

The Hutchinson Letters

By JOHN M. MOORE*

THE tragedies of history oftener than not remain unrecorded unless they contain spectacular elements. More numerous is the tragic fate of men who have found their lives shattered through no delinquency of their own, and whose suffering is caused because they are caught in a web of circumstances over which they have no control and from which they cannot escape.¹ Such was the fate of Thomas Hutchinson.

The affair of the letters has been variously characterized as an instance of spirited treatment by patriots thoroughly upright and long-suffering, of an underhand and most criminal attack upon their liberties,² or that "the whole affair is a marvelously strong illustration of the most vehement possible cry, with the slightest possible amount of wool."³ The work herein is primarily concerned with a presentation of the factors involved and an analysis of the conflicting viewpoints and personages who played a leading role.

Little has been written about this Governor of Massachusetts. Excepting an early biography and the publication of his diary, there is only a passing mention here and there by writers of the period. There are, however, certain intriguing aspects of the episode which have led this writer to seek beneath the surface in an effort to ferret out the duplicity connected with the actual transfer of the letters to Benjamin Franklin, whose involvement in the incident has in great measure rescued it from being relegated completely to the manuscript archives.

In order to achieve a clearer perspective of the immediate events of 1773 it is necessary to go back a few years and trace the developing trends and precedents that influenced later years.

Governor Francis Bernard of Massachusetts, in April of 1769, received the king's order to leave his office, and return to England, ostensibly to report to the king the state of the government. The recall, however, was considered by the people as a victory which they had gained. The order might, however, be said to have arrived

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at a very opportune moment, for Bernard was just beginning to encounter new difficulties, greater than any he had met with before.

He had notice from a friend in London, that endeavors were making to obtain copies of his letters and papers, which, his friend said, had been called for in the house of commons, in order to their being sent to America, to raise the fury of the people against him. Copies had been denied, upon application made for them by Mr. Bolland;⁴ and the governor encouraged himself, that care would be taken to prevent any copies from being delivered; but it seems that a member of the house has a right to copies of all papers, and, upon a demand made by alderman Beckford,⁵ they were delivered to him, and he delivered them to Mr. Bolland, who selected six, together with one from general Gage, and sent then over to the council. They were received by one of the council in Boston, on Saturday, April 5, 1769. On Sunday, such of the council as lived in and near Boston assembled; which had never been known, except on a pressing occasion, which could not be deferred without great detriment to the publick.⁶

The next day, the letters were printed and made public. They were all dated, except that from General Gage, between the first of November and the fifth of December, 1768, and contain an account of facts which occurred within that space, proper enough for him to communicate to the secretary of state. In the opinion of the people the proposals put forth in the letters were deemed most objectionable. Bernard infers the necessity of the king's taking the council chamber into his own hands and of an act of parliament, to authorize the king to supersede all commissions which had been issued to improper persons. The council undertook to answer these several letters, and to defend their conduct, in a very long letter to Lord Hillsborough. At the close of the letter, they say, it is plain that the people have lost all confidence in Governor Bernard, and he in them. This letter was, no doubt, composed by Mr. Bowdoin,⁷ who had great influence in the council.⁸ "The letters made it impossible for him to live in the country. Yet it was entirely proper for the chief magistrate to give his views as to what needed to be done; and not an idea was expressed as to a policy expedient in the circumstances, different from what he had expressed in the most open manner in his papers to the legislature, and in his talk to those who came in contact with him. . . ."⁹ The pattern to be followed four years later had been established.

Since there is a marked dissimilarity between the postal service as we know it today and the then prevailing system, some comment may afford a better understanding toward the overall picture.

. . . It must be remembered that the sanctity of the Post Office was then a transparent fiction. No man's correspondence was safe; and

those who suffered the most were tempted, when the occasion offered to repay their persecutors in kind.¹⁰ The confidential clerks of the Postmaster-General were sometimes engaged twelve hours on a stretch in rifling private letters A politician, when his turn came to be out in the cold, recognized the liability to have his letters opened as one of the incidents of opposition, and did not expect even the poor compliment of having them reclosed with any decent appearance of concealing the treatment to which they had been subjected.¹¹

Finally, a quote from a letter by Thomas Hutchinson to Richard Jackson in August of 1765, should serve to fix the temper of the time and to illustrate the sometimes violent mob rioting in Boston which smoldered, throughout this period, ready to erupt at a given signal.

. . . In the evening, whilst I was at supper and my children round me, somebody ran in and said the mob were coming. I directed my children to fly to a secure place, and shut up my house as I had done before, intending not to quit it; but my eldest daughter would not quit the house unless I did. I couldn't stand against this, and withdrew with her to a neighboring house, where I had been but a few minutes before the hellish crew fell upon my house with the rage of devils, and in a moment with axes split down the doors and entered. My son being in the great entry heard them cry "Dam him, he is upstairs, we'll have him." Some ran immediately as high as the top of the house, then filled the rooms below and the cellar, and others remained without the house to be employed there. . . . Not content with tearing off all the wainscot and hangings, and splitting the doors to pieces, they beat down the partition walls; and although that alone cost them near two hours, they cut down the cupola or lanthorn and they began to take the slate and boards from the roof, and were prevented only by the approaching daylight from a total demolition of the building. The garden house was laid flat, and all my trees, etc., broke down to the ground. Such ruin was never seen in America. Besides my plate and family pictures, household furniture of every kind, my own, my children, and servants', apparel, they carried off about 900 pounds sterling in money and emptied the house of everything whatsoever, except a part of the kitchen furniture, not leaving a single book or paper in it, and have scattered or destroyed all the manuscripts and other papers I had been collecting for thirty years together, besides a great number of public papers in my custody.¹²

Hutchinson, however, managed to receive a fair indemnity from the legislature for the destruction of his home; though this in no way atoned for the ordeal through which his family was put.

Governor Hutchinson had, naturally enough in the light of these preceding events, certain fears concerning the letters he wrote. In a letter to Bernard he said, "I must entreat you not to suffer

the contents of my letters to come to the knowledge of any New England man, for everything they hear to have been wrote from hence comes back in their letters."¹³

In May of 1773 Hutchinson journeyed to Hartford where he successfully concluded a boundary negotiation with New York, but his homecoming was a bitter one for the news of the letters was out.¹⁴

The subsequent profound sensation produced by the publication of the Hutchinson letters decided Franklin to explain his connection in a tract written in 1774, though it remained unpublished until 1817. The following extracts will serve to unfold the drama as it occurred.

On December 2, 1772, Benjamin Franklin wrote the following to Thomas Cushing,¹⁵ Speaker of the House of Representatives in Massachusetts.

On this occasion I think if fit to acquaint you, that there has lately fallen into my hands part of a correspondence, that I have reason to believe laid the foundation of most, if not all, our present grievances. I am not at liberty to tell through what channel I received it; and I have engaged that it shall not be printed, nor copies taken of the whole, or any part of it; but I am allowed to let it be seen by some men of worth in the province, for their satisfaction only. In confidence of your preserving inviolable my engagement, I send you enclosed the original letters, to obviate every pretence of unfairness in copying, interpolation, or omission. The hands of the gentleman will be well known. Possibly they may not like such an exposal of their conduct, however tenderly and privately it may be managed. But, if they are good men, or pretend to be such, and agree that *all good men wish a good understanding and harmony to subsist between the colonies and their mother country*, they ought the less to regret, that, at the small expense of their reputation for sincerity and public spirit among their compatriots, *so desirable an event may in some degree be forwarded*. For my own part, I cannot but acknowledge, that my resentment against this country, for its arbitrary measures in governing us, conducted by the late minister, has, since my conviction by these papers that those measures were projected, advised, and called for by men of character among ourselves, and whose advise must therefore be attended with all the weight that was proper to mislead, and which could therefore scarce fail of misleading; my own resentment, I say, has by this means been exceedingly abated. *I think they must have the same effect with you*; but I am not, as I have said, at liberty to make the letters public. I can only allow them to be seen by yourself, by the other gentlemen of the Committee of Correspondence, by Messrs. Bowdoin and Pitts of the Council, and Drs. Chauncy, Cooper, and Winthrop, with a few such other gentlemen as you may think fit to show them to. After being

some months in your possession, you are requested to return them to me.

As to the writers, I can easily as well as charitably conceive it possible, that men educated in prepossessions of the unbounded authority of Parliament, etc. may think unjustifiable every opposition even to its unconstitutional exactions, and imagine it their duty to suppress, as much as in them lies, such opposition. But, when I find them bartering away the liberties of their native country for posts, and negotiating for salaries and pensions extorted from the people; and, conscious of the odium these might be attended with, calling for troops to protect and secure the enjoyment of them; when I see them exciting jealousies in the crown, and provoking it to work against so great a part of its most faithful subjects, creating enmities between the different countries of which the empire consists; occasioning a great expense to the *old* country for suppressing or preventing imaginary rebellions in the *new*, and to the new country for the payment of needless gratifications to useless officers and enemies; I cannot but doubt their sincerity even in the political principles they profess, and deem them mere time-servers, seeking their own private emolument, through any quantity of public mischief; betrayers of the interest, not of their native country only, but of the government they pretend to serve, and of the whole English empire. . . .¹⁶

The total number of letters that Franklin sent over was seventeen among which were six by Hutchinson, which will be considered later. As for the remainder, one was written by Mr. Paxton,¹⁷ another by Mr. Rogers,¹⁸ two letters from gentlemen in Rhode Island,¹⁹ one from Mr. Auchmuty,²⁰ and four were penned by Andrew Oliver, the lieutenant-governor, the final two were from Connecticut writers of little importance.

As to the content of these letters that were later printed in pamphlet form, the one from Robert Auchmuty dated, September 14, 1768, warns Hutchinson against great danger to his life from "the infernal purposes of the sons of liberty as they falsely stile themselves . . . terrible threats and menaces by those Catilines against you."²¹ Charles Paxton wrote on June 20, 1768, "Unless we have immediately two or three regiments, 'tis the opinion of all the friends of government that Boston will be in open rebellion."²² The letter from Nathaniel Rogers concerned a personal and unimportant matter about succeeding Andrew Oliver as Secretary, an appointment he did not receive. What letters remain have even less significance, except for those of Oliver and Hutchinson.

Of the four from Andrew Oliver, the one of May 7, 1767, describes the effort of the Assembly to minimize the power of Crown officials, the bad treatment of Hutchinson, and the issue of payment to Crown officers. Oliver's second and fourth letters are quite un-

important; in the third, however, he distinctly advises a change of constitution, saying that some alteration is necessary in the election of councilors; furthermore that there must be less of popular influence in order to make the resemblance as near as may be to the British Parliament.²³

It is of interest to note also that some additional letters of Thomas Hutchinson dealing with the proceedings of March 5, 1770, the date of the Boston Massacre, were procured, though by whom and when and to whom they were sent has not been established, and put before the council, but it was not thought proper to publish them, nor was any exception taken to them.²⁴

The effect the letters had upon certain members of the council may be seen from the following extracts from John Adams' Diary, he being one of the first to whom Mr. Cushing communicated the letters upon their arrival in March 1773.

22. Monday. This afternoon received a collection of seventeen letters. . . . They come from England under such injunctions of secrecy, as to the person to whom they were written, by whom and to whom they are sent here, and as to the contents of them, no copies of the whole or any part to be taken, that it is difficult to make any public use of them.

These curious projectors and speculators in politics, will ruin this country. Cool, thinking, deliberate, villain, malicious and vindictive, as well as ambitious and avaricious. The secrecy of these episotlary genii is very remarkable; profoundly secret, dark, and deep.

24. Saturday. I have communicated to Mr. Norton Quincy and to Mr. Widbird the important secret. They are as much affected by it as any others. Bone of our bone, born and educated among us! Mr. Hancock is deeply affected; is determined, in conjunction with Major Hawley, to watch the vile serpent, and his deputy serpent, Brattle. The subtlety of this serpent is equal to that of the old one. Aunt is let into the secret, and is full of her interjections! But Cushing tells me that Powell told him, he had it from a tory, or one who was not suspected to be anything else, that certain letters were come, written by four persons, which would show the causes and the authors of our present grievances. This tory, we conjecture to be Bob Temple, who has received a letter, in which he is informed of these things: if the secret should leak out by this means, I am glad it is not to be charged upon any of us, to whom it has been committed in confidence.²⁵

The fact that evidently both the Tories and the council knew of the letters prior to their public release, is further corroborated by Hutchinson's claim that he ". . . received early information from whom and to whom, these letters were sent, and with what injunctions from a person let into the secret, but who detested

the whole proceeding, as iniquitous in every part."²⁶ This unnamed person who informed Hutchinson might well have been Robert Temple.

The question then arises as to why a Tory would be deliberately let into the secret, presuming Adams' information was correct. The answer seems to be that he was indeed meant to inform his compatriots as is in part borne out by the following letter from Franklin to Cushing on July 7, 1773, "The Letters communicated to you were not merely to satisfy the Curiosity of any, but it was thought there might be a Use in showing them to some Friends of the Province, and *even to some of the Governor's Party*, for their more certain Information concerning his Conduct and Politicks, tho' the Letters were not made quite publick. I believe I have since wrote to you, that there was no Occasion to return them speedily; and, tho' I cannot obtain Leave as yet to suffer Copies to be taken of them, I am allowed to say, that they may be shewn and read to whom and as many as you think proper."²⁷

Franklin expressed similar sentiments in a letter to Dr. Cooper, also dated July 7, 1773.

You mention the surprise of gentlemen to whom those letters have been communicated, at the restrictions with which they were accompanied, and which they supposed render them incapable of answering any important end. One great reason of forbidding their publication was an apprehension, that it might put all the possessors of such correspondence here upon their guard, and so prevent the obtaining more of it. And it was imagined, that showing the originals to so many as were named, and to a few such other as they might think fit, would be sufficient to establish their authenticity, and to spread through the province so just an estimation of the writers, as to strip them of all their deluded friends, and demolish effectually their interest and influence. The letters might be shown even to some of the Governor's and Lieutenant Governor's partisans, and spoken of to everybody; for there was no restraint proposed to talking of them, but only to copying. However the terms given with them could only be those with which they were received.²⁸

It is interesting to speculate on Franklin's motives in allowing the council to show the letters to as many persons as they desired. For in effect the stipulations would be bypassed, as he realized full well that when enough people were involved, the inevitable copies were bound to come forth, and yet Franklin would be absolved of encouraging any disregard of the terms.

Following out a prearranged plan, John Hancock informed the House that within eight and forty hours something most important was to transpire.

On June 2, 1773 Samuel Adams desired that the galleries might be cleared, as he had matters, which greatly concerned the province, to communicate with the leave of the House. He then informed the House of the reception of the letters, and of the restrictions which lay upon their publication. The terms were received and the letters read under those restrictions. A committee of the whole house then agreed upon a report, that the letters tended to annual the charter and overthrow all liberty; and the report was accepted by the House with only five members dissenting out of one hundred and six. This report and the vote of the House were thereupon made public.

Hutchinson was at once on the alert. He asked for copies of the letters, but they would only provide him with the dates of the letters and added a request that the governor send them *his* copies of letters for the dates that were sent. Their request, he naturally denied, letting them know that he strenuously disapproved of their actions.

By now the popular clamor to know what the letters contained became well nigh irresistible. The leaders were most awkwardly placed, bound as they were by Franklin's conditions. To yield, however, became a necessity.

Hancock told the House that copies of the letters had been put into his hands in the streets. This meant that either Samuel Adams or one of the other leaders had broken faith by having copies made, which seems very likely, or the copies had leaked out through the Tories and Robert Temple. It was moved that Hancock's find be compared with the letters in Cushing's possession, and upon comparison they were found to correspond. The whole episode appears to have been an all too obvious ruse to circumvent the restrictions and bears the familiar mark of Sam Adams upon it.

Another committee was appointed to consider how the house might become *honorably* possessed of the letters, so that they could be published. Hawley soon reported from this committee that Samuel Adams had said that, since copies of the letters were already out, the gentleman from whom the letters themselves were received gave his consent that they should be copied and printed. Cushing acknowledged in a letter, June 14, 1773, to Franklin that he had indeed been pressured into giving his approval.²⁹

The legislature then ordered that the letters should be printed; but beforehand they took care to circulate their resolves. These resolves construed the letters in the most unfavorable manner; the people were indeed well primed before the printed letters were finally released.

In the midst of the resulting rage against the governor, a petition for his removal and that of Andrew Oliver was dispatched by the House to Franklin, to be presented to the ministry.³⁰

The letters from Hutchinson that were put before the assembly contain statements that were nowhere inconsistent with his public declarations. His conviction that Parliament should be supreme in the colonies is apparent, but this he had asserted on numerous occasions. In only one of the six letters does he verge very closely upon controverted points.

I never think of the measures necessary for the peace and good order of the colonies without pain; there must be an abridgment of what are called English liberties. I relieve myself by considering that in a remove from the state of nature to the most perfect state of government, there must be a great restraint of natural liberty. I doubt whether it is possible to project a system of government in which a colony, three thousand miles distant from the parent state, shall enjoy all the liberty of the parent state. I am certain I have never yet seen the projection.³¹

In Hutchinson's own defense, he says of these words:

To a candid mind, the substance of the whole paragraph was really no more than this: I am sorry the people cannot be gratified with the enjoyment of all they call English liberties, but in their sense of them it is not possible for a colony at three thousand miles' distance from the parent state to enjoy them, as they might do if they had not removed.³²

Although this attack failed to force Hutchinson out of the governorship, his reputation in New England was seriously undermined. This sharp decline of his prestige in New England climaxed by the Tea Party, resulted in his taking an extended leave of absence in England which amounted to exile, for he never returned to reclaim his authority from General Gage who had replaced him.

As the patriots gained the ascendancy in Boston they vindictively passed a series of measures aimed against the loyalists, which affected seriously the writers of the letters, and conducted a series of vicious demonstrations. Certain of the signers of addresses in praise of Thomas Hutchinson, which were presented to him upon his departure, were pressured into recanting their views. Paxton left his home in Boston and withdrew with the British army to Halifax. In 1778 all the writers were included under the Banishment Act of the State of Massachusetts and later under the Confiscation Act. As Hutchinson was by far the most eminent of the group, so he was singled out for the greatest abuse. His name was considered a stigma. Hutchinson Street in Boston became Pearl Street. The town of Hutchinson in the heart of the Commonwealth

cast off its title, substituting for it that of Barre. The patriots did not even spare the family tomb, but tossed out the bones of his ancestors and inserted a new occupant.³³

"Knowing that he was suspected of Toryism by some of the leading patriots in Boston and that his position as agent for Massachusetts in London was none too secure, Franklin determined to set at rest all doubt of his patriotism by sending the Boston radicals the private correspondence of Hutchinson and Oliver that had come into his possession."³⁴ But in doing so and by publicly admitting his guilt in a letter to the *Public Advertiser*,³⁵ to prevent a further Whately-Temple duel, Franklin had put his head into the lion's jaws.

He received a notice from the Clerk of the Privy Council, informing him that the Lords of the Committee for Plantation Affairs would meet at the Cockpit on January 11, 1774, at noon, for the purpose of considering the petition for the removal of Hutchinson and Oliver, which had been referred to the Council by the King, and requiring him to be present. When the hearing took place, it proved for every reason a memorable one.

John Dunning and John Lee argued the case for the Assembly on the grounds that the appeal was to the wisdom and goodness of the king, and that they were not demanding justice but asking a favor. Moreover they supported Franklin's contention that the letters were public letters and not private, and as such his actions were justifiable.

The reply of Alexander Wedderburn, the Solicitor-General, who had been retained as the agent for Hutchinson and Oliver, was as pointed and caustic as if he had been summing up against an ordinary criminal. With regard to Franklin, he said, "Men will watch him with a jealous eye; they will hide their papers from him, and lock up their escritoirs. He will henceforth esteem it a libel to be called a *man of letters*. . . ."³⁶ Wedderburn's speech was a forensic masterpiece.

The report of the Committee, dated the day of its sitting, found that the letters had been surreptitiously obtained, and contained "nothing reprehensible;" that the petition was based on resolutions, formed on false and erroneous allegations; and that nothing had been laid before the committee which did, or could, in their opinion impeach the honor, integrity, or conduct of the Governor or Lieutenant-Governor. Wherefore the Lords of the Committee were of the opinion that the petition ought to be dismissed. This recommendation was approved by the King,

and an order was issued by him that the petition be dismissed, as answering the character imputed to it by the Committee.

On the second day, after the hearing, Franklin was handed a communication from the Postmaster-General, informing him in brief terms that the King had found it necessary to dismiss him from the office of Deputy Postmaster-General in America.³⁷

It is said that Franklin never again donned the new suit he wore on the day of his pilloring in the Cockpit until the signing of the Treaty of Paris.³⁸

There has never been put forth any fully substantiated evidence to prove exactly who was the individual responsible for obtaining and giving Benjamin Franklin the so-called Hutchinson letters; however there is enough testimony to eliminate all but one of four candidates for this dubious honor. An overwhelming amount of varied factors form an almost perfect case against Sir John Temple.

Of the other four one suspect was a Mr. Storer who is referred to in the diary of Ezra Stiles, later to be president of Yale, who wrote on June 10, 1773:

Mr. Storer of Boston suffered in the Stamp Act 1765 and went home for Redress. The Ministry put him off, till he should obtain Governor Hutchinson's Recommendation, and indeed it was finally referred to the Governor to provide for him some provincial office. It has not been done. Mr. Storer to have a Rod over etc. procured 18 Letters of Lt. Gov. Oliver and half a dozen of Governor Hutchinson to one of the Secretaries of some of the Ministerial Boards in London, as a specimen of their Correspondence for 15 years past urging and recommending the present arbitrary Government over the Colonies. The Governors Hutchinson and Oliver were last year given to understand that Mr. Storer had them in his power by means of a Collection of these Letters, and that the only condition of not exposing them was his being provided for. The master was neglected. Judge Oliver now here once took occasion to ask the Governor whether there was any Danger, etc. when the Gov. said he was under no Apprehensions. The Judge says, he himself apprehended both for Governor Hutchinson and especially for his Brother the Lieutenant Governor who was greatly exasperated in the Time of the Stamp Act. Besides these, other Letters have been procured from London shewing the correspondence held by others in the Colonies, and particularly Mr. Rome of Newport Rh. Isld. with the Ministry and their Tools, giving malicious informations, and recommending violent and arbitrary Regulations for the Colonies.³⁹

There is no other mention in the *Diary* of the additional letters Mr. Storer was supposed to have possessed nor is there any reference in other sources as to the matter; furthermore the fact that it is specifically stated that "besides these, *other letters* had

been procured from London. . .", would tend to preclude any involvement on the part of Mr. Storer.

The second personage whose name is mentioned with regard to the affair is Dr. Hugh Williamson. In the year 1820, Dr. Hosack, of New York, published a *Biographical Memoir of Dr. Hugh Williamson*, a gentleman well known for his scientific attainments. In that *Memoir* the author endeavors to establish the fact, on what he deems good authority, that Dr. Williamson obtained the letters in question and communicated them to Franklin.

Dr. Williamson had now arrived in London. Feeling a lively interest in the momentous questions then agitated, and suspecting that a clandestine correspondence, hostile to the interest of the colonies, was carried on between Hutchinson and certain leading members of the British Cabinet, he determined to ascertain the truth by a bold experiment.

He had learned, that Governor Hutchinson's letters were deposited in an office different from that in which they ought regularly to have been placed; and, having understood that there was little exactness in the transaction of the business of that office, (it is believed it was the office of a particular department of the Treasurer), he immediately repaired to it, and addressed himself to the chief clerk, not finding the principal within. Assuming the demeanor of official importance, he peremptorily stated, that he had come for the last letters that had been received from Governor Hutchinson and Mr. Oliver, noticing the office in which they ought regularly to have been placed. Without any question being asked, the letters were delivered. The clerk doubtless supposed him to be an authorized person from some other public office. Dr. Williamson immediately carried them to Dr. Franklin, and the next day left London for Holland.

I received this important fact from a gentleman of high respectability now living; with whom, as the companion and friend of his early days, Dr. Williamson had intrusted the secret.⁴⁰

But there are circumstances which would seem to prove, that this gentleman either misunderstood Dr. Williamson, or had confused this subject with some other of a different kind. This inference is based upon a comparison of dates. The initial letter from Franklin to Cushing enclosing the letters is dated December 2, 1772. Six months later, in June of 1773, they were publicly acted upon by the legislature of Massachusetts. Now it appears in the *Memoir* of Dr. Williamson's life, that he went to the West Indies in the year 1772, and did not return till the autumn of 1773, which would indicate that he could not have had any agency in procuring the letters.

There is a mode of reconciling these discrepancies, which at least has probability on its side. One of the conditions enjoined by

Dr. Franklin, in sending these letters, was, that they should be returned to London. At the time Dr. Williamson sailed from Boston, [December 16, 1773] the letters had been copied and printed, and there was no longer any motive for retaining the originals. These may have been intrusted to Dr. Williamson, with the request, that, on his arrival in London, he would put them into the hands of Dr. Franklin. His relation of this circumstance might easily lead to the error of connecting him with the previous transactions.⁴¹

Mr. John Adams, after reading the first edition of Dr. Hosack's *Memoir*, wrote a letter to him, dated January 28, 1820, which contains some interesting facts touching this subject. ". . . Mr. Temple, afterwards Sir John Temple, who told me, in Holland, that he had communicated those letters to Dr. Franklin. 'Though I swear to you,' said he, 'that I did not procure them in the manner represented.' This I believe, and I believe further, that he did not deliver them with his own hand into Dr. Franklin's, but employed a member of Parliament. . . . For Dr. Franklin declared publicly, that he received them from a member of Parliament."⁴²

This member of Parliament that is mentioned, by Adams, as having been involved in the incident might very possibly have been a Mr. Hartley, whom Adams suspected, or more probably, in this writer's opinion, Thomas Pownall. Hutchinson's great-grandson also hazards the conjecture that Pownall, an ex-governor of Massachusetts who was in Parliament, might be the said member of Parliament; ". . . from his personal acquaintance with several who were more or less connected with the affair, from his knowledge of America, and from the feelings which he was supposed to cherish towards some of the parties connected with it."⁴³

Dr. George Bancroft, who made a study of the Hutchinson letters, submitted a paper to the Massachusetts Historical Society, with relation to Sir John Temple, from which the following is drawn.

. . . Hutchinson wished to counteract with George Grenville the influence of Temple, and for that purpose used Thomas Whately. This Whately, with whom he formed some close connection, was Grenville's secretary of the treasury; and, after Grenville went out of office, remained his correspondent, partisan, political agent, and purveyor of news and gossip. His brother William Whately was a banker in London. The letters written by Hutchinson to Thomas Whately [Hutchinson verified that Whately was the recipient of the letters, even though the addressee had been erased] were written for the purpose of being used as means of ingratiating himself with Grenville, and were so used.⁴⁴

After the death of Grenville and Whately, Sir John Temple,

in October 1772, examined some files of the papers of Thomas Whately which had passed into the hands of William Whately, his brother and executor; but it is asserted, and not denied by anyone, that the papers which were sent to America had at no time been in the custody of that executor. This William Whately finally owned to be true, though in the interim his hesitancy over the issue involved him in a duel with Temple, in which he was slightly wounded. As the letters were written to produce an effect on George Grenville it seems logical to conclude that they were given to him by William Whately, and at Grenville's death remained in *his* estate, not in Whately's. Sir John Temple, who was connected with the Grenville family almost certainly ferreted out the matter, and formed the plan of sending them to be read in Boston, but, as heretofore mentioned, the actual communication of the papers was made to Franklin by a member of Parliament.⁴⁵

The above version is well substantiated by other works.⁴⁶ There is also an additional reference in the Bowdoin and Temple papers.

Whereas certain letters written by Governor Hutchinson . . . , which letters we afterwards were informed by the Hon. John Temple, Esq., were thro his means procured by Dr. Franklin, tho', as he declares, not in the way apprehended by the British ministry The consequence of which was that Mr. Temple . . . was deprived of the place he held under the British government of one thousand pounds sterling per annum, as also his office of Lieutenant Governor of New Hampshire. . . .⁴⁷

This certificate was signed by Bowdoin, Cushing, Chauncy, Cooper and Samuel Adams on May 21, 1779.

Governor Hutchinson was a man who found himself riding on the horns of a dilemma. As a royal representative his was an obligation to carry out the edicts of Parliament, and he would have been guilty of a breach of trust had he failed to do so. On the other hand he heard the cry of the patriots which grew louder with the ensuing years. But his first obligation, as is any man's, was to himself, and he held firm in his belief in the authority of Parliament.

As for the letters, there is little doubt, in this writer's opinion, that they were propagandised to meet the council's needs. Hutchinson was a victim, as were other loyalists, of an evolutionary process of government.

To conclude, there appears no more apt synthesis than Thomas Hutchinson's own, third person, vindication of his actions which was however never made public. It sums up best, this writer feels, the affair of the letters.

By acts of fraud and violence the late Governor Hutchinson's most private papers have, at different times, come into the possession of persons disposed to do him hurt, who for that purpose have published detached parcels of them, with comments and remarks, torturing his words to an unnatural sense and meaning, totally different from what they were intended to convey. It is nevertheless now asserted, that no one fact has ever appeared to have been materially misrepresented by him, nor any one proposal made unfriendly to the rights and liberties of mankind in general, or tending to take from the Province, of which he was Governor, the privileges enjoyed by its Charter, which can be made to consist with their relation to Parliament as the supreme authority of the British dominions, nor has it been shewn that in his public character, he has interested himself in controversies or disputes with the people of his Province farther than the posts which he sustained, required and made his indispensable duty. The great charge against him was, his obstinate attachment to the prerogative of the Crown, and the authority of Parliament.

A gentleman in England had procured and sent to Boston several private letters from Mr. Hutchinson, all but one before he came to the Chair, and from Mr. Oliver, when he was Secretary of the Province, to the late Mr. Whately. Every fallacious art had been used to raise expectations of the people, to inflame and enrage them, before the contents of the letters were made publick. The words of the great Roman Orator though in a case not exactly similar, may be used with propriety on this occasion — *Quis enim inquam oui paulum modo bonorum consuetudinem nosset, literas ad se ab amico missas, offensione aliqua interposita in medium protulit, palamque recitavit? Quid est aliud tollere e vita vitæ societatem, tollere amicorum colloquia absentium? Quam nulla joca solent esse in epistolis, quæ prolata si suit, inepta divulganda.*⁴⁸

1. Lewis Einstein, *Divided Loyalties* (Boston, 1933), p. 153.
2. James K. Hosmer, *The Life of Thomas Hutchinson* (Boston, 1896), p. 270.
3. George E. Ellis, *Atlantic Monthly* (Boston, 1884), LIII, 672.
4. William Bollan, a lawyer and agent for the Massachusetts Council in England, for the Council now as well as the House had its English agent. Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of Massachusetts-Bay* (Cambridge, 1936), III, 6.
5. William Beckford (1709-1770) was twice Lord Mayor of London. At times he was also a Member of Parliament. His name is closely associated with John Wilkes and other irreconcilable opponents of George III. *Ibid.*, III, 163.
6. *Ibid.*
7. James Bowdoin (1726-1790) was elected to the General Court in 1753, and chosen a member of the Council in 1757. After the Revolution he was governor of Massachusetts for a few years. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*, III, 164-165.
9. Hosmer, *Hutchinson*, p. 147.
10. According to John Bigelow, *Life of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia, 1905), II, 233n., "Dr. Franklin said, in a note found in his handwriting Governor Hutchinson, as appears by his letters . . . had the same idea of duty, when he procured copies of Dr. Franklin's letters to the Assembly, and sent them to the ministry of England." An ironic quirk should the information be valid, however, this writer has found no other such mention nor any letters to bear out the above, excepting the identical notation in Sparks and Smyth, whose works are referred to later.
11. Sir George Trevelyan, *The American Revolution* (New York, 1899), I, 169-170.
12. Stark, *Loyalists*, 154.
13. Hosmer, *Hutchinson*, p. 166.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267.
15. Thomas Cushing (1725-1788) beginning in 1761, he represented Boston in General

- Court for fourteen years. He was elected to the First and Second Continental Congresses, but was hesitant about declaring himself for independence. After the adoption of the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, Cushing was regularly elected lieutenant-governor as long as he lived. Hutchinson, *History of Massachusetts-Bay*, III, 261.
16. Albert H. Smyth, *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin* (New York, 1907), VI, 265-267.
 17. Charles Paxton (1704-1788), one of the Commissioners of Customs of Boston. He also served as pallbearer at the funeral of Governor Hutchinson. Hutchinson, *History of Massachusetts-Bay*, III, 283.
 18. Nathaniel Robers was a Boston merchant who held out against the non-importation agreement. *Ibid.*
 19. Thomas Moffatt and George Rome. Moffatt was a Scotch physician who settled in Rhode Island about 1750. He held an appointment as comptroller of customs at New London. Rome of Newport, Rhode Island, was a merchant who carried on a large business in the whaling industry. *Ibid.*
 20. Robert Auchmuty, a noted lawyer and judge in Massachusetts. Stark, *Loyalists*, p. 302.
 21. Hosmer, *Hutchinson*, p. 279.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
 24. Hutchinson, *History of Massachusetts-Bay*, III, 284.
 25. Charles F. Adams, *The Works of John Adams* (Boston, 1865), II, 318-319.
 26. Hutchinson, *History of Massachusetts-Bay*, III, 284.
 27. Jared Sparks, *The Works of Benjamin Franklin* (Boston, 1856), IV, 418-419.
 28. *Ibid.*, IV, 419.
 29. Smyth, *Franklin*, VI, 271.
 30. Hosmer, *Hutchinson*, pp. 276-278; Hutchinson, *History of Massachusetts-Bay*, III, 286-289.
 31. James K. Hosmer, *Samuel Adams* (Boston, 1898), pp. 200-201.
 32. Hutchinson, *History of Massachusetts-Bay*, III, 294.
 33. Stark, *Loyalists*, pp. 123, 133.
 34. John C. Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1943), p. 330.
 35. Smyth, *Franklin*, p. 284.
 36. William Cabell Bruce, *Benjamin Franklin Self-Revealed* (New York, 1917), II, 223-224.
 37. *Ibid.*, II, 225.
 38. Miller, *Origins*, p. 333.
 39. Ezra Stiles, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles* (New York, 1901), pp. 380-381.
 40. Sparks, *Franklin*, IV, 441.
 41. *Ibid.*, IV, 442-443.
 42. *Ibid.*
 43. Peter Orlando Hutchinson, *The Diary and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson* (Boston, 1884), I, 93.
 44. George Bancroft, "The Origin of the Hutchinson Letters," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston, 1878), XVI, 46-48.
 45. *Ibid.*
 46. Richard Lee, *The Life of Arthur Lee* (Boston, 1829), I, 270.
 47. Bowdoin and Temple Papers, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Sixth Series (Boston, 1897), IX, 434.
 48. Hutchinson, *Diary*, I, 576-577.