



Washington Crossing the Delaware, 1851. Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze. Oil on canvas, 12²/₅ x 21¹/₄ in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY.

from

The Crisis, No. 1

Thomas Paine

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. **Tyranny**, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem¹ too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value.

1. *Esteem* means "to value" or "to appreciate."

Vocabulary

tyranny (tir' ə nē) n. cruel use of authority; oppressive power

Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as freedom should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to tax) but "to bind us in all cases whatsoever";² and if being bound in that manner is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even the

2. In March 1766, the British parliament repealed the Stamp Act but also passed the Declaratory Act, which extended its right to impose taxes on the colonies and "to bind [the colonies] in all cases whatsoever."

The Road to Independence Why does Paine compare taxation without representation to slavery?

expression is impious;³ for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

Whether the independence of the continent was declared too soon, or delayed too long, I will not now enter into as an argument; my own simple opinion is, that had it been eight months earlier it would have been much better. We did not make a proper use of last winter; neither could we, while we were in a dependent state. However, the fault, if it were one, was all our own; we have none to blame but ourselves. But no great deal is lost yet. All that Howe⁴ has been doing for this month past is rather a ravage than a conquest, which the spirit of the Jerseys⁵ a year ago would have quickly repulsed, and which time and a little **resolution** will soon recover.

I have as little superstition in me as any man living; but my secret opinion has ever been, and still is, that God Almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupportedly to perish, who have so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent. Neither have I so much of the infidel⁶ in me as to suppose that He has relinquished the government of the world, and given us up to the care of devils; and as I do not, I cannot see on what grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against us: a common murderer, a highwayman,⁷ or a housebreaker, has as good a pretense as he.

3. *Impious* (im' pē əs) means "lacking in reverence for God."

4. Major General Sir William Howe was commander in chief of the British forces in America during part of the Revolutionary War.

5. At one time New Jersey was divided into two sections, East Jersey and West Jersey. The two parts were reunited as a royal colony in 1702.

6. Here, *infidel* means "someone who does not believe in God."

7. A thief who stole from travelers on a public road was a *highwayman*.

Tone Does Paine seem objective and removed here, or subjective and emotional? Explain.

Vocabulary

resolution (rez' ə lōō' shən) n. firmness of purpose

It is surprising to see how rapidly a panic will sometimes run through a country. All nations and ages have been subject to them: Britain has trembled like an *ague*⁸ at the report of a French fleet of flat-bottomed boats; and in the fourteenth century the whole English army, after ravaging the kingdom of France, was driven back like men **petrified** with fear; and this brave **exploit** was performed by a few broken forces collected and headed by a woman, Joan of Arc. Would that heaven might inspire some Jersey maid to spirit up her countrymen, and save her fair fellow sufferers from ravage and ravishment! Yet panics, in some cases, have their uses; they produce as much good as hurt. Their duration is always short; the mind soon grows through them, and acquires a firmer habit than before. But their peculiar advantage is, that they are the touchstones⁹ of sincerity and **hypocrisy**, and bring things and men to light, which might otherwise have lain forever undiscovered. In fact, they have the same effect on secret traitors which an imaginary apparition¹⁰ would have upon a private murderer. They sift out the hidden thoughts of man, and hold them up in public to the world. Many a disguised tory has lately shown his head, that shall penitentially solemnize¹¹ with curses the day on which Howe arrived upon the Delaware.

8. An *ague* is a fit of shivering.

9. A *touchstone* is anything that tests the quality or genuineness of something.

10. An *apparition* is a ghost.

11. A colonist who supported British rule was a *tory*. *Penitentially solemnize* means "to celebrate formally with sorrow and regret."

The Road to Independence What does Paine feel is missing from the colonists' struggle?

Summarize Briefly, what does Paine say about the effect of panics on British sympathizers?

Vocabulary

petrified (pet' rə fīd) *adj.* paralyzed with fear; stiff or like stone

exploit (eks' ploit) *n.* notable, heroic deed; feat

hypocrisy (hi pok' rə sē) *n.* an expression of feelings or beliefs not actually possessed or held

... Quitting this class of men, I turn with the warm ardor of a friend to those who have nobly stood, and are yet determined to stand the matter out: I call not upon a few, but upon all: not on *this* State or *that* State, but on *every* State: up and help us; lay your shoulders to the wheel; better have too much force than too little, when so great an object is at stake. Let it be told to the future world that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet and to repulse it. Say not that thousands are gone—turn out your tens of thousands; throw not the burden of the day upon Providence, but “*show your faith by your works*,”¹² that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back, the rich and poor, will suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now is dead; the blood of his children will curse his cowardice who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole, and made *them* happy. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress and grow brave by reflection. It is the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. My own line of reasoning is to myself as straight and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe, could have induced¹³ me to support an



Winter at Valley Forge, 1898. F. C. Yorn.

View the Art In this painting the artist represents the troops at Valley Forge by focusing on a single soldier. How does he depict the soldier? What is the effect of this approach?

offensive war, for I think it murder; but if a thief breaks into my house, burns and destroys my property, and kills or threatens to kill me or those that are in it, and to “*bind me in all cases whatsoever*” to his absolute will, am I to suffer¹⁴ it? What signifies¹⁵ it to me, whether he who does it is a king or a common man; my countryman or not my countryman; whether it be done by an individual villain, or an army of them? If we reason to the root of things we shall find no difference; neither can any just cause be assigned why we should punish in the one case and pardon in the other. . . .

12. Here, *Providence* means “God.” The quotation is from the New Testament Book of James.

13. *Induced* means “persuaded.”

Tone What does Paine imply about those people who do not act? How does this contribute to his tone?

Summarize Summarize the passage beginning “Not all the treasures of the world . . .”

14. Here, *suffer* means “to put up with.”

15. Here, *signifies* means “makes important . . .”