AIDING THE CONTINENTAL ARMY: JULY 1780

The Sentiments of a Lady in New-Jersey

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The war carried on by the British nation against my native country cannot fail to excite in the humane and virtuous mind sentiments very unfavourable to the authors and instruments of such a variety of complicated evils and misfortunes as we have suffered in the course of it.

The contest, begun on their part without principle, has been prosecuted without humanity. Devoid of those sentiments and that conduct which do so much honour to the civilized nations of Europe even in time of war; they have thrown off all restraint, and fully displayed in their military operations in this part of the world the true characteristicks of their country—a fierce and barbarous spirit, resisting, contrary to the common rule, the ordinary effects which refinement of manners and a high degree of polish usually have on the minds of men in softening them to humanity, constitutes their real character.

Was I unconnected with America by ties of friendship or blood, was I not attached by that love of one’s country which is inherent in some degree in every breast, and partakes of the nature of that instinctive affection which we bear to our parents and kindred; was I situated in a distant part of the world, unagitated by the incidents of the day, which are the more interesting the nigher we are to the scene of war, the bare recital of their unjust claims, their cruelties and their crimes would fill my soul with horror, and I should regard them not only as unprovoked aggressors, but as enemies by principle and example to mankind in general.

But as if it were not enough unjustly to spill the blood of our countrymen, to lay waste the fields, to destroy our dwellings and even the houses consecrated and set apart for the worship of the Supreme Being, they have desolated the aged and unprotected, and even waged war against our sex. Who that has heard of the burning of Charlestown in...
New-England,—of the wanton destruction of Norfolk and Falmouth,—of their wasting the fine improvements in the environs of Philadelphia,—of the tragical death of Miss M'Crea, torn from her house, murdered and scalped by a band of savages hired and set on by British emissaries,—of the melancholy fate of Mrs. Caldwell, put to death in her own house in the late incursion of the enemy,—and the general havoc which at this moment marks their footsteps in their route through a part of this state—but would wish to avert from themselves, their kindred, their property, and their country in general, so heavy misfortunes.

These are truths sufficiently affecting to touch with pity and compassion even hearts hard as marble, and cannot fail to make a deep and lasting impression in the minds of all.

These feelings and these sentiments have been particularly manifested by the Ladies of Philadelphia in their liberal contributions of money towards rendering the situation of the soldiery of the continental army more convenient and comfortable. It is to this class of men we more immediately owe our defence and protection; they have born the weight of the war, and met danger in every quarter; and what is higher praise, they have with Roman courage and perseverance suffered the extremes of heat and cold, the attacks of hunger, and the pain of long and fatiguing marches through parts before unexplored by armies, and which had scarcely ever before born the print of human feet.

It was enough for these brave men to reflect they were engaged in the best and most glorious of all causes, that of defending the rights and liberties of their country, to induce them to behave with so much resolution and fortitude. Their many sufferings so cheerfully undergone, highly merit our gratitude and sincere thanks, and claim all the assistance we can afford their distresses. If we have it not in our power to do from the double motive of religion and a love of liberty, what some Ladies of the highest rank in the Court of France every day perform from motives of religion only in the hospitals of the sick and diseased, let us animate one another to contribute from our purses in proportion to our circumstances towards the support and comfort of the brave men who are fighting and suffering for us in the field. We ought to
do this if we desire to keep the enemy from our borders, if we
wish that there may not be occasion to call forth our hus-
bands, our children, and our dearest friends, to risque their
lives again in our defence. I can truly say that I have experi-
enced the most heart-rending anxieties when my relations and
friends have been called upon as free citizens to march against
the enemy; and the pangs I have suffered on such occasions
have made it easy for me to give credit to the account we have
in the history of ancient Rome of the two matrons who died
for joy, one at the gate of the city, the other at her own house,
at the sight of their sons who returned in safety after the bat-
tle at the Lake of Thrasymene: — When I say this, I mean
only to express the feelings of a woman, my sentiments being
ever in favour of that spirit which my countrymen have so of-
ten manifested when their services have been required.