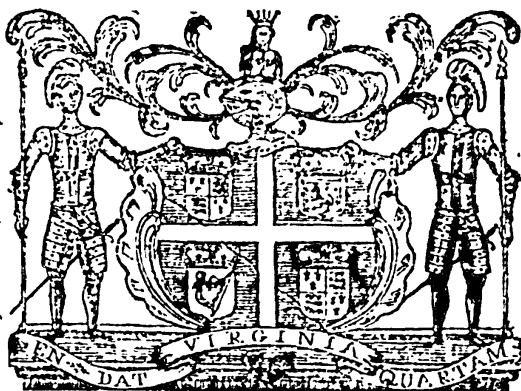


## VIRGINIA



## GAZETTE.

ALWAYS FOR LIBERTY.

AND THE PUBLICK GOOD.

ALEXANDER PURDIE, PRINTER.

IN CONGRESS, March 14, 1776. RESOLVED, that it be recommended to the several Assemblies, Conventions, and Councils or Committees of Safety of the United Colonies, immediately to cause all persons to be disarmed within their respective colonies who are notoriously disaffected to the cause of America, or who have not associated, and refuse to associate, to defend, by arms, these United Colonies against the hostile attempts of the British fleets and armies, and to apply the arms taken from such persons in each respective colony, in the first place, to the arming the continental troops raised in said colony; in the next, to the arming such troops as are raised by the colony for its own defence, and the residue to be applied to the arming the associators: That the arms, when taken, be appraised by indifferent persons, and such as are applied to the arming continental troops to be paid by the Congress; and the residue by the respective Assemblies, Conventions, or Councils or Committees of Safety.

Extract from the minutes.

CHARLES THOMSON, secretary.

To Mr. ALEXANDER PURDIE.

S I R,

THE independence of the colonies daily becomes more and more a topick of very anxious disquisition. The subject appears, in general, to lie under the difficulties of being misrepresented by our enemies, and misunderstood by some amongst ourselves. Without flattering myself that the following remarks will remove either, I shall be obliged by your inserting them.

It may with certainty be affirmed, that among the ends which the colonies, from South Carolina to New York inclusively, had in view, when they began the present contest, *independence* held no place; and that the New England governments, if they had it in view at all, considered it as a remote and contingent object. The terrors of immediate oppression engrossed our minds too fully to leave much room for ambition. Admitting this fact with regard to New England (of which, however, I know no proof) it was not the effect of a seditious character in the people, but of a consciousness that by their union and populousness they approached more nearly, than any single colony, to that period of power when independence would have become a natural event, and dependence a political absurdity. That the colonies were proceeding pretty rapidly to such a period of power seems to be a point acknowledged, by all dispassionate reasoners on both sides. The king's ministers, indeed, have induced him to believe, and to tell his parliament, that our professions of attachment and loyalty were meant only to amuse, while we were meditating a general revolt. The heart of an American tells him that the charge is erroneous, and the single external evidence of our having begun the war with so scanty a provision for its support will prove it so to all the unpreju-

iced world. In truth, these professions were founded in such deep-rooted attachments, that *even now*, when our lives and properties are the sport and prey of every tender's motley crew, that can catch them, many of our brethren shudder at the name of independence.

The use of words, without settling their determinate meanings, often occasions disputes with men whose sentiments in reality exactly correspond. This appears to be particularly the case in the present question.

In many, the *name of independence* is accompanied with the terrifying ideas of an *everlasting* separation from Great Britain, of the destruction of the *finest constitution in the world* (as the phrase is) and of the substitution of republican governments in the colonies. Then follow a dreadful train of domestick convulsions in each republick, of jealousies, dissensions, wars, and all their attendant miseries, in the neighbouring republicks; in which form of government, they seem to imagine that nature breeds All monstrous, all prodigious things, Abominable, unutterable, and worse Than fables yet have feign'd, or fear conceiv'd,

*Gorgons and hydras, and chimeras dire!*

Under the pressure of real calamities, which, if actually felt, cannot be exceeded, do men find comfort in the contemplation of those that are imaginary; and which, were we sure they would befall us, might claim our preference, by being remote?

Others, with the ideas of the former, connect some dark mysterious scheme for *tricking* us into independence, to which most of our *continental* measures, however speciously introduced, are supposed to be ultimately subservient. These men, my friends, are enemies to harmony. The motions of their spirits are dark and dull; and whatever be their professions, or condition, let them not be trusted,

Of a much more numerous and respectable class are those who think that our opposition is founded in a virtuous determination to defend our liberty against a tyranny instant and impending; that no sacrifice, no suffering, should divert us from the necessary means of effecting so important a purpose; that if, in the course of events, a declaration of independence should become essential to our safety, we should instantly adopt the measure, considering it not as a primary object of the war, but, in a secondary view, as a means of conducting it successfully. Now I verily believe this is all that nine tenths of the Congress mean, notwithstanding that the presses of *Philadelphia* have lately brought forth *Common Sense*, *Montgomery's* *Christ*, and other *frightful forms*, to the no small terror of many of his majesty's liege subjects.

Without attempting to prove that these fears are much of the same puerile cast as those with which the armour of an heroic and affectionate parent impressed the son of Hector, I shall endeavour to show, that

the propriety of speedily declaring a *temporary* independence, at least, may be derived from a circumstance more universally interesting and solid than from the *machinations* of the Congress.

It is confessed, on all hands, that we cannot continue the war, with very prosperous hopes, unless we can be supplied from foreign countries with warlike stores, with many necessaries, of which the restrictions on British trade deprive us, and unless some market be furnished for the productions of our labour. Accordingly men expect with impatience the freedom of exportation, when this trade may be pushed to the utmost extent. But, alas! in the small essays we have already made, we have found foreigners reserved and cold. They will tell us, "In justice to your veracity, we must believe that you will be cordially reconciled to Great Britain, so soon as certain acts of parliament shall be repealed; now, as she cannot carry on a vigorous war without you, she must either sit a passive spectator of our triumph, and of her own ruin, or repeal the acts, and, in conjunction with you, take vengeance for our friendly intentions, before we have received any advantage from them. We cannot, therefore, hazard so much with so precarious a prospect of an equivalent. We insist not that you should declare an everlasting separation from Britain, and thereby cut off all prospect of an honourable renewal of old friendships, but that you will, with the freedom, solemnity, and good faith of sovereign states, enter into a *treaty of commerce* for a certain time, and into a *treaty of neutrality*, at least, should our efforts to serve you produce a rupture with that power." A commerce thus established would be beneficial, and honourable. Such manly and vigorous conduct would render us respectable to foreigners, and formidable to our enemies. But if we can only venture to *steal* a foreign trade, I can see nothing but disappointment, disgrace, and contempt, from all quarters. In the one case, the malice of our enemies will be awed into moderation, by the increase of our power; in the other, by its decline, they may enjoy, uncontrolled by any other passion, the rich prospect of a revenge insatiable. Here, however, *independence* steps in to terrify us. For my part, I see no terror in it; but in an unconditional dependence, which seems at present our only alternative, I see a thousand. It wears, indeed, the rugged aspect of virtue; but, like the *Mask of Pallas*, it petrifies alone the timid and the base: It is the invincible guardian of the brave and virtuous.

I fancy that many qualms on this subject would be overcome, if men would more thoroughly consider how very far we have already proceeded in effecting independence; and that many, who have engaged in this business, are irrevocably dedicated to the cord, whatever vain hopes they may entertain of drawing out a few

