

About five or six years ago, it is well known, certain measures were adopted by the British parliament, which gave a general alarm to this continent. Measures were alternately taken in Great Britain, that awakened jealousy, resentment, fortitude and vigilance. Affairs continued long fluctuating. A sentiment universally prevailed, that our dearest rights were invaded. It is not our business here to inquire touching these delicate points. These are concerns, which, however interesting or important in themselves, we must keep far away from us, when in a court of law. It poisons justice, when politics tincture its current.

I need not inform you, how the tide rose, as we were advancing towards the present times. The general attention became more and more roused—people became more and more alike in opinion and practice. A vast majority thought all that was dear was at stake—sentiments of liberty—property—ignominious bondage—all conspire to increase the ferment. At this period the troops land. Let us here pause and view the citizen and the soldier.

The causes of grievance being thus spread far and wide, the inhabitants viewed the soldiery as called in, foreign from their prime institution, to force obedience to acts, which were, in general, deemed subversive of natural as well as constitutional freedom. With regard to the universal prevalence of ideas of this kind, it does not fall within our present plan, to give you direct, positive evidence. It would be too foreign to the present issue, though pertinent enough, when considered as a clue to springs and motives of action, and as an additional aid to form a just judgment in our present inquiry. You, gentlemen, who come from the body of the country, are presumed to know these facts, if they are true; nay, their notoriety must be such, provided I am not mistaken in my conjecture, that the justness of my observation on this matter must be certainly confirmed by your own experience. I presume not in this, or any other matter of fact, to prescribe to you; if these sentiments are wrong, they have no influence; if right, they ought certainly to have their due weight.