



Walpole in happier days (c. 1756-57) by Sir Joshua Reynolds (Ragley Hall.)

THE VIEW FROM STRAWBERRY HILL:

Horace Walpole and the American Revolution

The era of Horace Walpole's father, Prime Minister Robert Walpole (in office 1721–1742) and the decades immediately leading up to, in terms of peace, prosperity, and general social improvement could, relatively speaking, be considered one of the most halcyon periods in British history. And that so few are acquainted with it, outside of, say, the specific history of Marlborough or else some literary, artistic, musical, or scientific giant like Defoe,¹ Pope, Hogarth, Handel, and Newton, is perhaps as sure proof as any of the truth of this assertion

What is more, and oddly enough, the revolt of American the whigs in 1776 was in a sense of a conservative nature inasmuch as it sought to bring back those times, which many knew from living memory; when crown and colonies peaceably co-existed: without taxation or unfriendly coercion; when America was proud of her parentage and the colonies were not yet so wealthy as to command more than casual or curious attention by the British themselves. The Americans had come to view William and Mary's and Walpole's, and Pitt the elder's eras as being the proper measure of the status quo. Yet all changed when following the brilliantly successful Seven Years/French and Indian War, the spirit of the nation seemed to turn from an attitude of domestic self-improvement and cultural refinement and excellence to that of a robust imperialism, accompanied by a fast rising and unparalleled economic supremacy among the states of Europe. As the 1770's developed, well then might many colonists have viewed the reigning powers-that-be as wrongful usurpers of those earlier, more tranquil times; all the more so as growing economies on both sides of the Atlantic provided opportunity for greater greed and avarice to play a more extensive and powerful role in people's lives and communities. Ironically, the refractory revolutionaries were in their own eyes the true conservatives; while for some vociferous few, Britain's soul was battling for its very life; and in Walpole's case, with a breadth of vision and experience that transcended thoughtless acquiescence to changing times, he felt this most acutely.

It is a fact no little familiar to many of us that in the competition for goods and the control of prosperity, orchestrated and methodical criminality (not least of which such criminality that refuses to stop short of murder) will often, if not always, prevail over idealism and brotherly good will. And it was in the former light that the more ardent Whigs came to deem the presiding Tories and their allies; such that as events reached a heated pitch in the form of the American War, the defeat of Lord North's Ministry and what it represented was seen as the defeat of, correspondingly, folly and crime.

Yet were such as Wedderburn, North or Germain the actual culprits or only stand-ins for unpublic, unaccountable others lying in the shadows? For most people, in the haze of comprehending wide and far flung worldly affairs, it wasn't always easy or even exactly necessary to say. What mattered was that regardless of who specifically was most at fault, something clearly was wrong -- and that things came to blows is matter of fact confirmation of this. And yet bitterly critical as he is in his famous letters,

¹ Quite in the spirit of many of the later Revolutionaries, Robinson Crusoe's father admonishes his son, to eschew the extravagance of the rich and titled elite, and shun the hardships and ignominy of poverty; advising his son instead to steer an economically middle class course in his life.

Walpole was hesitant to dwell for more than a spell on one or two individuals that might be considered most blameworthy, and rather makes use of colorfully varied illustrations and examples to argue his point. His support of the Americans doubtless has its roots in his antipathy for the Tories who ousted his father. But as he himself makes plain, even if party affiliation is construed to be an important motivating factor, he still feels it is still necessary to adduce good and objective reasons otherwise for the inflammatory minority opinion (in Britain) he espouses.

As well one the foremost connoisseurs of (literal) *belle lettres*, imaginative aesthetes, and punctilious antiquarians, Walpole became, among his other possible literary honors, the Samuel Pepys of his generation, and his correspondence is a treasure trove in its addressing numerous and diverse subjects; not least of which the American Revolutionary War as seen from one Englishman's eyes. Selections and collections made from it, while having its practical advantages, unfortunately cannot begin to do the entire corpus of Walpole's chatty missives justice; other than to serve as a sampler to encourage a reader to seek more. The following then, with the aforesaid caveat, is one such. Our title itself *technically* is a misnomer, as not all the letters from which the ensuing extracts are taken were written at Strawberry Hill. But we so liked the sound and appropriateness otherwise, we retain it all the same.

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To Sir Horace Mann  
From Paris, Feb. 29, 1766.

...The Duke of Richmond has been gone to England this fortnight; he had a great deal of business, besides engagements here; and if he has failed writing, at least I believe he received yours. Mr. Conway, I suppose, has received them too, but not to my knowledge; for I have received but one from him this age. He has had something else to do than to think of Pretenders, and pretenders to pretensions. It has been a question (and a question scarcely decided yet) not only whether he and his friends should remain Ministers, but whether we should not draw the sword on our colonies, and provoke them and the manufacturers at home to rebellion. The goodness of Providence, or Fortune by its permission, has interposed, and I hope prevented blood; though George Grenville and the Duke of Bedford, who so mercifully checked our victories, in compassion to France, grew heroes the moment there was an opportunity of conquering our own brethren. It was actually moved by them and their banditti to send troops to America. The stout Earl of Bute, who is never afraid when not personally in danger, joined his troops to his ancient friends, late foes, and now new allies. Yet this second race of Spaniards, so fond of gold and thirsting after American blood, were routed by 274; their whole force amounting but to 134. The Earl, astonished at this defeat, had recourse to that kind of policy which Machiavel recommends in his chapter of *back-stairs*. Caesar himself disavowed his Ministers, and declared he had not been for the repeal, and that his servants had used his name without his permission. A paper was produced to his eyes, which proved this denial an equivocation. The Ministers, instead of tossing their places into the middle of the closet, as I should have done, had the courage and virtue to stand firm, and save both Europe and America from destruction... [*The Letters of Horace Walpole*, edited by Peter Cunningham, Vol. IV, p. 479]

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To Sir Horace Mann
From Strawberry Hill, May 6, 1770.

...In Parliament their numbers are shrunk to nothing, and the session is ending very triumphantly for the Court. But there is another scene opened of a very different aspect. You have seen the accounts from Boston. The tocsin seems to be sounded to America. I have many visions about that country, and fancy I see twenty empires and republics forming upon vast scales over all that continent, which is growing too mighty to be kept in subjection to half a dozen exhausted nations in Europe. As the latter sinks, and the others rise, they who live between the eras will be a sort of Noahs, witnesses to the period of the old world and origin of the new. I entertain myself with the idea of a future senate in Carolina and Virginia, where their future patriots will harangue on the austere and incorruptible virtue of the ancient English! will tell

their auditors of our disinterestedness and scorn of bribes and pensions, and make us blush in our graves at their ridiculous panegyrics. Who knows but even our Indian usurpations and villainies may become topics of praise to American schoolboys? As I believe our virtues are extremely like those of our predecessors the Romans, so I am sure our luxury and extravagance are too...[Vol. V, p. 235]

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To Sir Horace Mann  
From Strawberry Hill, Oct. 6, 1774.

...We have a new famous Bill, devised by the late Mr. Grenville, that has its first operation now; and what changes it may occasion, nobody can yet foresee. The first symptoms are not favourable to the Court; the great towns are casting off submission, and declaring for popular members. London, Westminster, Middlesex, seem to have no monarch but Wilkes, who is at the same time pushing for the Mayoralty of London, with hitherto a majority on the poll. It is strange how this man, like a phoenix, always revives from his embers! America, I doubt, is still more unpromising. There are whispers of their having assembled an armed force, and of earnest supplications arrived for succours of men and ships. A civil war is no trifle; and how we are to suppress or pursue in such a vast region, with a handful of men, I am not an Alexander to guess; and for the fleet, can we put it upon casters and wheel it from Hudson's Bay to Florida? But I am an ignorant soul, and neither pretend to knowledge nor foreknowledge. All I perceive already is, that our Parliaments are subjected to America and India, and must be influenced by their politics; yet I do not believe our senators are more universal than formerly... [Vol. VI p. 128]

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To the Countess of Ailesbury.
From Strawberry Hill, Nov. 7, 1774.

...Expectation hangs on America. The result of the general assembly is expected in four or five days. If one may believe the papers, which one should not believe, the other side of the waterists are not *doux comme des moutons*, and yet we do intend to eat them...[Vol. VI, p 141]

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To Sir Horace Mann  
From Strawberry Hill, Nov. 24, 1774.

...Don't tell me I am grown old and peevish and supercilious -- name the geniuses of 1774, and I submit. The next Augustan age will dawn on the other side of the Atlantic. There will, perhaps, be a Thucydides at Boston, a Xenophon at New York, and, in time, a Virgil at Mexico, and a Newton at Peru. At last, some curious traveller from Lima will visit England and give a description of the ruins of St. Paul's, like the editions of Balbec and Palmyra; but am I not prophesying, contrary to my consummate prudence, and casting horoscopes of empires like Rousseau? Yes; well, I will go and dream of my visions... [Vol. VI, p 152]

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To Henry Seymour Conway
From Arlington Street, Nov. 27, 1774.

...America is still more refractory, and I doubt will outvote the ministry. They have picked General Gage's pocket of three pieces of cannon,² and intercepted some troops that were going to him. Sir William Draper is writing plans of pacification in our newspapers; and Lord Chatham flatters himself that he shall

² A pre-war raid by some Massachusetts militia of a British stores depot near Portsmouth (now N.H.)

be sent for when the patient is given over; which I don't think at all unlikely to happen. My poor nephew is very political too: so we shall not want mad doctors. Apropos, I hear Wilkes says he will propose Macreth for Speaker... [Vol. VI, p 152]

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To Henry Seymour Conway  
From Arlington Street, Dec. 15, 1774.

...The long expected sloop is arrived at last, and is indeed a man of war! The General Congress have voted a non-importation, a non-exportation, a non-consumption; that, in case of hostilities committed by the troops at Boston, the several provinces will march to the assistance of their countrymen; that the cargoes of ships now at sea shall be sold on their arrival, and the money arising thence given to the poor at Boston; that a letter, in the nature of a petition of rights, shall be sent to the King; another to the House of Commons; a third to the people of England; a demand of repeal of all the acts of Parliament affecting North America passed during this reign, as also of the Quebec-bill: and these resolutions not to be altered till such repeal is obtained.

Well, I believe you do not regret being neither in parliament nor in administration! As you are an idle man, and have nothing else to do, you may sit down and tell one a remedy for all this. Perhaps you will give yourself airs, and say you was a prophet, and that prophets are not honoured in their own country. Yet, if you have any inspiration about you, I assure you it will be of great service -- we are at our wit's end -- which was no great journey. Oh! you conclude Lord Chatham's crutch will be supposed a wand, and be sent for. They might as well send for my crutch; and they should not have it; the stile is a little too high to help them over. His Lordship is a little fitter for raising a storm than laying one, and of late seems to have lost both virtues. The Americans at least have acted like men, gone to the bottom at once, and set the whole upon the whole. Our conduct has been that of pert children: we have thrown a pebble at a mastiff, and are surprised that it was not frightened. Now we must kill the guardian of the house which will be plundered the moment little master has nothing but the old nurse to defend it. But I have done with reflections; you will be fuller of them than I... [Vol. VI, p 158]

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To Henry Seymour Conway
From Arlington Street, Dec. 26, 1774.

...It is supposed here, that the new proceedings of the French Parliament will produce great effects: I don't suppose any such thing. What America will produce I know still less; but certainly something very serious. The merchants have summoned a meeting for the second of next month, and the petition from the Congress to the King is arrived. The heads have been shown to Lord Dartmouth; but I hear one of the agents is again presenting it; yet it is thought it will be delivered, and then be ordered to be laid before Parliament. The whole affair has already been talked of there on the army and navy-days; and Burke, they say, has shone with amazing Wit and ridicule on the late inactivity of Gage, and his losing his cannon and straw; on his being entrenched in a town with an army of observation; with that army being, as Sir William Meredith had said, an asylum for magistrates, and to secure the port. Burke said, he had heard of an asylum for debtors and whores, never for magistrates; and of ships never of armies securing a port... [Vol. VI, p 159]

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To Henry Seymour Conway  
From Arlington Street, Jan, 15, 1775.

You have made me very happy by saying your journey to Naples is laid aside. Perhaps it made too great an impression on me; but you must reflect, that all my life I have satisfied myself with your being perfect, instead of trying to be so myself. I don't ask you to return, though I wish it: in truth there is

nothing to invite you. I don't want you to come and breathe fire and sword against the Bostonians, like that second Duke of Alva, the inflexible Lord George Germain; or to anathematize the court and its works, like the incorruptible Burke, who scorns lucre, except when he can buy a hundred thousand acres from naked Caribs for a song. I don't want you to do any thing like a party-man. I trust you think of every party as I do, with contempt, from Lord Chatham's mustard-bowl down to Lord Rockingham's hartshorn. All, perhaps, will be tried in their turns, and yet, if they had genius, might not be Mighty enough to save us. From some ruin or other I think nobody can, and what signifies an option of mischiefs? An account is come of the Bostonians having voted an army of sixteen thousand men, who are to be called minute-men, as they are to be ready at a minute's warning. Two directors or commissioners, I don't know what they are called, are appointed. There has been too a kind of mutiny in the fifth regiment. A soldier was found drunk on his post. Gage, in his time of danger, thought vigour necessary, and sent the fellow to a court-martial. They ordered two hundred lashes. The general ordered them to improve their sentence. Next day it was published in the *Boston Gazette*. He called them before him, and required them on oath to abjure the communication, three officers refused. Poor Gage is to be scape-goat, not for this, but for what was a reason against employing him, incapacity. I wonder at the precedent! Howe is talked of for his successor. Well, I have done with you! -- Now I shall go gossip with Lady Ailesbury... [Vol. VI, p 169]

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To Henry Seymour Conway
From Arlington Street, Jan. 22, 1775.

After the magnificent overture for peace from Lord Chatham, that I announced to Madame du Deffand, you will be most impatient for my letter. *Ohime!* you will be sadly disappointed. Instead of drawing a circle with his wand round the House of Lords, and ordering them to pacify America, on the terms he prescribed before they ventured to quit the circumference of his commands, he brought a ridiculous, uncommunicated, unconsulted motion for addressing the King immediately to withdraw the troops from Boston, as an earnest of lenient measures. The Opposition stared and shrugged; the courtiers stared and laughed. His own two or three adherents left him, except Lord Camden and Lord Shelburne, and except Lord Temple, who is not his adherent and was not there. Himself was not much animated, but very hostile; particularly on Lord Mansfield, who had taken care not to be there. He talked of three millions of Whigs in America, and told the ministers they were checkmated and had not a move left to make. Lord Camden was as strong. Lord Suffolk was thought to do better than ever, and Lord Lyttelton's declamation was commended as usual. At last, Lord Rockingham, very punily, and the Duke of Richmond joined and supported the motion; but at eight at night it was rejected by 68 to 18, though the Duke of Cumberland voted for it.

This interlude would be only entertaining, if the scene was not so totally gloomy. The cabinet have determined on civil war, and regiments are going from Ireland and our West Indian islands. On Thursday the plan of the war is to be laid before both Houses. To-morrow the merchants carry their petition; which, I suppose, will be coolly received, since, if I hear true, the system is to cut off all traffic with America at present -- as, you know, we can revive it when we please. There! there is food for meditation! Your reflections, as you understand the subject better than I do, will go further than mine could. Will the French you converse with be civil and keep their countenances?... [Vol. VI, p 180]

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To Dr. Gem.  
From Arlington Street, April 4, 1776.

...I beg your pardon, Sir, for giving you this long trouble; but I could not help venting myself, when shocked to find such renegade conduct in a Parliament that I was rejoiced had been restored. Poor human kind! is it always to breed serpents from its own bowels? In one country, it chooses its representatives, and they sell it and themselves -- in others, it exalts despots -- in another, it resists the despot when he consults the good of his people! Can we wonder mankind is wretched, when men are such beings? Parliaments run wild with loyalty, when America is to be enslaved or butchered. They rebel, when

their country is to be set free! I am not surprised at the idea of the devil being always at our elbows. They who invented him, no doubt could not conceive how men could be so atrocious to one another, without the intervention of a fiend. Don't you think, if he had never been heard of before, that he would have been invented on the late partition of Poland! Adieu, dear Sir. Yours most sincerely. [Vol. VI, p. 320]

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To Henry Seymour Conway
From Strawberry Hill, June 30, 1776.

...I can neither walk nor sing -- nor, indeed, am fit for any thing but to amuse myself in a sedentary trifling way. What I have most certainly not been doing, is writing any thing: a truth I say to you, but do not desire you to repeat. I deign to satisfy scarce any body else. Whoever reported that I was writing any thing, must have been so totally unfounded, that they either blundered by guessing without reason, or knew they lied -- and that could not be with any kind intention; though saying I am going to do what I am not going to do, is wretched enough. Whatever is said of me without truth, any body is welcome to believe that pleases. In fact, though I have scarce a settled purpose about any thing, I think I shall never write any more. I have written a great deal too much, unless I had written better, and I know I should now only write still worse. One's talent, whatever it is, does not improve at sixty -- yet, if I liked it, I dare say a good reason would not stop my inclination; -- but I am grown most indolent in that respect, and most absolutely indifferent to every purpose of vanity. Yet without vanity I am become still prouder and more contemptuous. I have a contempt for my countrymen that makes me despise their approbation. The applause of slaves and of the foolish mad is below ambition. Mine is the haughtiness of an ancient Briton, that cannot write what would please this age, and would not, if he could. Whatever happens in America this country is undone. I desire to be reckoned of the last age, and to be thought to have lived to be superannuated, preserving my senses only for myself and for the few I value... [Vol. VI, p. 352]

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To Henry Seymour Conway  
From Strawberry Hill, Thursday, Oct. 31, 1776.

...Here is a solution of the Americans declaring themselves independent. Oh! the folly, the madness, the guilt of having plunged us into this abyss! Were we and a few more endued with any uncommon penetration? No: they who did not see as far, would not. I am impatient to hear the complexion of to-day. I suppose it will, on the part of administration, have been a wretched farce of fear, daubed over with airs of bullying. You, I do not doubt, have acted like yourself, feeling for our situation, above insulting, and unprovoked but at the criminality that has brought us to this pass. Pursue your own path, nor lean to the court that may be paid to you on either side, as I am sure you will not regard their being displeased that you do not go as far as their interested views may wish. If the court should receive any more of what they call good news, I think the war with France will be unavoidable. It was the victory at Long Island and the frantic presumption it occasioned, that has ripened France's measures -- And now we are to awe them by pressing -- an act that speaks our impotence! -- which France did not want to learn!... [Vol. VI, p 386]

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To Sir Horace Mann.
From Arlington Street, Jan. 24, 1777.

...The tide of victories continues: Fort Washington was taken at the end of the year, and Rhode Island since. A great deal is still to do, and not much less if the war was over. It does not appear yet that Dr. Franklin has persuaded Franco to espouse America openly. One hears a great deal of underhand support, and in general the disposition of the French is for war with us; but I never believe but on facts, seldom reports, and seldomer prophecies and conjectures; chance being the great mistress of human affairs in the *dernier ressort*... [Vol. X, p. 7]

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To the Rev. William Mason  
From Arlington Street, Feb. 17, 1777.

...The news from America are, as usual, difficult to be fathomed. The court denies being certain of the discomfit of the Hessians, yet their runners pretend that the Hessian prisoners have been retaken. It is fact that the royalists have neither yet taken Providence nor the American ships: the other side believe that Lord Cornwallis has received a check at the Jerseys. [Am. major general Charles] Lee is certainly taken by the poltroonery of his own men, of whom he had eighteen to Colonel Harcourt's fourteen. He has written a short letter in which he himself says so, and adds that he submits to his fate, only regretting that liberty will no longer enjoy a foot of earth... [Vol. X, p. 14]

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To the Rev. William Mason.
From Arlington Street, Feb. 27, 1777.

...The capture of the Hessians is confirmed with circumstances somewhat untoward, for they were not surprised, and yet all laid down their arras as if they liked lands in America better than the wretched pittance they are to receive out of the Landgrave's dole.

It is now the fashion to cry up the manoeuvre of General Washington in this action, who has beaten two English regiments, too, and obliged General Howe to contract his quarters -- in short, the campaign has by no means been wound up to content... [Vol. X, p. 20]

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To Sir Horace Mann.  
From Arlington Street, March 5, 1777.

...I have kept my sentiments pretty much to myself, but nothing has made me change my opinion. At present, the aspect is not as if I had been totally in the wrong. The campaign in America has lost a great deal of its florid complexion, and General Washington is allowed by both sides not to be the worst general in the field. The stocks are grown positive that we shall have a French war. That was so self-evident, that I should be ashamed of bragging I had always foreseen it. A child might foretell many of the consequences. I leave it to those who would not foresee to excuse themselves as they can.

The *Gazettes* will tell you as much as you are allowed to know or believe. If you do not understand them, you will not be singular. The time is coming, I doubt, when truth will write a more legible hand. In one word, the retreat of the Americans seems to have been wise; you will find they will flight and have fought, and that, when we believed Philadelphia was gone, General Howe has been obliged to contract his quarters. I should think less than *unlimited submission* would content us at present; and I leave you to judge whether France will be omitted in the negotiation, and whether she will enjoin the Congress to be very tractable. I hope there will be a little more wisdom in making the peace than there was in making the war; *but they who make the one, do not always consider that they may not be equally wasters to make the other...* [Vol. X, p. 23]

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To Sir Horace Mann.
From Strawberry Hill, April 3, 1777.

...I have nothing very new to tell you on public affairs, especially as I can know nothing more than you see in the papers. It is my opinion that the King's affairs are in a very bad position in America. I do not say that his armies may not gain advantages again; though I believe there has been as much design as cowardice in the behaviour of the provincials, who seem to have been apprised that protraction of the war would be more certainly advantageous to them than heroism. Washington, the dictator, has shown himself both a Fabius and a Camillus. His march through our lines is allowed a prodigy of generalship. In one word, I look upon a great part of America as lost to this country! It is not less deplorable, that, between art and contention, such an inveteracy has been sown between the two countries as will probably outlast even the war! Supposing this unnatural enmity should not soon involve us in other wars, which would be extraordinary indeed, what a difference, in a future war with France and Spain, to have the colonies in the opposite scale, instead of being in ours! What politicians are those who have preferred the empty name of sovereignty to that of alliance, and forced subsidies to the golden ocean of commerce!

Alas! the trade of America is not all we shall lose! The ocean of commerce wafted us wealth at the return of regular tides: but we had acquired an empire too, in whose plains the beggars we sent out as labourers could reap sacks of gold in three or four harvests; and who with their sickles and reaping-hooks have robbed and cut the throats of those who sowed the grain. These rapacious foragers have fallen together by the ears; and our Indian affairs, I suppose, will soon be in as desperate a state as our American, Lord Pigot has been treacherously and violently imprisoned, and the Company here has voted his restoration. I know nothing of the merits of the cause on either side: I dare to say both are very blamable. I look only to the consequences, which I do not doubt will precipitate the loss of our acquisitions there; the title to which I never admired, and the possession of which I always regarded as a transitory vision. If we could keep it, we should certainly plunder it, till the expense of maintaining would overbalance the returns; and, though it has rendered a little more than the holy city of Jerusalem, I look on such distant conquests as more destructive than beneficial; and, whether we are martyrs or banditti, whether we fight for the Holy Sepulchre or for lacks of rupees, I detest invasions of quiet kingdoms, both for their sakes and for our own; and it is happy for the former, that the latter are never permanently benefited... [Vol. X, p. 31]

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To the Countess of Upper Ossory  
From Strawberry Hill, June 15 1777

...Have you got through Dr. Robertson, Madam? I am not enchanted. There is a great affectation of philosophizing without much success. But there is one character that charms me, besides Las Casas, at whom the good doctor rather sneers; it is that of Pedro di Gasca, who was disinterested enough to make ten Parliaments blush. Do but imagine the satisfaction with which he must have retired with his poverty, after the great things he had done, when every other of his countrymen were cutting the throats of Americans for gold! He did not want to be Treasurer of the Navy, as well as general and pacificator. I am delighted too with the ingratitude of the Spanish monarchs to all their heroic assassins. How fortunate the Otaheitans, to have no gold mines in their country! [Vol. X, p. 61]

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To the Countess of Upper Ossory.
From Strawberry Hill, Aug. 8, 1777.

...Have you read General Burgoyne's rhodomontade [i.e., Burgoyne's proclamation to the Americans prior to his invasion proper of New York], in which he almost promises to cross America in a hop, step, and a jump? I thought we were cured of hyperboles. He has sent over, too, a copy of his talk with the Indians, which they say is still more supernatural. I own I prefer General Howe's taciturnity, who at least, if he does nothing, does not break his word. It is supposed the latter is sailed to Boston, and that the former has kicked Ticonderoga into one of the lakes -- I don't know which, I am no geographer... [Vol. X, p. 91]

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To Sir Horace Mann.  
From Strawberry Hill, Aug. 11, 1777.

...The conquest of America is put off to the millennium. It is hoped, and thence supposed, that General Howe is gone to take some place, or beat some army, that is more practicable than dislodging Washington. Burgoyne has sent over a manifesto, that, if he was to overrun ten provinces, would appear too pompous; and yet, let him achieve ever so little, it will be sure of not being depreciated; so great is the want of something to keep up the spirits of the people, who stare a little at being bullied on their own coasts, after being told that five thousand men would overrun all America. France sits by and laughs, receives our remonstrances, sends us an ambassadress, and winks on Dr. Franklin, that it is all the comfort she will give us. -- I believe you will not wish me to expatiate more on that chapter... [Vol. X, p. 94]

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To Sir Horace Mann
From Arlington Street, Oct. 26, 1777.

It is past my usual period of writing to you; which would not have happened but from an uncommon, and indeed, considering the moment, an extraordinary dearth of matter. I could have done nothing but describe suspense, and every newspaper told you that. Still we know nothing certain of the state of affairs in America; the very existence where, of the Howes, is a mystery. The General is said to have beaten Washington, Clinton to have repulsed three attacks, and Burgoyne to be beaten. The second alone is credited. Impatience is very high, and uneasiness increases with every day. There is no sanguine face anywhere, but many alarmed ones. The pains taken, by circulating false reports, to keep up some confidence, only increase the dissatisfaction by disappointing. Some advantage gained may put off clamour for some months: but I think, the longer it is suspended, the more terrible it will be; and how the war should end but in ruin, I am not wise enough to conjecture. France suspends the blow, to make it more inevitable. She has suffered us to undo ourselves: will she allow us time to recover? We have begged her indulgence in the first: will she grant the second prayer?... [Vol. X, p. 143]

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To the Countess of Upper Ossory.  
From Strawberry Hill, Monday night, Nov. 3, 1777.

St. John is a false prophet, and of the house of Bolingbroke; the angel of the Church of Philadelphia is a blind buzzard, and cannot see a yard beyond his nose. A heathen Cupid, with a bandage over his eyes, is worth a hundred of such blundering cherubim, that, like bats, fly about in the dark, and take a farthing candle for the sun. There, my Lady, there's Washington beaten, and Philadelphia taken! Commend me to Revelations! If your angel would be seeing, why did not he put on his spectacles and hover over Arnold, who has beaten the vapouring Burgoyne, and destroyed his magazines? Carleton, who was set aside for General Hurlothrumbo, is gone to save him and the remains of his army, if he can. On Saturday night, not a minister but was packing up: yesterday morning, they ran about, shouting and huzzaing, like madmen!... [Vol. X, p. 148]

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To Sir Horace Mann.
From Arlington Street, Dec. 4, 1777.

...General Clinton has marched to relieve or find Burgoyne, but was forced to be content with taking two forts [on the Hudson River, below Albany], and showing uncommon valour. The next paragraph will tell you why his expedition was unnecessary.

On Tuesday night came news from Carleton at Quebec, which indeed had come from France earlier, announcing the total annihilation (as to America) of Burgoyne's army. Carleton declares he has no authentic information; but from all the intelligence he can get, and which he believes, Burgoyne, after dispatching Colonel Fraser [i.e., Brig. Gen. Simon Fraser] with 1,000 men to seek provisions, which whole body with their commander was cut off, fought desperately to extricate himself; but, numbers increasing and pouring upon him, he had been forced to lay down his arms, and the whole remaining army, which some say still consisted of 5,000, but probably were reduced much lower, surrendered themselves prisoners, and are to be transported to England, on parole of not serving more in America -- no bad circumstance for us, if they were but here? Burgoyne is said to be wounded in three places; his vanquisher Arnold is supposed to be dead of his wounds. [Vol. X, p. 160]

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To the Countess of Upper Ossory  
From Arlington Street, Friday night, late, Dec. 5, 1777.

...I must own I had not sorted my feelings into different drawers, and therefore cannot one day pull out one, and grieve for burning a town, or destroying a beautiful province; and the next day take out an assortment of compassion for an army that marched under such a savage proclamation as Burgoyne's. The accounts that are come, own that the provincials have treated him and his fellow-prisoners with the utmost humanity. On the other hand, I must contradict myself, and do justice to General Clinton, who spared all he could when he took the two forts. We have been horribly the aggressors; and I must rejoice that the Americans are to be free, as they had a right to be, and as I am sure they have shown they deserve to be. I cannot answer for what our troops would have done, had they conquered; and less what the spirit would have done that sent them. Lord Chatham is an Irishman: he would recall the troops and deny the independence of the Americans. He is in the right to recall an army that cannot conquer it; but a country that will not be conquered, and that cannot be, is but in an odd sort of state of dependence. He seems to be afraid of their condescending even to trade with us. No, Madam, we do not want ministers that would protract our difficulties. I look on them but as beginning now, and am far from thinking that there is any man, or set of men, able enough to extricate us. I own there are very able Englishmen left, but they happen to be on t'other side of the Atlantic. If his Majesty hopes to find them here, I doubt he will be mistaken: it is not worth his while to change hands... [Vol. X, p. 163]

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To the Rev. William Mason
From Arlington Street, Feb. 18, 1778

...The faults of the administration, according to their own calculation, are *two*: one of being misinformed, the other of persisting in a mere point of honour. Some will perhaps think they have been guilty of two more; -- the destruction of twenty-four thousand lives on their own side, and Lord knows how many thousands on t'other, with the burning of towns, desolation of the country, and the expense of above thirty millions of money; the second consists of two parts -- rejection of all proposals of accommodation offered by the opposition, and the delay of offering terms themselves till they knew it was too late; for Lord North was asked if he did not know that the treaty between the Americans and France is signed? He would not answer till Sir George Saville hallooed out, 'An answer, an answer, an answer!' His Lordship then rose, could not deny the fact, but said he did not know it officially; that is, I suppose, it does not stand on the votes of the Parliament at Paris...

A night's rest has not dissipated the astonishment of mankind. Everybody that comes in stares, and cannot express himself. Who can at once reconcile a supplication of alliance with the high and mighty States of America, with a total improbability of obtaining it? and the faintest hope of peace, with a prospect

of a war with France? How, an acknowledgement of independence, with a pretension of supplies, or a suspension of the war for a year and a half, with any intention of renewing it, when the Americans shall have had time to settle their government and recruit? but who can digest all the contradictions into which the Government plunges every day?... [Vol. X, p. 189]

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To Sir Horace Mann  
From Arlington Street, Feb. 18, 1778.

I DO not know how to word the following letter; how to gain credit with you! How shall I intimate to you, that you must lower your topsails, waive your imperial dignity, and strike to the colours of the thirteen United Provinces of America? Do not tremble, and imagine that Washington has defeated General Howe, and driven him out of Philadelphia; or that Gates has taken another army; or that Portsmouth is invested by an American fleet. No: no military new event has occasioned this revolution. The sacrifice has been made on the altar of peace. Stop again: peace is not made, it is only implored, -- and, I fear only on this side of the Atlantic. In short, yesterday, February 17th, a most memorable era, Lord North opened his conciliatory plan, -- no partial, no collusive one. In as few words as I can use, it solicits peace with the States of America: it haggles on no terms; it acknowledges the Congress, or anybody that pleases to treat; it confesses errors, misinformation, ill-success, and impossibility of conquest; it disclaims taxation, desires commerce, hopes for assistance, allows the independence of America, not verbally, yet virtually, and suspends hostilities till June 1779. It does a little more: not *verbally*, but *virtually*, it confesses that the opposition have been in the right from the beginning to the end.

The warmest American cannot deny but these gracious condescensions are ample enough to content that whole continent; and yet, my friend, such accommodating facility had one defect, -- it came too late. The treaty between the high and mighty States and France is signed; and instead of peace, we must expect war with the high allies. The French array is come to the coast, and their officers here are recalled...

I have lived long, but never saw such a day as last Tuesday! From the first, I augured ill of this American war; yet do not suppose that I boast of my penetration. Far was I from expecting such a conclusion! Conclusion!...

[The same letter to Rev. Mason resumed on Feb. 20, 1778.]

...Acts of Parliament have made a war, but cannot repeal one. They have provoked -- not terrified; and Washington and Gates have respected the Speaker's mace no more than Oliver Cromwell did... [Vol. X, p. 193]

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To Sir Horace Mann.
From Strawberry Hill, March 27, 1778.

...No more troops are to go to America; we are collecting our whole force; the new-raised regiments will have been an advantageous addition, as they were not embarked; and the militia, which is complete in every county but two, is to take the field. As to America, it will certainly retain its seat amongst the sovereignties of this world: so, Columbus's invasion begins to be set aside; and one quarter of the globe will not be held *in commendam* by another! Imagination could expatiate widely on that chapter -- but what have I to do with a new era in the annals of mankind?... [Vol. X, p. 211]

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To Sir Horace Mann

From Strawberry Hill, May 31, 1778.

...General Burgoyne has succeeded and been the topic, and for two days engrossed the attention of the House of Commons; and probably will be heard of no more. He was even forgotten for three hours while he was on the *tapis*, by a violent quarrel between Temple Luttrell (a brother of the Duchess of Cumberland) and Lord George Germaine; but the public has taken affection for neither them nor the General: being much more disposed at present to hate than to love -- except the dead. It will be well if the ill-humour, which increases, does not break out into overt acts...[Vol. X, p. 257]

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To the Rev. William Mason
From Strawberry Hill, July 4, 1778.

Children break their playthings to see the inside of them. Pope thought superior beings looked on Newton but as a monkey of uncommon parts: would not he think that we have been like babies smashing an empire to see what it was made of? Truly I doubt whether there will be a whole piece left in three months: the conduct bears due proportion to the incapacity -- you ought to be on the spot to believe it...

...General Howe is arrived and was graciously received. The agreeable news he brought is, that Clinton for want of provisions has abandoned Philadelphia and marched through the Jerseys to New York without molestation, on condition of not destroying Philadelphia. The Congress has ratified the treaty with France, and intend to treat the Commissioners³ *de haut en bas*, unless you choose to believe the *Morning Post*, who says five provinces declare for peace. I told you lately my curiosity to know what is to be left to us at a general peace. The wisest thing the ministers could do would be to ask that question incontinently. I am persuaded in the present apathy that the nation would be perfectly pleased, let the terms be what they would. A series of disasters may spoil this good humour, and there often wants but a man to fling a stone to spread a conflagration...

...Our writers have been disputing for these hundred and sixty-six years on Whig and Tory principles. Their successors, who I suppose will continue the controversy, will please to allow at least that if the ministers of both parties were equally complaisant when in power, the splendour of the crown (I say nothing of the happiness of the people, which is never taken into the account) has constantly been augmented by Whig administrations, and has faded (and then and now a little more) when Tories have governed ! The reason is as plain: Whig principles are founded on sense; a Whig may be a fool, a Tory must be so : the consequence is plain ; a Whig when a minister may abandon his principles, but he will retain his sense and will therefore not risk the felicity of his posterity by sacrificing everything to selfish views. A Tory attaining power hurries to establish despotism: the honour, the trade, the wealth, the peace of the nation, all are little to him in comparison of the despotic will of his master, but are not you glad I write on small paper? [Vol. X, p. 270]

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To the Rev. Mr. Cole  
From Strawberry Hill, July 12, 1778.

....Has not this Indian summer dispersed your complaints? We are told we are to be invaded. Our Abbots and Whitgifts now see with what successes and consequences their preaching up a crusade against America has been crowned! Archbishop Markham may have an opportunity of exercising his martial prowess. I doubt he would resemble Bishop Crewe more than good Mr. Baker. Let us respect those only who are Israelites indeed. I surrender Dr. Abbot to you. Church and presbytery are terms for monopolies, Exalted notions of church matters are contradictions in terms to the lowliness and humility of the gospel. There is nothing sublime but the Divinity. Nothing is sacred but as His work. A tree or a brute stone is more respectable as such, than a mortal called an Archbishop, or an edifice called a Church, which are the

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<sup>3</sup> The British peace commissioners sent to Philadelphia in early 1778 and lead by Lord Carlisle.

puny and perishable productions of men. Calvin and Wesley had just the same views as the Pope; power and wealth their objects. I abhor both, and admire Mr. Baker. Let us respect only those that are Israelites indeed. I surrender Dr. Abbot to you. Church and presbytery are human nonsense, invented by knaves to govern fools. Church and Kirk are terms for monopolies. *Exalted notions of Church matters* are contradictions in terms to the lowliness and humility of the Gospel. There is nothing sublime but the Divinity. Nothing is sacred but as His work. A tree or a brute stone is more respectable as such, than a mortal called an Archbishop, or an edifice called a Church, which are the puny and perishable productions of men. Calvin and Wesley had just the same views as the Popes; power and wealth their objects. I abhor both, and admire Mr. Baker.

P.S. I like Popery as well as you, and have shown I do. I like it as I like chivalry and romance. They all furnish one with ideas and visions, which presbyterianism does not. A Gothic church or a convent fills one with romantic dreams -- but for the mysterious, the Church in the abstract, it is a jargon that means nothing, or a great deal too much, and I reject it and its apostles, from Athanasius to Bishop Keene. [Vol. X, p. 278]

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To the Rev. William Mason
From Strawberry Hill, July 18, 1778.

...Well; war proclaimed! [with France] and I am near sixty-one. Shall I live to see peace again? and what a peace! I endeavour to compose my mind, and call in every collateral aid. I condemn my countrymen, but cannot, would not divest myself of my love to my country. I enjoy the disappointment of the Scots, who had prepared the yoke for the Americans and for our necks too. I cannot blame the French whom we have tempted to ruin us: yet, to be ruined by France! -- there the Englishman in me feels again. My chief comfort is in talking to you, though you do not answer me. I write to vent my thoughts, as it is easier than brooding over them, but allow that it is difficult to be very tranquil when the navy of England is at stake. That thought annihilates resentment. I wish for nothing but victory and then peace, yet what lives must victory cost! Nor will one victory purchase it. The nation is so frantic that success would intoxicate us more; yet calamity, that alone could sober us, is too near our doors. Resignation to the will of Heaven is the language of reason as well as of religion, when one knows not what would be best for us. It is a dilemma to which the honest are reduced: our gamesters are in a worse situation. The best they can hope for is to sit down with the debris of an empire. What a line they have drawn between them and Lord Chatham! I believe it was modesty made them not attend his funeral. Will the house of Brunswick listen again to the flatterers of prerogative?

My time of life, that ought to give me philosophy, dispirits me. I cannot expect to live to see England revive. I shall leave it at best an insignificant island. Its genius is vanished like its glories; one sees nor hero nor statesman arise to flatter hope. Dr. Franklin, thanks to Mr. Wedderburn, is at Paris. Every way I turn my thoughts, the returns are irksome. What is the history of a fallen empire? A transient satire on the vices and follies that hurried it to dissolution. The protest of a few that foretold it is not registered. The names of Jefferies and two or three principals satisfy the sage moralist who hurries to more agreeable times. I will go to bed and sleep, if I can. Pray write to me; tell me how you reconcile your mind to our situation -- I cannot. Two years ago I meditated leaving England if it was enslaved. I have no such thought now. I will steal into its bosom when my hour comes, and love it to the last. [Vol. X, p. 283]

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To Henry Seymour Conway  
From Strawberry Hill, June 16, 1779.

...Well! here we are, *aris et focis* and all at stake! What can we be meaning? Unable to conquer America before she was assisted -- scarce able to keep France at bay -- are we a match for both, and Spain too? What can be our view? nay, what can be Our expectation? I sometimes think we reckon it will be more creditable to be forced by France and Spain to give up America, than to have the merit with the latter of doing it with grace. -- But, as [Addison's] Cato says,

“I’m weary of conjectures -- this must end them;”

that is, the sword: -- and never, I believe, did a Country Plunge itself into such difficulties step by step, and for six years, together, without once recollecting that each foreign war rendered the object of the civil war more unattainable; and that in both the foreign wars we have not an object in prospect. Unable to recruit our remnant of an army in America, are we to make conquests on France and Spain? They may choose their attacks: we can scarce choose what we will defend... [Vol. X, p. 422]

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To Sir Horace Mann.
From Strawberry Hill, June 16, 1779.

...I shall not boast of having been a better soothsayer than you, when I foretold that the American war would not be of short duration. It is a trist honour to be verified a prophet of woes. Were I vain of the character, a Spanish war, added to an American and to a French one, wore a fine field; but I do not ambition being a Jeremiah, though my countrymen are so like the Jews. Nor does it require inspiration to prophesy, when one has nothing to do but to calculate. Were you here, you would not be alarmed. You would see no panic; you would hear of nothing but diversions. The ministers affirm the majority of America is with us, and it is credited. Were they to tell us half the Spanish fleet would come over to us, it would be credited too. When it does not, perhaps they will tell us it has. -- Well! what is most to be dreaded is the dissipation of our delusion. When the *revel* comes, it will be serious indeed!... [Vol. X, p. 425]

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To The Countess of Ailesbury  
Saturday night, July 10, 1779.  
From Strawberry Hill

...We could not Conquer America when it stood alone; then France supported it, and we did not mend the matter. To make it still easier, we have driven Spain into the alliance. Is this wisdom? Would it be presumption, even if one were single, to think that we must have the worst in such a contest? Shall I be like the mob, and expect to conquer France and Spain, and then thunder upon America? Nay, but the higher mob do not expect such success. They would not be so angry at the house of Bourbon, if not morally certain that those kings destroy all our passionate desire and expectation of conquering America. We bullied, and threatened, and begged, and nothing would do. Yet independence was still the word. Now we rail at the two monarchs -- and when they have banged us, we shall sue to them as humbly as we did to the Congress. All this my senses, such as they are, tell me has been and will be the case. What is worse, all Europe is of the same opinion; and though forty thousand *baronesses* may be ever so angry, I venture to prophesy that we shall make but a very foolish figure whenever we are so lucky as to obtain a peace; and posterity, that may have prejudices of its own, will still take the liberty to pronounce, that its ancestors were a wo[e]ful set of politicians from the year 1774 to -- I wish I knew when... [Vol. X, p. 446]

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To Sir Horace Mann
From Strawberry Hill, Sept. 16, 1779.

...Nature gave to mankind a beautiful world, and larger than it could occupy, -- for, as to the eruption of Goths and Vandals occasioned by excess of population, I very much doubt it; and mankind prefers deforming the ready Paradise, to improving and enjoying it. Ambition and mischief, which one should not think were natural appetites, seem almost as much so as the impulse to propagation; and those pious rogues, the clergy, preach against what Nature forces us to practise (or she could not carry on her system), and not twice in a century say a syllable against the Lust of Destruction! Oh! one is lost in moralising, as one is in astronomy! In the ordinance and preservation of the great universal system one sees the Divine Artificer, but our intellects are too bounded to comprehend anything more... [Vol. XI, p. 25]

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To Sir Horace Mann  
From Berkeley Square, Jan. 13, 1780

...What might have been expected much sooner, appears at last -- a good deal of discontent; but chiefly where it was not much expected. The country gentlemen, after encouraging the Court to war with America, now, not very decently, are angry at the expense. As they have long seen the profusion, it would have been happy had they murmured sooner. Very serious associations are forming in many counties; and orders, under the title of petitions, coming to Parliament for correcting abuses. They talk of the waste of money; are silent on the thousands of lives that have been sacrificed -- but when are human lives counted by any side?... [Vol. XI, p. 101]

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To Sir Horace Mann,
From Berkeley Square, May 18, 1780.

...America has begun to announce itself for a successor to old Europe, but I already doubt whether it will replace its predecessors; genius does not seem to make great shoots there. Buffon says that European animals degenerate across the Atlantic; perhaps its migrating inhabitants may be in the same predicament. If my reveries are true, what pity that the world will not retire into itself and enjoy a calm old age!... [Vol. XI, p. 172]

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To the Countess of Upper Ossory.  
From Berkeley Square, at night, June 16, 1780

...The conquest of Charleston is a great event at the present moment: not a good one if it ensanguines us against peace. I neither understand military details nor love them for that reason. But this success is coupled with a very remarkable event. A Colonel Scott, I think a prisoner, says the Americans are sick of the war, but have been buoyed up by Spanish gold, and by *French promises of the conflagration of London* -- a hellish sort of war, but who set the precedent? The court talk much of a plot, and this anecdote is corroborative. Indeed I cannot at all agree with Mr. F.<sup>4</sup> in wishing Lord George Gordon may not be found guilty. He is so black in my eyes already, that though I have infinite compassion for criminals, I never heard of one I should pity less. If he is the source of our being ruled by an army, I shall abhor him still more. Have you heard, Madam, that the common soldiers style one another *your worship*, as being the only Justices of Peace?... [Vol. XI, p. 225]

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To Sir Horace Mann.
From Berkeley Square, Oct. 4, 1780.

....General Dalrymple is arrived from Sir Henry Clinton, with heavy baggage indeed, full of bad news! The *Gazette* has produced only samples strewed over with fine sugar, to make it as palatable and little bitter as possible; but the sum total is, that adieu to America! All the visions that mounted in fumes into our heads from the capture of Charleston are turned to smoke; and it were well if it would rest there. To be cured of that dream would be no calamity; but I wish we may have no collateral losses! I fear we ache in some islands, and are not quite without twitches on the continent of America. Well! as I was right in foreseeing some miserable issue from the American war, I have a mind to try my skill in foretelling peace. 'Tis sure I wish it most fervently... [Vol. XI, p. 291]

⁴ Richard Fitzpatrick, brother-in-law of Lady Ossory.

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To Sir Horace Mann.  
From Strawberry Hill, Oct. 9, 1780 [resumed from a Oct. 7 letter]

...I have just heard some news that you will like to hear, and which will make you hold up your head again a little *vis-a'-vis* *M.de Barbantane*. An express arrived to-day from Lord Cornwallis who with two thousand men has attacked General Gates in Carolina at the head of seven thousand, and entirely defeated him, killed nine hundred, and taken one thousand prisoners; and there has since been a little codicil, of all which you will see the particulars in the to-morrow's Gazette. But it is very late, and this must go to town early in the morning. I allow you to triumph, though Gates is my godson, and your namesake...<sup>5</sup> [Vol. XI, p. 294]

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To the Countess of Upper Ossory
From Berkeley Square, Nov. 16, 1780.

...A good courtier, yesterday, sang the praises to me of that atrocious villain, Arnold, who, he said, till he heard of Andre's execution, would not discover the persons at New York, with whom Washington was in secret correspondence; then indeed he did. Only think of the monster! I hope he will be a Privy Councillor I betraying to Sir Harry Clinton, in the height of his indignation for Andre' the wretched poor souls cooped up in New York, who are guilty of that correspondence. When I expressed my horror at such bloody treachery, and said I did not doubt but Lord Cornwallis's savage executions had hurried on Andre's fate, and were, besides cruel, indiscreet; the same apologist said, 'Oh, we have more prisoners of theirs than they have of ours.' How tender to their *own friends*, who they do not care if hanged, provided they can spill more buckets of blood! I know nothing of poor Andre'; he is much commended, but so he would be if as black as Arnold... [Vol. XI, p. 316]

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To Henry Seymour Conway  
From Berkeley Square, Jan. 3, 1781.

...I sit and gaze with astonishment at our frenzy. Yet why? Are not nations as liable to intoxication as individuals? Are not predictions founded on calculation oftener rejected than the prophecies of dreamers? Do we not act precisely like Charles Fox, who thought he had discovered a new truth in figures, when he preached that wise doctrine, that nobody could want money that would pay enough for it? The consequence was, that in two years he left himself without the possibility of borrowing a shilling. I am not surprised at the spirits of a boy of parts; I am not surprised at the people; I do wonder at government, that games away its consequence. For what are we now really at war with America, France, Spain, and Holland! -- Not with hopes of reconquering America; not with the smallest prospect of conquering a foot of land from France, Spain, or Holland. No; we are at war on the defensive to protect what is left, or more truly to stave off, for a year perhaps, a peace that must proclaim our nakedness and impotence... [Vol. XI, p. 357]

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To the Countess of Upper Ossory
From Berkeley Square, Jan. 4, 1781.

⁵ Letters of Horace Walpole, vol. XI, editor's note (p. 295): "Horatio Gates, the American general, was son of an inferior officer of the revenue in England, who married a housekeeper of the second Duke of Leeds. Mrs. Gates was very intimate with the woman of Lady Walpole, Mr. H. W.'s mother, which occasioned his being godfather, about twelve years old, to her son..."

...In good truth, I was glad of anything that would occupy me, and turn my attention from all the horrors one hears or apprehends. I am sorry I have read the devastation of Barbadoes and Jamaica, &c, &c.; when one can do no good, can neither prevent nor redress^ nor has any personal share, by oneself or one's friends, is it not excusable to steep one's attention in anything? I fear, Madam, you and Lord Ossory have a suffering friend: poor Mr. James, I hear, is totally ruined -- his whole property swept away! There is another dreadful history, less known: the expedition sent against the Spanish settlements is cut off by the climate, and not a single being is left alive. The Duchess of Bedford told me last night that the poor soldiers were so averse, that they were driven to the march by the point of the bayonet, and that, beside the men, twenty-five officers have perished.

Lord Cornwallis and his tiny army are scarce in a more prosperous way. On this dismal canvas a fourth war is embroidered; and what, I think, threatens still more, the French administration is changed, and likely to be composed of more active men, and much more hostile to England. Our ruin seems to me inevitable. Nay, I know those who smile in the Drawing-room, that groan by their fireside: they own we have no more men to send to America, and think our credit almost as nearly exhausted. Can you wonder, then, Madam, if I am glad to play with Quipos -- Oh, no! nor can I be sorry to be on the verge -- does one wish to live to weep over the ruins of Carthage?... [Vol. XI, p. 359]

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To the Rev. William Mason  
From Berkeley Square, Thursday night late, Jan. 4, 1781.

...This good town is quite happy, for it has gotten a new plaything, a Dutch War; and the folks that are to gain by Privateering, have persuaded those who are to pay the piper, to dance for joy. In the midst of this exultation came accounts that would make any body shudder, but an overgrown capital, who care for nothing but their daily bread, news, and *circenses*. All Barbadoes and half Jamaica are annihilated. The inhabitants are buried or famishing. The shipping too has suffered deplorably. The events in America are not more flattering. Leslie, who had taken a walk into two or three open towns, one of which was Norfolk, that we burnt three or four years ago, has been recalled and is re-embarked, to try to save Lord Cornwallis, who has found the country as hostile as it was proclaimed to be friendly, and is in great danger too from five thousand men dispatched by Washington to strengthen Gates. An expedition sent against the Spanish settlements has been so totally destroyed by the climate that not a single man is left alive. The officers to the number of twenty-five are all dead too. My pen revolts at detailing such horrors! If I turn from them I have nothing else to tell you. I used to write of books as well as news, I have not seen one. Raspe's book indeed is in the press and will appear in February; I have been correcting the second sheet this evening... [Vol. XI, p. 362]

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To Sir Horace Mann.
From Berkeley Square, March 30, 1781.

I WROTE a letter to you for your messenger the moment he arrived, but he was detained here so long that it must have reached you antiquated. He found us exulting for the capture of St. Eustatia: the scene is a little changed since, both in West and East. America is once more not quite ready to be conquered, though every now and then we fancy it is. Tarleton is defeated. Lord Cornwallis is checked, and Arnold not sure of having betrayed his friends to much purpose. If we are less certain of recovering what we have thrown away, we are in still as much danger of losing what we acquired, not more creditably, at the other end of the world. Hyder Ally, an Indian potentate, thinking he has as much right to the diamonds of his won country as the Rumbolds and Sykes's, who were originally waiters in a tavern, has given us a blow, and his not done [i.e., "has not done doing so"]... [Vol. XI, p. 419]

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To Sir Horace Mann.

From Berkeley Square, Nov. 26, 1781.

...An account came yesterday that could not but be expected, that Washington and the French have made Lord Cornwallis and his whole army prisoners. I do not know what others think, but to me it seems fortunate that they were not all cut to pieces. It is not heroic perhaps, but I am glad that this disaster arriving before our fleet reached the Chesapeake, it turned back to New York without attacking the French fleet who are above three to two, thirty-seven to twenty-three. This is all I know yet; and yet this comes at an untoward moment; for the Parliament meets to-morrow, and it puts the Speech and speeches a little into disorder.

I cannot put on the face of the day, and act grief. Whatever puts an end to the American war will save the lives of thousands -- millions of money too. If glory compensates such sacrifices, I have never heard that disgraces and disappointments were palliatives; but I will not descant, nor is it right to vaunt of having been in the right when one's country's shame is the solution of one's prophecy, nor would one join in the triumph of her enemies. Details you will hear from France sooner than I can send them; but I will write again the moment I know anything material. I am sorry your nephew is not arrived; who, by being in Parliament and in the world, would be sooner and better informed than I, who stir little out of my own house, and have no political connections, nor scarce a wish but to die in peace.... [Vol. XII, p. 102]

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For *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, edited by Peter Cunningham, online and from which the above was taken, see:

Vol. IV: <http://www.archive.org/details/lettershoracewa15cunngoog>

Vol. V: <http://www.archive.org/details/lettershoracewa13cunngoog>

Vol. VI: <http://www.archive.org/details/lettershoracewa05cunngoog>

Vol. X: <http://www.archive.org/details/lettersofhoracew10walpiala>

Vol. XI: <http://www.archive.org/details/lettershoracewa28walpgoog>

Vol. XII: <http://www.archive.org/details/lettershoracewa32walpgoog>

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