

Letter from Mercy Otis Warren to Catharine Macaulay, December 29, 1774

Plimouth NE December 29 1774

Dear Madam

Your kind notice of my last Embolden, me again to Interrupt your more important pursuits, by offering my Warmest acknowledgment for the Expressions of personal Regard contained in your agreeable favour of Sep^t 11th. as well as for your general Attention to the publick Calamities of my Country.

Though I never imagined that while you were Researching the Records of time & by your Elegant pen Exhibiting to the World the most striking traits of former tyrants you was in attention to the living Agents of a Corrupt Court: who have been Long forming A System of Despotism that should Reach beyond the Atlantic, & involve this Extensive Continent in the Same Thralldom that Awaits the Miserable Asiatic.

But how Absurd will the plans of Modern policy appear when the faithful Historian shall transmit to posterity the Late Manœuvres of A British administration: when they shall Behold them plunging the Nation still deeper in an immense debt. Equiping her fleet, to Harrass the Coasts & her armies to insult & subjugate these loyal & populous Colonies who (from the first settlement of this once dreary Wilderness, to the mad project of shutting up the port of Boston) have been Voluntarily pouring their treasury into the Lap of Britain.

Will not Succeeding Generations be Astonished when told that this Maritime city was Blockaded at a period when her Commercial interests were Closely interwoven with those of Britain. When the tracts of Cultivated Lands on this Continent, acknowledging the captre of Brunswick were almost immeasurable & when at the same time they Boasted their united Millions Ready to Pour out the Warm Blood as a Libation at the Shrine of Freedom Ere they would submit to become the slaves of arbitrary power.

But tho America Stands Armed with Resolution & Virtue, She still Recoils at the thought of Drawing the sword against the state from whence she derived her Origen. Tho that state like an unnatural parent has plung'd her dagger into the Bosom of her affectionate offspring.

But may I not hope to hear from you Madam, who can easily Deliniate their Character, that the New parliament principlly Consists of men of more Consiliating temper,

of men who inherit the Glorious spirit which distinguished their Noble Ancestors: & stimulated them to stand forth as the Barriers of English Liberty in the Most perilous Seasons yet such is the prevailing Luxury & Dissipation of the times, such the undue influence of the Crown from the tribes of placemen, Pensioners & Dependents Backed with a large standing army, that Nursery of Slavery & Vice, that Bane of Every Free State that I fear there is Little Reason to Expect it.

But if the Majority of the Commons still Continue the Dupes of Venality and Corruption they will soon see the Genius which once Animated their Hambden, Harington, & Pym, has taken up for Residence on their Distant shores.

The seeds of Empire are Sown in this new World. the Ball Rolls Wayward past, and though daily threatened with the incursion of savages: the Depredations of foreign auxiliaries. Yet Each City from Nova Scotia to Georgia has her Decii & her Fabii: Ready to Sacrifice their Devoted lives to preserve inviolate & to convey to their Children the inherent Rights of Men Confered on all by the God of Nature and the priviledge of English Men Claimed by Americans from the Sacred Section of Compact.

It is not possible for me Madam to give you an Adequate Idea of the situation of this Country, 'tho doubtless it will be done by some more able pen.

The Boston port Bill occasions such A stagnation of commerce as is felt in Every Villa of the Massachusetts. The Bill for altering the Constitution has Reduced the province to a state of Nature.

The Legislative Body is prevented meeting the Executive officers Rendered incapable of acting & the Court of justice shut up: Nothing but the Virtue of this people prevents our Daily feeling the Dreadful Consequences of Anarchy in the Exstream

Heaven only knows how Long we Can Continue in this state. But such is the Ferocity of Human Nature: that it is not to be Expected Society can subsist Long Without some Government which may finally drive us to assume such a form as is most consistant with the taste & Genius of a Free People.

Ere this Reaches your Hand you will doubtless have seen the Resolves of the provincial & the Result of the Continental Congress. perhaps there never was any Human

Law to which Mankind so Religiously, & So Generally Adhered as the Americans do to the Resolutions of those Assembly.

And now a Firm, undaunted persevering people (with the sword half Drawn from the Scabard) are patiently wailings the Effects of those measures.

The Vigorous Spirit that universally Reigns, the Determined opposition to the strides of Wanton power, & the unshaken Union of the American Colonies is so Remarkable, that I think we must Ascribe it to the Divine Agency of a superintending providence. But what are the Grand designs of the Almighty Governour of the Universe, or what the important Events the present Conditions will produce time only can only disclose, but if pacific Measures do not soon take place none can wonder that a timid Woman should tremble for the consequences. more Especially one who is Connected by the tenderest tie to a Gentleman whose principles & Conduct in this province may Expose him to fall an Early Victim, Either in the day of Battle, or by the Vindictive Hand of Lowly power.

Will you pardon me Madam if I own that my Apprehensions are Sometimes Awake. Least Britain should be infatuated Enough to push the unhappy American to the Last Appeal.

I Behold the Civil Sword Bradish'd over our Heads, & an innocent Land Drenched in Blood. To see the inhabitant of our plundered Cities quitting the Elegancies of Life possessing nothing but their freedom taking refuge in the forests.

I Behold faction & Discard tearing up an Island we once held deep as our own inheritance, and A Mighty Empire (Long the dread of distant Nations) tottering to the very Foundation.

Forgive dear Madam, & I draw a Veil over the painful Revire.

It gives me particular pleasure to hear that your Worthy Brother is Reelected a Member of parliament. M^r Sandridge has been often Mentioned with Respect & Gratitude at the Social Boards of the American Patriots & when assured by his good sister that he will still continue an Advocate to the injured. We thank her for the communication. And ardently wish that his Laudable Example might Fire the Breast of a Certain August Assembly to do that justice which not only the Colonies wish but Every Honest Man in Europe might Expect.

I am Extremely obliged by your kind Remembrance of an unhappy man once the pride of his Numerous friends, & a principle supporter of the invaded Rights of his Country. But Heaven who Bestows Superior Intellect, has a right to Limit the Duration, and so inscrutable are the ways of providence that the Vilest instruments are often permitted to work the Ruin of the individual & to undermine the Happiness of the state. the truth of the first I feel in an instance too painful to mention, & the tears as all America Witness the Last traduced & misrepresented as she has been by men who were Bound by all the ties of Honour, Gratitude, and Humanity to Defend her.

Were not the peculiar Circumstances of the times some Apology, yet from your Candor Madam I should expect a pardon for the Length of this letter, & as a proof thereof may I hope for the indulgence of a few more of your Excellent Sentiments & judicious observations in the next I am favoured with from you, but whatever cause may prevent or postpone me that pleasure, may your want of Health be the Last. Heaven Grant you the Confirmation & Long Continuance of that invaluable Blessing with the Addition of Every other Felicity that Life can Boast.

And if the Lowering Cloud which now Darkens the American Hemisphere should pass over, & a more Bright and Tranquil prospect appear. May you be able to Gladden with A visit your Admiring Friends in this quarter of the Globe.

Among which there is no one who [*text loss*] subscribe

With more Respect & Affection than your

Very Humble Servant

Mercy Warren

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