

1 INTRODUCTION.

2 PERHAPS the sentiments contained in the following pages, are not yet sufficiently fashionable to
3 procure them general favour; a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong, gives it a superficial
4 appearance of being right, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defence of custom. But the
5 tumult soon subsides.—Time makes more converts than reason.
6 As a long and violent abuse of power is generally the means of calling the right of it in question (and in
7 matters too which might never have been thought of, had not the sufferers been aggravated into the
8 enquiry) and as the King of England hath undertaken, in his own right, to support the Parliament in
9 what he calls theirs; and as the good people of this country are grievously oppressed by the
10 Combination, they have an undoubted privilege to enquire into the pretensions of both, and equally to
11 reject the Usurpation of either.

12 In the following sheets, the author hath studiously avoided every thing which is personal among
13 ourselves. Compliments as well as censure to individuals make no part thereof. The wise, and the
14 worthy, need not the triumph of a pamphlet; and those whose sentiments are injudicious, or
15 unfriendly, will cease of themselves, unless too much pains are bestowed upon their conversion.
16 The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances hath, and
17 will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all lovers of mankind
18 are affected, and in the event of which their affections are interested. The laying a country desolate
19 with fire and sword, declaring war against the natural rights of all mankind, and extirpating the
20 defenders thereof from the face of the earth, is the concern of every man to whom nature hath given
21 the power of feeling; of which class, regardless of party censure, is the

22 AUTHOR.

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1 COMMON SENSE.

2 Of the Origin and Design of Government in general, with concise Remarks on the English Constitution.

3 SOME writers have so confounded society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between
4 them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants,
5 and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively, by uniting our
6 affections; the latter negatively, by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other
7 creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher.

8 Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its
9 worst state an intolerable one: For when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries by a
10 government, which we might expect in a country without government, our calamity is heightened by
11 reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost
12 innocence; the palaces of Kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of Paradise: For were the impulses
13 of conscience clear, uniform and irresistably obeyed, man would need no other lawgiver; but that not
14 being the case, he finds it necessary to surrender up a part of his property, to furnish means for the
15 protection of the rest; and this he is induced to do, by the same prudence which in every other case
16 advises him, out of two evils to choose the least. Wherefore, security being the whole design and end of
17 government, it unanswerably follows, that whatever form thereof appears most likely to ensure it to
18 us, with the least expence and greatest benefit, is preferable to all others.

19 In order to give a clear and just idea of the design and end of government, let us suppose a small
20 number of persons settled in some sequestered part of the earth, unconnected with the rest; they will
21 then represent the first peopling of any country, or of the world. In this state of natural liberty, society
22 will be their first thought. A thousand motives will excite them thereto; the strength of one man is so
23 unequal to his wants, and his mind so unfitted for perpetual solitude, that he is soon obliged to seek
24 assistance and relief of another, who in his turn requires the same. Four or five united would be able to
25 raise a tolerable dwelling in the midst of a wilderness, but one man might labour out the common

1 period of life without accomplishing any thing; when he had felled his timber he could not remove it, nor
2 erect it after it was removed; hunger in the mean time would urge him from his work, and every
3 different want call him a different way. Disease, nay even misfortune, would be death; for though
4 neither might be mortal, yet either would disable him from living, and reduce him to a state in which he
5 might rather be said to perish, than to die.

6 Thus necessity, like a gravitating power, would soon form our newly arrived emigrants into society, the
7 reciprocal blessings of which would supersede, and render the obligations of law and government
8 unnecessary, while they remained perfectly just to each other: But as nothing but heaven is
9 impregnable to vice, it will unavoidably happen, that in proportion as they surmount the first
10 difficulties of emigration, which bound them together in a common cause, they will begin to relax in
11 their duty and attachment to each other: And this remissness will point out the necessity of
12 establishing some form of government, to supply the defect of moral virtue.

13 Some convenient tree will afford them a state-house, under the branches of which the whole colony
14 may assemble to deliberate on public matters. It is more than probable that their first laws will have
15 the title only of Regulations, and be enforced by no other penalty than public dis-esteem. In this first
16 Parliament every man by natural right will have a seat.

17 But as the colony encreases, the public concerns will encrease likewise, and the distance at which the
18 members may be separated, will render it too inconvenient for all of them to meet on every occasion as
19 at first, when their number was small, their habitations near, and the public concerns few and trifling.

20 This will point out the convenience of their consenting to leave the legislative part to be managed by
21 a select number chosen from the whole body, who are supposed to have the same concerns at stake
22 which those have who appointed them, and who will act in the same manner as the whole body would
23 act, were they present. If the colony continue encreasing, it will become necessary to augment the
24 number of the representatives, and that the interest of every part of the colony may be attended to, it
25 will be found best to divide the whole into convenient parts, each part sending its proper number: And

1 that the elected might never form to themselves an interest separate from the electors, prudence will
2 point out the propriety of having elections often; because as the elected might by that means return and
3 mix again with the general body of the electors in a few months, their fidelity to the public will
4 be secured by the prudent reflection of not making a rod for themselves. And as this frequent
5 interchange will establish a common interest with every part of the community, they will mutually and
6 naturally support each other, and on this (not on the unmeaning name of King) depends the strength of
7 government, and the happiness of the governed.

8 Here then is the rise and origin of government; namely a mode rendered necessary by the inability of
9 moral virtue to govern the world; here too is the design and end of government, viz. Freedom and
10 Security. And however our eyes may be dazzled with show, or our ears deceived by sound; however
11 prejudice may warp our wills, or interest darken our understanding, the simple voice of nature and
12 reason will say, 'tis right.

13 I draw my idea of the form of government from a principle in nature which no art can overturn, viz.
14 that the more simple any thing is, the less liable it is to be disordered, and the easier repaired when
15 disordered; and with this maxim in view I offer a few remarks on the so much boasted constitution of
16 England. That it was noble for the dark and slavish times in which it was erected, is granted. When the
17 world was over-run with tyranny, the least remove therefrom was a glorious rescue. But that it is
18 imperfect, subject to convulsions, and incapable of producing what it seems to promise, is easily
19 demonstrated.

20 Absolute governments (though the disgrace of human nature) have this advantage with them, that
21 they are simple; if the people suffer, they know the head from which their suffering springs; know
22 likewise the remedy; and are not bewildered by a variety of causes and cures. But the constitution of
23 England is so exceedingly complex, that the nation may suffer for years together, without being able to
24 discover in which part the fault lies; some will say in one and some in another, and every political
25 physician will advise a different medicine.

1 I know it is difficult to get over local or long-standing prejudices, yet if we will suffer ourselves to
2 examine the component parts of the English constitution, we shall find them to be the base remains of
3 two ancient tyrannies, compounded with some new Republican materials.

4 First.—The remains of Monarchical tyranny, in the person of the King.

5 Secondly.—The remains of Aristocratical tyranny, in the persons of the Peers.

6 Thirdly.—The new Republican materials, in the persons of the Commons, on whose virtue depends the
7 freedom of England.

8 The two first, by being hereditary, are independent of the people; wherefore in
9 a constitutional sense they contribute nothing towards the freedom of the state.

10 To say that the constitution of England is a union of three powers, reciprocally checking each other, is
11 farcical; either the words have no meaning, or they are flat contradictions.

12 To say that the Commons is a check upon the King, presupposes two things:

13 First.—That the King is not to be trusted without being looked after, or, in other words, that a thirst for
14 absolute power is the natural disease of Monarchy.

15 Secondly.—That the Commons, by being appointed for that purpose, are either wiser or more worthy of
16 confidence than the Crown.

17 But as the same constitution which gives the Commons a power to check the King, by with-holding
18 the supplies, gives afterwards the King a power to check the Commons, by empowering him to reject
19 their other bills; it again supposes that the King is wiser than those, whom it has already supposed to
20 be wiser than him. A mere absurdity!

21 There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of Monarchy; it first excludes a man
22 from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgment is
23 required.—The state of a King shuts him from the world, yet the business of a King requires him to
24 know it thoroughly: Wherefore the different parts, by unnaturally opposing and destroying each other,
25 prove the whole character to be absurd and useless.

1 Some writers have explained the English constitution thus; the King, say they, is one; the People
2 another; the Peers are an house in behalf of the King; the Commons in behalf of the People; but this hath
3 all the distinctions of an house divided against itself; and though the expressions be pleasantly
4 arranged, yet when examined they appear idle and ambiguous: And it will always happen, that the
5 nicest construction that words are capable of, when applied to the description of something which
6 either cannot exist, or is too incomprehensible to be within the compass of description, will be words
7 of sound only, and though they may amuse the ear, they cannot inform the mind: For this explanation
8 includes a previous question, viz. How came the King by a power which the People are afraid to trust,
9 and always obliged to check? Such a power could not be the gift of a wise people, neither can any
10 power which needs checking be from God: Yet the provision which the constitution
11 makes, supposes such a power to exist.

12 But the provision is unequal to the task; the means either cannot or will not accomplish the end, and
13 the whole affair is a *felo de se*: For as the greater weight will always carry up the less, and as all the
14 wheels of a machine are put in motion by one, it only remains to know which power in the constitution
15 has the most weight, for that will govern: And though the others, or a part of them, may clog, or, as the
16 phrase is, check the rapidity of its motion, yet so long as they cannot stop it, their endeavours will be
17 ineffectual: The first moving power will at last have its way, and what it wants in speed is supplied by
18 time.

19 That the crown is this overbearing part in the English constitution needs not be mentioned, and that it
20 derives its whole consequence merely from being the giver of places and pensions is self-evident;
21 wherefore, though we have been wise enough to shut and lock a door against absolute Monarchy, we at
22 the same time have been foolish enough to put the Crown in possession of the key.

23 The prejudice of Englishmen in favour of their own government, by King, Lords and Commons, arises
24 as much or more from national pride than reason. Individuals are undoubtedly safer in England than
25 in some other countries: But the will of the King is as much the law of the land in Britain as in France,

1 with this difference, that instead of proceeding directly from his mouth, it is handed to the people under
2 the more formidable shape of an act of Parliament. For the fate of Charles the first hath only made
3 Kings more subtle—not more just.

4 Wherefore laying aside all national pride and prejudice in favour of modes and forms, the plain truth is,
5 that it is wholly owing to the constitution of the People, and not to the constitution of the Government,
6 that the Crown is not as oppressive in England as in Turkey.

7 An enquiry into the constitutional errors in the English form of government, is at this time highly
8 necessary; for as we are never in a proper condition of doing justice to others, while we continue under
9 the influence of some leading partiality, so neither are we capable of doing it to ourselves while we
10 remain fettered by any obstinate prejudice. And as a man who is attached to a prostitute is unfitted to
11 choose or judge of a wife, so any prepossession in favour of a rotten constitution of government will
12 disable us from discerning a good one.

13 Of Monarchy and hereditary Succession.

14 MANKIND being originally equals in the order of creation, the equality could only be destroyed
15 by some subsequent circumstance. The distinctions of rich and poor may in a great measure be
16 accounted for, and that without having recourse to the harsh ill-sounding names of oppression and
17 avarice. Oppression is often the consequence, but seldom or never the means of riches; and though
18 avarice will preserve a man from being necessitously poor, it generally makes him too timorous to be
19 wealthy.

20 But there is another and greater distinction, for which no truly natural or religious reason can be
21 assigned, and that is, the distinction of Men into Kings and Subjects. Male and female are the
22 distinctions of nature—good and bad the distinctions of Heaven; but how a race of men came into the
23 world so exalted above the rest, and distinguished like some new species, is worth enquiring into, and
24 whether they are the means of happiness or of misery to mankind.

25 In the early ages of the world, according to the scripture chronology, there were no Kings; the

1 consequence of which was, there were no wars; it is the pride of Kings which throws mankind into
2 confusion. Holland, without a King, hath enjoyed more peace for this last century, than any of the
3 Monarchical governments in Europe. Antiquity favours the same remark; for the quiet and rural lives
4 of the first Patriarchs hath a happy something in them, which vanishes away when we come to the
5 history of Jewish Royalty.

6 Government by Kings was first introduced into the world by the Heathens, from whom the children of
7 Israel copied the custom. It was the most prosperous invention the devil ever set on foot for the
8 promotion of idolatry. The Heathens paid divine honours to their deceased Kings, and the Christian
9 world hath improved on the plan, by doing the same to their living ones. How impious is the title
10 of sacred Majesty, applied to a worm, who in the midst of his splendor is crumbling into dust!

11 As the exalting one man so greatly above the rest cannot be justified on the equal rights of nature, so
12 neither can it be defended on the authority of scripture; for the will of the Almighty, as declared by
13 Gideon and the Prophet Samuel, expressly disapproves of government by Kings. All Anti-Monarchical
14 parts of scripture have been very smoothly glossed over in Monarchical governments, but they
15 undoubtedly merit the attention of countries which have their governments yet to form. Render unto
16 Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," is the scripture doctrine of Courts, yet it is no support of a
17 Monarchical government; for the Jews at that time were without a King, and in a state of vassalage to
18 the Romans.

19 Near three thousand years passed away, from the Mosaic account of the creation, till the Jews, under
20 a national delusion, requested a King. Till then, their form of government (except in extraordinary
21 cases where the Almighty interposed) was a kind of Republic, administered by a judge and the elders of
22 the tribes. Kings they had none, and it was held sinful to acknowledge any being under that title but
23 the Lord of Hosts. And when a man seriously reflects on the idolatrous homage which is paid to the
24 persons of Kings, he need not wonder that the Almighty, ever jealous of his honor, should disapprove
25 of a form of government which so impiously invades the prerogative of Heaven.

1 Monarchy is ranked in scripture as one of the sins of the Jews, for which a curse in reserve is
2 denounced against them. The history of that transaction is worth attending to.
3 The children of Israel being oppressed by the Midianites, Gideon marched against them with a small
4 army, and victory through the divine interposition decided in his favour. The Jews, elate with success,
5 and attributing it to the generalship of Gideon, proposed making him a King, saying, "Rule thou over us,
6 thou and thy son, and thy son's son." Here was temptation in its fullest extent; not a Kingdom only, but
7 an hereditary one: But Gideon in the piety of his soul, replied, "I will not rule over you, neither shall
8 my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you." Words need not be more explicit; Gideon doth
9 not decline the honor, but denieth their right to give it; neither doth he compliment them with invented
10 declarations of his thanks, but, in the positive stile of a Prophet, charges them with disaffection to
11 their proper Sovereign, the King of Heaven.
12 About one hundred and thirty years after this, they fell again into the same error. The hankering
13 which the Jews had for the idolatrous customs of the Heathens, is something exceedingly
14 unaccountable; but so it was, that laying hold of the misconduct of Samuel's two sons, who were
15 entrusted with some secular concerns, they came in an abrupt and clamorous manner to
16 Samuel, saying, "Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways, now make us a King to judge
17 us, like all the other nations." And here we cannot but observe that their motives were bad, viz. that
18 they might be like unto other nations, i. e. the Heathens; whereas their true glory laid in being as
19 much unlike them as possible. "But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said give us a King to judge
20 us; and Samuel prayed unto the Lord, and the Lord said unto Samuel, hearken unto the voice of the
21 people in all that they say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I
22 should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done, since the day that I
23 brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other
24 Gods; so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice; howbeit, protest solemnly
25 unto them, and shew them the manner of the King that shall reign over them," i. e. not of any

1 particular King, but the general manner of the Kings of the Earth, whom Israel was so eagerly copying
2 after. And notwithstanding the great distance of time, and difference of manners, the character is still
3 in fashion. "And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people, that asked of him a King. And
4 he said this shall be the manner of the King that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and
5 appoint them for himself, for his chariots and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his
6 chariots." (This description agrees with the present mode of impressing men.) "And he will appoint him
7 captains over thousands and captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his
8 harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your
9 daughters to be confectioneries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers." (This describes the expence and
10 luxury as well as the oppression of Kings.) "And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your
11 olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of
12 your seed, and of your vineyards, and give them to his officers and to his servants." (By which we see
13 that bribery, corruption, and favouritism, are the standing vices of Kings.) "And he will take the tenth
14 of your men servants, and your maid servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put
15 them to his work: And he will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants, and ye shall
16 cry out in that day because of your King which ye shall have chosen, and the Lord will not hear you in
17 that day." (This accounts for the continuation of Monarchy; neither do the characters of a few good
18 Kings, which have lived since, either sanctify the title, or blot out the sinfulness of the origin; the high
19 encomium given of David takes no notice of him officially as a King, but only as a Man after God's own
20 heart.) "Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and they said nay but we will
21 have a King over us, that we may be like all the nations, and that our King may judge us, and go out
22 before us and fight our battles." Samuel continued to reason with them, but to no purpose; he set
23 before them their ingratitude, but all would not avail, and seeing them fully bent on their folly, he cried
24 out, "I will call unto the Lord, and he shall send thunder and rain (which then was a punishment, being
25 in the time of wheat harvest) that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which you

1 have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking you a King. So Samuel called unto the Lord, and the
2 Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the
3 people said unto Samuel, pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have
4 added unto our sins this evil, to ask a King." These portions of scripture are direct and positive. They
5 admit of no equivocal construction. That the Almighty hath here entered his protest against
6 Monarchical government is true, or the scripture is false. And a man hath good reason to believe, that
7 there is as much King-craft as Priest-craft in with-holding the scripture from the public in Popish
8 countries; for Monarchy in every instance is the Popery of Government.
9 To the evil of Monarchy we have added that of Hereditary Succession; and as the first is a degradation
10 and lessening of ourselves, so the second, claimed as a matter of right, is an insult and imposition on
11 posterity. For all men being originally equals, no one by birth could have a right to set up his own
12 family in perpetual preference to all others for ever; and though himself might deserve some decent
13 degree of honors of his contemporaries, yet his descendants might be far too unworthy to inherit them.
14 One of the strongest natural proofs of the folly of hereditary right in Kings is, that nature disapproves
15 it, otherwise she would not so frequently turn it into ridicule, by giving mankind an Ass for a Lion.
16 Secondly, as no man at first could possess any other public honors than were bestowed upon him, so
17 the givers of those honors could have no power to give away the right of posterity; and though they
18 might say "we choose you for our head," they could not, without manifest injustice to their
19 children, say that "your children and your children's children shall reign over ours for ever;"
20 because such an unwise, unjust, unnatural compact might (perhaps) in the next succession, put them
21 under the government of a rogue or a fool. Most wise men, in their private sentiments, have ever
22 treated hereditary right with contempt; yet it was one of those evils, which when once established is
23 not easily removed; many submit from fear, others from superstition, and the more powerful
24 part shares with the King the plunder of the rest.
25 This is supposing the present race of Kings in the world to have had an honorable origin; whereas it is

1 more than probable, that could we take off the dark covering of antiquity, and trace them to their first
2 rise, that we should find the first of them nothing better than the principal Ruffian of some restless
3 Gang, whose savage manners or pre-eminence in subtilty obtained him the title of Chief among
4 Plunderers; and who by increasing in power, and extending his depredations, overawed the quiet and
5 defenceless to purchase their safety by frequent contributions. Yet his electors could have no idea of
6 giving hereditary right to his descendants, because such a perpetual exclusion of themselves was
7 incompatible with the free and unrestrained principles they professed to live by. Wherefore
8 hereditary succession, in the early ages of Monarchy, could not take place as a matter of claim, but
9 as something casual or complimentary; but as few or no records were extant in those days, and
10 traditionary history stuffed with fables, it was very easy, after the lapse of a few generations, to trump
11 up some superstitious tale, conveniently timed, Mahomet-like, to cram hereditary right down the
12 throats of the vulgar. Perhaps the disorders which threatened, or seemed to threaten, on the decease
13 of a leader, and the choice of a new one (for elections among ruffians could not be very orderly)
14 induced many at first to favour hereditary pretensions; by which means it happened, as it hath
15 happened since, that what at first was submitted to as a convenience, was afterwards claimed as a
16 right. England since the conquest hath known some few good Monarchs, but groaned beneath a much
17 larger number of bad ones; yet no man in his senses can say, that their claim under William the
18 Conqueror is a very honorable one. A French Bastard landing with an armed banditti, and establishing
19 himself King of England against the consent of the natives, is in plain terms a very paltry rascally
20 original.—It certainly hath no divinity in it. However it is needless to spend much time in exposing the
21 folly of hereditary right; if there are any so weak as to believe it, let them promiscuously worship the
22 Ass and the Lion and welcome. I shall neither copy their humility, nor disturb their devotion.
23 Yet I should be glad to ask how they suppose Kings came at first? The question admits but of three
24 answers, viz. either by lot, by election, or by usurpation. If the first King was taken by lot, it
25 establishes a precedent for the next, which excludes hereditary succession. Saul was by lot, yet

1 the succession was not hereditary, neither does it appear from the transaction there was any intention
2 it ever should. If the first King of any country was by election, that likewise establishes a precedent for
3 the next; for to say, that the right of all future generations is taken away by the act of the first electors,
4 in their choice not only of a King, but of a family of Kings for ever, hath no parallel in or out of scripture
5 but the doctrine of original sin, which supposes the free-will of all men lost in Adam: And from such
6 comparison, and it will admit of no other, hereditary succession can derive no glory. For as in Adam
7 all sinned, and as in the first electors all men obeyed; as in the one all mankind were subjected to Satan,
8 and in the other to Sovereignty; as our innocence was lost in the first, and our authority in the last; and
9 as both disable us from reassuming some former state and privilege, it unanswerably follows that
10 original sin and hereditary succession are parallels. Dishonorable rank! inglorious connexion! yet the
11 most subtile sophist cannot produce a juster simile.

12 As to usurpation, no man will be so hardy as to defend it; and that William the Conqueror was an
13 usurper is a fact not to be contradicted. The plain truth is, that the antiquity of English Monarchy will
14 not bear looking into.

15 But it is not so much the absurdity as the evil of hereditary succession which concerns mankind. Did it
16 ensure a race of good and wise men, it would have the seal of divine authority; but as it opens a door to
17 the foolish, the wicked, and the improper, it hath in it the nature of oppression. Men who look upon
18 themselves born to reign, and others to obey, soon grow insolent—selected from the rest of mankind,
19 their minds are easily poisoned by importance; and the world they act in differs so materially from the
20 world at large, that they have but little opportunity of knowing its true interests, and when
21 they succeed in the government are frequently the most ignorant and unfit of any throughout the
22 dominions.

23 Another evil which attends hereditary succession is, that the throne is subject to be possessed by a
24 minor at any age; all which time the Regency acting under the cover of a King, have every opportunity
25 and inducement to betray their trust. The same national misfortune happens when a King, worn out

1 with age and infirmity, enters the last stage of human weakness. In both these cases the public becomes
2 a prey to every miscreant, who can tamper successfully with the follies either of age or infancy.
3 The most plausible plea which hath ever been offered in favour of hereditary succession is, that it
4 preserves a nation from civil wars; and were this true, it would be weighty; whereas it is the most
5 barefaced falsity ever imposed upon mankind. The whole history of England disowns the fact. Thirty
6 Kings and two minors have reigned in that distracted kingdom since the conquest, in which time there
7 have been (including the Revolution) no less than eight civil wars and nineteen rebellions. Wherefore,
8 instead of making for peace, it makes against it, and destroys the very foundation it seems to stand on.
9 The contest for Monarchy and Succession between the houses of York and Lancaster laid England in
10 a scene of blood for many years. Twelve pitched battles, besides skirmishes and sieges, were fought
11 between Henry and Edward. Twice was Henry prisoner to Edward, who in his turn was prisoner to
12 Henry. And so uncertain is the fate of war and the temper of a nation, when nothing but personal
13 matters are the ground of a quarrel, that Henry was taken in triumph from a prison to a palace, and
14 Edward obliged to fly from a palace to a foreign land: Yet as sudden transitions of temper are seldom
15 lasting, Henry in his turn was driven from the throne, and Edward recalled to succeed him: The
16 Parliament always following the strongest side.

17 This contest began in the reign of Henry the sixth, and was not entirely extinguished till Henry
18 the seventh, in whom the families were united; including a period of 67 years, viz. from 1422 to 1489.
19 In short, Monarchy and Succession have laid (not this or that kingdom only) but the World in blood
20 and ashes. It is a form of government which the word of God bears testimony against, and blood will
21 attend it.

22 If we enquire into the business of a King, we shall find that in some countries they have none; and
23 after sauntering away their lives without pleasure to themselves or advantage to the nation, withdraw
24 from the scene, and leave their successors to tread the same idle round. In absolute Monarchies the
25 whole weight of business civil and military lies on the King; the children of Israel in their request for a

1 King urged this plea, "that he may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles." But in countries
2 where he is neither a judge nor a general, as in England, a man would be puzzled to know what is his
3 business.

4 The nearer any government approaches to a Republic, the less business there is for a King. It
5 is somewhat difficult to find a proper name for the government of England. Sir William Meredith calls it
6 a Republic; but in its present state it is unworthy of the name, because the corrupt influence of the
7 Crown, by having all the places in its disposal, hath so effectually swallowed up the power, and eaten out
8 the virtue of the House of Commons (the Republican part in the constitution) that the government of
9 England is nearly as Monarchical as that of France or Spain. Men fall out with names, without
10 understanding them. For it is the Republican and not the Monarchical part of the constitution of
11 England which Englishmen glory in, viz. the liberty of choosing an House of Commons from out of
12 their own body—and it is easy to see that when Republican virtue fails, slavery ensues. Why is the
13 constitution of England sickly? but because Monarchy hath poisoned the Republic; the Crown hath
14 engrossed the Commons.

15 In England a King hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which, in plain terms,
16 is to impoverish the nation, and set it together by the ears. A pretty business indeed for a man to be
17 allowed eight hundred thousand sterling a year for, and worshipped into the bargain! Of more worth is
18 one honest man to society, and in the sight of God, than all the crowned Ruffians that ever lived.

19 Thoughts on the present State of American Affairs.

20 IN the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense:
21 And have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice
22 and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves: That he will
23 put on, or rather that he will not put off the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views
24 beyond the present day.—Volumes have been written on the subject of the struggle between England
25 and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with

1 various designs; but all have been ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed. Arms, as the last
2 resource, decide the contest; the appeal was the choice of the King, and the Continent has accepted the
3 challenge.

4 It hath been reported of the late Mr. Pelham (who, though an able minister, was not without his faults)
5 that on his being attacked in the House of Commons on the score that his measures were only of a
6 temporary kind, replied, "they will last my time." Should a thought so fatal and unmanly possess the
7 Colonies in the present contest, the name of ancestors will be remembered by future generations with
8 detestation.

9 The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. It is not the affair of a City, a County, a Province, or a
10 Kingdom; but of a Continent—of at least one eighth part of the habitable Globe. It is not the concern of
11 a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected
12 even to the end of time by the proceedings now. Now is the seed-time of Continental union, faith and
13 honor. The least fracture now, will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of
14 a young oak; the wound will enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

15 By referring the matter from argument to arms, a new æra for politics is struck, a new method of
16 thinking hath arisen. All plans, proposals, &c. prior to the 19th of April, i. e. to the commencement of
17 hostilities, are like the almanacks of the last year; which, though proper then, are superseded and
18 useless now. Whatever was advanced by the advocates on either side of the question then, terminated
19 in one and the same point, viz. a union with Great-Britain; the only difference between the parties was
20 the method of effecting it; the one proposing force, the other friendship; but it hath so far happened
21 that the first hath failed, and the second hath withdrawn her influence.

22 As much hath been said of the advantages of reconciliation, which, like an agreeable dream, hath
23 passed away and left us as we were, it is but right that we should examine the contrary side of the
24 argument, and enquire into some of the many material injuries which these Colonies sustain, and
25 always will sustain, by being connected with, and dependent on, Great-Britain; to examine that

1 connexion and dependence, on the principles of nature and common sense; to see what we have to trust
2 to if separated, and what we are to expect if dependent.

3 I have heard it asserted by some, that as America hath flourished under her former connexion with
4 Great-Britain, that the same connexion is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always
5 have the same effect.—Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument:—We may as well
6 assert, that because a child hath thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat; or that the first
7 twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. But even this is admitting more
8 than is true, for I answer, roundly, that America would have flourished as much, and probably much
9 more, had no European power taken any notice of her. The commerce by which she hath enriched
10 herself are the necessaries of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom of Europe.
11 But she hath protected us, say some. That she hath engrossed us is true, and defended the Continent
12 at our expence as well as her own is admitted; and she would have defended Turkey from the same
13 motive, viz. the sake of trade and dominion.

14 Alas! we have been long led away by ancient prejudices, and made large sacrifices to superstition. We
15 have boasted the protection of Great-Britain, without considering that her motive was interest,
16 not attachment; that she did not protect us from our enemies on our account, but from her
17 enemies on her own account, from those who had no quarrel against us on any other account, and who
18 will always be our enemies on the same account. Let Britain wave her pretensions to the Continent, or
19 the Continent throw off the dependence, and we should be at peace with France and Spain, were they
20 at war with Britain. The miseries of Hanover last war ought to warn us against connexions.

21 It hath lately been asserted in Parliament, that the Colonies have no relation to each other but through
22 the Parent Country, i. e. that Pennsylvania and the Jerseys, and so on for the rest, are sister Colonies
23 by the way of England; this is certainly a very round-about way of proving relationship, but it is the
24 nearest and only true way of proving enemyship, if I may so call it. France and Spain never were, nor
25 perhaps ever will be, our enemies as Americans, but as our being the subjects of Great-Britain.

1 But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do
2 not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families; wherefore the assertion, if true,
3 turns to her reproach: But it happens not to be true, or only partly so, and the phrase, parent or mother
4 country, hath been jesuitically adopted by the King and his parasites, with a low papistical design of
5 gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds. Europe, and not England, is the parent
6 country of America. This new World hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and
7 religious liberty, from every part of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of the
8 mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny
9 which drove the first emigrants from home, pursues their descendants still.

10 In this extensive quarter of the globe, we forget the narrow limits of three hundred and sixty miles
11 (the extent of England) and carry our friendship on a larger scale; we claim brotherhood with every
12 European Christian, and triumph in the generosity of the sentiment.

13 It is pleasant to observe by what regular gradations we surmount the force of local prejudice, as we
14 enlarge our acquaintance with the world. A man born in any town in England, divided into parishes,
15 will naturally associate most with his fellow parishioners (because their interests in many cases will
16 be common) and distinguish him by the name of neighbour: If he meet him but a few miles from home,
17 he drops the narrow idea of a street, and salutes him by the name of townsman: If he travel out of the
18 county, and meet him in any other, he forgets the minor divisions of street and town, and calls
19 him countryman, i. e. county-man: But if in their foreign excursions they should associate in France,
20 or any other part of Europe, their local remembrance would be enlarged into that of Englishmen. And
21 by a just parity of reasoning, all Europeans meeting in America, or any other quarter of the globe,
22 are countrymen; for England, Holland, Germany, or Sweden, when compared with the whole, stand in
23 the same places on the larger scale, which the divisions of street, town and county, do on the smaller
24 ones; distinctions too limited for Continental minds. Not one third of the inhabitants, even of this
25 province, are of English descent. Wherefore, I reprobate the phrase of parent or mother country

1 applied to England only, as being false, selfish, narrow and ungenerous.

2 But admitting that we were all of English descent, what does it amount to? Nothing. Britain being now

3 an open enemy, extinguishes every other name and title; and to say that reconciliation is our duty, is

4 truly farcical. The first King of England, of the present line (William the Conqueror) was a Frenchman,

5 and half the Peers of England are descendants from the same country; wherefore, by the same method

6 of reasoning, England ought to be governed by France.

7 Much hath been said of the united strength of Britain and the Colonies; that in conjunction, they might

8 bid defiance to the world: But this is mere presumption; the fate of war is uncertain, neither do the

9 expressions mean any thing, for this Continent would never suffer itself to be drained of inhabitants,

10 to support the British arms in either Asia, Africa, or Europe.

11 Besides, what have we to do with setting the world at defiance? Our plan is commerce, and that well

12 attended to, will secure us the peace and friendship of all Europe, because it is the interest of all

13 Europe to have America a free port. Her trade will always be a protection, and her barrenness of gold

14 and silver will secure her from invaders.

15 I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation, to shew a single advantage that this Continent

16 can reap, by being connected with Great-Britain. I repeat the challenge, not a single advantage is

17 derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe, and our imported goods must be paid for,

18 buy them where we will.

19 But the injuries and disadvantages we sustain by that connexion, are without number, and our duty to

20 mankind at large, as well as to ourselves, instruct us to renounce the alliance; because any submission

21 to, or dependence on, Great-Britain, tends directly to involve this Continent in European wars and

22 quarrels. As Europe is our market for trade, we ought to form no political connexion with any part of

23 it. 'Tis the true interest of America, to steer clear of European contentions, which she never can do,

24 while by her dependence on Britain she is made the make-weight in the scale of British politics.

25 Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out

1 between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, because of our connexion
2 with Britain. The next war may not turn out like the last, and should it not, the advocates for
3 reconciliation now, will be wishing for separation then, because neutrality in that case would be a safer
4 convoy than a man of war. Every thing that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of
5 the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'tis time to part. Even the distance at which the Almighty
6 hath placed England and America, is a strong and natural proof, that the authority of the one over the
7 other was never the design of heaven. The time likewise at which the Continent was discovered, adds
8 weight to the argument, and the manner in which it was peopled encreases the force of it.—The
9 reformation was preceded by the discovery of America; as if the Almighty graciously meant to open
10 a sanctuary to the persecuted in future years, when home should afford neither friendship nor safety.
11 The authority of Great-Britain over this Continent is a form of government which sooner or later must
12 have an end: And a serious mind can draw no true pleasure by looking forward, under the painful and
13 positive conviction, that what he calls "the present constitution," is merely temporary. As parents, we
14 can have no joy, knowing that this government is not sufficiently lasting to ensure any thing which we
15 may bequeath to posterity: And by a plain method of argument, as we are running the next generation
16 into debt, we ought to do the work of it, otherwise we use them meanly and pitifully. In order to
17 discover the line of our duty rightly, we should take our children in our hand, and fix our station a few
18 years farther into life; that eminence will present a prospect, which a few present fears and prejudices
19 conceal from our sight.
20 Though I would carefully avoid giving unnecessary offence, yet I am inclined to believe, that all those
21 who espouse the doctrine of reconciliation, may be included within the following descriptions.
22 Interested men who are not to be trusted, weak men who cannot see, prejudiced men who will not see,
23 and a certain sett of moderate men who think better of the European world than it deserves; and this
24 last class, by an ill-judged deliberation, will be the cause of more calamities to this Continent, than all
25 the other three.

1 It is the good fortune of many to live distant from the scene of present sorrow; the evil is not sufficiently
2 brought to their doors to make them feel the precariousness with which all American property is
3 possessed. But let our imaginations transport us for a few moments to Boston; that feat of wretchedness
4 will teach us wisdom, and instruct us for ever to renounce a power in whom we can have no trust. The
5 inhabitants of that unfortunate city, who but a few months ago were in ease and affluence, have now no
6 other alternative than to stay and starve, or turn out to beg. Endangered by the fire of their friends if
7 they continue within the city, and plundered by government if they leave it. In their present condition
8 they are prisoners without the hope of redemption, and in a general attack for their relief, they would
9 be exposed to the fury of both armies.

10 Men of passive tempers look somewhat lightly over the offences of Britain, and still hoping for the
11 best, are apt to call out, "come, come, we shall be friends again for all this." But examine the passions
12 and feelings of mankind: Bring the doctrine of reconciliation to the touchstone of nature, and then tell
13 me, whether you can hereafter love, honor, and faithfully serve, the power that hath carried fire
14 and sword into your land? If you cannot do all these, then are you only deceiving yourselves, and by
15 your delay bringing ruin upon posterity. Your future connexion with Britain, whom you can neither
16 love nor honor, will be forced and unnatural, and being formed only on the plan of present
17 convenience, will in a little time fall into a relapse more wretched than the first. But if you say, you
18 can still pass the violations over, than I ask, hath your house been burnt? Hath your property been
19 destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on?
20 Have you lost a parent or a child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If
21 you have not, then are you not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and still can shake hands
22 with the murderers, then are you unworthy the name of husband, father, friend, or lover, and
23 whatever may be your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward, and the spirit of
24 a sycophant.

25 This is not inflaming or exaggerating matters, but trying them by those feelings and affections which

1 nature justifies, and without which, we should be incapable of discharging the social duties of life, or
2 enjoying the felicities of it. I mean not to exhibit horror for the purpose of provoking revenge, but to
3 awaken us from fatal and unmanly slumbers, that we may pursue determinately some fixed object. It is
4 not in the power of England or of Europe to conquer America, if she doth not conquer herself
5 by delay and timidity. The present winter is worth an age if rightly employed, but if lost or neglected,
6 the whole Continent will partake of the misfortune; and there is no punishment which that man doth
7 not deserve, be he who, or what, or where he will, that may be the means of sacrificing a season so
8 precious and useful.

9 It is repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things, to all examples from former ages, to suppose
10 that this Continent can long remain subject to any external power. The most sanguine in Britain doth
11 not think so. The utmost stretch of human wisdom cannot, at this time, compass a plan short
12 of separation, which can promise the Continent even a year's security. Reconciliation is now a
13 fallacious dream. Nature hath deserted the connexion, and art cannot supply her place. For,
14 as Milton wisely expresses, "never can true reconcilement grow, where wounds of deadly hate have
15 pierced so deep."

16 Every quiet method for peace hath been ineffectual. Our prayers have been rejected with disdain; and
17 hath tended to convince us, that nothing flatters vanity or confirms obstinacy in Kings more than
18 repeated petitioning—and nothing hath contributed more, than that very measure, to make the Kings
19 of Europe absolute. Witness Denmark and Sweden. Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for
20 God's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats,
21 under the violated, unmeaning names of parent and child.

22 To say they will never attempt it again is idle and visionary; we thought so at the repeal of the stamp-
23 act, yet a year or two undeceived us; as well may we suppose that nations which have been once
24 defeated will never renew the quarrel.

25 As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this Continent justice: The business of

1 it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience, by a
2 power so distant from us, and so very ignorant of us; for if they cannot conquer us, they cannot govern
3 us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five
4 months for an answer, which when obtained requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years
5 be looked upon as folly and childishness.—There was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper
6 time for it to cease.

7 Small islands, not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for government to take
8 under their care; but there is something very absurd, in supposing a Continent to be perpetually
9 governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet, and
10 as England and America with respect to each other reverses the common order of nature, it is evident
11 they belong to different systems. England to Europe: America to itself.

12 I am not induced by motives of pride, party or resentment, to espouse the doctrine of separation and
13 independence; I am clearly, positively, and conscientiously persuaded that it is the true interest of this
14 Continent to be so; that every thing short of that is mere patchwork; that it can afford no lasting
15 felicity, that it is leaving the sword to our children, and shrinking back at a time when a little more, a
16 little farther, would have rendered this Continent the glory of the earth.

17 As Britain hath not manifested the least inclination towards a compromise, we may be assured that no
18 terms can be obtained worthy the acceptance of the Continent, or any ways equal to the expence of
19 blood and treasure we have been already put to.

20 The object contended for, ought always to bear some just proportion to the expence. The removal
21 of North, or the whole detestable junto, is a matter unworthy the millions we have expended. A
22 temporary stoppage of trade was an inconvenience, which would have sufficiently balanced the repeal
23 of all the acts complained of, had such repeals been obtained; but if the whole Continent must take up
24 arms, if every man must be a soldier, it is scarcely worth our while to fight against a contemptible
25 ministry only. Dearly, dearly do we pay for the repeal of the acts, if that is all we fight for; for in a just

1 estimation, it is as great a folly to pay a Bunker-hill price for law as for land. As I have always
2 considered the independency of this Continent as an event which sooner or later must arrive, so from
3 the late rapid progress of the Continent to maturity, the event could not be far off: Wherefore, on the
4 breaking out of hostilities, it was not worth the while to have disputed a matter, which time would have
5 finally redressed, unless we meant to be in earnest; otherwise it is like wasting an estate on a suit at
6 law, to regulate the trespasses of a tenant, whose lease is just expiring. No man was a warmer wisher
7 for reconciliation than myself, before the fatal 19th of April, 1775, but the moment the event of that day
8 was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen-tempered Pharoah of England for ever; and disdain
9 the wretch, that with the pretended title of Father of his People, can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter,
10 and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul.

11 But admitting that matters were now made up, what would be the event? I answer, the ruin of the
12 Continent. And that for several reasons.

13 First.—The powers of governing still remaining in the hands of the King, he will have a negative over
14 the whole legislation of this Continent: And as he hath shewn himself such an inveterate enemy to
15 liberty, and discovered such a thirst for arbitrary power, is he, or is he not, a proper man to say to
16 these Colonies, "you shall make no laws but what I please?" And is there any inhabitant in America so
17 ignorant as not to know, that according to what is called the present constitution, that this Continent
18 can make no laws but what the King gives leave to; and is there any man so unwise, as not to see, that
19 (considering what has happened) he will suffer no laws to be made here, but such as suit his purpose?

20 We may be as effectuallyenslaved by the want of laws in America, as by submitting to laws made for us
21 in England. After matters are made up (as it is called) can there be any doubt, but the whole power of
22 the crown will be exerted to keep this Continent as low and humble as possible? Instead of going
23 forward, we shall go backward, or be perpetually quarrelling, or ridiculously petitioning.—We are
24 already greater than the King wishes us to be, and will he not hereafter endeavour to make us less? To
25 bring the matter to one point, is the power who is jealous of our prosperity, a proper power to govern

1 us? Whoever says No to this question is an Independent, for independency means no more than
2 whether we shall make our own laws, or whether the King, the greatest enemy this Continent hath, or
3 can have, shall tell us "there shall be no laws but such as I like."
4 But the King you will say hath a negative in England; the people there can make no laws without his
5 consent. In point of right and good order, there is something very ridiculous, that a youth of twenty-one
6 (which hath often happened) shall say to six millions of people, older and wiser than himself, "I forbid
7 this or that act of yours to be law." But in this place I decline this sort of reply, though I will never cease
8 to expose the absurdity of it, and only answer, that England being the King's residence, and America
9 not so, makes quite another case. The King's negative here is ten times more dangerous and fatal than it
10 can be in England, for there he will scarcely refuse his consent to a bill for putting England into
11 as strong a state of defence as possible, and here he would never suffer such a bill to be passed.
12 America is only a secondary object in the system of British politics, England consults the good
13 of this country no farther than it answers her own purpose. Wherefore her own interest leads her
14 to suppress the growth of ours, in every case which doth not promote her advantage, or in the least
15 interferes with it. A pretty state we should soon be in, under such a second-hand government,
16 considering what has happened! Men do not change from enemies to friends by the alteration of a
17 name: And in order to shew that reconciliation now is a dangerous doctrine. I affirm, that it would be
18 policy in the King at this time to repeal the acts, for the sake of reinstating himself in the government
19 of the Provinces; in order that HE MAY ACCOMPLISH BY CRAFT AND SUBTILTY, IN THE LONG RUN,
20 WHAT HE CANNOT DO BY FORCE AND VIOLENCE IN THE SHORT ONE. Reconciliation and ruin are
21 nearly related.
22 Secondly.—That as even the best terms which we can expect to obtain, can amount to no more than a
23 temporary expedient, or a kind of government by guardianship, which can last no longer than till the
24 Colonies come of age, so the general face and state of things in the interim will be unsettled
25 and promising: Emigrants of property will not choose to come to a country whose form of government

1 hangs but by a thread, and who is everyday tottering on the brink of commotion and disturbance: And
2 numbers of the present inhabitants would lay hold of the interval to dispose of their effects, and quit the
3 Continent.

4 But the most powerful of all arguments is, that nothing but independence, i. e. a Continental form of
5 government, can keep the peace of the Continent, and preserve it inviolate from civil wars. I dread the
6 event of a reconciliation with Britain now, as it is more than probable, than it will be followed by a
7 revolt somewhere or other, the consequences of which may be far more fatal than all the malice of
8 Britain.

9 Thousands are already ruined by British barbarity: Thousands more will probably suffer the same fate.

10 Those men have other feelings than us who have nothing suffered. All they now possess is liberty,
11 what they before enjoyed is sacrificed to its service, and having nothing more to lose, they
12 disdain submission. Besides, the general temper of the Colonies towards a British government will be
13 like that of a youth, who is nearly out of his time; they will care very little about her: And a
14 government which cannot preserve the peace, is no government at all, and in that case we pay our
15 money for nothing; and pray what is it that Britain can do, whose power will be wholly on
16 paper, should a civil tumult break out the very day after reconciliation? I have heard some men say,
17 many of whom I believe spoke without thinking, that they dreaded an independence, fearing that it
18 would produce civil wars: It is but seldom that our first thoughts are truly correct, and that is the case
19 here; for there are ten times more to dread from a patched up connexion, than from independence. I
20 make the sufferers case my own, and I protest, that were I driven from house and home, my property
21 destroyed, and my circumstances ruined, that as a man sensible of injuries, I could never relish the
22 doctrine of reconciliation, or consider myself bound thereby.

23 The Colonies have manifested such a spirit of good order and obedience to Continental government, as
24 is sufficient to make every reasonable person easy and happy on that head. No man can assign the
25 least pretence for his fears, on any other grounds, than such as are truly childish and ridiculous, viz.

1 that one Colony will be striving for superiority over another.

2 Where there are no distinctions, there can be no superiority; perfect equality affords no temptation. The
3 republics of Europe are all (and we may say always) in peace. Holland and Switzerland are without
4 wars, foreign or domestic: Monarchical governments, it is true, are never long at rest; the Crown itself
5 is a temptation to enterprising ruffians at home; and that degree of pride and insolence ever attendant
6 on regal authority, swells into a rupture with foreign powers, in instances, where a republican
7 government, by being formed on more natural principles, would negotiate the mistake.

8 If there is any true cause for fear, respecting independence, it is because no plan is yet laid down. Men
9 do not see their way out—Wherefore, as an opening into that business, I offer the following hints, at
10 the same time modestly affirming, that I have no other opinion of them myself, than that they may be
11 the means of giving rise to something better. Could the straggling thoughts of individuals be collected,
12 they would frequently form materials for wise and able men to improve into useful matter.—Let the
13 Assemblies be annual, with a President only. The representation more equal. Their business wholly
14 domestic, and subject to the authority of a Continental Congress.—Let each Colony be divided into six,
15 eight or ten convenient districts, each district to send a proper number of Delegates to Congress, so
16 that each Colony send at least thirty. The whole number in Congress will be at least 390. Each
17 Congress to sit and to choose a President by the following method. When the Delegates are met, let a
18 Colony be taken from the whole thirteen Colonies by lot, after which let the whole Congress choose (by
19 ballot) a President from out of the Delegates of that province. In the next Congress let a Colony be
20 taken by lot from twelve only, omitting that Colony from which the President was taken in the former
21 Congress, and so proceeding on till the whole thirteen shall have had their proper rotation. And in
22 order that nothing may pass into a law but what is satisfactorily just, not less than three fifths of the
23 Congress to be called a majority. He that will promote discord under a government so equally formed
24 as this, would have joined Lucifer in his revolt.—But as there is a peculiar delicacy from whom, or in
25 what manner, this business must first arise, and as it seems most agreeable and consistent, that

1 it should come from some intermediate body between the governed and governors, that is, between the
2 Congress and the people, let a Continental Conference be held in the following manner, and for the
3 following purpose.

4 A committee of twenty-six members of the Congress, viz. two for each Colony; two members from each
5 House of Assembly, or Provincial Convention; and five Representatives of the people at large, to be
6 chosen in the capital city or town of each Province, for and in behalf of the whole Province, by as many
7 qualified voters as shall think proper to attend from all parts of the Province for that purpose; or, if
8 more convenient, the Representatives may be chosen in two or three of the most populous parts
9 thereof. In this Conference, thus assembled, will be united the two grand principles of
10 business, knowledge and power. The members of Congress, Assemblies or Conventions, by having had
11 experience in national concerns, will be able and useful counsellors, and the whole, by being
12 empowered by the people, will have a truly legal authority.

13 The conferring members being met, let their business be to frame a Continental Charter, or Charter of
14 the United Colonies (answering to what is called the Magna Charta of England) fixing the number and
15 manner of choosing members of Congress, members of Assembly, with their date of sitting, and
16 drawing the line of business and jurisdiction between them: (Always remembering, that our strength
17 and happiness is Continental, not Provincial.) Securing freedom and property to all men, and above all
18 things the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; with such other matters as
19 is necessary for a charter to contain. Immediately after which the said Conference to dissolve, and the
20 bodies which shall be chosen conformable to the said Charter, to be the Legislators and Governors of
21 this Continent, for the time being; whose peace and happiness may God preserve. Amen.

22 Should any body of men be hereafter delegated for this or some similar purpose, I offer them the
23 following extract from that wise observer on governments, Dragonetti. "The science," says he, "of the
24 politician consists in fixing the true point of happiness and freedom. Those men would deserve the
25 gratitude of ages, who should discover a mode of government that contained the greatest sum of

1 individual happiness, with the least national expence."

2 Dragonetti on Virtue and Rewards.

3 But where says some is the King of America? I'll tell you, friend, he reigns above; and doth not make
4 havoc of mankind, like the Royal Brute of Great-Britain. Yet that we may not appear to be defective
5 even in earthly honors, let a day be solemnly set apart for proclaiming the Charter; let it be brought
6 forth placed on the Divine Law, the Word of God; let a crown be placed thereon, by which the World may
7 know, that so far as we approve of Monarchy, that in America the Law is King. For as in absolute
8 governments the King is Law, so in free countries the Law ought to be King; and there ought to be no
9 other. But lest any ill use should afterwards arise, let the crown at the conclusion of the ceremony be
10 demolished, and scattered among the people, whose right it is.

11 A government of our own is our natural right; and when a man seriously reflects on the
12 precariousness of human affairs, he will become convinced, that it is infinitely wiser and safer to form
13 a constitution of our own, in a cool deliberate manner, while we have it in our power, than to trust such
14 an interesting event to time and chance. If we omit it now, some[1] Massanello may hereafter arise,
15 who laying hold of popular disquietudes, may collect together the desperate and discontented, and by
16 assuming to themselves the powers of government, may sweep away the liberties of the Continent like
17 a deluge. Should the government of America return again into the hands of Britain, the
18 tottering situation of things will be a temptation for some desperate adventurer to try his fortune; and
19 in such a case, what relief can Britain give? Ere she could hear the news, the fatal business might be
20 done; and ourselves suffering like the wretched Britons under the oppression of the Conqueror. Ye that
21 oppose independence now, ye know not what ye do: Ye are opening a door to eternal tyranny, by
22 keeping vacant the seat of government. There are thousands, and tens of thousands, who would think
23 it glorious to expel from the Continent that barbarous and hellish power, which hath stirred up the
24 Indians and the Negroes to destroy us. The cruelty hath a double guilt; it is dealing brutally by us, and
25 treacherously by them.

1 To talk of friendship with those in whom our reason forbids us to have faith, and our affections,
2 wounded through a thousand pores, instruct us to detest, is madness and folly. Every day wears out the
3 little remains of kindred between us and them, and can there be any reason to hope, that as the
4 relationship expires, the affection will increase, or that we shall agree better, when we have ten times
5 more and greater concerns to quarrel over than ever?—Ye that tell us of harmony and reconciliation,
6 can ye restore to us the time that is past? Can ye give to prostitution its former innocence? Neither can
7 ye reconcile Britain and America. The last cord now is broken, the people of England are presenting
8 addresses against us. There are injuries which nature cannot forgive; she would cease to be nature
9 if she did. As well can the lover forgive the ravisher of his mistress, as the Continent forgive the
10 murders of Britain. The Almighty hath implanted in us these unextinguishable feelings for good and
11 wise purposes. They are the guardians of his image in our hearts. They distinguish us from the herd of
12 common animals. The social compact would dissolve, and justice be extirpated the earth, or have only
13 a casual existence, were we callous to the touches of affection. The robber and the murderer would
14 often escape unpunished, did not the injuries which our tempers sustain provoke us into justice.
15 O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose not only the tyranny, but the Tyrant, stand forth!
16 Every spot of the old world is over-run with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe.
17 Asia and Africa have long expelled her.—Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given
18 her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.
19 Of the present Ability of America, with some miscellaneous Reflections.
20 I HAVE never met with a man, either in England or America, who hath not confessed his opinion, that
21 a separation between the countries would take place one time or other: And there is no instance in
22 which we have shewn less judgment, than in endeavoring to describe what we call the ripeness or
23 fitness of the Continent for independence.—As all men allow the measure, and vary only in their
24 opinion of the time, let us, in order to remove mistakes, take a general survey of things, and endeavor
25 if possible, to find out the very time. But I need not go far, the enquiry ceases at once, for the time hath

1 found us. The general concurrence, the glorious union of all things, prove the fact.—It is not in numbers
2 but in unity that our great strength lies: Yet our present numbers are sufficient to repel the force of all
3 the world. The Continent hath at this time the largest disciplined army of any power under heaven; and
4 is just arrived at that pitch of strength, in which no single Colony is able to support itself, and the
5 whole, when united, is able to do any thing. Our land force is more than sufficient, and as to navy affairs,
6 we cannot be insensible that Britain would never suffer an American man of war to be built, while the
7 Continent remained in her hands. Wherefore, we should be no forwarder an hundred years hence in
8 that branch than we are now; but the truth is, we should be less so, because the timber of the country is
9 every day diminishing.—Were the Continent crowded with inhabitants, her sufferings under the present
10 circumstances would be intolerable. The more seaport towns we had, the more we should have both to
11 defend and to lose. Our present numbers are so happily proportioned to our wants, that no man need
12 be idle. The diminution of trade affords an army, and the necessities of an army creates a new trade.—
13 Debts we have none: And whatever we may contract on this account will serve as a glorious memento
14 of our virtue. Can we but leave posterity with a settled form of government, an independent
15 constitution of its own, the purchase at any price will be cheap. But to expend millions for the sake of
16 getting a few vile acts repealed, and routing the present ministry only, is unworthy the charge, and is
17 using posterity with the utmost cruelty; because it is leaving them the great work to do, and a debt
18 upon their backs from which they derive no advantage. Such a thought is unworthy a man of honor,
19 and is the true characteristic of a narrow heart, and a pedling politician.
20 The debt we may contract doth not deserve our regard, if the work be but accomplished. No nation
21 ought to be without a debt. A national debt is a national bond; and when it bears no interest, is in no
22 case a grievance. Britain is oppressed with a debt of upwards of one hundred and forty
23 millions sterling, for which she pays upwards of four millions interest. And as a compensation for her
24 debt, she has a large navy; America is without a debt, and without a navy; but for the twentieth part of
25 the English national debt, could have a navy as large again. The navy of England is not worth at this

1 time more than three millions and an half sterling.—No country on the globe is so happily situated, or so
2 internally capable of raising a fleet as America. Tar, timber, iron and cordage, are her natural
3 produce, We need go abroad for nothing; whereas the Dutch, who make large profits by hiring out
4 their ships of war to the Spaniards and Portuguese, are obliged to import most of the materials they
5 use. We ought to view the building a fleet as an article of commerce, it being the natural manufactory of
6 this country. 'Tis the best money we can lay out. A navy when finished is worth more than it cost, and is
7 that nice point in national policy, in which commerce and protection are united. Let us build; if we want
8 them not, we can sell; and by that means replace our paper currency with ready gold and silver.—In
9 point of manning a fleet, people in general run into great errors; it is not necessary that one fourth
10 part should be sailors. The Terrible privateer, Capt. Death, stood the hottest engagement of any ship
11 last war, yet had not 20 sailors on board, though her complement of men was upward of 200. A few
12 able and social sailors will soon instruct a sufficient number of active landmen in the common work of
13 a ship. Wherefore, we never can be more capable to begin on maritime matters than now, while our
14 timber is standing, our fisheries blocked up, and our sailors and shipwrights out of employ. Men of war,
15 of seventy and eighty guns, were built forty years ago in New-England; and why not the same now?
16 Ship-building is America's greatest pride, and in which she will in time excel the whole world. The
17 great empires of the east are mostly inland, and consequently excluded from the possibility of rivalling
18 her. Africa is in a state of barbarism; and no power in Europe hath either such an extent of coast,
19 or such an internal supply of materials. Where nature hath given the one, she has with-held the other;
20 to America only hath she been liberal of both. The vast empire of Russia is almost shut out from
21 the sea; wherefore her boundless forests, her tar, iron and cordage, are only articles of commerce.
22 In point of safety, ought we to be without a fleet? We are not the little people now, which we were sixty
23 years ago; at that time we might have trusted our property in the streets, or fields rather,
24 and slept securely without locks or bolts to our doors and windows. The case now is altered, and our
25 methods of defense ought to improve with our increase of property. A common pirate, twelve months

1 ago, might have come up the Delaware, and laid the city of Philadelphia under instant contribution for
2 what sum he pleased; and the same might have happened to other places. Nay, any daring fellow, in a
3 brig of 14 or 16 guns, might have robbed the whole Continent, and carried off half a million of money.
4 These are circumstances which demand our attention, and point out the necessity of naval protection.
5 —Some perhaps will say, that after we have made it up with Britain she will protect us. Can we be so
6 unwise as to mean, that she shall keep a navy in our harbors for that purpose? Common sense will tell
7 us, that the power which hath endeavored to subdue us, is of all others the most improper to defend us.
8 Conquest may be effected under the pretence of friendship; and ourselves, after a long and brave
9 resistance, be at last cheated into slavery. And if her ships are not to be admitted into our harbours, I
10 would ask, how is she to protect us? A navy three or four thousand miles off can be of little use, and
11 on sudden emergencies, none at all. Wherefore if we must hereafter protect ourselves, why not do it for
12 ourselves? Why do it for another?—The English list of ships of war is long and formidable, but not a
13 tenth part of them are at any one time fit for service, numbers of them not in being; yet their names
14 are pompously continued in the list, if only a plank is left of the ship; and not a fifth part of such as are
15 fit for service, can be spared on any one station at one time. The East and West-Indies, Mediterranean,
16 Africa, and other parts over which Britain extends her claim, make large demands upon her navy.
17 From a mixture of prejudice and inattention, we have contracted a false notion respecting the navy of
18 England, and have talked as if we should have the whole of it to encounter at once, and for that
19 reason supposed that we must have one as large, which not being instantly practicable, have been
20 made use of by a sett of disguised tories to discourage our beginning thereon. Nothing can be farther
21 from truth than this, for if America had only a twentieth part of the naval force of Britain, she would
22 be by far an over-match for her; because as we neither have, nor claim any foreign dominion, our
23 whole force would be employed on our own coast, where we should, in the long run, have two to one
24 the advantage of those who had three or four thousand miles to sail over, before they could attack us,
25 and the same distance to return in order to refit and recruit. And although Britain by her fleet hath

1 a check over our trade to Europe, we have as large a one over her trade to the West-Indies, which, by
2 laying in the neighborhood of the Continent, lies entirely to its mercy.—Some method might be fallen
3 on to keep up a naval force in time of peace, if we should not judge it necessary to support a constant
4 navy. If premiums were to be given to merchants to build and employ in their service ships mounted
5 with 20, 30, 40 or 50 guns (the premiums to be in proportion to the loss of bulk to the merchant) fifty
6 or sixty of those ships, with a few guard-ships on constant duty, would keep up a sufficient navy, and
7 that without burthening ourselves with the evil so loudly complained of in England, of suffering their
8 fleets in time of peace to lie rotting in the docks. To unite the sinews of commerce and defense is sound
9 policy; for when our strength and our riches play into each other's hands, we need fear no external
10 enemy.—In almost every article of defense we abound. Hemp flourishes even to rankness, so that we
11 need not want cordage. Our iron is superior to that of other countries. Our small arms equal to any in
12 the world. Cannon we can cast at pleasure. Salt-petre and gun-powder we are every day producing.
13 Our knowledge is hourly improving. Resolution is our inherent character, and courage hath never yet
14 forsaken us. Wherefore, what is it that we want? Why is it that we hesitate? From Britain we can
15 expect nothing but ruin. If she is once admitted to the government of America again, this Continent
16 will not be worth living in. Jealousies will be always arising; insurrections will be constantly
17 happening; and who will go forth to quell them? Who will venture his life to reduce his own
18 countrymen to a foreign obedience? The difference between Pennsylvania and Connecticut,
19 respecting some unlocated lands, shews the insignificance of a British government, and fully proves,
20 that nothing but Continental authority can regulate Continental matters.—Another reason why the
21 present time is preferable to all others, is, that the fewer our numbers are, the more land there is yet
22 unoccupied, which instead of being lavished by the King on his worthless dependents, may be
23 hereafter applied not only to the discharge of the present debt, but to the constant support of
24 government. No nation under heaven hath such an advantage as this.
25 The infant state of the Colonies, as it is called, so far from being against, is an argument in favor of

1 independence. We are sufficiently numerous, and were we more so, we might be less united. It is a
2 matter worthy of observation, that the more a country is peopled, the smaller their armies are. In
3 military numbers the ancients far exceeded the moderns; and the reason is evident, for trade being the
4 consequence of population, men become too much absorbed thereby to attend to any thing else.
5 Commerce diminishes the spirit both of patriotism and military defense. And history sufficiently
6 informs us, that the bravest achievements were always accomplished in the non-age of a nation. With
7 the increase of commerce England hath lost its spirit. The city of London, notwithstanding its
8 numbers, submits to continued insults with the patience of a coward. The more men have to lose, the
9 less willing they are to venture. The rich are in general slaves to fear, and submit to courtly power with
10 the trembling duplicity of a spaniel.

11 Youth is the seed time of good habits as well in nations as in individuals. It might be difficult if not
12 impossible to form the Continent into one government half a century hence. The vast variety of
13 interests, occasioned by an increase of trade and population, would create confusion. Colony would be
14 against Colony. Each being able, would scorn each other's assistance: And while the proud and foolish
15 gloried in their little distinctions, the wise would lament that the union had not been formed before.
16 Wherefore, the present time is the true time for establishing it. The intimacy which is contracted in
17 infancy, and the friendship which is formed in misfortune, are of all others the most lasting and
18 unalterable. Our present union is marked with both these characters: We are young, and we have been
19 distressed; but our concord hath withstood our troubles, and fixes a memorable æra for posterity to
20 glory in.—The present time likewise is that peculiar time, which never happens to a nation but once,
21 viz. the time of forming itself into a government. Most nations have let slip the opportunity, and by
22 that means have been compelled to receive laws from their conquerors, instead of making laws for
23 themselves. First they had a King, and then a form of government; whereas the article or Charter of
24 government should be formed first, and men delegated to execute them afterward: But from the
25 errors of other nations let us learn wisdom, and lay hold of the present opportunity———To begin

1 Government at the right end.

2 When William the Conqueror subdued England, he gave them law at the point of the sword; and until we

3 consent that the seat of government in America be legally and authoritatively occupied, we shall be in

4 danger of having it filled by some fortunate ruffian, who may treat us in the same manner, and then

5 where will be our freedom? where our property?

6 As to religion, I hold it to be the indispensable duty of government to protect all conscientious professors

7 thereof, and I know of no other business which government hath to do therewith. Let a man throw aside

8 that narrowness of soul, that selfishness of principle, which the niggards of all professions are so

9 unwilling to part with, and he will be delivered of his fears on that head. Suspicion is the companion of

10 mean souls, and the bane of all good society. For myself, I fully and conscientiously believe, that it is

11 the will of the Almighty, that there should be diversity of religious opinions among us. It affords a

12 larger field for our Christian kindness: Were we all of one way of thinking, our religious dispositions

13 would want matter for probation; and on this liberal principle, I look on the various denominations

14 among us to be like children of the same family, differing only in what is called their Christian names.

15 In page 25 I threw out a few thoughts on the propriety of a Continental Charter (for I only presume to

16 offer hints, not plans) and in this place I take the liberty of rementioning the subject, by observing,

17 that a Charter is to be understood as a bond of solemn obligation, which the whole enters into,

18 to support the right of every separate part, whether of religion, personal freedom, or property. A right

19 reckoning makes long friends.—In a former page I likewise mentioned the necessity of a large and

20 equal representation; and there is no political matter which more deserves our attention. A small

21 number of Electors, or a small number of Representatives, are equally dangerous. But if the number of

22 the Representatives be not only small, but unequal, the danger is increased. As an instance of this I

23 mention the following; when the Associators petition was before the House of Assembly of

24 Pennsylvania, 28 members only were present; all the Bucks county members, being 8, voted against

25 it, and had 7 of the Chester members done the same, this whole Province had been governed by two

1 counties only, and this danger it is always exposed to. The unwarrantable stretch likewise which that
2 House made, in their last sitting, to gain an undue authority over the Delegates of that Province, ought
3 to warn the people at large how they trust power out of their own hands. A sett of instructions for the
4 Delegates were put together, which in point of sense and business would have dishonored a school-boy,
5 and after being approved by a few, a very few without doors, were carried into the House, and there
6 passed in behalf of the whole Colony; whereas, did the whole Colony know with what ill-will that House
7 hath entered on some necessary public measures, they would not hesitate a moment to think them
8 unworthy of such a trust.—Immediate necessity makes many things convenient, which if continued
9 would grow into oppressions. Experience and right are different things. When the calamities of America
10 required a consultation, there was no method so ready, or at that time so proper, as to appoint persons
11 from the several Houses of Assembly for that purpose; and the wisdom with which they have
12 proceeded hath preserved this Continent from ruin. But as it is more than probable that we shall
13 never be without a Congress, every well-wisher to good order must own, that the mode for choosing
14 members of that body deserves consideration. And I put it as a question to those, who make a study of
15 mankind, whether representation and election is not too great a power for one and the same body of
16 men to possess? When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember, that virtue is not
17 hereditary.—It is from our enemies that we often gain excellent maxims, and are
18 frequently surprised into reason by their mistakes. Mr. Cornwall (one of the Lords of the Treasury)
19 treated the petition of the New-York Assembly with contempt, because that House, he said, consisted
20 but of twenty-six members, which trifling number, he argued, could not with decency be put for the
21 whole. We thank him for his involuntary honesty[2].
22 To conclude, however strange it may appear to some, or however unwilling they may be to think so,
23 matters not; but many strong and striking reasons may be given to shew, that nothing can settle our
24 affairs so expeditiously as an open and determined declaration for independence. Some of which are,
25 —First. It is the custom of nations, when any two are at war, for some other powers not engaged in

1 the quarrel to step in as mediators, and bring about the preliminaries of a peace: But while America
2 calls herself the subject of Great-Britain, no power, however well disposed she may be, can offer her
3 mediation. Wherefore, in our present state we may quarrel on for ever.—Secondly. It is unreasonable
4 to suppose, that France or Spain will give us any kind of assistance, if we mean only to make use of that
5 assistance for the purpose of repairing the breach, and strengthening the connexion between Britain
6 and America, because those powers would be sufferers by the consequences.—Thirdly. While we
7 profess ourselves the subjects of Britain, we must in the eye of foreign nations be considered as rebels.
8 The precedent is somewhat dangerous to their peace, for men to be in arms under the name of subjects:
9 We on the spot can solve the paradox; but to unite resistance and subjection, requires an idea much too
10 refined for common understanding.—Fourthly. Were a manifesto to be published, and dispatched to
11 foreign Courts, setting forth the miseries we have endured, and the peaceable methods we have
12 ineffectually used for redress, declaring at the same time, that not being able any longer to live happily
13 or safely, under the cruel disposition of the British Court, we had been driven to the necessity of
14 breaking off all connexions with her; at the same time assuring all such Courts of our peaceable
15 disposition towards them, and of our desire of entering into trade with them; such a memorial would
16 produce more good effects to this Continent, than if a ship were freighted with petitions to Britain.
17 Under our present denomination of British subjects, we can neither be received nor heard abroad: The
18 custom of Courts is against us, and will be so, until by an independence we take rank with other
19 nations.
20 These proceedings may at first appear strange and difficult, but, like all other steps which we have
21 already passed over, will in a little time become familiar and agreeable: And until an independence is
22 declared, the Continent will feel itself like a man who continues putting off some unpleasant business
23 from day to day, yet knows it must be done, hates to set about it, wishes it over, and is continually
24 haunted with the thoughts of its necessity.
25 FINIS

1 APPENDIX TO COMMON SENSE:

2 The Necessity of Independency.

3 SINCE the publication of the first edition of this pamphlet, or rather on the same day on which it came
4 out, the King's Speech made its appearance in this city. Had the spirit of prophecy directed the birth of
5 this production, it could not have brought it forth at a more seasonable juncture, or a more necessary
6 time. The bloody-mindedness of the one, shews the necessity of pursuing the doctrine of the other. Men
7 read by way of revenge: And the Speech, instead of terrifying, prepared a way for the manly principles
8 of Independence.

9 Ceremony, and even silence, from whatever motive they may arise, have a hurtful tendency, when they
10 give the least degree of countenance to base and wicked performances; wherefore, if this maxim be
11 admitted, it naturally follows, that the King's Speech, as being a piece of finished villainy, deserved,
12 and still deserves, a general execration, both by the Congress and the people. Yet, as the domestic
13 tranquility of a nation depends greatly on the chastity of what may properly be called national
14 Manners, it is often better to pass some things over in silent disdain, than to make use of such new
15 methods of dislike, as might introduce the least innovation on that guardian of our peace and safety.
16 And perhaps it is chiefly owing to this prudent delicacy, that the King's Speech hath not, before
17 now, suffered a public execution. The speech, if it may be called one, is nothing better than a wilful,
18 audacious libel against the truth, the common good, and the existence of mankind; and is a formal and
19 pompous method of offering up human sacrifices to the pride of tyrants. But this general massacre of
20 mankind is one of the privileges, and the certain consequence of Kings; for as nature knows them not,
21 they know not her, and although they are beings of our own creating, they know not us, and are
22 become the gods of their creators. The speech hath one good quality, which is, that it is not calculated
23 to deceive, neither can we, even if we would, be deceived by it. Brutality and tyranny appear on the
24 face of it. It leaves us at no loss: And every line convinces, even in the moment of reading, that he who
25 hunts the woods for prey, the naked and untutored Indian, is less a Savage than the King of Britain.

1 Sir John Dalrymple, the putative father of a whining jesuitical piece, fallaciously called, "The address of
2 the people of England, to the inhabitants of America," hath, perhaps, from a vain supposition, that the
3 people here were to be frightened at the pomp and description of a King, given (though very unwisely
4 on his part) the real character of the present one: "But," says this writer, "if you are inclined to pay
5 compliments to an administration which we do not complain of (meaning the Marquis of Rockingham's
6 at the repeal of the stamp-act) it is very unfair in you to withhold them from that Prince by whose nod
7 alone they were permitted to do any thing" This is Toryism with a witness! Here is idolatry even
8 without a mask: And he who can calmly hear and digest such doctrine, hath forfeited his claim to
9 rationality—an apostate from the order of manhood, and ought to be considered—as one, who hath not
10 only given up the proper dignity of man, but sunk himself beneath the rank of animals, and
11 contemptibly crawl through the world like a worm.

12 However, it matters very little now, what the King of England either says or does; he hath wickedly
13 broken through every moral and human obligation, trampled nature and conscience beneath his feet;
14 and, by a steady and constitutional spirit of insolence and cruelty, procured for himself an universal
15 hatred. It is now the interest of America to provide for herself. She hath already a large and young
16 family, whom it is more her duty to take care of, than to be granting away her property, to support a
17 power, who is become a reproach to the names of men and christians.—Ye, whose office it is to watch
18 over the morals of a nation, of whatsoever sect or denomination ye are of, as well as ye, who are more
19 immediately the guardians of the public liberty, if ye wish to preserve your native country
20 uncontaminated by European corruption, ye must in secret wish a separation.—But leaving the moral
21 part to private reflection, I shall chiefly confine my farther remarks to the following heads:
22 First,—That it is the interest of America to be separated from Britain.
23 Secondly,—Which is the easiest and most practicable plan, Reconciliation or Independence? with some
24 occasional remarks.
25 In support of the first, I could, if I judged it proper, produce the opinion of some of the ablest and most

1 experienced men on this Continent; and whose sentiments on that head are not yet publicly known. It is
2 in reality a self evident position: For no nation, in a state of foreign dependence, limited in its
3 commerce, and cramped and fettered in its legislative powers, can ever arrive at any material
4 eminence. America doth not yet know what opulence is; and although the progress which she hath
5 made stands unparalleled in the history of other nations, it is but childhood, compared with what she
6 would be capable of arriving at, had she, as she ought to have, the legislative powers in her own hands.
7 England is, at this time, proudly coveting what would do her no good, were she to accomplish it; and the
8 Continent hesitating on a matter, which will be her final ruin if neglected. It is the commerce, and not
9 the conquest of America, by which England is to be benefited, and that would in a great measure
10 continue, were the countries as independent of each other as France and Spain; because, in many
11 articles, neither can go to a better market. But it is the independence of this country on Britain, or any
12 other, which is now the main and only object worthy of contention, and which, like all other truths
13 discovered by necessity, will appear clearer and stronger every day.

14 First. Because it will come to that one time or other.

15 Secondly. Because the longer it is delayed, the harder it will be to accomplish.

16 I have frequently amused myself, both in public and private companies, with silently remarking
17 the specious errors of those who speak without reflecting. And among the many which I have heard,
18 the following seems the most general, viz. that had this rupture happened forty or fifty years hence,
19 instead of now, the Continent would have been more able to have shaken off the dependence. To which
20 I reply, that our military ability, at this time, arises from the experience gained in the last war, and
21 which in forty or fifty years time would have been totally extinct. The Continent would not by that
22 time have had a General, or even a military officer left; and we, or those who may succeed us, would
23 have been as ignorant of martial matters as the ancient Indians: And this single position, closely
24 attended to, will unanswerably prove, that the present time is preferable to all others: The argument
25 turns thus:—At the conclusion of the last war, we had experience, but wanted numbers; and forty or

1 fifty years hence, we should have numbers, without experience; wherefore, the proper point of time
2 must be some particular point between the two extremes, in which a sufficiency of the former remains,
3 and a proper encrease of the latter is obtained: And that point of time is the present time.
4 The reader will pardon this digression, as it does not properly come under the head I first set out with,
5 and to which I again return by the following position, viz.
6 Should affairs be patched up with Britain, and she to remain the governing and sovereign power of
7 America (which, as matters are now circumstanced, is giving up the point entirely) we shall deprive
8 ourselves of the very means of sinking the debt we have, or may contract. The value of the back lands,
9 which some of the provinces are clandestinely deprived of, by the unjust extention of the limits of
10 Canada, valued only at five pounds sterling per hundred acres, amount to upwards of twenty-five
11 millions, Pennsylvania currency; and the quit-rents, at one penny sterling per acre, to two millions
12 yearly.
13 It is by the sale of those lands, that the debt may be sunk, without burthen to any, and the quit-rent
14 reserved thereon will always lessen, and in time will wholly support the yearly expence of
15 government. It matters not how long the debt is in paying, so that the lands, when sold, be applied to
16 the discharge of it, and for the execution of which, the Congress for the time being will be the
17 Continental trustees.
18 I proceed now to the second head, viz. which is the easiest and most practicable
19 plan, Reconciliation or Independence; with some occasional remarks.
20 He who takes nature for his guide is not easily beaten out of his argument, and on that ground, I
21 answer generally—That independence being a single simple line, contained within ourselves; and
22 reconciliation a matter exceedingly perplexed and complicated and in which a treacherous capricious
23 court is to interfere, gives the answer without a doubt.
24 The present state of America is truly alarming to every man who is capable of reflection. Without law,
25 without government, without any other mode of power than what is founded on, and granted by

1 courtesy. Held together by an unexampled concurrence of sentiment, which is nevertheless subject to
2 change, and which every secret enemy is endeavouring to dissolve. Our present condition is, legislation
3 without law; wisdom without a plan; a constitution without a name; and, what is strangely astonishing,
4 perfect independence contending for dependence. The instance is without a precedent; the case never
5 existed before; and who can tell what may be the event? The property of no man is secure in the
6 present unbraced system of things. The mind of the multitude is left at random, and seeing no fixed
7 object before them, they pursue such as fancy or opinion starts. Nothing is criminal; there is no such
8 thing as reason; wherefore every one thinks himself at liberty to act as he pleases. The Tories would not
9 have dared to assemble offensively, had they known that their lives, by that act, were forfeited to the
10 laws of the state. A line of distinction should be drawn, between English soldiers taken in battle, and
11 inhabitants of America taken in arms. The first are prisoners, but the latter traitors. The one forfeits
12 his liberty, the other his head.

13 Notwithstanding our wisdom, there is a visible feebleness in some of our proceedings, which gives
14 encouragement to dissents. The Continental Belt is too loosely buckled. And if something is not
15 done in time, it will be too late to do any thing, and we shall fall into a state, in which
16 neither Reconciliation nor Independence will be practicable. The King and his worthless adherents are
17 got at the old game of dividing the Continent, and there are not wanting among us, Printers, who will
18 be busy in spreading specious falsehoods. The artful and hypocritical letter, which appeared a few
19 months ago in two of the New-York papers, and likewise in two others, is an evidence, that there are
20 men who want either judgment or honesty.

21 It is easy getting into holes and corners, and talking of reconciliation: But do such men seriously
22 consider how difficult the task is, and how dangerous it may prove, should the Continent divide
23 thereon? Do they take within their view all the various orders of men, whose situation and
24 circumstances, as well as their own, are to be considered therein? Do they put themselves in the place
25 of the sufferer, whose all is already gone, and of the soldier, who hath quitted all for the defence of his

1 country? If their ill judged moderation be suited to their own private situations only, regardless of
2 others, the event will convince them, that "they are reckoning without their host."
3 Put us, say some, upon the footing we were on in 1763: To which I answer, the request is not now in the
4 power of Britain to comply with, neither will she propose it; but if it were, and even should be granted, I
5 ask, as a reasonable question, by what means is such a corrupt and faithless court to be kept to its
6 engagements? Another Parliament, nay, even the present, may hereafter repeal the obligation, on the
7 pretence of its being violently obtained, or unwisely granted; and in that case, where is our redress?—
8 No going to law with nations; cannon are the barristers of crowns; and the sword, not of justice, but of
9 war, decides the suit. To be on the footing of 1763, it is not sufficient that the laws only be on
10 the same state, but that our circumstances likewise be put on the same state; our burnt and destroyed
11 towns repaired or built up, our private losses made good, our public debts (contracted for defence)
12 discharged, otherwise we shall be millions worse than we were at that enviable period. Such a request,
13 had it been complied with a year ago, would have won the heart and soul of the Continent; but now it is
14 too late. "The Rubicon is passed."
15 Besides, the taking up arms, merely to enforce the repeal of a pecuniary law, seems as unwarrantable
16 by the divine law, and as repugnant to human feelings, as the taking up arms to enforce the obedience
17 thereto. The object, on either side, doth not justify the means; for the lives of men are too valuable to
18 be cast away on such trifles. It is the violence which is done and threatned to our persons; the
19 destruction of our property by an armed force; the invasion of our country by fire and sword, which
20 conscientiously qualifies the use of arms: And the instant in which such a mode of defence became
21 necessary, all subjection to Britain ought to have ceased; and the independency of America should
22 have been considered, as dating its æra from, and published by, the first musket that was fired against
23 her. This line is a line of consistency; neither drawn by caprice, nor extended by ambition; but
24 produced by a chain of events, of which the Colonies were not the authors.
25 I shall conclude these remarks with the following timely and well intended hints. We ought to reflect,

1 that there are three different ways by which an independency may hereafter be effected; and
2 that one of those three will, one day or other, be the fate of America, viz. by the legal voice of the people
3 in Congress; by a military power; or by a mob: It may not always happen that our soldiers are citizens,
4 and the multitude a body of reasonable men; virtue, as I have already remarked, is not hereditary,
5 neither is it perpetual. Should an independency be brought about by the first of those means, we have
6 every opportunity and every encouragement before us, to form the noblest, purest constitution on the
7 face of the earth. We have it in our power to begin the world over again. A situation similar to the
8 present hath not happened since the days of Noah until now. The birth-day of a new world is at hand,
9 and a race of men, perhaps as numerous as all Europe contains, are to receive their portion of freedom
10 from the event of a few months. The reflection is awful, and in this point of view, how trifling, how
11 ridiculous, do the little paltry cavillings of a few weak or interested men appear, when weighed against
12 the business of a World?

13 Should we neglect the present favourable and inviting period, and an independence be hereafter
14 effected by any other means, we must charge the consequence to ourselves, or to those rather, whose
15 narrow and prejudiced souls are habitually opposing the measure, without either enquiring or
16 reflecting. There are reasons to be given in support of independence, which men should rather
17 privately think of, than be publicly told of. We ought not now to be debating whether we shall be
18 independent or not, but anxious to accomplish it on a firm, secure and honorable basis, and uneasy
19 rather that it is not yet began upon. Every day convinces us of its necessity. Even the Tories (if such
20 beings yet remain among us) should, of all men, be the most solicitous to promote it; for as the
21 appointment of Committees at first protected them from popular rage, so a wise and well established
22 form of government will be the only certain means of continuing it securely to them. Wherefore, if
23 they have not virtue enough to be Whigs, they ought to have prudence enough to wish for
24 independence.

25 In short, Independence is the only Bond that can tye and keep us together. We shall then see our

1 object, and our ears will be legally shut against the schemes of an intriguing, as well as a cruel enemy.

2 We shall then too be on a proper footing to treat with Britain; for there is reason to conclude, that the

3 pride of that court will be less hurt by treating with the American States for terms of peace, than with

4 those whom she denominates "rebellious subjects," for terms of accommodation. It is our delaying it,

5 that encourages her to hope for conquest, and our backwardness tends only to prolong the war. As we

6 have, without any good effect therefrom, withheld our trade to obtain a redress of our grievances; let us

7 now try the alternative, by independently redressing them ourselves, and then offering to open the

8 trade. The mercantile and reasonable part in England will be still with us; because, peace with trade is

9 preferable to war without it. And if this offer be not accepted, other courts may be applied to.

10 On these grounds I rest the matter: And as no offer hath yet been made to refute the doctrine

11 contained in the former editions of this pamphlet, it is a negative proof that either the doctrine cannot

12 be refuted, or, that the party in favour of it are too numerous to be opposed. Wherefore, instead of

13 gazing at each other with suspicious or doubtful curiosity, let each of us hold out to his neighbour the

14 hearty hand of friendship, and unite in drawing a line, which, like an act of oblivion, shall bury in

15 forgetfulness every former dissention. Let the names of Whig and Tory be extinct; and let none other

16 be heard among us than those of a good citizen, an open and resolute friend, and a virtuous supporter

17 of the rights of mankind, and of the free and independent States of America.

18 To the Representatives of the Religious Society of the People called Quakers, or to so many of them as

19 were concerned in publishing a late Piece, intituled, "The Ancient Testimony and Principles of the

20 People called Quakers renewed, with Respect to the King and Government, and touching

21 the Commotions now prevailing in these and other Parts of America, addressed to the People in

22 general."

23 THE writer of this is one of those few who never dishonours religion, either by ridiculing or cavilling at

24 any denomination whatsoever. To God, and not to man, are all men accountable on the score of

25 religion. Wherefore, this epistle is not so properly addressed to you as a religious, but as a political

1 body, dabbling in matters which the professed Quietude of your Principles instruct you not to meddle
2 with.

3 As you have, without a proper authority for so doing, put yourselves in the place of the whole body of
4 the Quakers, so the writer of this, in order to be on an equal rank with yourselves, is under the
5 necessity of putting himself in the place of all those, who approve the very writings and principles
6 against which your testimony is directed: And he hath chosen this singular situation, in order that you
7 might discover in him that presumption of character which you cannot see in yourselves. For neither
8 he nor you can have any claim or title to Political Representation.

9 When men have departed from the right way, it is no wonder that they stumble and fall. And it is
10 evident from the manner in which ye have managed your testimony, that politics (as a religious body
11 of men) is not your proper walk; for however well adapted it might appear to you, it is, nevertheless, a
12 jumble of good and bad put unwisely together, and the conclusion drawn therefrom both unnatural
13 and unjust.

14 The two first pages (and the whole doth not make four) we give you credit for, and expect the same
15 civility from you, because the love and desire of peace is not confined to Quakerism; it is the natural as
16 well as the religious wish of all denominations of men. And on this ground, as men labouring to
17 establish an Independent Constitution of our own, do we exceed all others in our hope, end and
18 aim. Our plan is peace for ever. We are tired of contention with Britain, and can see no real end to it but
19 in a final separation. We act consistently, because for the sake of introducing an endless and
20 uninterrupted peace, do we bear the evils and burthens of the present day. We are endeavouring, and
21 will still continue to endeavour, to separate and dissolve a connexion which hath already filled our
22 land with blood; and which, while the name of it remains, will be the fatal cause of future mischiefs to
23 both countries.

24 We fight neither for revenge nor conquest, neither from pride nor passion; we are not insulting the
25 world with our fleets and armies, nor ravaging the globe for plunder. Beneath the shade of our own

1 vines are we attacked; in our own houses, and on our own lands, is the violence committed against us.
2 We view our enemies in the character of Highwaymen and Housebreakers, and having no defence for
3 ourselves in the civil law, are obliged to punish them by the military one, and apply the sword in the
4 very case where you have before now applied the halter.—Perhaps we feel for the ruined and
5 insulted sufferers in all and every part of the Continent, with a degree of tenderness which hath not yet
6 made its way into some of your bosoms. But be ye sure that ye mistake not the cause and ground of
7 your testimony. Call not coldness of soul religion; nor put the Bigot in the place of the Christian.
8 O ye partial ministers of your own acknowledged principles, if the bearing arms be sinful, the first going
9 to war must be more so, by all the difference between wilful attack and unavoidable defence. Wherefore,
10 if ye really preach from conscience, and mean not to make a political hobby-horse of your religion,
11 convince the world thereof, by proclaiming your doctrine to our enemies, for they likewise bear arms.
12 Give us proof of your sincerity by publishing it at St. James's, to the Commanders in Chief at Boston, to
13 the Admirals and Captains who are piratically ravaging our coasts, and to all the murdering
14 miscreants who are acting in authority under Him whom ye profess to serve. Had ye the honest soul
15 of Barclay,[1] ye would preach repentance to your King; ye would tell the Royal Wretch his sins, and
16 warn him of eternal ruin: Ye would not spend your partial invectives against the injured and the
17 insulted only, but, like faithful ministers, would cry aloud, and spare none. Say not that ye are
18 persecuted, neither endeavour to make us the authors of that reproach, which ye are bringing upon
19 yourselves; for we testify unto all men, that we do not complain against you because ye are Quakers,
20 but because ye pretend to be, and are not Quakers.
21 Alas! it seems by the particular tendency of some part of your testimony, and other parts of your
22 conduct, as if all sin was reduced to, and comprehended in, the act of bearing arms, and that by
23 the people only. Ye appear to us to have mistaken party for conscience; because the general tenor of
24 your actions wants uniformity: And it is exceedingly difficult for us to give credit to many of your
25 pretended scruples; because we see them made by the same men, who, in the very instant that they

1 are exclaiming against the mammon of this World, are nevertheless hunting after it with a step
2 as steady as Time, and an appetite as keen as Death.
3 The quotation which ye have made from Proverbs, in the third page of your testimony, that, "when a
4 man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him," is very unwisely
5 chosen on your part; because it amounts to a proof, that the King's ways (whom ye are so desirous
6 of supporting) do not please the Lord, otherwise his reign would be in peace.

7 I now proceed to the latter part of your testimony, and that for which all the foregoing seems only an
8 introduction, viz.

9 "It hath ever been our judgment and principle, since we were called to profess the light of Christ Jesus,
10 manifested in our consciences unto this day, that the setting up and putting down Kings and
11 governments, is God's peculiar prerogative, for causes best known to himself; and that it is not our
12 business to have any hand or contrivance therein, nor to be busy bodies above our station, much less
13 to plot and contrive the ruin or overturn of any of them; but to pray for the King, and safety of our
14 nation, and good of all men: That we may live a peaceable and quiet life, in all godliness and
15 honesty, under the government which God is pleased to set over us."—If these are really your
16 principles, why do you not abide by them? Why do you not leave that which ye call God's work to be
17 managed by himself? These very principles instruct you to wait with patience and humility for the
18 event of all public measures, and to receive that event as the divine will towards you. Wherefore, what
19 occasion is there for your political testimony, if you fully believe what it contains? And the very
20 publishing it proves, that either ye do not believe what ye profess, or have not virtue enough to
21 practise what ye believe.

22 The principles of Quakerism have a direct tendency, to make a man the quiet and inoffensive subject of
23 any and every government which is set over him. And if the setting up and putting down of Kings and
24 governments is God's peculiar prerogative, he most certainly will not be robbed thereof by us;
25 wherefore, the principle itself leads you to approve of every thing which ever happened or may

1 happen to Kings, as being his work. Oliver Cromwell thanks you. Charles then died not by the hands of
2 man; and should the present proud Imitator of him come to the same untimely end, the writers and
3 publishers of the testimony are bound by the doctrine it contains to applaud the fact. Kings are not
4 taken away by miracles, neither are changes in governments brought about by any other means
5 than such as are common and human; and such as we are now using. Even the dispersion of the Jews,
6 though foretold by our Saviour, was effected by arms. Wherefore, as ye refuse to be the means on
7 one side, ye ought not to be medlers on the other but to wait the issue in silence, and unless ye can
8 produce divine authority to prove, that the Almighty, who hath made and placed this new world at the
9 greatest distance it could possibly stand, east and west, from every part of the old, doth, nevertheless,
10 disapprove of its being independent of the corrupt and abandoned court of Britain, unless I say ye
11 can shew this, how can ye, on the ground of your principles, justify the exciting and stirring up the
12 people "firmly to unite in the abhorrence of all such writings and measures, as evidence a desire and
13 design to break off the happy connexion we have hitherto enjoyed with the kingdom of Great-Britain,
14 and our just and necessary subordination to the King, and those who are lawfully placed in authority
15 under him?" What a slap of the face is here! The men who, in the very paragraph before, have quietly
16 and passively resigned up the ordering, altering and disposal of Kings and governments into the hands
17 of God, are now recalling, their principles, and putting in for a share of the business. Is it possible that
18 the conclusion, which is here justly quoted, can any ways follow from the doctrine laid down? The
19 inconsistency is too glaring not to be seen; the absurdity too great not to be laughed at; and such as
20 could only have been made by those, whose understandings were darkened by the narrow and
21 crabbed spirit of a despairing political party; for ye are not to be considered as the whole body of the
22 Quakers, but only as a factional and fractional part thereof.
23 Here ends the examination of your testimony (which I call upon no man to abhor as ye have done, but
24 only to read and judge of fairly) to which I subjoin the following remark; "that the setting up and
25 putting down of Kings," most certainly mean, the making him a King who is yet not so, and the making

1 him no King who is already one. And pray what hath this to do in the present case? We neither mean
2 to set up nor to pull down, neither to make nor to unmake, but to have nothing to do with them.
3 Wherefore your testimony, in whatever light it is viewed, serves only to dishonor your judgment, and
4 for many other reasons had better have been let alone than published.
5 First, Because it tends to the decrease and reproach of all religion whatever, and is of the utmost danger
6 to society, to make it a party in political disputes.
7 Secondly, Because it exhibits a body of men, numbers of whom disavow the publishing political
8 testimonies, as being concerned therein, and approvers thereof.
9 Thirdly, Because it hath a tendency to undo that Continental harmony and friendship, which
10 yourselves, by your late liberal and charitable donations, hath lent a hand to establish; and the
11 preservation of which, is of the utmost consequence to us all.
12 And here, without anger or resentment, I bid you farewell: Sincerely wishing, that as men and
13 Christians, ye may always fully and uninterruptedly enjoy every civil and religious right; and be, in
14 your turn, the means of securing it to others; but that the example which ye have unwisely set, of
15 mingling religion with politics, may be disavowed and reprobated by every inhabitant of America.
16 FINIS.

17 The following Addition is made to the new Edition of Common Sense, printed in Philadelphia.
18 Page 28, line 23, from the top, after the sentence which ends with the word sterling, is now added:
19 The first and second editions of this pamphlet were published without the following calculations, which
20 are now given as a proof that the above estimation of the navy is a just one. See Entick's Naval Hist.
21 Introd. page 56.
22 The charge of building a ship of each rate, and furnishing her with masts, yards, sails and rigging,
23 together with a proportion of eight months boatswain's and carpenter's sea-stores, as calculated by
24 Mr. Burchett, Secretary to the Navy.

25

1	For a ship of 100 guns	£ 35,553
2	90	29,886
3	80	23,638
4	70	17,785
5	60	14,197
6	50	10,606
7	40	7,558
8	30	5,846
9	20	3,710

10 And from hence it is easy to sum up the value, or cost rather, of the whole British navy, which in the
11 year 1757, when it was at its greatest glory, consisted of the following ships and guns.

12	Ships	Guns	Cost of One	Cost of All
13	6	100	£ 35,553	£213,218
14	12	90	29,886	358,632
15	12	80	23,638	283,656
16	43	70	17,785	764,755
17	35	60	14,197	496,895
18	40	50	10,606	424,240
19	45	40	7,558	340,110
20	58	20	3,710	215,180
21	85	sloops,bombs and		
22		fire-ships, one with		
23		another, at	2,000	170,000
24		Cost,		3,266,786
25		Remains for guns,		233,214

1	Total,	£3,500,000
2	Providence: Printed and Sold by John Carter.	
3	"Thou hast tasted of prosperity and adversity; thou knowest what it is to be banished thy native	
4	country, to be over-ruled as well as to rule, and sit upon the throne; and being oppressed, thou hast	
5	reason to know how hateful the oppressor is both to God and man: If after all these warnings and	
6	advertisements, thou dost not turn unto the Lord with all thy heart, but forget him who remembered	
7	thee in thy distress, and give up thyself to folly, lust and vanity, surely great will be thy condemnation.—	
8	Against which snare, as well as the temptations of those who may or do feed thee, and prompt thee to	
9	evil, the most excellent and prevalent remedy will be to apply thyself to that light of Christ	
10	which shineth in thy conscience, and which neither can nor will flatter thee, nor suffer thee to be at	
11	ease in thy sins."Barclay's Address to Charles II.	
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