

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen  
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller  
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall  
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis  
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac  
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman  
Darwin Thoreau Twain  
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott  
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte  
London Descartes Cervantes Wells Hesse  
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke  
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chambers Irving  
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**A Letter Addressed to the Abbe  
Raynal, on the Affairs of North  
America, in Which the Mistakes in  
the Abbe's Account of the  
Revolution of America Are  
Corrected and Cleared Up**

Thomas Paine

# Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

Author: Thomas Paine

Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin - Germany

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg - Germany

ISBN: 978-3-8424-7803-9

[www.tredition.com](http://www.tredition.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

A London translation of an original work in French, by the Abbe Raynal, which treats of the Revolution of North America, having been reprinted in Philadelphia and other parts of the continent, and as the distance at which the Abbe is placed from the American theatre of war and politics, has occasioned him to mistake several facts, or misconceive the causes or principles by which they were produced; the following tract, therefore, is published with a view to rectify them, and prevent even accidental errors intermixing with history, under the sanction of time and silence.

The Editor of the London edition has entitled it, "The Revolution of America, by the Abbe Raynal," and the American printers have followed the example. But I have understood, and I believe my information just, that the piece, which is more properly reflections on the revolution, was unfairly purloined from the printer which the Abbe employed, or from the manuscript copy, and is only part of a larger work then in the press, or preparing for it. The person who procured it appears to have been an Englishman; and though, in an advertisement prefix to the London edition, he has endeavoured to gloss over the embezzlement with professions of patriotism, and to soften it with high encomiums on the author, yet the action, in any view in which it can be placed, is illiberal and unpardonable.

"In the course of his travels," says he, "the translator happily succeeded in obtaining a copy of this exquisite little piece, which has not yet made its appearance from any press. He publishes a French edition, in favour of those who will feel its eloquent reasoning more forcibly in its native language, at the same time with the following translation of it; in which he has been desirous, perhaps in vain, that all the warmth, the grace, the strength, the dignity of the original should not be lost. And he flatters himself, that the indulgence of the illustrious historian will not be wanting to a man, who, of his own motion, has taken the liberty to give this composition to the public, only from a strong persuasion, that this momentous argument will be useful, in a critical conjecture, to that country which he loves with an ardour that can be exceeded only by the nobler flame

which burns in the bosom of the philanthropic author, for the freedom and happiness of all the countries upon earth."

This plausibility of setting off a dishonourable action, may pass for patriotism and sound principles with those who do not enter into its demerits, and whose interest is not injured, nor their happiness affected thereby. But it is more than probable, notwithstanding the declarations it contains, that the copy was obtained for the sake of profiting by the sale of a new and popular work, and that the professions are but a garb to the fraud.

It may with propriety be remarked, that in all countries where literature is protected, and it never can flourish where it is not, the works of an author are his legal property; and to treat letters in any other light than this, is to banish them from the country, or strangle them in the birth. — The embezzlement from the Abbe Raynal was, it is true, committed by one country upon another, and therefore shews no defect in the laws of either. But it is nevertheless a breach of civil manners and literary justice; neither can it be any apology, that because the countries are at war, literature shall be entitled to depredation. [1]

But the forestalling the Abbe's publication by London editions, both in French and English, and thereby not only defrauding him, and throwing an expensive publication on his hands, by anticipating the sale, are only the smaller injuries which such conduct may occasion. A man's opinions, whether written or in thought, are his own until he pleases to publish them himself; and it is adding cruelty to injustice to make him the author of what future reflection or better information might occasion him to suppress or amend. There are declarations and sentiments in the Abbe's piece, which, for my own part, I did not expect to find, and such as himself, on a revisal, might have seen occasion to change, but the anticipated piracy effectually prevented him the opportunity, and precipitated him into difficulties, which, had it not been for such ungenerous fraud, might not have happened.

This mode of making an author appear before his time, will appear still more ungenerous, when we consider how exceedingly few men there are in any country who can at once, and without the aid of reflection and revisal, combine warm passions with a cool tem-

per, and the full expansion of imagination with the natural and necessary gravity of judgment, so as to be rightly balanced within themselves, and to make a reader feel, and understand justly at the same time. To call three powers of the mind into action at once, in a manner that neither shall interrupt, and that each shall aid and vigorate the other, is a talent very rarely possessed.

It often happens, that the weight of an argument is lost by the wit of setting it off, or the judgment disordered by an intemperate irritation of the passions: yet a certain degree of animation must be felt by the writer, and raised in the reader, in order to interest the attention; and a sufficient scope given to the imagination, to enable it to create in the mind a sight of the persons, characters, and circumstances of the subject; for without these, the judgment will feel little or no excitement to office, and its determinations will be cold, sluggish, and imperfect. But if either or both of the two former are raised too high, or heated too much, the judgment will be jostled from his seat, and the whole matter, however important in itself, will diminish into a pantomime of the mind, in which we create images that promote no other purpose than amusement.

The Abbe's writings bear evident marks of that extension and rapidness of thinking and quickness of sensation which of all others require revisal, and the more particularly so when applied to the living characters of nations or individuals in a state of war. The least misinformation or misconception leads to some wrong conclusion and an error believed becomes the progenitor of others. And as the Abbe has suffered some inconveniences in France, by mistating certain circumstances of the war and the characters of the parties therein, it becomes some apology for him, that those errors were precipitated into the world by the avarice of an ungenerous enemy.



## FOOTNOTE:

[1] The state of literature in America must one day become a subject of legislative consideration. Hitherto it hath been a disinterested volunteer in the service of the revolution, and no man thought of profits: but when peace shall give time and opportunity for study, the country will deprive itself of the honour and service of letters and the improvement of science, unless sufficient laws are made to prevent depredations on literary property. It is well worth remarking that Russia, who but a few years ago was scarcely known in Europe, owes a large share of her present greatness to the close attention she has paid, and the wise encouragement she has given to science and learning, and we have almost the same instance in France, in the reign of Lewis XIV.



## A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE ABBE RAYNAL

To an author of such distinguished reputation as the Abbe Raynal, it might very well become me to apologize for the present undertaking; but as *to be right* is the first wish of philosophy, and the first principle of history, he will, I presume, accept from me a declaration of my motives, which are those of doing justice, in preference to any complimentary apology, I might otherwise make. The Abbe, in the course of his work, has, in some instances extolled, without a reason, and wounded without a cause. He has given fame where it was not deserved, and withheld it where it was justly due; and appears to be so frequently in and out of temper with his subjects and parties, that few or none of them are decisively and uniformly marked.

It is yet too soon to write the history of the revolution; and whoever attempts it precipitately, will unavoidably mistake characters and circumstances, and involve himself in error and difficulty. Things like men are seldom understood rightly at first sight. But the Abbe is wrong even in the foundation of his work; that is, he has misconceived and misstated the causes which produced the rupture between England and her then colonies, and which led on, step by step, unstudied and uncontrived on the part of America, to a revolution, which has engaged the attention, and affected the interest of Europe.

To prove this, I shall bring forward a passage, which, though placed towards the latter part of the Abbe's work, is more intimately connected with the beginning: and in which, speaking of the original cause of the dispute, he declares himself in the following manner —

"None," says he, "of those energetic causes, which have produced so many revolutions upon the globe, existed in North-America. Neither religion nor laws had there been outraged. The blood of martyrs or patriots had not there streamed from scaffolds. Morals had not there been insulted. Manners, customs, habits, no object dear to nations, had there been the sport of ridicule. Arbitrary power had not there torn any inhabitant from the arms of his family and friends, to drag him to a dreary dungeon. Public order had not been

there inverted. The principles of administration had not been changed there; and the maxims of government had there always remained the same. The whole question was reduced to the knowing whether the mother country had, or, had not a right to lay, directly or indirectly, a slight tax upon the colonies."

On this extraordinary passage, it may not be improper, in general terms, to remark, that none can feel like those who suffer; and that for a man to be a competent judge of the provocative, or, as the Abbe styles them, the energetic causes of the revolution, he must have resided in America.

The Abbe, in saying that the several particulars he has enumerated did not exist in America, and neglecting to point out the particular period in which the means they did not exist, reduces thereby his declaration to a nullity, by taking away all meaning from the passage.

They did not exist in 1763, and they all existed before 1776; consequently as there was a time when they did *not*, and another when they *did* exist, the *time when* constitutes the essence of the fact; and not to give it, is to withhold the only evidence which proves the declaration right or wrong, and on which it must stand or fall. But the declaration as it now appears, unaccompanied by time, has an effect in holding out to the world, that there was no real cause for the revolution, because it denied the existence of all those causes which are supposed to be justifiable, and which the Abbe styles energetic.

I confess myself exceedingly at a loss to find out the time to which the Abbe alludes; because, in another part of the work, in speaking of the stamp act, which was passed in 1764, he styles it "*An usurpation of the Americans' most precious and sacred rights.*" Consequently he here admits the most energetic of all causes, that is, *an usurpation of their most precious and sacred rights*, to have existed in America twelve years before the declaration of independence, and ten years before the breaking out of hostilities. The time, therefore, in which the paragraph is true, must be antecedent to the stamp act, but as at that time there was no revolution, nor any idea of one, it consequently applies without a meaning; and as it cannot, on the Abbe's own principle, be applied to any time *after* the stamp act, it is there-

fore a wandering, solitary paragraph connected with nothing, and at variance with every thing.

The stamp act, it is true, was repealed two years after it was passed; but it was immediately followed by one of infinitely more mischievous magnitude, I mean the declaratory act, which asserted the right, as it was styled, of the British Parliament, "*to bind America in all cases whatsoever.*"

If then, the stamp act was an usurpation of the Americans' most precious and sacred rights, the declaratory Act left them no rights at all; and contained the full grown seeds of the most despotic government ever exercised in the world. It placed America not only in the lowest, but in the basest state of vassalage; because it demanded an unconditional submission in everything, or, as the act expressed it, *in all cases whatsoever*: and what renders this act the more offensive, is, that it appears to have been passed as an act of mercy; truly then may it be said, that *the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.*

All the original charters from the Crown of England, under the faith of which, the adventurers from the old world settled in the new, were by this act displaced from their foundations; because, contrary to the nature of them, which was that of a compact, they were now made subject to repeal or alteration at the mere will of one party only. The whole condition of America was thus put into the hands of the Parliament or the Ministry, without leaving to her the least right in any case whatsoever.

There is no despotism to which this iniquitous law did not extend; and though it might have been convenient in the execution of it, to have consulted manners and habits, the principle of the act made all tyranny legal. It stooped no where. It went to everything. It took in with it the whole life of a man, or, if I may so express it, an eternity of circumstances. It is the nature of law to require obedience, but this demanded servitude; and the condition of an American, under the operation of it, was not that of a subject, but a vassal. Tyranny has often been established *without* law, and sometimes *against* it, but the history of mankind does not produce another instance, in which it has been established *by* law. It is an audacious outrage upon civil government, and cannot be too much exposed, in order to be sufficiently detested.

Neither could it be said after this, that the legislature of that country any longer made laws for this, but that it gave out commands; for wherein differed an act of Parliament constructed on this principle, and operating in this manner, over an unrepresented people, from the orders of a military establishment?

The Parliament of England, with respect to America, was not septennial but *perpetual*. It appeared to the latter a body always in being. Its election or expiration were to her the same, as if its members succeeded by inheritance, or went out by death, or lived for ever, or were appointed to it as a matter of office. Therefore, for the people of England to have any just conception of the mind of America, respecting this extraordinary act, they must suppose all election and expiration in that country to cease forever, and the present Parliament, its heirs, &c., to be perpetual; in this case, I ask, what would the most clamorous of them think, were an act to be passed, declaring the right of *such a Parliament* to bind *them* in all cases whatsoever? For this word *whatsoever* would go as effectually to their *Magna Charta*, *Bill of Rights*, *trial by Juries*, &c. as it went to the charters and forms of government in America.

I am persuaded, that the Gentleman to whom I address these remarks will not, after the passing of this act, say, "That the *principles* of administration had not been *changed* in America, and that the maxims of government had there been *always the same*." For here is, in principle, a total overthrow of the whole; and not a subversion only, but an annihilation of the foundation of liberty and absolute dominion established in its stead.

The Abbe likewise states the case exceedingly wrong and injuriously, when he says, "that that *the whole* question was reduced to the knowing whether the mother country had, or had not, a right to lay, directly or indirectly, a *slight* tax upon the colonies." This was *not the whole* of the question; neither was the *quantity* of the tax the object, either to the Ministry, or to the Americans. It was the principle, of which the tax made but a part, and the quantity still less, that formed the ground on which America opposed.

The tax on tea, which is the tax here alluded to, was neither more or less than an experiment to establish the practice of a declaratory law upon; modelled into the more fashionable phrase of *the universal*

*supremacy of Parliament.* For until this time the declaratory law had lain dormant, and the framers of it had contented themselves with barely declaring an opinion.

Therefore the *whole* question with America, in the opening of the dispute, was, Shall we be bound in all cases whatsoever by the British Parliament, or shall we not? For submission to the tea or tax act, implied an acknowledgment of the declaratory act, or, in other words, of the universal supremacy of Parliament, which as they never intended to do, it was necessary they should oppose it, in its first stage of execution.

It is probable, the Abbe has been led into this mistake by perusing detached pieces in some of the American newspapers; for, in a case where all were interested, everyone had a right to give his opinion; and there were many who, with the best intentions, did not chuse the best, nor indeed the true ground, to defend their cause upon. They felt themselves right by a general impulse, without being able to separate, analyze, and arrange the parts.

I am somewhat unwilling to examine too minutely into the whole of this extraordinary passage of the Abbe, lest I should appear to treat it with severity; otherwise I could shew, that not a single declaration is justly founded; for instance, the reviving an obsolete act of the reign of Henry the Eighth, and fitting it to the Americans, by authority of which they were to be seized and brought from America to England, and there imprisoned and tried for any supposed offenses, was, in the worse sense of the words, *to tear them by the arbitrary power of Parliament, from the arms of their families and friends, and drag them not only to dreary but distant dungeons.* Yet this act was contrived some years before the breaking out of hostilities. And again, though the blood of martyrs and patriots had not streamed on the scaffolds, it streamed in the streets, in the massacre of the inhabitants of Boston, by the British soldiery in the year 1770.

Had the Abbe said that the causes which produced the revolution in America were originally *different* from those which produced revolutions in other parts of the globe, he had been right. Here the value and quality of liberty, the nature of government, and the dignity of man, were known and understood, and the attachment of the Americans to these principles produced the revolution, as a

natural and almost unavoidable consequence. They had no particular family to set up or pull down. Nothing of personality was incorporated with their cause. They started even-handed with each other, and went no faster into the several stages of it, than they were driven by the unrelenting and imperious conduct of Britain. Nay, in the last act, the declaration of independence, they had nearly been too late; for had it not been declared at the exact time it was, I saw no period in their affairs since, in which it could have been declared with the same effect, and probably not at all.

But the object being formed before the reverse of fortune took place, that is, before the operations of the gloomy campaign of 1776, their honour, their interest, their everything, called loudly on them to maintain it; and that glow of thought and energy of heart, which even distant prospect of independence inspires, gave confidence to their hopes, and resolution to their conduct, which a state of dependence could never have reached. They looked forward to happier days and scenes of rest, and qualified the hardships of the campaign by contemplating the establishment of their new-born system.

If, on the other hand, we take a review of what part great Britain has acted, we shall find every thing which ought to make a nation blush. The most vulgar abuse, accompanied by that species of haughtiness which distinguishes the hero of a mob from the character of a gentleman; it was equally as much from her manners as from her injustice that she lost the colonies. By the latter she provoked their principles, by the former she wore out their temper; and it ought to be held out as an example to the world, to shew how necessary it is to conduct the business of government with civility. In short, other revolutions may have originated in caprice, or generated in ambition, but here, the most unoffending humility was tortured into rage, and the infancy of existence made to weep.

A union so extensive, continued and determined, suffering with patience, and never in despair, could not have been produced by common causes. It must be something capable of reaching the whole soul of man and arming it with perpetual energy. In vain it is to look for precedents among the revolutions of former ages, to find out, by comparison, the causes of this. The spring, the progress, the object, the consequences, nay the men, their habits of thinking, and

all the circumstances of the country, are different. Those of other nations are, in general, little more than the history of their quarrels. They are marked by no important character in the annals of events; mixt in the mass of general matters, they occupy but a common page; and while the chief of the successful partizans stepped into power, the plundered multitude sat down and sorrowed. Few, very few of them are accompanied with reformation, either in government or manners; many of them with the most consummate profligacy.—Triumph on the one side, and misery on the other, were the only events. Pains, punishments, torture, and death, were made the business of mankind, until compassion, the fairest associate of the heart, was driven from its place; and the eye, accustomed to continual cruelty, could behold it without offence.

But as the principles of the present resolution differed from those which preceded it, so likewise has the conduct of America, both in government and war. Neither the foul finger of disgrace, nor the bloody hand of vengeance has hitherto put a blot upon her fame. Her victories have received lustre from a greatness of lenity; and her laws been permitted to slumber, where they might justly have awakened to punish. War, so much the trade of the world, has here been only the business of necessity; and when the necessity shall cease, her very enemies must confess, that as she drew the sword in her just defence, she used it without cruelty, and sheathed it without revenge.

As it is not my design to extend these remarks to a history, I shall now take my leave of this passage of the Abbe, with an observation, which, until something unfolds itself to convince me otherwise, I cannot avoid believing to be true;—which is, that it was the fixt determination of the British Cabinet to quarrel with America at all events.

They (the members who compose the cabinet) had no doubt of success, if they could once bring it to the issue of a battle; and they expected from a conquest, what they could neither propose with decency, nor hope for by negotiation. The charters and constitutions of the colonies were become to them matters of offence, and their rapid progress in property and population were disgustingly beheld as the growing and natural means of independence. They saw

no way to retain them long but by reducing them time. A conquest would at once have made them both lords and landlords, and put them in the possession both of the revenue and the rental. The whole trouble of government would have ceased in a victory, and a final end put to remonstrance and debate. The experience of the stamp act had taught them how to quarrel with the advantages of cover and convenience, and they had nothing to do but to renew the scene, and put contention into motion. They hoped for a rebellion, and they made one. They expected a declaration of independence, and they were not disappointed. But after this, they looked for victory, and obtained a defeat.

If this be taken as the generating cause of the contest, then is every part of the conduct of the British ministry consistent, from the commencement of the dispute, until the signing the treaty of Paris, after which, conquest becoming doubtful, they retreated to negotiation, and were again defeated.

Though the Abbe possesses and displays great powers of genius, and is a master of style and language, he seems not to pay equal attention to the office of an historian. His facts are coldly and carelessly stated. They neither inform the reader, nor interest him. Many of them are erroneous, and most of them defective and obscure. It is undoubtedly both an ornament, and a useful addition to history, to accompany it with maxims and reflections. They afford likewise an agreeable change to the style, and a more diversified manner of expression; but it is absolutely necessary that the root from whence they spring, or the foundations on which they are raised, should be well attended to, which in this work they are not. The Abbe hastens through his narrations, as if he was glad to get from them, that he may enter the more copious field of eloquence and imagination.

The actions of Trenton and Princeton, in New Jersey, in December 1776, and January following, on which the fate of America stood for a while trembling on the point of suspence, and from which the most important consequences followed, are comprised within a single paragraph, faintly conceived, and barren of character, circumstance and description.

"On the 25th of December," says the Abbe, "they (the Americans) crossed the Delaware, and fell *accidentally* upon Trenton, which was