

POTTER'S AMERICAN MONTHLY.

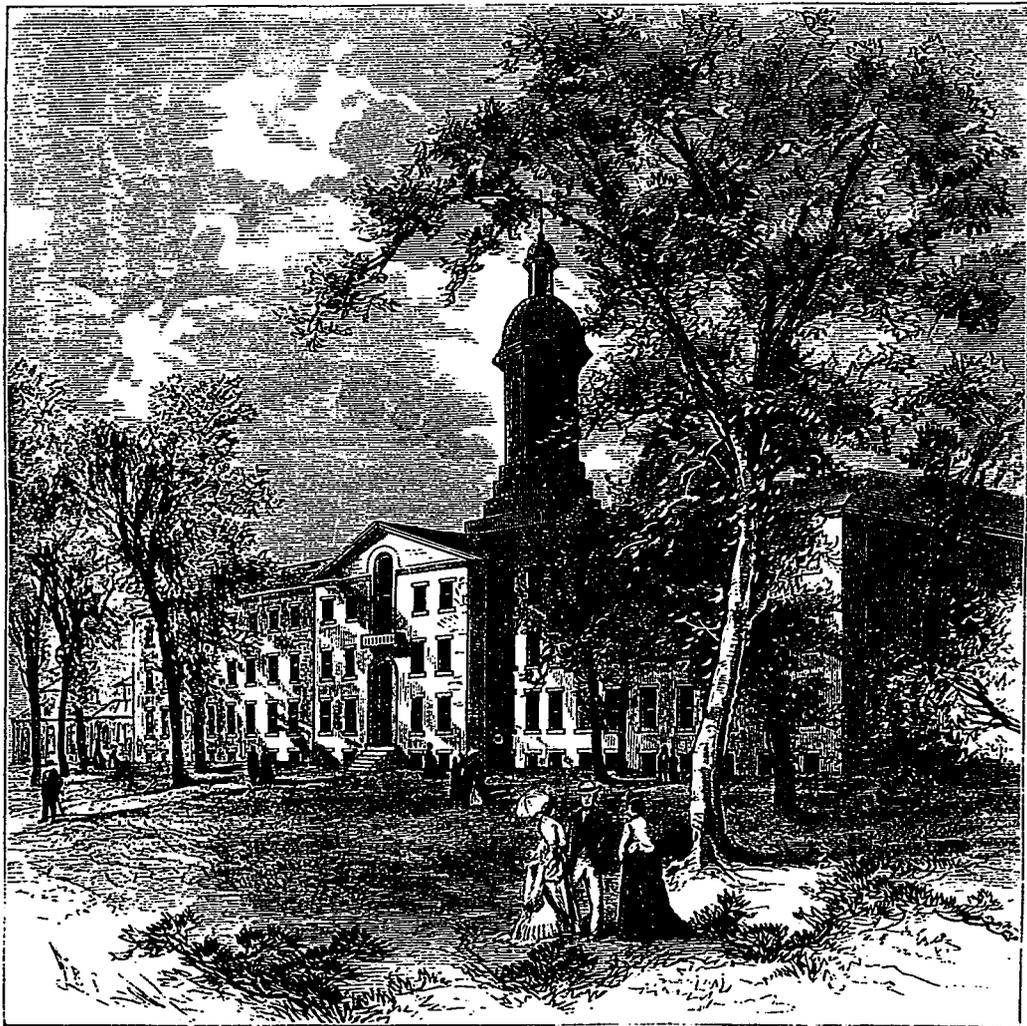
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THE HISTORIC BUILDINGS OF AMERICA.

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NASSAU HALL, COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY, PRINCETON.

THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC, NINETY-NINE YEARS AGO.

BY NELLIE HESS MORRIS.



THE OLD CAPITOL OF VIRGINIA.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO—who can in imagination go back and fully comprehend, vividly realize the stirring events that prepared the way for the birth of our glorious “land of the free, and home of the brave?” Much less can we thus go back and comprehend the intense loyalty to the King and to the nation of Great Britain that induced our patriot fathers to exhaust every alternative in the form of appeal, remonstrance and protest, ere they took up arms in defence of their rights and liberties—still less can we understand how that loyalty survived for months after the actual appeal to arms, and caused our patriot fathers long to cherish the hope of reconciliation and of a return to their old charter relations as Colonies of the British Empire. Many battles had been fought, very many lives offered up, ere the first thought of independence was developed into utterance—and then slower than leaven was that thought in working its way through the minds of the patriot masses, and betraying itself into action.

It has been claimed that as early as May, 1775,

the citizens of Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, passed a Declaration of Independence. I have read numerous arguments *pro* and *con*, and have but recently read the article in the May, 1874, number of *The American Historical Record*, upon the said claim, and am constrained to the conclusion that, at best, if not disproven, neither is the claim proven; but, be that as it may, it was not till a year later that any effectual action was had towards independence, and then it was glorious old Virginia that led off.

On Monday, the 6th of May, there assembled in the old Capitol¹ of Virginia, in the City of Wil-

¹ The sessions of the Assembly were held in the old Capitol at Williamsburg, of which the picture at the head of this paper is a representation, copied from an old print engraved in England about a hundred years ago. The first building erected on that spot for a Capitol, was burnt in the year 1746, and this was erected not long afterward. It was built of imported brick, and stood there, a monument of the revolutionary period, until April, 1832, when it, too, was consumed. The seat of government was removed to Williamsburg from



THE STATE HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA, IN 1776.

Williamsburg, a "Convention of Delegates from the Counties and Corporations in the Colony of Virginia." I have before me the Journal of that Convention, and from the record of Wednesday, May the 15th, I copy the following :

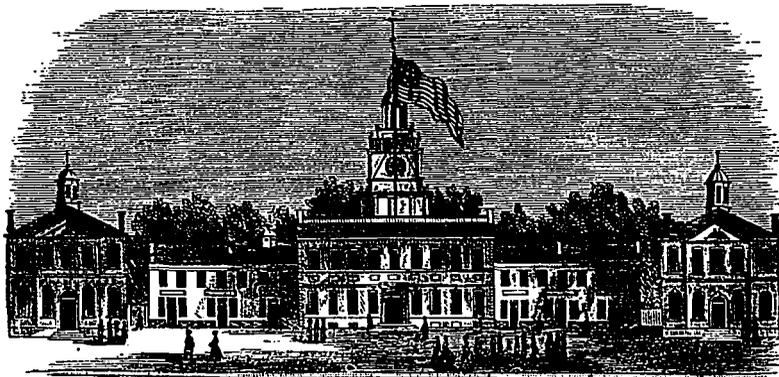
"The Convention then, according to the Order of the Day, resolved itself into a Committee on the state of the Colony, and, after some time spent therein, Mr. President resumed the chair, and Mr. Cary reported, that the Committee had, according to order, had under their consideration the state of the Colony, and had come to the following Resolutions thereupon; which he read in his place, and afterwards delivered in at the Clerk's table, where the same were again twice read, and unanimously agreed to, one hundred and twelve Members being present :

"Forasmuch as all the endeavors of the United Colonies, by the most decent representations and petitions to the King and Parliament of *Great Britain*, to restore peace and security to *America* under the *British* Government, and a reunion with that people upon just and liberal terms, instead of a redress of grievances, have produced, from an imperious and vindictive Administration, increased insult, oppression, and a vigorous attempt to effect our total destruction:—By a late act all these Colonies are declared to be in rebellion, and out

Jamestown, in 1698, and remained there until Richmond became the capital of the State, in 1779. The old Capitol was the scene of many interesting events in our history. There the great deliberations which preceded the war for independence were held, and therein were heard the voices of those Virginia statesmen whose memory Americans will ever delight to honor.

of the protection of the *British* Crown, our properties subjected to confiscation, our people, when captivated, compelled to join in the murder and plunder of their relations and countrymen, and all former rapine and oppression of *Americans* declared legal and just; fleets and armies are raised, and the aid of foreign troops engaged to assist these destructive purposes; the King's representative in this Colony hath not only withheld all the powers of Government from operating for our safety, but having retired on board an armed ship, is carrying on a piratical and savage war against us, tempting our slaves by every artifice to resort to him, and training and employing them against their masters. In this state of extreme danger, we have no alternative left but an abject submission to the will of those overbearing tyrants, or a total separation from the Crown and Government of *Great Britain*, uniting and exerting the strength of all *America* for defence, and forming alliances with foreign Powers for commerce and aid in war:—Wherefore, appealing to the Searcher of hearts for the sincerity of former declarations expressing our desire to preserve the connection with that nation, and that we are driven from that inclination by their wicked councils, and the eternal law of self-preservation :

"Resolved, *unanimously*, That the Delegates appointed to represent this Colony in General Congress be instructed to propose to that respectable body to declare the United Colonies free and Independent States, absolved from all allegiance to, or dependance upon, the Crown or Parliament of *Great Britain*; and that they give the assent of this Colony to such declaration, and to what-



THE STATE HOUSE (INDEPENDENCE HALL), IN 1861.

ever measures may be thought proper and necessary by the Congress for forming foreign alliances, and a Confederation of the Colonies, at such time and in the manner as to them shall seem best: *Provided*, That the power of forming Government for, and the regulations of the internal concerns of each Colony, be left to the respective Colonial Legislatures."

This Convention included among its members the best, most earnest and zealous, and at the same time the most intelligent of the people of the grand Old Dominion, and these were not content to pass the glorious Resolution above quoted, but evinced their solemn and intelligent earnestness by providing for the organization of a thorough system of State government as well as for the necessary courts and judicatories. Indeed, the legislation of the Virginia Convention not only showed it in advance of the legislative bodies of the other Colonies on the question of independence, but was enlightened, discreet and wise in a marked degree, fully worthy of a body of legislators of the largest experience.

Meanwhile, in the Pennsylvania State House, at Philadelphia, was convened one of the most remarkable bodies that has ever come together, with a still more remarkable mission—to deliberate on, and promote the best interests of a Continent, and to develop (though its members did not realize this till long months after their first assembling) a nation out of thirteen Colonies—the giant patriots of the Colonies—the leaders in the stirring events of the stirring times—the representative men of the patriot thousands who

were resolved to die freemen rather than live slaves. It takes times like those of 1775-'83 to bring to light the strength of the strong and the weakness of the weak—and these times had demonstrated that but an insignificant number of the patriot Congress were of the latter sort; almost the entire body was of the bravest, best and strongest of patriot stuff.

In this august assembly, on the 7th of June, 1776, arose Richard Henry Lee, a Representative from Virginia, and, acting under the Resolution already cited, offered "Certain Resolutions." Early in the year, indications had begun to appear of a growing sentiment among the people in favor of independence, and several of the provincial assemblies had considered, and more or less distinctly endorsed, this public feeling. But now that the matter was brought forward in the Congress in a practical shape, there was a pause of doubt, almost of fear—members were startled, and some of them not yet ready to ratify the proposed bold, decided, irrevocable step. The Journal of the Congress does not even give the names of the mover and seconder of the Resolutions, as it was judged best to suppress the names, to protect the brave patriots from the special vengeance of the British authorities, should the exigencies of the war place them in their enemies' power. The Journal of date of June 7th tells us:

"Certain Resolutions [*Resolved*, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the *British* Crown, and that all political connection between them

and the State of *Great Britain* is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.

“That it is expedient forthwith to take the most effectual measures for forming Foreign alliances.

“That a plan of Confederation be prepared and transmitted to the respective Colonies for their consideration and approbation,] being moved and seconded,

“*Resolved*, That the consideration of them be deferred till to-morrow morning; and that the Members be enjoined to attend punctually at ten o'clock, in order to take the same into consideration.”

Then the record of the following day runs:

“*Resolved*, That the Resolutions respecting Independency be referred to a Committee of the whole Congress.

“The Congress then resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole; and, after some time, the President resumed the chair, and Mr. *Harrison* reported, that the Committee have taken into consideration the matter to them referred, but not having come to any resolution thereon, directed him to move for leave to sit again on *Monday*.

“*Resolved*, That this Congress will, on *Monday* next, at ten o'clock, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to take into their further consideration the Resolutions referred to them.”

On *Monday*, we are told: “

“Agreeable to order, the Congress resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole, to take into their further consideration the Resolutions to them referred; and after some time spent thereon, the President resumed the chair, and Mr. *Harrison* reported, that the Committee have had under consideration the matters referred to them, and have come to a Resolution thereon, which they directed him to report.

“The Resolution agreed to in Committee of the Whole being read,

“*Resolved*, That the consideration of the first Resolution be postponed to *Monday*, the 1st day of *July* next; and, in the mean while, that no time be lost, in case the Congress agree thereto, that a Committee be appointed to prepare a Declaration to the effect of the said first Resolution, which is in these words: ‘That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from

all allegiance to the *British Crown*; and that all political connection between them and the State of *Great Britain* is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.’

“*Resolved*, That the Committee be discharged.”

The next day, June 11th, it was

“*Resolved*, That the Committee for preparing the Declaration consist of five.

“Members chosen: Mr. *Jefferson*, Mr. *J. Adams*, Mr. *Franklin*, Mr. *Sherman*, and Mr. *R. R. Livingston*.”

And on the same day, it is evident that the majority of the Congress were not in doubt as to the adoption of the Resolutions and Declaration when they should come up at the commencement of the following month, for the record advises us that, immediately after the selection of the committee, it was

“*Resolved*, That a Committee be appointed to prepare and digest the form of a Confederation to be entered into between these Colonies.

“That a Committee be appointed to prepare a plan of Treaties to be proposed to Foreign Powers.”

And now, while we await the report of the Committee on the Declaration, and the resumption of the consideration of the great question by the Congress, let us briefly survey the country, and ascertain the attitude of the several Colonies upon the all-important question of independence.

We already know the position of Virginia. On the 10th of the preceding April, the Assembly of Massachusetts had requested the people, at the then approaching election of representatives, to indicate their wish upon the question of independence, and the people of Boston on the 23d, in town-meeting assembled, had in response instructed their representatives to have their delegates in the Congress “advised that, in case the Congress should think it necessary, for the safety of the united Colonies, to declare them independent of Great Britain, the inhabitants of this Colony, with their lives and the remnants of their fortunes, will most cheerfully support them in that measure.” North Carolina, by a vote of a Convention held on the 22d of April, had instructed the representatives from that Colony “to concur with those from the other Colonies in declaring independence.” During the same month the Rhode Island Assembly had given the Rhode Island representatives the same instructions. On the day following the offering of Mr. Lee’s Resolutions in the Con-

gress, the New York delegates asked the Provincial Congress of that Colony for instructions, but that body declined to take the responsibility of giving instructions, and simply appealed to the people to indicate their will. The Assembly of Connecticut, on the 14th of June, and that of New Hampshire, on the 15th, instructed the delegates from their respective Colonies to concur in such Resolutions, while New Jersey told hers to act according to their best judgment. The Assembly of Pennsylvania had some time before instructed the representatives from that Colony to oppose any action favorable to independence; in June, the Assembly rescinded these instructions and left the representatives to their own discretion. The Maryland Convention also had in December, 1775, positively forbidden the representatives of that Colony to vote for independence, and in June, 1776, yielding to the solicitations and arguments of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, and his patriotic colleagues, it reversed its adverse instructions, and

“Resolved, That the instructions given to their Deputies in *December* last be recalled, and the restrictions therein contained removed; and that the Deputies of said Colony, or any three or more of them, be authorized and empowered to concur with the other United Colonies, or a majority of them, in declaring the United Colonies free and independent States, in forming such further compact and confederation between them, in making foreign alliances, and in adopting such other measures as shall be adjudged necessary for securing the liberties of *America*; and that said Colony will hold itself bound by the resolutions of a majority of the United Colonies in the premises, provided the sole and exclusive right of regulating the internal government and police of that Colony be reserved to the people thereof.”

Delaware, Georgia, and South Carolina refused to take action upon the subject—thus leaving the respective delegations free to the exercise of their individual judgment.

As the 1st of July approached, the friends of independence naturally became intensely anxious concerning the probable vote of the Congress. It was known that a decided majority of the delegates individually, and a majority of the Colonial Delegation were pronounced in favor of independence; but it was of the last importance that the vote of the Colonies should be unanimous, and this was not at all certain. Virginia, Massachusetts, North

Carolina, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Maryland, were pledged; the rest unpledged.

At last the momentous day arrived. The Congress met, and proceeded with routine business in a quiet, spiritless manner—the one great question engrossed the minds and hearts of the true patriots who had come with brave hearts to take the step which could not be recalled, and which would place its advocates beyond the pale of possible pardon from the British government, in the possible event of the resubjugation of the Colonies.

At last,

“The Order of the Day being read,

“Resolved, That this Congress will resolve itself into Committee of the Whole, to take into consideration the Resolution respecting Independence.

“That the Declaration be referred to said Committee.

“The Congress resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole. After some time, the President resumed the chair, and Mr. *Harrison* reported, that the Committee had come to a Resolution, which they desired him to report, and to move for leave to sit again.

“The Resolution agreed to by the Committee of the Whole being read, the determination thereof was, at the request of a Colony, postponed till to-morrow.

“Resolved, That this Congress will to-morrow resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to take into consideration the Declaration respecting Independence.”

The next day,

“The Congress resumed the consideration of the Resolution reported from the Committee of the Whole, which was agreed to, as follows:

“Resolved, That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the *British* Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of *Great Britain* is, and ought to be, totally dissolved.

“Agreeable to the Order of the Day, the Congress resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole; and after some time, the President resumed the chair, and Mr. *Harrison* reported, that the Committee have had under consideration the Declaration to them referred; but not having had time to go through the same, desired him to move for leave to sit again.

“Resolved, That this Congress will, to-morrow, again resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to take into their further consideration the Declaration respecting Independence.”

When on the 2d, the vote upon the Resolution was had in the Committee of the Whole, the New York delegation was excused from voting,¹ that of Delaware was divided² and of the Pennsylvania representatives, seven being present, four voted no, and three aye.³ But when the final vote

¹When the question was put, the New York representatives explained that owing to the peculiar course of the New York Congress, in refusing to instruct or advise them in the premises, they did not feel themselves authorized to vote either in the affirmative or the negative—they were, therefore, excused from voting. On the 9th of July, however, the New York Convention adopted the following:

“Resolved, unanimously, That the reasons assigned by the Continental Congress for declaring the United Colonies free and independent States, are cogent and conclusive; and that while we lament the cruel necessity which has rendered that measure unavoidable, we approve the same, and will, at the risk of our lives and fortunes, join with the other Colonies in supporting it.

“Resolved, That a copy of the said Declaration, and the foregoing Resolution, be sent to the Chairman of the Committee of the County of *Westchester*, with orders to publish the same with beat of drum at this place on *Thursday* next, and to give directions that it be published with all convenient speed in the several Districts within the said County, and that copies thereof be forthwith transmitted to the other County Committees within the State of *New York*, with orders to cause the same to be published in the several Districts of their respective Counties.

“Resolved unanimously, That the Delegates of this State in the Continental Congress be, and they hereby are, authorized to concert and adopt all such measures as they may deem conducive to the happiness and welfare of the *United States of America*.

“Extract from the Minutes:

“ROBERT BENSON, *Secretary*.”

Thus the Declaration became the “Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America.”

²The delegation of Delaware consisted of three, Caesar Rodney, Thomas McKean, and George Read—of these the two former approved of the immediate passage of a resolution of independence, while Read opposed present action; Rodney was absent, and the other two voting on opposite sides, the vote of the Colony was void; but when the final vote was had all three were at their posts, and Delaware's vote was recorded in the affirmative.

³As stated, but seven of the nine Pennsylvania members were present, and four voted in the negative—thus in the preliminary vote Pennsylvania was entered against independence. But fortunately a new delegation displaced the opponents of the Resolution in time to place Pennsylvania on the patriotic side in the final vote.

was taken by the Congress, Delaware and Pennsylvania were recorded on the patriotic side, the New York vote alone being wanting to make the adoption of the Resolution unanimous.

The journal of July 3d, tells us:

“Agreeable to the Order of the Day, the Congress resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole, to take into their further consideration the Declaration; and, after some time, the President resumed the chair, and Mr. *Harrison* reported that the Committee, not having yet gone through it, desired leave to sit again.

“Resolved, That this Congress will, to-morrow, again resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to take into their further consideration the Declaration of Independence.”

And now we come to the great Birthday of the Republic, July 4th, when the Declaration having been fully canvassed and amended in Committee of the Whole, was finally ratified by the Congress, signed by its President, John Hancock alone, according to some authorities, while others assert that it was signed by all the members present with the solitary exception of John Dickinson, of Pennsylvania, and published to the world. I annex the Declaration as reported by the Committee and as adopted by the Congress, in parallel columns, believing that many readers of the *MONTHLY* will like to compare the two.

The adoption of the Resolution was preceded by a long and intensely warm discussion in the Committee of the Whole, some of the representatives declaring themselves favorable to independence, but doubtful of the full time having arrived for so advanced and pronounced a step. It is a remarkable fact that of the many speeches *pro* and *con*, but one is preserved entire, and that was published by its author, John Dickinson, some time after, in the vain hope of relieving himself of the odium he had gained by his course. When it is recollected that the public was by no means unanimous in favor of the irrevocable severance of the olden ties with Great Britain, that there was a strong possibility that the Americans might be eventually overpowered, and that every representative who voted for the overt act of high treason was, so to speak, placing the halter about his own neck and insuring his own hanging, should the British Government triumph—when all this is recollected, we cannot wonder that in the Congress there were some who were reluctant thus to place themselves beyond the pale of safety.



INDEPENDENCE HALL, IN 1875.

The Resolution having been finally adopted, and allegiance to the British Government having been thrown off, it only remained for the Congress to consider the form of declaring the great fact to the world.

The Declaration of Independence had been drafted by Thomas Jefferson, and revised, corrected, and amended first by John Adams, and subsequently by the Committee, and had been submitted in the form and words (quoted in the first column of pages 499-504), on the 1st of July. On the 2d, after the Resolution had passed, the Declaration was taken up in Committee of the Whole, and closely scrutinized and criticised, each paragraph, indeed each word, well weighed, and amended as shown by a comparison of the two columns of the Declaration as given on pages 499-504. It is certainly open to question whether some of the amendments were improvements, while the wisdom of a number of them will be evident to the most cursory reader.¹ When the process of revising and amending had been completed and the Committee of the Whole reported to the Congress, it was adopted by a unanimous vote of the Colonies or States. Whether the original Declaration was signed by the President only or by all the members of the Congress present, except John Dickinson, is a question I cannot venture to decide—but the more probable statement of the matter appears to be that of Thomas Jefferson, that John Hancock signed it at the time, and that the following morning, as each member arrived, the cor-

¹ Most of the amendments were evidently designed to condense the paper, and in many cases these condensations undoubtedly strengthen the paragraphs, while in some the effect is not so good. The most important omission was of a paragraph strongly condemnatory of the slave trade; it is instructive to read the paragraph as it came from Jefferson's pen. Doubtless, many of his avowed followers in late years never knew how bitterly hostile the great Declarer was not only to the slave trade, but to slavery *per se*; I believe there is not, in all his speeches and other productions that have been preserved, a solitary sentence or phrase that can be cited in eulogy or defence of, or even apology for, slavery. It is said that the slave trade paragraph was stricken out to satisfy certain representatives of Georgia and the Carolinas, but Dr. Lossing controverts this, and seeks to show that it was erased because the charges therein were not susceptible of proof. Possibly, there was some weight in the consideration that some of the nations of the world were at that time directly interested in the evil traffic, and policy dictated the avoidance of any expressions calculated to alienate or antagonize a single nation.

rected paper was shown to him and, without any formal order of the Congress, each member affixed his name to it, in token of his entire endorsement of its contents and self-consecration to its maintenance. At any rate, the precious document was ordered to be engrossed upon a suitable parchment with a view to its being signed by all the delegates, and on the 2d of August it was signed by every member of the Congress—Dickinson having been retired in the interim. Among the signers were several who had not been members at the time of its adoption,² and it is worthy of note that George Read, Robert Morris, and others who had opposed present action on the question of independence, when the step had been taken joined with their colleagues in signing the Declaration, and thenceforward were among the boldest, most determined, and most useful supporters and champions of the new-born Nation.

The immediate effects of the passage of the Resolution and Declaration were to elevate the tone and spirit of the entire Congress, and to inspire the people of all the States with renewed hopes, courage, and determination. Hitherto, there had been wanting a something that all felt the lack of—but few could define what it was—it now became evident that it was just this—a distinctive issue to be determined, a National Independence to be achieved and maintained. The war, from the moment that the Declaration was published, assumed grander proportions—no longer a War of Rebellion, it was now a War of Independence—no longer a War between rebellious subjects and an angry Government, it was now a War between a vigorous young Republic and a vast Nation still great, though in a state of temporary blindness or stupidity. Before the adoption of the Resolution and Declaration, even the most splendid victory upon the part of the Americans would leave the Colonies still subject to future injustice and oppression from the British Government—but Independence declared, victory meant the achievement of Nationality, with the possibility of a glorious future. And this fact was well understood by a large proportion of the more intelligent Americans.

² Matthew Thornton did not become a member of the Congress until November (I believe), 1776; but he was so anxious to enter his name upon the immortal roll, that the Congress accorded him the privilege.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

On the 1st of July, pursuant to agreement, Mr. Lee's motion was brought up in the committee of the whole House, Benjamin Harrison, of Virginia (father of the late President Harrison), in the chair. The draft of a Declaration of Independence was reported at the same time, and for three consecutive days it was debated by paragraphs seriatim. Many alterations, omissions, and amendments were made. The following is a copy of that original draft, before any amendments were made in Committee of the Whole:

As Reported by the Committee.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate, that governments, long established, should not be changed for light and transient causes. And, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, begun at a distinguished period, and pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colo-

"Agreeably to the order of the day, the Congress resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole, to take into their further consideration the Declaration; and, after some time, the President resumed the chair, and Mr. Harrison reported that the Committee have agreed to a Declaration, which they desired him to report." The Declaration being read, was agreed to, as follows:

As Adopted by the Congress.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which con-

As Reported by the Committee.

nies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to expunge their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of unremitting injuries and usurpations; among which appears no solitary fact to contradict the uniform tenor of the rest; but all have, in direct object, the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world; for the truth of which we pledge a faith yet unshaken by falsehood.

He has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has neglected utterly to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless these people would relinquish the right of representation in the Legislature; a right inestimable to them, and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the repository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved representative houses repeatedly and continually, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused, for a long time after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected, whereby the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to the people at large for their exercise, the state remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without and convulsions within.

He has endeavored to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither; and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

He has suffered the administration of justice totally to cease in some of these states, refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

He has made our judges dependent on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices and the amount and payment of their salaries.

As Adopted by the Congress.

strains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

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He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the repository of their public records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

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He has endeavored to prevent the population of these states; for that purpose obstructing the laws for the naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands.

He has obstructed the administration of justice, by refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers.

He has made judges dependent on his will alone for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

As Reported by the Committee.

He has erected a multitude of new offices by a self-assumed power, and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies and ships of war, without the consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the military independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitutions, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;

For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states;

For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;

For imposing taxes on us without our consent;

For depriving us of the benefits of trial by jury;

For transporting us beyond the seas to be tried for pretended offenses;

For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighboring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these states;

For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our governments;

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated government here, withdrawing his governors, and declaring us out of his allegiance and protection, and waging war against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burned our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy unworthy the head of a civilized nation.

He has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants

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He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers, to harass our people and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, standing armies, without the consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the military independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitutions, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their acts of pretended legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;

For protecting them, by a mock trial, from punishment for any murders which they should commit on the inhabitants of these states;

For cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;

For imposing taxes on us without our consent;

For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury;

For transporting us beyond seas, to be tried for pretended offenses;

For abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighboring province, establishing therein an arbitrary government, and enlarging its boundaries, so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these colonies;

For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering, fundamentally, the forms of our governments;

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated government here, by declaring us out of his protection, and waging war against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burned our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries, to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow-citizens, taken

As Reported by the Committee.

of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions of existence; he has excited treasonable insurrections of our fellow-citizens with the allurements of forfeiture and confiscation of our property.

He has constrained others, taken captive on the high seas, to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people, who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the CHRISTIAN King of Great Britain. Determined to keep open a market where MEN should be bought and sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce. And that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished dye, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them by murdering the people upon whom he obtruded them: thus paying off former crimes committed against the LIBERTIES of one people with crimes which he urges them to commit against the LIVES of another.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms: our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a people who mean to be free. Future ages will scarce believe that the hardness of one man adventured, within the short compass of twelve years only, to build a foundation so broad and undisguised, for tyranny over a people fostered and fixed in principles of freedom.

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them, from time to time, of attempts by their Legislature to extend a jurisdiction over these our states. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here, no one of which

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captive on the high seas, to bear arms against their country, to become the executioners of their friends and brethren, or to fall themselves by their hands.

He has excited domestic insurrection among us, and has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, and conditions.

In every stage of these oppressions we have petitioned for redress in the most humble terms: our repeated petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have we been wanting in our attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them, from time to time, of attempts by their Legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have

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could warrant so strange a pretension; that these were effected at the expense of our own blood and treasure, unassisted by the wealth or the strength of Great Britain; that in constituting, indeed, our several forms of government, we had adopted one common king, thereby laying a foundation for perpetual league and amity with them; but that submission to their Parliament was no part of our Constitution, nor ever in idea, if history may be credited; and we appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, as well as to the ties of our common kindred, to disavow these usurpations, which were likely to interrupt our connection and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity; and when occasions have been given them, by the regular course of their laws, of removing from their councils the disturbers of our harmony, they have, by their free election, re-established them in power. At this very time, too, they are permitting their chief magistrate to send over, not only soldiers of our common blood, but [Scotch and] foreign mercenaries to invade and destroy us. These facts have given the last stab to agonizing affection, and manly spirit bids us to renounce forever these unfeeling brethren. We must endeavor to forget our former love for them; we must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war; in peace, friends.

We might have been a free and great people together; but a communication of grandeur and of freedom, it seems, is below their dignity. Be it so, since they will have it. The road to happiness and to glory is open to us too; we will climb it apart from them, and acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our eternal separation.

We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these states, reject and renounce all allegiance and subjection to the kings of Great Britain, and all others who may hereafter claim by, through, or under them; we utterly dissolve all political connection which may heretofore have subsisted between us and the Parliament or people of Great Britain; and, finally, we do assert the colonies to

As Adopted by the Congress.

appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred, to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They, too, have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity which denounces our separation, and hold them as we hold the rest of mankind—enemies in war—in peace, friends.

We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in general Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved; and that, as free and independent

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be free and independent states ; and that, as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

I have already spoken of the immediate effect of the Declaration of Independence upon the Congress and the people of the country. Its effect upon the various nations of Christendom was equally auspicious ; it gave the Americans a new standing that was appreciated by all—the unfriendly and the friendly alike felt this. Even the British authorities could not conceal the respect which the bold act inspired. The calm dignity of the Congress—the evidently careful consideration the great document itself showed it had received—even the perceptible reluctance of many of the representatives to take the final steps—all these were understood, and operated most favorably in the several foreign lands. Not less potent was the moderation of the people in the expression of the heartfelt joy that they could not but feel, in its influence upon the peoples and governments of the world.

The Declaration was officially proclaimed on the 5th of July, and, with the utmost celerity then possible, it was published to all parts of the country. In a General Order of the 9th of July, General Washington said : “ The General hopes this important event will serve as an incentive to every officer and soldier to act with fidelity and courage, as knowing that now the peace and safety of his country depend—under God—solely on the success of our arms ; and that he is now in the service of a State possessed of sufficient power to reward his merit, and advance him to the highest honours of a free Country.” At six o'clock the same evening, each brigade was assembled, and the Declaration was read. General Washington says, in his letter to the Congress, after stating what he had done in the premises, “ The expressions and behaviour of the officers and men testify their warmest approbation.”

The Legislative bodies and Conventions of the several *States* all promptly responded in the most patriotic terms—those that had hesitated and appeared to doubt, were as emphatic in their endorse-

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states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

ment of the step taken, and as warm in their resolves to maintain the Freedom and Independence of the United States of America, as were those that had urged the taking of the step. Nor were their representatives in their State Assemblies more earnest than the people in approving the Declaration, and in the expression of a firm purpose to consecrate life and fortune to the achieving and maintaining of the Freedom and Independence of the Republic.

And now, looking back, ninety-nine years into the history of those days of our country's struggle for the right to a place among the Nations of the Earth—we cannot but thank God that our forefathers in the Congress had the moral courage to decree, and that our forefathers throughout the land had the moral and physical courage to achieve, the Independence of our now large and prosperous Nation. May God give their descendants the will and the courage and the intelligence to maintain that Independence absolute of *all* foreign influence, unto the end of time !

The steady expansion, and substantial development of the country in the ninety-nine years past has fully demonstrated the wisdom of the severance of the Colonial ties and the founding of the Republic. I have not space here to note the development and progress of the nation in wealth, in commerce, etc. ; but the following brief table shows the expansion of our territorial limits :

	Square Miles.
Original area of the Thirteen States	820,680
Louisiana, purchased in 1803, cost \$15,000,000	899,579
Florida, purchased in 1809, cost \$3,000,000	66,900
Territory acquired by the Oregon Treaty, in 1842 and 1846	308,052
Texas, 1846, cost by payment of Texas debt, \$7,500,000	318,000
California and New Mexico, 1847, cost expense of war, \$15,000,000	522,955
Arizona, purchased in 1854, cost \$10,000,000	30,000
Alaska, purchased in 1867, cost \$7,200,000	500,000
Aggregate area in 1875	3,466,166