

Mr. G O R D O N's

S E R M O N

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY OF THE DECLARATION

OF

INDEPENDENCY.

THE SEPARATION OF THE JEWISH
TRIBES, AFTER THE DEATH OF
SOLOMON, ACCOUNTED FOR,
AND APPLIED TO THE
PRESENT DAY,

IN A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE
GENERAL COURT,

On FRIDAY, JULY the 4th, 1777.

B E I N G

The ANNIVERSARY of the DECLARATION

O F

I N D E P E N D E N C Y.

By WILLIAM GORDON.

PASTOR OF THE THIRD CHURCH IN ROXBURY.



B O S T O N .

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

M,DCC,LXXVII.

1777

STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS-BAY,

In the HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES,

July 4, 1777.

ORDERED, That Mr. Greenleaf and Col. Porter, with such as the honorable Board may join, be a Committee to wait upon the Rev. Doctor WILLIAM GORDON, with the Thanks of the General Assembly for his S E R M O N delivered at their Desire, before them this Day, being the Anniversary of the DECLARATION of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCY; and desire a Copy of it for the Press.

Sent up for Concurrence.

R. T. PAINE, Speaker P. T.

In COUNCIL, July 4, 1777.

Read and concurred, and Jeremiah Powell, Esq; is joined.

JOHN AVERY, Dep. Sec'y.

S E R M O N, &c.

THE fulness and variety of scripture is such, that no occurrence, whether public, domestic, or private, presents itself, but you may find a text suitable to the same. How far I have been directed to chuse the right, I submit to the better judgment of this venerable audience : but I mean to improve the present opportunity, by treating on the separation that happened amongst the Jewish tribes in the time of Rehoboam, and to ground the discourse upon these words in the 1 Kings 12th ch. 15th v.

1 K I N G S 12 ch. 15 v.

Wherefore the king hearkned not unto the people : for the cause was from the Lord.

THE sacred oracles enable us to solve many a difficulty in the ancient and modern history of the world. According to their doctrine, the Lord Jehovah, the Creator of the universe, governs all his works, whether material or immaterial, animate

animate or inanimate, rational or irrational, men or angels, agreeable to an infinitely wise plan formed from the beginning ; and brings to pass his own purpose, doing all his pleasure and causing his counsel to stand, amidst the various jarring devices of created intelligent beings. He hath wisdom and strength. He hath counsel and understanding. He doeth great things and unsearchable ; marvellous things without number. He setteth up on high those that be low ; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness : and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. The deceived and the deceiver are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bond of kings, and breaketh the rod of the oppressor. He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He taketh away the heart of the chiefs of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. He plucketh up, pulleth down, and destroyeth kingdoms. He buildeth and planteth and prospereth nations. In fine, his influence extends to all events whether more or less important, that so each may work together, in its respective place, towards the accomplishment of that perfect scheme of universal government, which He hath projected.

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Thus we are taught to account for those grand revolutions that take place at times in these lower regions ; and that are brought forward by circumstances in themselves apparently trifling ; and that might easily have been prevented by a prudent and speedy compliance with the reasonable requests of the aggrieved.

The Jewish state flourished amazingly, under the reign of Solomon ; whose court was the resort of the wise and noble ; *for there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom, 1 Kings. 4. 34.* The friendship of this wise king was courted by neighbouring states, who paid him their annual tributes. He enlarged his dominions so as to rule over all the region on this side the river, the great river Euphrates, *from Tiphshab even unto Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river, and he had peace on all sides round about him, 1 Kings, 4. 24.* Trade and commerce was prosecuted with that spirit, and attended with such success, as that he *made silver and gold at Jerusalem as plenteous as stones, and cedar trees made he as the sycamore trees that are in the vale for abundance, 2Chro. 1. 15.* His subjects enjoyed not only plenty but security : *Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree from Dan even to Beer-sheba, from one end of the country to the other, all the days of Solomon, 1 Kings 4. 25.* One

One would have concluded, from the height the Jewish empire had reached, when at its meridian in the reign of Solomon, that like the summer's sun it would have been long in declining. But alas ! how soon did the glory and fashion of it pass away, thro' the bad policy that prevailed under the reign of his successor. Solomon's funeral is scarce closed, before fatal dissensions arise : the Jewish tribes separate thro' the imprudence and tyranny of Rehoboam ; and the empire is suddenly divided into two independent states.

Thus the most destructive events may be in the rear of the most successful. It is not for a community, any more than a private person to say, glorying in present appearances, *My mountain stands strong, I shall not be moved, I shall never be in a variety.* When great mercies bestowed upon a sinful nation, are productive of great vices, instead of leading to repentance and the practice of virtue, divine justice may hurl it without further warning into the depths of misery.

When George the 2d. of blessed memory, was upon the verge of eternity, the British nation had nearly attained the summit of its glory. That worthy sovereign had the happiness of his reign interrupted, by an unprovoked rebellion and by wars with foreign powers ; but its close was like that of the setting sun, with not a cloud about it, when
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the storm that loured in the sky hath been broken and dispersed. His loyal subjects enjoyed the glorious circumstances, while they sincerely mourned it's being a setting and not a rising sun. However, they consoled themselves with the hopes, that his successor would possess the royal virtues of his aged grandfire, and prove the happy instrument of confirming and lengthening out the British glory ; and therefore hailed his ascension to the throne, with loud and hearty acclamations. These had scarce ceased, ere it was perceived, that the baneful influence, which George the 2d. foresaw, dreaded as big with misery to his subjects. and spoke of with concern to his trusty servants was giving a wrong bias to publick measures. Old and experienced persons, conversant with business, and who had the confidence of the people, were removed, that so an ambitious favourite of high flying principles, with his clan of pliant dependants, might be admitted into places of honor, power and profit. The throne was soon surrounded by men of despotic sentiments ; and the complexion of the court was such, as that not only violent tories, but known Jacobites repaired to it with confidence, while the staunch friends of the House of Hanover were so coolly received, as to be really slighted. This occasioned many converts from among those that were attached to the pretenders family ; but as a political writer wisely and severely

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observed, tho' they *changed* their *idol* they *retained* their *idolatry*. They were, with the party they had joined, for having the king absolute ; but as Britons were strenuous for the forms of liberty, tho' negligent as to liberty itself, they were for making him so by law ; which, as the nation was lost to public virtue, might easily be done by corrupting and securing a majority in parliament. No wonder, that, while the leading men had such principles and views, and the sovereign a temper well adapted to second and support them, should he not be thought the first promoter, unwarrantable methods were adopted for procuring monies for the purpose of ministry, without regarding the rights of those that were to pay them ; and that a firm determined opposition to such proceedings was deemed, and treated as disobedience to legal authority. From hence hath originated a separation between those that were as nearly related and as strongly united as the Jewish tribes. Such was the warm affection that the Colonists had for Great-Britain, that they considered her as their home, and honored her as their mother country. In all her afflictions, they were afflicted ; and when she rejoiced, they were glad. With what anxiety did they expect news, when her ruin was threatned by rebellions or invasions ! How did they wish that they could cross the Atlantic in her defence ! How did they exult in her salvations ! And how were their
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hearts enlarged in thanksgivings to God for her successes ! But how has the cruelty of the British legislature, and the tameness of the British nation in suffering it, produced such an alienation of heart in the Colonists, that many, very many, can scarce wish to be connected with her more, in any way whatsoever ! As a friend to the rights of mankind in general, and of this Continent in particular, I can't but pray that the King of kings would give his sanction to what the Congress declared this day twelve month, and by succeeding make the united States of America perpetually *Free and Independent* ; being assured that there is no alternative, but that or the most horrid slavery : And yet as a native of Great-Britain, and considering that that is the land of the sepulchres of *your* forefathers, I can't but wish, that, tho' we have been drove into an *independency*, we may not be forced into a *total separation*. However, it is likely that we shall see the words of Rehoboam's father verified—*a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and their contentions are like the bars of a castle*—of an unusual size, beyond what are to be met with in common among strangers, *Prov. 18. 19.*

Return we to the sacred history.

Rehoboam repaired to Shechem, where all Israel met to make him king. The house of David could plead a *divine right* to the throne ;

throne ; and yet God, designing to intimate, that it's princes were to rule for the good of the subjects, were not to lord it over his heritage, and would forfeit their right should they commence tyrants, did leave the investiture in the hands of the people. Thus upon every new instalment, the people had an opportunity of relating the grievances they laboured under during the preceeding reign, and of insisting on a redress ere they acknowledged the successor. Accordingly *all the congregation came and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, thy father made our yoke grievous : now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee,* v. 3, 4. We are not told what were the particulars on which this general complaint was grounded. We may conclude from the acknowledgment contained in Rehoboam's answer, that it was not without foundation. The advantages enjoyed under the reign of Solomon were uncommon ; notwithstanding which, there were some things peculiarly disgusting, that the people were not willing to submit to under his successor : and that Rehoboam might not construe their silence into an acquiescence, they determined upon speaking their minds freely, and stipulating with him upon what terms they would serve him. Whether they thought the expences of government multiplied unnecessarily, or designedly mis-applied : whether they objected to
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the taxes as too great, or to the mode of laying and raising them, or to the imperious, insolent and oppressive behaviour of crown officers: whether any, some, or each of these were particular matters of complaint must remain an uncertainty: but they considered themselves as having been under a heavy yoke and grievous servitude. They therefore intimate to Rehoboam, that they would not serve him, unless he would lighten their burden. This circumstance, plainly proves, that they did not apprehend themselves bound to *non-resistance* and *passive-obedience*, though Rehoboam should plead that he was king *jure divino*. The language of their procedure was, “ we submit to no unconditional sovereignty. You must solemnly promise, before we install you, and acknowledge ourselves your subjects. Then we shall know what we have to trust to, and when our obligation to obedience ceases. Do we approve of your proposals, we will serve you: if not, we are at liberty to serve whom we please. Do we agree to your proposals, we are bound to serve you while you keep to them; but do you vary from them without our consent, the contract is ended, our allegiance is absolved, we have a right to chuse another sovereign, or to alter the mode of government as we may judge most expedient”. Let it be observed, that these were the sentiments not of a disaffected party, but of *all the congregation of Israel*—

at a period, not when the nation was overrun with ignorance, and priestcraft influenced, but immediately after the Jews had been tutored in the school of wisdom by the greatest and acutest genius that ever lived. Here I may introduce with propriety the following words of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Newton, wrote upon another occasion—“not only in this particular, but in the general the scriptures, though often perverted to the purposes of tyranny, are yet in their own nature calculated to promote the civil as well as the religious liberties of mankind. True religion and virtue, and liberty are more nearly related, and more intimately connected with each other, than people commonly consider. It is very true as St. Paul saith, that *where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty* : or as our Saviour himself expresseth it, *if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed ; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye free.*” Whether these, which were the sentiments of a private clergyman, continue those of the Bishop of Bristol since advancement, is immaterial to the public : but they will be perpetuated in his incomparable dissertations on the prophecies, vol. 1 p. 313.

Rehoboam having heard what the people had to say, with seeming prudence defers giving them an answer, till he had time to consider the affair, and consult his counsellors,
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and so sends them away for the present, saying, *depart yet for three days, then come again to me.* Had Rehoboam a good design in thus delaying the matter, he ought to be commended for it ; but the policy of princes is so exceeding intricate and crooked, that he might only mean to gain time by it. He might resent their conduct in presenting such a petition ; artfully conceal his displeasure ; give it to all appearance a gracious reception ; propose by that means to make them secure, to deceive and to divide them ; and think that within the three days, what with corrupting some, wheedling others, and frightening the timid, he should so weaken the opposition as to have nothing to fear from it. Such policy would only have resembled that of modern times. Rehoboam however, to keep up the farce, *consulted with the old men that stood before Solomon his father, while he yet lived, and said, how do ye advise, that I may answer this people?* The people when they heard he had consulted the old statesmen of the former reign, might promise themselves a redress of grievances from their wisdom, and be ready to congratulate each other upon the pleasing prospect. In *this* George the third did not resemble Rehoboam. The reason for it may be easily conjectured. He was well assured, that had he consulted the old men that stood before his grandfather while he yet lived, they like Solomon's counsellors would have advised him to have complied with the
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petition of the complainants ; which, as he had no inclination to do, he might fear would embarrass his affairs and disconcert his favourite projects.

The old men gave counsel to Rehoboam saying, *if thou wilt be a servant to this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever.* The old men had studied, been long acquainted with, and knew the temper of the people ; that they were not given to change ; that they did not seek occasion to separate from Solomon's successor ; that they sought nothing more than to have their petition complied with ; that their proposals were honest, whatever designing and interested men might insinuate ; and that they would keep their word with Rehoboam were they gratified : therefore they do not hesitate to declare *positively* what would be the happy consequence would he answer them graciously, and speak good words to them.

Whether it was owing entirely to Rehoboam's not relishing this good advice ; or partly to that, and partly to the cunning practices of some selfish servants, who were sensible, that, if he followed it, their schemes of aggrandizing themselves and families would be totally ruined ; so it was, that *he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men*

men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him.

The persons here stiled young men, were not so very young in point of years ; for, from it's being said that *they were grown up* with Rehoboam, we must conclude that they were of the same age with him ; and he was forty and one years old when he began to reign ; but they were young men compared with the old men that stood before Solomon ; they were young also in point of political knowledge, and the art of governing properly. They had lived long enough to have been good politicians and wise counsellors, if they had applied themselves to the study of human nature, the tempers of mankind, and the history of states and kingdoms ; but they had neglected these particulars and had applied themselves to the pleasing and getting the favour of the prince, to whom they had been appointed companions when young, and with whom they were grown up. They were raw and inexperienced, as to state affairs ; and no ways fit to be advised with in matters of the first importance. which required the greatest sagacity, and a judgment matured by repeated practice. Men may have old heads, and yet be incapable of giving proper counsel, for want of understanding what they are consulted about. But as Rehoboam did not approve of the counsel of the old men, he discover'd his policy in applying to the young men that

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were grown up with him : for there was no danger of their giving advice that would be disagreeable to him. They had been so long about his person, that they knew his temper, (perhaps better than what he himself did) what counsel would be acceptable to him ; and they would not run the hazard of being turn'd out of place and removed from before him, by advising to measures that he might dislike. Not only so, but they might have been so long habituated to adapt their own inclinations to that of the prince with whom they had grown up, as that harsh proceedings might please them no less than him. We cannot be surpris'd therefore that they spake unto him, saying, *thus shalt thou speak unto this people, that spake unto thee saying, thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us : thus shalt thou say unto them, my little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with an heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke : my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.* Rehobam though descended from Solomon, had very little of Solomon's wisdom, or he must have known, that such an answer as this, would only inflame the people, and make matters worse : but it so suited his arbitrary disposition, that when they came to him on the third day according to appointment, he answered them roughly, forsook the old men's counsel, and spake to them after the counsel of
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the young men. It must appear strange, that any one who was not quite a natural should commit such a horrid blunder, and dream of bullying with great sounding words of vanity a high spirited people. struggling for their liberties, and determined not to submit to past hardships. But our text tells us how it came about, and *wherefore* it was that *the king hearkned not unto the people* : he did it not, *for the cause was from the Lord, that he might perform his saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah the Shilonite, unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.* What the Lord spake by Ahijah unto Jeroboam, was, that he would rend the kingdom and give ten tribes to him. It was the will and design of heaven that the ten tribes should be separated from Rehoboam, wherefore it was that the king hearkned not unto the people. He was left to himself, to act a foolish obstinate part, and to follow the worst advice, that so the purpose of the Most High might be accomplished. This is the only rational way of accounting for what happened : and thus was it according to the Latin adage—those whom God means to destroy, he first of all bereaves of senses. Rehoboam being so lost to common sense as to give the answer above related, the people resented it with a becoming spirit ; and having nothing good to hope for, from one who could treat them thus cavalierly as tho' they were his beasts of burden, should they enter into further treaty with him ; and being con-

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fident that it was not the will of heaven that the Lord's free people should submit to be enslaved by a tyrant, because he was descended from David whom the Lord had anointed to be king over the tribes of Israel, they had a recourse to the unalienable rights of human nature, declared themselves *free and independent*, saying, *what portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents O Israel; now see to thine house David.* In the warmth of their resentment they seem to speak disrespectfully of *David*: but when persons are charged with cruel treatment, and that after having meant well and honestly, it is not unusual for them to utter those harsh expressions that they would not adopt in cooler moments. *So Israel departed unto their tents.* Rehoboam was soon sensible of his error; but in endeavouring to correct it, fell into another that made his affairs still worse. He sent *Adoram*, who was over the tribute to treat with them. The tribute we may suppose was one ground of complaint; and Adoram might by his bad management in that department, have made himself peculiarly obnoxious; unless it was so, we can scarce think that he would have fallen a sacrifice to their rage in such a way, for all Israel stoned him with stones that he died. Had Rehoboam sent one or more, who had the love and confidence of the people, and were possessed of prudence, some good might possibly have come of it, and a reconciliation have

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taken place: but that was not to be, and therefore the aggrieved were insulted in the *commissioner* employed by him. When Adoram was stoned, Rehoboam perceived that it would not be safe for him to remain longer at Shechem, and therefore made speed to mount his chariot, and fled to Jerusalem. When he got there, he thought the ten tribes were of too much consequence to be lost, tho' before, being far from the seat of government, they might have been slighted, and been spoken of in diminutive terms by the courtiers; and he determined upon reducing them to obedience by arms. Accordingly *he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.* What horrid scenes were now likely to commence! Countrymen, brethren in blood, brethren in religion, falling upon and slaughtering each other with the weapons of destruction! Houses on fire! Towns in flames! Women and children shrieking, crying, and flying, without conveniences, without necessaries, into woods and dens and caves for safety! Sons, brethren, lovers, husbands, parents and grand-parents wallowing in blood, and expiring in agonies! Scenes not to be imagined without shuddering! But an infinitely merciful God interdicts the whole by a most timely message. *The word of God came unto Shemajab the*

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man of God, saying, *Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon the king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying thus saith the Lord, ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel : return every man to his house, for this thing is from me.* Did Rehoboam's regard to the divine prohibition influence him to desist, it was more to his credit than had he marched against and subdued the ten tribes ; but it is to be apprehended, from the temper he had before shewed, that the authority of the man of God to deliver such a message would have been disputed by him, had not the Jews that cleaved to him been fully convinced of the messages, being from the Lord, which at once disarm'd them of all hostile intentions against their brethren, tho' themselves accustomed to war. *They hearkned therefore to the word of the Lord, and returned to depart according to the word of the Lord.* Thus I have considered the revolution that commenced at the death of Solomon, and the progress of that separation from the house of David, that the ten tribes were drove into, by the insulting and tyrannical conduct of Rehoboam—an event of that nature and so circumstanced, that can be accounted for only upon the principle assigned by the sacred historian—*the king hearkned not unto the people, for the cause was from the Lord.* And it is upon that principle alone that we can rationally account for the separation

tion that hath taken place, between the united States of America and Great-Britain. That real friend to America and the rights of human nature, Dr. Price, was he acquainted with all the anecdotes to be gained on this side the atlantic relative to our affairs instead of wording himself so cautiously "*I fancy I see*, would not hesitate in saying", "*I see* in these measures something that cannot be accounted for merely by human ignorance". He would strike out *I am inclined to think that* and boldly "pronounce the hand of providence is in them, "working to bring about some great ends".

You must have applied already much of the discourse ; for we have not been alluding to things done in secret ; and you cannot be dwellers in the Massachusetts, and be strangers to them. This continent complained of real grievances, and *humbly petitioned*. Whatever individuals of uncommon penetration might wish, from foreseeing what would necessarily exist sooner or later ; the bulk of the people in every *State, not this excepted*, the body of the delegates, would have been satisfied, would have rejoiced, would have been happy, had their requests been complied with. No set of delegates could have insisted upon more without breaking the union of the colonies. Instead of being heard and relieved, the yoke was increased by fresh acts of cruelty, and new burdens laid upon the continent. Our first grievances were spoken of, as if not real : and as tho' we complained without

without cause, it was determined that we should have cause for complaining. We had not been accustomed to a state of slavery ; therefore could not brook such treatment without resenting it. In the British Parliament we were posted up to the world for poltroons, and the ministry promised themselves a victory, over all our resolutions *to be free*, without any slaughter. " The cabinet was in no disposition to give America any redress. The king was our inveterate enemy, and ordered the ministers to persevere in the old plan ; and it was determined by the *secret ruling power* to distress us as much as possible. This ruler, being the veryest coward that human nature can know", * no wonder that

- * Taken out of a letter from a gentleman at London to his friend in Virginia, copied and sent over by the late Josiah Quincy, jun. Esq; whose death was occasioned by his zeal to serve the American cause, no less than if he had been slain in the field, as appears from the following minutes in his journal—" It is a good deal against my own private opinion and inclination that I now sail to America. I have had no letter from thence since they knew of my arrival. I know not what my next letters may contain. Besides, the fine season is now coming on here, and Dr. Fothergill thinks Bristol air and water would give me perfect health. On the other hand, my most intimate friends (except Mr. Bromfield) insist upon my going directly to Boston. They say no letters can go with safety, and that I can deliver more information and advice *viva voce*, than could or ought to be wrote. They say my going now (if I arrive safe) must be of great advantage to the American cause". He attempted to serve the cause in the way advised to, notwithstanding the personal dangers attending it, and lost his life in the attempt : Let him be numbered therefore with the heroes that have fallen in the dispute.

that he was afraid lest we were falsely affected, and wished to have the trifling military stores we had collected for service, in case matters were brought to an extremity, destroyed : instructions for doing it were without doubt transmitted : blood being wantonly spilt, in attempting to execute them, we were at once plunged into a defensive war, with the greatest power in the world. what with her riches, her resources, her alliances, her armies and navies. When we look back to that important period, and recollect that we were without an army, without money and without ammunition, we are amazed. that instead of being galled to the bone with the yoke of slavery, we are keeping the anniversary of our independency ! The sword being drawn and the ground stained with the blood of its inhabitants, the people offered themselves willingly in the cause of liberty, and the colonies united more closely. Still we were desirous, if possible, of an accommodation. We therefore petitioned again, without rising in our requests, only enlarging them to take in new grievances. Instead of having them redressed, we were deemed, and were to be treated as rebels. The power of Great-Britain was to be employed in reducing us, by fire and sword, by armies and navies. This inclined several of the colonies to wish for *independency* : but others would not hear of it tho' it was known that the British ministry meant to employ Indians, Canadi-

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ans and Negroes against us. Union was essential to our safety : some colonies therefore could not be gratified in their desires after independency, till it was the wish of most or all. The delusive image of an inclination on the part of the ministry to settle the dispute by treating, with which many in Britain were amused, fascinated numbers on this side the Atlantic : but when it was found that the commission given to the Howes was to be supported by an army of foreign mercenaries, a change of sentiments among the beguiled Americans commenced, and the advocates for independency multiplied greatly, the measure being made absolutely necessary in order to self-preservation.

The deep laid scheme for destroying the army being discover'd in a seasonable moment, remov'd the difficulties still remaining in the breasts of several well-affected to the cause and liberties of the continent ; and brought every colony without exception to unite in declaring for a state of independency, and that they were absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great-Britain, was and ought to be totally dissolved.

A variety of particulars conspire to evidence, that it becomes us to say of this great event that it was from the Lord. The union
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of the colonies was marvellous, considering the methods taken to hinder it ; that they had their distinct interests, their mutual jealousies, and their different forms of government. The continuance of that union, notwithstanding the attempts made to prevent it—the general unanimity prevailing successively through the Congress—the ready compliance yielded to their recommendations and resolutions thro' the continent—the successes attending our military operations—the new modelling of most of our governments, that the people might thereby attain to the enjoyment of their civil rights, to a degree beyond what was before known—the derangement of the plans concerted by the adherents of the British ministry in different colonies—the revolution in peoples sentiments making them fond of a measure, that a few months before they abhorred the thought of—the oversight of king and parliament in neglecting conciliatory measures, while there was an opening for them, tho' urged strongly to it by the wisest statesmen in the kingdom—the unanimity of the Congress on a point which some weeks before would have occasioned a great division—and Lord Howes not arriving till independency had been declared, which prevented his having the opportunity of dividing the public and of obstructing the measure by the subtle arts of negotiation—These are matters so remarkable as not to admit of our excluding the special influence of heaven.

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Let others attach'd to a false philosophy, ascribe the separation of the united States of America from Great Britain to moral and natural causes, without taking into the account the providential concern of the Most High in order to the accomplishment of his own divine purpose ; but let every religious assembly say, *the king hearkened not unto the people, for the cause was from the Lord ; this thing is from God.* And I heartily congratulate you upon his having brought it to pass, as the only secure way for your continuing free. I see not how it is possible for you to be ever more dependent upon Great-Britain, without being in a state of bondage, and feeling all the horrors of slavery. I have not a doubt but that we are fully authorised by reason and religion for thus separating ; and am persuaded that we are justified by the disinterested and impartial world. May the spirit of wisdom return speedily to the British councils, that so Britain may soon recover our friendship and secure our connection by commercial treaties, ere it is too late, and her ruin is sealed ! But of this I have little hope, unless some important event should take place in Europe, and oblige Britons to to think themselves : I rather expect, that they will strain every nerve to subdue us. And such is the impiety of the courtiers (I mean in justice except the king) such the irreligion of Lords and Commons, that was a messenger sent with the word of God to forbid the bloody project, he would be rejected without examining

examining his credentials, and would probably be ordered into confinement for a madman. An angel from heaven would have less attention paid him, than a threatening express from a neighbouring power. Has not the God of nature declared again and again his disapprobation of their bloody proceedings, by scattering their fleets, staying their voyages, disconcerting their plans, delivering many of their stores into our hands, and plunging them continually into greater difficulties. I might enumerate the several interpositions of providence whereby we have been carried safely thro' the first year of our independency : but your time will not permit it, and you can scarce have forgot or be ignorant of them. Notwithstanding all, the British ministry will still persist. O ! when—when—will the vengeance of heaven overtake them, by awakening an injured betrayed nation to avenge itself on such treasonable rulers !

Bear with me somewhat longer, my honourable hearers, for methinks I perceive in a private corner, a sly crafty and concealed enemy, whispering in the ear of his well disposed but timid neighbour, why does he not proceed in the history, and observe to us, that the separation of the ten tribes weakened and hastened the ruin of all ; and may not the like be feared with regard to Great-Britain and the united states of America ? I answer. The ruin of Great-Britain will

will probably follow, unless prevented in the manner abovementioned. And tho' in the heat of the present contest, and while engrossed in attending to our own safety, we can scarce find time to pity her ; yet when we have got through our difficulties, we shall bitterly lament her fall, and curse the memories of those who made it absolutely necessary for us to give her the mortal wound, that so we might escape with life and liberty. As to the united states of America, there is no reason to fear that it will be with them as it was with the ten tribes, do we improve by their errors. What led on to their ruin, was, their choosing another king when they had rejected Rehoboam, and not erecting a form of government that should keep out tyranny, after they had cast off the tyrant. They must needs call Jeroboam unto the congregation, and make him king over all Israel : and he through jealousy, lest the people by frequenting the worship of the Lord God at Jerusalem should be induced at length to return to Rehoboam, adopted a policy that made Israel to sin, and forfeit the blessing and protection of heaven.

But we are not bound to repair to the metropolis of Great Britain that we may do homage to the Sovereign of the universe. Our separation from her can be no injury to the *of the* continent. Should she think of denying episcopal ordination to persons of that persuasion,

suasion, she only endangers her own establishment : and conscientious persons of that communion will soon be able to procure episcopal ordination elsewhere. No damage can ensue to the continent, on the score of religion, from its separation. Nay, we may derive a benefit from it, even beyond what is enjoyed in Britain, by embracing the present happy moment for establishing to all the peaceable enjoyment of the rights of conscience, while they approve themselves good members of civil society, be their religious principles what they may.

In civil concerns, let us divest ourselves of that selfish partiality and oppressive temper which have so disgraced us of late, and benumbed those patriotic principles which animated us in the commencement of the present noble contest, turning numbers into sons of rapine and extortion that once passed for and called themselves high sons of liberty. The nature of the times must unavoidably make the necessities no less than the superfluities of life much dearer than formerly, so that it would be folly to say, that all that advance which has taken place has been owing to oppression and extortion. But if men in this day will not be content with a livelihood, and will make themselves fortunes, immense fortunes, out of the distresses of the people, I say, let the curse of heaven fall upon their substance, their unhallowed gains,
till

till the same are providentially dispersed among the sufferers. 'Tis not a curse that is causeless. Says the wisest of men, *he that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him : but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it*, Prov. 11, 26.—to corn we may add, meat, wool, flax, sugar, salt, in a word all the necessary articles of life, whether raised in the country by the farmer, or brought in by the merchant or persons engaged in privateering. And I can heartily deliver over to satan, in the name of the people, such oppressive *withholders*, for the destruction of their flesh and of their substance, that so their spirits may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. I aim not this stroke at any particular order of men ; and have been vexed at the weakness and wickedness that have appeared in that animosity which hath existed between the merchant and countryman. Fix their proportion, and I will venture to bring as many honest upright patriotic individuals from the one as from the other, and as many from each of the opposite character. But to hear some talk against trade and merchandise, as though they were of course a nuisance to society and the country could do without them, is an exercise for patience. Those very persons forget, that had it not been for trade and merchandise, the country had never been settled by their forefathers, had never been peopled and cultivated as now, had remained a wilderness and the residence of Indians. They forget, that

that without trade and merchandise we must have been enslaved, for we could have had neither arms, nor ammunition, tents, medicines, and so on. The countryman says, and remember sir, that if it had not been for the country you would not have had your men, your provision and the like—True, my friend, and this shews that the country and commercial interest ought not to be contrasted to each other, that for the public good and the well-being of community, providence hath designedly joined them together, and what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

I am greatly mistaken, or before the sword was drawn, they were both joined in one in whom we are all united, and to whom we are all more indebted than to any one man upon the continent—a—I recollect myself and name him not; 'twould be like shewing the sun after having described it—Was not the worthy and honourable President of the Congress our *own*—a merchant also? Some of the first characters in the civil and military department were merchants or traders; and now I have said so much upon this head, I hope little more will be said upon it henceforward but what will be healing.

I go on to mention, let us mould the governments of the respective states, and the representative body of the united, viz. the Congress, so as not only to exclude kings but
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tyranny

tyranny, and as ever to retain the *supreme authority* in the people, together with the *power*, no less than the *right* of calling their delegated agents to an account, whether they sit in the assembly, the council, the chair, or the Congress. We are not fighting against the *name* of a king, but the *tyranny*; and if we suffer that tyranny under another name, we only change our master without getting rid of our slavery. Take heed therefore my brethren, and stand fast in that liberty wherewith you have been made free. Let no single individual, let no collective body exalt itself above measure, and assume to itself powers that do not belong to it, and with which it has never been entrusted, neither implicitly nor expressly. Now is the golden opportunity for banishing tyranny as well as royalty out of the American states, and sending them back to Europe from whence they were imported.

I might enlarge, but must forbear. 'Tis expedient and opportune however to mention that would we have our independency perpetuated, let us repent of our sins, attend to religion, and live the doctrines of christianity; then may we reasonably expect, that future generations will joyfully commemorate this anniversary, and that the names of those who boldly stood forth in the cause of liberty, and acted a consistent and uniform part will be blessed.

My

My honourable audience, I am as much tired with speaking, as you can be with hearing me ; but I must take a little notice of what strikes the ear of my imagination, from one oppressed with the difficulties of the day—if these are the fruits of independence, better be dependent as before !—My honest friend, they are not the fruits of independence, but of Britain's attempting to enslave us. They originate truly and properly from those we were before dependent upon. Blame *them* therefore for all your difficulties, and hate more than ever being brought into bondage to them. Your difficulties are great, but don't mistake the cause, charge them to the real authors. I pity you under them, and recommend it to every man to ease you of them as far as he is able. But, my friend, have you ever read the history of your own country wrote by Mather, if not, you have heard of it, let me recommend it to your perusal. you will then find, that your difficulties are vastly short of what your forefathers endured. And let me further tell you, that I do not recollect reading of any people since the creation that ever secured their liberties without undergoing far, far more than what we have experienced. I feel or fancy I see, a distant dawning that indicates we are not far from the end of our troubles. But if not, be of good courage,

the horrors of slavery, after having exasperated our enemies by so animated and brave an opposition, are more to be dreaded than greater difficulties. Look upon your little ones, the darlings of your soul, and consider what will be their lot should the arms of Britain prevail. They will be forced to cry out. O that we had been born Africans instead of Americans! I now leave it with your good sense, and have done, my friend. I cannot but hope that the Lord will save us for his own names sake.

A M E N ! So let it be !

ERRATA.—Page 11 six lines from the bottom for *unusual* read *unusual*. Page 20 thirteen lines from the top for *charged* read *engaged*. Page 32, last line for *forget* read *forget*.

The following HYMN from Dr. WATTS's collection, somewhat altered, was sung upon the occasion.

NATURE with all her pow'rs shall sing
 God the creator and the King ;
 Nor air, nor earth, nor skies, nor seas,
 Deny the tribute of their praise.

Begin to make his glories known,
 Ye seraphs that sit near his throne,
 Tune your harps high, and spread the sound
 To the creation's utmost bound.

All mortal things of meaner frame,
 Exert your force, and own his name ;
 Whilst with our souls, and with our voice,
 We sing his honors and our joys.

To him be sacred all we have,
 From the young cradle to the grave ;
 Our lips shall his loud wonders tell,
 And ev'ry word a miracle.

This western soil, our native land,
 Lies safe in the Almighty's hand ;
 Our foes of conquest dream in vain,
 We'll ne'er submit to wear the chain.

Raise monumental praises high,
 To him that thunders thro' the sky,
 And with an awful nod or frown,
 Shakes an aspiring tyrant down !