



“*Treason in mask of liberty*”

The PATRIOTS of NORTH AMERICA:

A SKETCH, with EXPLANATORY NOTES

Rev. Myles Cooper __1775__ EXCERPTS

If you were a Loyalist in America in the 1770s, you tried to explain to yourself and others why your Patriot neighbors were turning the paradise of America into “an endless Hell” by objecting to what was, in your view, the benign, enlightened, and gentle rule of Great Britain. Such sentiments motivated Loyalist Myles Cooper to publish anonymously a 34-page poem in 1775 titled *The Patriots of North America: A Sketch*. To Cooper, an English-born Anglican clergyman in New York City, the colonists were led astray by proud ignorant fanatics or, as he calls them in his poem, “this vagrant Crew / Whose wretched Jargon, crude and new / Whose Impudence and Lies delude / The harmless, ign’rant Multitude.” Cooper’s rhetoric grows more frenzied as he delivers verse after verse condemning Patriot leaders for *their* frenzied rhetoric. As such, the poem is a stark

example of the hardened political divide by 1775. As mob attacks on Loyalists increased after the Battle of Lexington and Concord, Cooper fled a threatening mob in August 1775 to seek refuge on a British ship in New York harbor, soon sailing to England.

ADVERTISEMENT [Preface]

THERE is not a single Pamphlet written in North America that does not, by some Accident or other, find its Way to England. At a Time when the English Newspapers may probably be filled with [news of] Equipments of Fleets, Embarkations of Armies, &c. the dullest Composition relating to the Affairs of this Country will be read there with Avidity. The author has therefore thought it proper to subjoin here and there a Note for the Information of his English Readers. He has occasionally quoted a few Scraps of Latin, not because, like Panurge, he chooses to speak any Language rather than his Mother Tongue, for he abhors Pedantry and Affectation of every Kind, but partly from his dreadful Apprehension of the Tarrers and Featherers¹ of the Country in which he resides, none of whom, he is well assured, were ever bred at a Latin School; and partly from Respect to the female Part of his Readers, for whose Innocence and Modesty he has a sacred Regard. At the same Time, lest while the latter acquit his Manners they should think hardly of his Morals, he begs Leave to assure them, that Ribaldry is unknown to that Language. The Philosophers, Poets, and Historians with whose Names the Men are too prone to insult their Understandings, abounding with Expressions, which literally translated, would be too foul for the Mouths of the most brutal of a modern Rabble.

THE PATRIOTS OF NORTH-AMERICA, A SKETCH.

EXCERPTS

...

The Men deprav’d, who quit their Sphere,
Without Remorse or Shame or Fear,
And boldly rush they know not where;
Seduc’d, alas! by fond Applause,
Of gaping Mobs and loud Huzzas.
Unconscious all of nobler Aim,
Than sordid Pelf [riches] or vulgar Fame;
Men undefin’d by any Rules,
Ambiguous Things, half Knaves, half Fools,

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¹ Tarring and feathering was a common form of intimidation and revenge in colonial America, used against royal officials and offending citizens, and, in the prerevolutionary period, used to threaten Loyalists or others who did not fully support the Patriot cause. The crowd would strip the victim, pour hot tar over his/her body, and then roll the person in feathers that would adhere to the tar. Usually the person was paraded about the area in a cart before being released and perhaps threatened with further violence. Occasionally the victim would die.

Whom God denied the Talents great,
 Requir'd to make a Knave complete;
 Whom Nature form'd, vile Party-Tools,
 Absurder much than downright Fools,
 Who from their own dear Puppet-Show,
 The World's great Stage, pretend to know.
 In Politics mere Punchinellos,²
 Yet pass for rare, for clever Fellows;
 Like Punch, who struts and swears and roars,
 And calls his Betters, Rogues and Whores;
 Like Punch, who speak their Prompter's Sense,
 Like his, their pow'rful Eloquence,
 Like his, their wond'ring Audience.
 Poor, busy, factious empty Things,
 Who nothing know of Courts or Kings;
 Who Lords or Commons⁴ ne'er have seen,
 But think they're like Committee-men;
 By Rote, like clam'rous Parrots prate
 Of Trade, Revenue, Church, and State.

...

Is there among them who can read,
 It serves to turn the Idiot's Head;
 Is there among them who can write,
 It serves to wreak the Miscreant's Spite;
 With Vipers leagu'd, in borrow'd Name,
 They hiss and blast their Neighbor's Fame;
 Vipers like, - - - - -
 - - - - - or Dolt.
 Fair Truth exclude from many a Press,
 On Pain of every dread Distress:
 As Priests, their Flocks to circumvent,
 Forbid to read Christ's Testament,
 With senseless Jargon, stupid Lies,
 Like Morpheus, close the People's Eyes,
 Vile, false, pernicious Doctrines preach,
 Rebellion rank and Treason teach,
 Malignant o'er the Land they crawl,
 And wither, blast, and poison all.

...

Shall we applaud this vagrant Crew,
 Whose wretched Jargon, crude and new,
 Whose Impudence and Lies delude
 The harmless, ign'rant Multitude:
 To Varlets, weak, impure, unjust,
 The Reins of Government entrust.



Punch & Judy marionettes³

calls his Betters. It is the practice of these Orators, all over America, to summon the Mob by some anonymous portentous handbill, addressed to the public; to mount into a gallery or elevated Station, in or near a place of public resort; and from thence, with a grave important face, harangue on the deplorable state of public Affairs and the total loss of liberty in a country which, were it not for them, would be the happiest and the freest country in the Universe. . . . [Cooper, Explanatory Note]

Vipers leagu'd. Alluding to the Figure of a Snake⁵ with which certain Printers of American Newspapers adorn their Publications, designed to allure a certain Set of Customers and to enlist a certain Crew of Writers, who have contributed in a most criminal Degree to subvert the laws of this Country, have already enflamed it into the most dangerous Convulsions, and threaten to complete its final Destruction. . . . [Cooper, Explanatory Note]

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Benjamin Franklin, *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 9 May 1754

² Punchinellos/Punch: marionette puppet character often presented as a jester in farcical sketches; origins in medieval Europe and popular in colonial America. Cooper is accusing the Patriots of being mere puppets in the hands of self-serving leaders.

³ 1827 drawing by George Cruikshank; courtesy of Colonial Williamsburg.

⁴ I.e., Parliamentary government (House of Lords & House of Commons) of which the Americans, Cooper says, have no experience.

⁵ Referring to the often-copied "Join-or Die" cartoon created by Benjamin Franklin (above), in which a segmented snake represents the colonies in need of unified action.

Will Raggamuffins bold like these,
Protect our Freedom, Peace, or Ease?
Ah! surely no, it cannot be,
These are false Sons of Liberty.

The Men who form their Hopes and Fears
From Hand-Bills, Pamphlets, Gazetteers;
Swallow like Gudgeons every Lie
Which Malice, Rage, and Guilt supply;
Whose Views reach not an Inch from Home,
Who think their little Mantua, Rome.⁷
The dullest Ignorance betray,
In all they do, and write, and say.
Boldly affirm each wild Position,
As if inspir'd by Intuition;
Untaught in Wisdom's modest School
That Confidence proclaims a Fool:
Their scanty Stock of useless Knowledge,
Taught them by Floggings sheer of College,
Or which, alas! is ten Times worse,
Deriv'd from some polluted Source.
From Clodius,⁸ Judge of Men and Things,
Of Statesmen, Ministers and Kings;
Of Power supreme, of just Protection,
Of Order, Peace, and due Subjection;
Too fond and credulous to see
Treason in Mask of Liberty.
What false Conclusions Knaves can draw
From Gospel Truths, from Statute Law;
How much like Fools these Knaves can write,
From Hunger, or from Party Spite,
Of regal Power, of legal Right.

...

Alas! vain Men, how blind! how weak!
Give them the Liberty they seek;
Grant all their vain, their fond Desires,
Grant all that ev'ry Fool requires.
Let them convene in vagrant Bands,
To play at Questions and Commands,
In tatter'd Garb, with squalid Mein,
Like Children, play at King and Queen.
Let them, round Freedom's sacred Pole,
Quaff Toddy from the flowing Bowl.
The Tylers, Cades, and Straws debate⁹,
The dread Arcanas of the State.
Issue their Mandates, near and far,

⁶ Broadside on the Battle of Lexington and Concord, 1775 (detail), one of many one-page sheets published by Patriot leaders, especially in New England, for mass distribution among the citizenry.

⁷ Mantua: ancient Etruscan city in northern present-day Italy, conquered by Rome in the 3rd century B.C.E. Cooper is accusing the Patriots of equating the colonies' strength with Rome's while, in truth, they are puny and will be conquered.

⁸ Clodius, a Roman politician who championed the rights of ordinary citizens against the power of the Roman elite. He was briefly emperor in A.D. 238.

⁹ Wat Tyler, Jack Cade, and Jack Straw: leaders of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England.

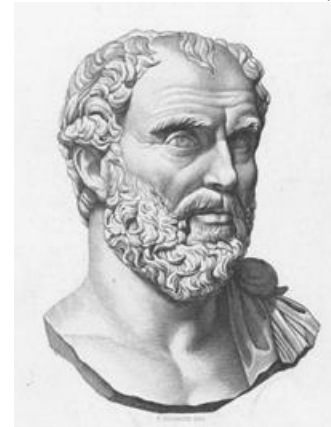
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"Hand-Bills, Pamphlets, Gazetteers"⁶

their little Mantua, Rome. . . . An overweening Conceit of the Importance of this Country, and a very inadequate Knowledge or a total Ignorance of the Parent Country, are among the fatal Sources of the dreadful Calamities at this Moment impending over a Part of this Country; may they never extend over the Whole. [Cooper, Explanatory Note]

New York Public Library



Marcus Clodius Pupienus Maximus
emperor of Rome, A.D. 238

University of Florida



"Wat Tyler's Rebellion," Peasants' Revolt of 1381

On Pain of Feathers and of Tar,
Pierce thro' dark Night with gummy Eyes,
And see an Empire vast arise.
(Since 'tis a Truth by all confesst,
That Arts and Empires travel West,)
An Empire vast, by Heav'n declar'd,
With which each other State compar'd,
From Delhi to renown'd Calcut,
Is not much bigger than a Nut,
From Ispahan to Neufchatel,
Is but the veriest Bagatelle.
That isle, so blest by George's Sway,
Is but the Needle in the Hay.
Claim Pow'r supreme by Right Divine,
From Acady [Acadia], to Caroline.
The Pow'r and Glory of a State,
By Quantities of Acres rate.
Let them, great Legislators sit,
Instruct, advise, forbid, permit,
Sole Judges of their private Weal,
As they demand, enact, repeal.
Fleets, Armies, Hirelings, Viceroy's, all
The pension'd Slaves of Courts recall.
Let Cobblers, Tinkers, Butchers, prate
At Will, of deep Affairs of State;
Relate their Suff'rings o'er and o'er,
Of Tea, of Tax, and Compacts roar,
Till Pow'r supreme to Babes devolves,
And every Suckling lisps Resolves.

Poor giddy Wights, without pretense
To Age, Experience, Parts, or Sense:
Yet dare to judge of Men and Things,
And think themselves as great as Kings;
Leave them their idle Course to run,
In two short Years, they'd be undone.

Thus oft, a cocker'd, pamper'd Child,
By fond maternal Love is spoil'd.
Forward and petulant and rash,
Neglects his Books and feeds on Trash;
Flies in his aged Parent's Face,
For Whims that Age and Sense disgrace.
A weak, ungrateful, booby Son,
Sullen, control'd; if pleas'd, undone:
Let him pursue his idle Way,
'Twou'd be one glorious Holiday;
Let the poor Thing his Fancy please,
He'd perish soon by dire Disease.
Unconscious of the Woes to come,
Unmindful of his future Doom,
How rough the World, compar'd with Home.

Since 'tis a Truth. A very cogent Argument frequently urged with much Gravity to prove the approaching Splendor of North America.
[Cooper, Explanatory Note]

The Needle in the Hay. A very prevailing Mode of Thinking and Talking of the insignificant little Island Britain.
[Cooper, Explanatory Note]

By Quantity of Acres of rate. If the Author does not mistake, it was a Remark of Dean Berkeley that a Man might possess fifty Thousand Acres of Land in North America, and not know where to get a Dinner. The Dean was in the Right: It is the melancholy Case at this Day of innumerable American Landholders. *Experto crede Roberto* [Believe Roberto, who has tried it.].

This Pre-eminence, so much boasted of, will in the Author's humble Opinion prove for many Centuries to come fatal to the Establishment of Manufactories, to permanent Independence, to mutual Defense, and to lasting Peace.
[Cooper, Explanatory Note]

When left alone, on Life's sad Stage,
 When anxious Cares his Thoughts engage,
 Of Parent's fost'ring Aid bereft,
 To the wide World an Orphan left.
 Too late, the fatal Truth perceives,
 Too late reflects and vainly grieves,
 His Parent fondly was beguil'd,
 Had spar'd the Rod and spoil'd the Child.
 Teach them, wise Patriot, t'obey,
 The mild Commands of Brunswick's Sway;
 Bid them the Tyrant's Pow'r defy,
 In Freedom live, for Freedom die;
 But Oh! instruct them first to know,
 Tyrants from Sov'reigns, Friend from Foe,
 Freedom, from wild licentious Schemes,
 Just, legal Rights, from idle Dreams,
 The golden Mean, from mad Extremes.
 Like Prophets, erst in Mercy sent,
 To bid offending Worlds repent.
 Recall their wand'ring Steps to Truth,
 Look down, with Pity, on their Youth.
 Wanton and proud in Nature's Bloom,
 Unconscious of impending Doom.
 Whilst George's fond, paternal Hand,
 Ling'ring suspends the stern Command;
 Ere hostile, conqu'ring Fleets appear,
 Benignant check their mad Career.
 Ere yet, avenging Hosts prepare
 To shake the Land with horrid War.
 Save them from that sad Scene of Woes,
 Where thankless Sons their Sires oppose;
 Where Sires and Sons are mortal Foes;
 Where Moonstruck Zealots fierce despise
 Nature's endearing, sacred Ties;
 Where Ruffians gain unblest Applause
 By violated Faith, and Laws.
 Where fair earn'd Wealth, Possessions fair,
 Are torn from many a rightful Heir;
 Where Lust of Pow'r and guilty Joys,
 Sweet Peace and Innocence destroys;
 Imposters vile to Pow'r aspire,
 Honor and Worth abash'd, retire.
 Retire, and see their native Lands
 Plunder'd by bold rapacious Hands.
 Unpitying Bands, fair Seats destroy,
 Of dear domestic, social Joy;

See many a Field and fertile Plain,
 Cover'd with kindred Natives slain.

See Friends, Companions, once belov'd,
 By dire contagious Madness mov'd;
 Frantic and ruthless, pierce the Breast,
 Once with dear mutual Love possess.

Triumphant Crimes pollute the Land,
 Consign'd to ev'ry Butcher's Hand;
 Spread Desolation like a Flood,
 And Brothers shed their Brother's Blood.
 Rouse these dear Lands from torpid Sleep,
 Ah! rouse them, lest they 'wake to weep;
 With Anguish weep, alas! in vain,
 For thousands ruin'd, thousands slain.
 Let not their fatal Rage despise
 The Orphan's Tears, the Widow's Sighs.
 Kind aged Parents left forlorn,
 Their hapless, murder'd Sons to mourn;
 Dear pious Sons, whose frantic Eye
 Beholds their Sires untimely die;
 And Ruffians, rushing to destroy
 Soft Charms, reserv'd for virtuous Joy.

Snatch this short fleeting Interval,
 Their wand'ring Senses to recall.
 Warn them of their impending Fate,
 Lest sad Repentance comes too late.
 Bid them survey the Realms above,
 The blissful Seats of Peace and Love,
 Yet there, even there, a rebel Crew,
 That Peace, that Love, could joyless view;
 See God immortal Joys prepare,
 Yet Joys immortal scorn to share.
 Plac'd by the Side of Pow'r divine,
 Yet midst that Glory, could repine.
 View Pow'r supreme with envious Eye,
 And God's Omnipotence defy:
 To Envy, Rage, and Malice prone,
 Invade th'indulgent Father's Throne,
 Till by unjust Wrath the Traitors fell,
 Headlong from Heav'n, to endless Hell.

T H E E N D