

Samuel Adams

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Messieurs EDES & GILL,

“Ambition saw that stooping Rome could bear,
A MASTER, nor had virtue to be free.”

I believe that no people ever yet groaned under the heavy yoke of slavery, but when they deserv'd it. This may be called a severe censure upon by far the greatest part of the nations in the world who are involv'd in the misery of servitude: But however they may be thought by some to deserve commiseration, the censure is just. Zuinglius, one of the first reformers, in his friendly admonition to the republic of the Switzers, discourses much of his countrymens throwing off the yoke: He says, that they who lie under oppression deserve what they suffer, and a great more; and he bids them perish with their oppressors. The truth is, All might be free if they valued freedom, and defended it as they ought. Is it possible that millions could be enslaved by a few, which is a notorious fact, if all possessed the independent spirit of Brutus, who to his immortal honor, expelled the proud Tyrant of Rome, and his “royal and rebellious race?” If therefore a people will not be free; if they have not virtue enough to maintain their liberty against a presumptuous invader, they deserve no pity, and are to be treated with contempt and ignominy. Had not Caesar seen that Rome was ready to stoop, he would not have dared to make himself the master of that once brave people. He was indeed, as a great writer observes, a smooth and subtle tyrant, who led them gently into slavery; “and on his

brow, 'ore daring vice deluding virtue smil'd". By pretending to be the peoples greatest friend, he gain'd the ascendancy over them: By beguiling arts, hypocrisy and flattery, which are even more fatal than the sword, he obtain'd that supreme power which his ambitious soul had long thirsted for: The people were finally prevail'd upon to consent to their own ruin: By the force of perswasion, or rather by cajoling arts and tricks always made use of by men who have ambitious views, they enacted their *Lex Regia*: whereby *Quod placuit principi legis habuit vigorem*; that is, the Will and pleasure of the Prince had the force of law. His minions had taken infinite pains to paint to their imaginations the god-like virtues of Caesar: They first persuaded them to believe that he was a deity, and then to sacrifice to him those Rights and Liberties which their ancestors had so long maintained, with unexampled bravery, and with blood and treasure. By this act they fixed a precedent fatal to all posterity: The Roman people afterwards, influenced no doubt by this pernicious example, renew'd it to his successors, not at the end of every ten years, but for life. They transfer'd all their right and power to Charles the Great: *In eum transtulit omne suum jus et potestatem*. Thus, they voluntarily and ignominiously surrendered their own liberty, and exchanged a free constitution for a TYRANNY!

It is not my design at present to form the comparison between the state of this country now, and that of the Roman Empire in those dregs of time; or between the disposition of Caesar, and that of--; The comparison, I confess, would not in all parts hold good: The Tyrant of Rome, to do him justice, had learning, courage, and great abilities. It behoves us however to awake and advert to the danger we are in. The Tragedy of American Freedom, it is to be feared is nearly compleated: A Tyranny seems to be at the very

door. It is to little purpose then to go about coolly to rehearse the gradual steps that have been taken, the means that have been used, and the instruments employed, to encompass the ruin of the public liberty: We know them and we detest them. But what will this avail, if we have not courage and resolution to prevent the completion of their system?

Our enemies would fain have us lie down on the bed of sloth and security, and persuade ourselves that there is no danger. They are daily administering the opiate with multiplied arts and delusions, and I am sorry to observe, that the gilded pill is so alluring to some who call themselves the friends of Liberty. But is there no danger when the very foundations of our civil constitution tremble? - When an attempt was first made to disturb the corner-stone of the fabrick, we were universally and justly alarmed: And can we be cool spectators, when we see it already removed from its place? With what resentment and indignation did we first receive the intelligence of a design to make us tributary, not to natural enemies, but infinitely more humiliating, to fellow subjects? And yet with unparalleled insolence we are told to be quiet, when we see that very money which is torn from us by lawless force, made use of still further to oppress us - to feed and pamper a set of infamous wretches, who swarm like the locusts of Egypt; and some of them expect to revel in wealth and riot on the spoils of our country. - Is it a time for us to sleep when our free government is essentially changed, and a new one is forming upon a quite different system? A government without the least dependance upon the people: A government under the absolute controul of a minister of state; upon whose sovereign dictates is to depend not only the time when, and the place where, the legislative assembly shall sit, but whether it shall sit at all: And if it is allowed to meet, it shall be liable im-

mediately to be thrown out of existence, if in any one point it fails in obedience to his arbitrary mandates. Have we not already seen specimens of what we are to expect under such a government, in the instructions which Mr. Hutchinson has received, and which he has publickly avow'd, and declared he is bound to obey? - By one, he is to refuse his assent to a tax-bill, unless the Commissioners of the Customs and other favorites are exempted: And if these may be freed from taxes by the order of a minister, may not all his tools and drudges, or any others who are subservient to his designs, expect the same indulgence? By another he is to forbid to pass a grant of the assembly to any agent, but one to whose election he has given his consent; which is in effect to put it out of our power to take the necessary and legal steps for the redress of those grievances which we suffer by the arts and machinations of ministers, and their minions here. What difference is there between the present state of this province, which in course will be the deplorable state of all America, and that of Rome, under the law before mention'd? The difference is only this, that they gave their formal consent to the change, which we have not yet done. But let us be upon our guard against even a negative submission; for agreeable to the sentiments of a celebrated writer, who thoroughly understood his subject, if we are voluntarily silent, as the conspirators would have us to be, it will be consider'd as an approbation of the change. "By the fundamental laws of England, the two houses of parliament in concert with the King, exercise the legislative power: But if the two houses should be so infatuated, as to resolve to suppress their powers, and invest the King with the full and absolute government, certainly the nation would not suffer it." And if a minister shall usurp the supreme and absolute government of America, and set up his instructions as laws in the

colonies, and their Governors shall be so weak or so wicked, as for the sake of keeping their places, to be made the instruments in putting them in execution, who will presume to say that the people have not a right, or that it is not their indispensable duty to God and their Country, by all rational means in their power to RESIST THEM.

“Be firm, my friends, nor let UNMANLY SLOTH
Twine round your hearts indissoluble chains.
Ne’er yet by force was freedom overcome.
Unless CORRUPTION first dejects the pride,
And guardian vigour of the free-born soul,
All crude attempts of violence are vain.
Determined, hold
Your INDEPENDENCE; for, that once destroy’d,
Unfounded Freedom is a morning dream.”

THE liberties of our country, the freedom of our civil Constitution are worth defending at all hazards; and it is our duty to defend them against all attacks. We have received them as a fair inheritance from our worthy ancestors. They purchased them for us with toil, and danger, and expense of treasure and blood, and transmitted them to us with care and diligence. It will bring an everlasting mark of infamy on the present generation, enlightened as it is, if we should suffer them to be wrested from us by violence without a struggle, or be cheated out of them by the artifices of false and designing men. Of the latter, we are in most danger at present. Let us therefore be aware of it. Let us contemplate our forefathers and posterity, and resolve to maintain the rights bequeathed to us from the former for the sake of the latter. Instead of sitting down satisfied with the efforts we have already made, which is the wish of our enemies, the necessity of the times more than ever calls for our utmost circumspection, deliberation, fortitude, and perseverance. Let us remember that ‘if we suffer tamely a lawless attack upon our liberty, we encourage it, and involve others in our doom!’ It is a very serious consideration, which should deeply impress our minds, *that millions yet unborn may be the miserable sharers in the event!*