD, that turned the slander and falsehood of wicked Haman, and his accomplices; against the innocent Jews; upon their own heads; that he will speedily appear for us, and plead our righteous CAUSE, against all those, that have so falsely accused us, so unjustly reproached us, and sought to enslave us. That a merciful GOD And if our King is angry with us, it is because Men of the be-

And this end no pains are to be spared, in order to engage wise, prudent and influential men, at home, in the glorious cause of Freedom. And we have reason to hope, yea, firmly to believe, that GOD will so dispose the heart of the King, and raise us up friends, that shall be able, and effectual, to put a stop to the reign of present men, and measures, without shedding of blood. Nothing but our sins, and impenitence can prevent this, our cause is so just, and the affair so important and interesting to the nation, it must, and will prevail, unless for our sins we are given up of GOD:—But after all our greatest dependance is upon our GOD, and under him, upon the exertions of our own virtue and fortitude.
Americans by this time, no doubt are generally acquainted with the question in controversy between us and the court of Great-Britain; in short, it is this, the parliament of Britain, at present claim a right of binding us by their laws in all cases whatsoever, (i.e.) to tax us at their pleasure; the Colonies deny their right to taxation in any case whatever, and affirm that to submit to the claim would reduce them to absolute Slavery. If they have right to lay on us one tax, they have another, if they have right to take one shilling from us without our consent, they have as good right to take all, and strip us naked of every thing; though the robbery would not be so great in the first, as in the latter case, yet it partakes of the same nature. If Ministers of State, and court dependants at any time want money to support their luxury, or to buy creatures, to increase their power and to strengthen their influence, it is but to apply to a Parliament smuggled up by venality, grouped together by ministerial BRIBERY, whose interest it is, to serve their CREATOR, and grant all their demands; and Americans must be taxed without mercy, to pay it. But if we complain or oppose, we are to be taught submission by the point of the Sword; armed mercenaries, at the beck of an haughty wan-ton Minister of State, are to enforce the decree, and we are to pay them for pillaging our substance and spilling our BLOOD.

Can it be any longer a secret, that a plan has been systematically laid, and pursued by the British ministry, near twelve years, for enslaving America, as the STIRRUP by which they design to mount the RED HORSE of TYRANNY and DESPOTISM at home?

Well did despots at home know, that if Charming FREEDOM spread her olive branches in America, emigrations from them to us, would soon go near to depopulate their own country; weakening them and strengthening us, until America became invincible; and therefore open strides of arbitrary power, were first to appear in the Colonies, while the mines were laving at home; that when we were subdued, they might open their batteries with safety against British Liberty; and Britons be made to feel the same oppressive hand of despotic Power.

Besides it would then be in the power, and it would be the policy of haughty ministers, to make America a nursery of mercenary troops for their service, supported by the sweat of Americans, and called home upon any emergency, necessary to promote their despotic purposes.

And then not a murmur, not a complaint must be heard from poor servile Americas, or it must be stopped with axes and scaffolds, gibbets and halter: Or perhaps in great tenderness some might be permitted to die by powder and ball, sword or bayonet. Armed mercenaries must be the instruments of stifling all complaints, and the officers to collect from us our treasure; and in case of the least resistance, we are to expect Massacred and Death.

These are thy Blessings, this thy legacy, O Americans! bequeathed thee by those in power in thy parent state—This thy reward for thy warmest duty, and filial affection! This the return for all the blood and treasure of thy fathers expended in settling and defending this large and fertile territory, and hereby enlarging the commerce of Great-Britain, and adding sinews to her strength! These thy wages, for the blood of thy young men spilt, and thy treasure largely and cheerfully spent, in the conquest of Louisbourg, Nova Scotia, and Canada, only for the Benefit of thy King, and to increase the wealth, and enlarge the territories of the British nation. These thy returns, for all thy rich treasures,

* In that large expence of the money and blood of these colonies the last war, the crown alone had the profit; we supplied men and money much beyond our proportion, and the balance we bore in the scale of national strength and wealth, was to conquer, not for ourselves, but the crown; not a foot of the lands conquered fell to our share; not a ship stationed upon our coast, for our defence in a time of war to protect our trade, the whole of the operations in America, were with a view to their own advantage, without any regard to our interest; yet none but a colonist can conceive of the ardour and zeal with which these colonies put to their shoulders, what treasures expended, and what number of lives lost, in the several enterprises in which they were engaged; and yet not they, but others have the profit. The crown has taken possession of the late acquisitions in America, to which the colonies so largely contributed, our estates have depreciated, by the conquest, while the wealth of the British nation has amazingly increased.—Good heaven's!—must all this be forgot by those who have had the profit of our toils and BLOOD;—and now in a time of peace must we have ships and troops in plenty, not to protect, but to ENSLAVE us.
cast in abundance into thy mother's LAP.—Oh! Heaven attend to our oppression, and hear our cries!—Oh! Almighty Father,—awake in thy Righteousness and in thy strength,—and avenge our just controversy upon the heads of the contrivers of so fatal a plan;—and in mercy LORD, spare thy covenant people!—O Americans! awake, arise, and stand for your life: You have a grant to do so, against all that assault you, from the King of Heaven; from Nature and from Nature's GOD.

To repel armed force, by force of the same kind, is lawful by Heaven's decree. Therefore be of good courage, nothing is lost that is not given over for lost.—STANDING ARMIES MUST BE REMOVED, or they will reduce us to a State of Slavery worse than DEATH.—But the time when, and manner how, I leave with a merciful GOD, and the wisdom of our political fathers.

That God who delivered his people of old, when brought to the brink of ruin by a wicked Minister of State, can deliver us. And is there not reason to hope, yea firmly to believe that he will remove the MONSTER of a standing ARMY from our land? Has he not amazingly united the Colonies, in the grand cause of Liberty? Notwithstanding all the bribery and craft practiced in order to disunite them? Has not God been working for us, while we have made (as yet) a noble stand against oppression? And is he not raising us up friends at home? And who knows but God in mercy suffered so early a TRAGEDY and CARNAGE of our brethren in the Metropolis, that by awakening us out of lethargy, to assert our invaded rights, and uniting us in the general cause before it was too late, he might prevent greater destruction.

But while I mention our slaughtered Brethren in BOSTON whose funeral obsequies, we this day with sympathy commemorate and lament; my blood ferments, my passions kindle, my heart burns, and every power of my soul is on the stretch, in the love and for the cause of Liberty! With what ardour, firmness, and resolution, should we defend this glorious cause, Men and brethren, our brothers blood cries to us from the ground, and the voice is like that in the motto, Arise and stand for your lives against all that would assault you.

You are called upon by repentance and amendment to engage the Lord on your side, to exert yourselves like men that fear their maker, and ye shall stand proof against a flood of ministerial vengeance; your God will remarkably for you, and you shall yet be safe and free.

But hark! methinks I hear the Ghost of GREY, or one of his associates in the dark, sounding in mine ear, with a plaintive voice, Oh! Americans will ye not take warning by our untimely fate? Will ye not resent our FALL? Will ye not shake off the yoke? Will ye open your bosoms to the fatal lead, and pointed steel? Will not our warm blood reeking from the hands of armed mercenaries mingled with the dust of your metropolis? Will not the groans, sighs, and tears, of our bereaved wives, children and friends, rouse you to heroic valour, and inspire you with the temper, and form you to the character of the tribe of Judah, and arm you with martial virtue in the cause of God, and in the cause of drooping Liberty; in our cause and in your OWN? By our untimely death learn your own fate if tyranny should prevail; you will soon be hourly exposed to fall by an armed assassin, and he escape with impunity. Will not these plaintive groans from the Dead awaken every virtue of the human soul, and call forth all its vigour, to expel from the land the power by which we fell? If ye do not ye are Slaves. But is there no Lightning in the hidden stores of Heaven, red with uncommon wrath to blast the men, that have called these mercenaries to your land, the ingrateful men that abet the despotic plan, and would owe their greatness to their Country's Ruin? Is it not real, or is it all illusion; the voice is indeed illusion: But are not the sentiments real and just. The sentiments of all wise men, the patriots of every country, the experience of all ages, bare TESTIMONY against a standing ARMY, as inconsistent with Liberty. When ever there exists a power in the state sufficient, to trample upon or control its LAWS, THAT STATE IS NO LONGER FREE.
An ingenious author† speaking of a standing army in \textit{England}, says, “It is evident that this is “a mortal distemper in the British government, of which at last, it must inevitably perish;” since which, the disease has amazingly increased, but of this, no more need be said. We fell the \textit{baleful} influence, we hear the monster \textit{roar}, he shews his pointed teeth, fierce and \textit{red}, we have felt, and still feel a touch of his \textit{iron claw}, and shall we not believe our senses? But we hope, and have great confidence, that this unhappy controversy will be settled without bloodshed, and liberty yet be triumphant with us, without the contention of \textit{swords}; that the eyes of the nation will soon be opened, by our steady perseverance in the peaceable measures adopted by the whole continent∗ and our wrongs righted, and friendship again restored; which may Heaven grant, according to the earnest prayer of every lover of this country, or of the interest of \textit{Great-Britain}. But have we not every admonition, and every motive to prepare for the worst, to stand ready for the onset, to stand for our lives against all that \textit{assault} us, and if our enemies drive us to it (which may the Lord prevent) to contend for the \textit{immortal} prize \textit{sword} in hand. Awake! arise \textit{Americans}! and prepare for the event, by no means strike the first, but be ready to strike the second blow, to advantage. Had we not better \textit{die} gloriously in the cause of \textit{GOD}, of Liberty and our Country, than to dishonour \textit{GOD} and human nature by submitting to \textit{ignoble} slavery, than to die like dogs by meagre famine or the halter. Behold yonder the \textit{SHACKLES} forging, and perhaps traitors to their King and Country, hoping to put them on: Upon whom? The good Lord knoweth, but we fully trust that our \textit{God} will disappoint them; and that with regard to our wearing of them, it shall remain an unanswerable question, who shall put them on. Let them remember who it was that occupied the gallows prepared for innocent \textit{Mordecai}. I mention this not to discourage you, but to animate your souls, and to warm your hearts, and to call forth every manly passion, and christian virtue. Let your spirits be cool, your opposition to tyranny prudent, yet steadfast and persevering, and let this thought support you, that when wicked men are nearest their hopes, the godly are farthest from their fears. I close in the words of the ingenious Mr. \textit{Quincy}. Yet “be not amused, my countrymen! the extirpation of bondage, and the reestablishment of “freedom are not of easy acquisition. The worst passions of the human heart, and the most subtle “projects of the human mind are leagued against you; and principalities and powers have acceded to “the combination. Trials and conflicts you must, therefore, endure;—hazards and jeopardies—of life “and fortune—will attend the struggle. Such is the fate of all noble exertions for public liberty and “social happiness—Enter not the lists without thought and consideration, lest you arm with timidity “and combat with irresolution. Having engaged in the conflict, let nothing discourage your vigour, “or repel your perseverance:—Remember, that submission to the yoke of bondage is the worst that “can befall a people after the most fierce and unsuccessful resistance. What can the misfortune of “vanquishment take away, which despotism and rapine would spare? It had been easy (said the great “law-giver Solon to the Athenians,* to repress \textit{the advances of tyranny}, and prevent it’s “establishment, \textit{but now it is established and grown to some height} it would be \textbf{MORE GLORIOUS} to “\textit{demolish it}. But nothing glorious is accomplished, nothing great is attained, nothing valuable is “secured without magnanimity of mind and \textit{devotion of heart to the service}—\textit{BRUTUS-LIKE}, “therefore, dedicate yourselves at this day to the service of your Country;” (and let me add, to the fear and service of your \textit{GOD}, “and henceforth live A \textit{LIFE OF LIBERTY AND GLORY}.” Which may \textit{God in infinite mercy grant, through JESUS CHRIST}.

\textbf{A M E N.}

† Mr. \textit{Hume}, who ever would see more of the destructive tendency of Standing Armies, let him consult, Mr. Hume, and the Lords' Protest, the celebrated American Farmer, but in particular Mr. \textit{Quincy's} late observation &c. than which nothing can be wrote with more spirit and life, and yet with greater justness.

∗ If the resolves of the Continental Congress are strictly adhered to, together with the non-importation, and consumption agreements, there is but little doubt of the desired effects, which will save the calamities of a civil war, he therefore that violates them, language cannot express his baseness, for want of a worse, we will call him by his own proper name, as fraught with the greatest conceivable turpitude. My \textit{D E A R COUNTRYMEN}, let nothing but a total repeal of all oppressive Acts of Parliament respecting American \textit{FREEDOM}, remit the least degree of your zeal, and pruden firmness and perseverance in the measures adopted in support of your liberty, be not deceived with flattering hopes, and false pretences, least a snake in the grass bite you at unawares.

"Plut. Life of Solon."
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