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United States Declaration of Independence

THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

1776:

AND

WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

TO THE

PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES,

1796.



BOSTON:
PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE CITY COUNCIL.
1876.

in the



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DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

PROCEEDINGS IN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED COLONIES
RESPECTING “A DECLARATION BY THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, IN CONGRESS AS-
SEMBLED.”

IN THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED COLONIES.

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1776.

Resolved, That the resolutions respecting independency be referred to a committee of the whole Congress.

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

Resolved, That this Congress will, on Monday next, at 10 o'clock, resolve itself into a committee of the whole, to take into their further consideration the resolutions referred to them.

MONDAY, JUNE 10, 1776.

Agreeably to order, the Congress resolved itself into a committee of the whole, to take into their further consideration the resolutions to them referred; and, after some time spent thereon, the President resumed the chair, and Mr. Harrison reported, that the committee have had under consideration the matters referred to them, and have come to a resolution thereon, which they directed him to report.

The resolution agreed to in committee of the whole being read,

Resolved, That the consideration of the first resolution be postponed to Monday, the first day of July next; and, in the meanwhile, that no time be lost, in case the Congress agree thereto, that a committee be appointed to prepare a declaration to the effect of the said first resolution, which is in these words: "That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British crown; and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is, and ought to be, totally dissolved."

TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 1776.

Resolved, That the committee, for preparing the DECLARATION, consist of five:—The members chosen, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. John Adams, Mr. Franklin, Mr. Sherman, and Mr. R. R. Livingston.

MONDAY, JULY 1, 1776.

The order of the day being read,

Resolved, That this Congress will resolve itself into a committee of the whole, to take into consideration the RESOLUTION respecting independence.

That the DECLARATION be referred to said committee.

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

The RESOLUTION agreed to by the committee of the whole being read, the determination thereof was, at the request of a colony, postponed until to-morrow.

Resolved, That this Congress will, to-morrow, resolve itself into a committee of the whole, to take into consideration the DECLARATION respecting independence.

TUESDAY, JULY 2, 1776.

The Congress resumed the consideration of the RESOLUTION reported from the committee of the whole; which WAS AGREED TO AS FOLLOWS :

Resolved, THAT THESE UNITED COLONIES ARE, AND OF RIGHT OUGHT TO

BE, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; THAT THEY ARE ABSOLVED FROM ALL ALLEGIANCE TO THE BRITISH CROWN, AND THAT ALL POLITICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM AND THE STATE OF GREAT BRITAIN IS AND OUGHT TO BE TOTALLY DISSOLVED.

Agreeably to the order of the day, the Congress resolved itself into a committee of the whole; and, after some time, the President resumed the chair, and Mr. Harrison reported, that the committee have had under consideration the DECLARATION to them referred; but, not having had time to go through the same, desired him to move for leave to sit again.

Resolved, That this Congress will, to-morrow, again resolve itself into a committee of the whole, to take into their further consideration the DECLARATION respecting independence.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 3, 1776.

Agreeably to the order of the day, the Congress resolved itself into a committee of the whole, to take into their further consideration the DECLARATION; and, after some time, the President resumed the chair, and Mr. Harrison reported, that the committee, not having yet gone through it, desired leave to sit again.

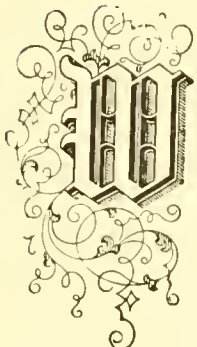
Resolved, That this Congress will, to-morrow, again resolve itself into a committee of the whole, to take into their further consideration the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

THURSDAY, JULY 4, 1776.

Agreeably to the order of the day, the Congress resolved itself into a committee of the whole, to take into their further consideration the DECLARATION; and after some time the President resumed the chair, and Mr. Harrison reported that the committee had agreed to a DECLARATION, which they desired him to report.

THE DECLARATION being read, WAS AGREED TO AS FOLLOWS :

A Declaration by the Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

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

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness; that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object,

evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world:

He has refused his Assent to Laws the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

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

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommo-

dation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature—a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

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

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws

for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

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

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies, without the Consent of our Legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of, and superior to, the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our Constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation,

for quartering large bodies of armed troops among us ;

for protecting them by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States ;

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

for imposing Taxes on us without our Consent ;
for depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury ;

for transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences ;

for abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary Government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies ;

for taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the forms of our Governments ;

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

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

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

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

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of

our frontiers the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms. Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the

voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do in the Name and by authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be, FREE AND INDEPENDENT STATES; that they are absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of DIVINE

PROVIDENCE, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.

The foregoing declaration was, by order of Congress, engrossed, and signed by the following members:—

JOHN HANCOCK.

New Hampshire.

Josiah Bartlett,
William Whipple,
Matthew Thornton.

Connecticut.

Roger Sherman,
Samuel Huntington,
William Williams,
Oliver Wolcott.

Rhode Island.

Stephen Hopkins,
William Ellery.

Massachusetts Bay.

Samuel Adams,
John Adams,
Robert Treat Paine,
Elbridge Gerry.

New York.

William Floyd,
Philip Livingstone,
Francis Lewis,
Lewis Morris.

New Jersey.

Richard Stockton,
John Witherspoon,
Francis Hopkinson,
John Hart,
Abraham Clark.

Maryland.

Samuel Chase,
William Paca,
Thomas Stone,
Charles Carroll, of Car-
rollton.

Pennsylvania.

Robert Morris,
Benjamin Rush,
Benjamin Franklin,
John Morton,
George Clymer,
James Smith,
George Taylor,
James Wilson,
George Ross.

Virginia.

George Wythe,
Richard Henry Lee,
Thomas Jefferson,
Benjamin Harrison,
Thomas Nelson, jun.,
Francis Lightfoot Lee,
Carter Braxton.

Delaware.

Cæsar Rodney,
George Read,
Thomas M'Kean.

North Carolina.

William Hooper,
Joseph Hewes,
John Penn.

South Carolina.

Edward Rutledge,
Thomas Heyward, jun.,
Thomas Lynch, jun.,
Arthur Middleton.

Georgia.

Button Gwinnett,
Lyman Hall,
George Walton.

Resolved, That copies of the Declaration be sent to the several assemblies, conventions, and committees, or councils of safety, and to the several commanding officers of the continental troops; that it be proclaimed in each of the United States, and at the head of the army.

John Hancock
Massachusetts

Sam^l. Adams

John Adams

ROBERT PAINE

Elbridge Gerry

New-Hampshire

Josiah Bartlett

Wm Whipple

Matthew Thornton

Rhode Island &c

STEPHENS

William Ellery

Connecticut

Roger Sherman

Sam^l Huntington

Wm Williams

Oliver Wolcott

ROBERT

New York

Phil. Livingston

JOHN LENOX

LEWIS MORRIS

New Jersey

Rich^d Stockton

Jos Witherspoon

Tras. Hopkinson

John Hart

Abra Clark

Pennsylvania

ROB MORRIS

Benjamin Rush

Ben^g Franklin

John Morton

Geo. Clymer
Jas. Smith

Pennsylvania

Geo. Taylor
James Wilson

Wm. W. W. W.
Casar Rodney

Delaware

Geatread

Thos. M. Treat

Samuel Chas. W.

Maryland

Wm. Paca

Thos. Hone

Charles Carroll of Carrollton

George Wythe

Richard Henry Lee

Virginia

Thos. Jefferson

Virginia

Wm. Harrison
Thos. Nelson

Francis Lightfoot Lee

Carter Braxton

Wm. Hooper

North Carolina

Joseph Hewes

John Penn

Edward Rutledge

South Carolina

Thos. Heyward Junr.

Thomas Lynch Junr.

Arthur Middleton

Button Guinness

Georgia

Syman Hall

Geo. Walton

F A C - S I M I L E

O F T H E

O R I G I N A L D R A F T

O F T H E

D E C L A R A T I O N O F I N D E P E N D E N C E ,

I N T H E H A N D W R I T I N G O F T H O M A S J E F F E R S O N , W I T H T H E
C O R R E C T I O N S A S M A D E B Y J O H N A D A M S A N D ,
B E N J A M I N F R A N K L I N , N O W O N F I L E I N
T H E P A T E N T O F F I C E A T
W A S H I N G T O N , D . C .

A Declaration by the Representatives of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in General Congress assembled.

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for ^{one} people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to ~~assume as~~ ~~from that independent station which they have hitherto maintained, &c.~~ as ^{separate and equal} -sume among the powers of the earth the ~~independent~~ station to which the laws of nature & of nature's god entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to ~~the~~ ^{the} separation.

We hold these truths to be ^{self-evident} ~~clear & undeniable~~; that all men are created equal & independent; that ^{they are endowed by their creator with equal} ~~from that equal creation they derive~~ ~~certain~~ ^{rights; that} ~~inherent~~ ^{unalienable} rights, among ^{these} ~~which~~ are ~~the preservation of~~ life & liberty, & the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these ^{rights} ~~ends~~, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever ^{any} form of government ~~shall~~ becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, & to institute new government, laying it's foundation on such principles & organising it's powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety & happiness. ^{prudence} indeed will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light & transient causes: and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. but when a long train of abuses & usurpations, [begun at a distinguished period, &] pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to ~~reduce~~ ^{reduce} them ~~to a state of~~ ^{under absolute Despotism,} ~~tyranny & oppression,~~ it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government & to provide new guards for their future security. such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies, & such is now the necessity which constrains them ^{to} ^{alter} ~~to~~ [expunge] their former systems of government. the history of ^{the} ^{thing of Great Britain} ~~this present~~ ^{repeated} ~~usurpations,~~ is a history of [unremitting] injuries and

Franklin's handwriting

Adams handwriting

usurpations, [among which, ~~appears no solitary fact~~ ^{but all} ~~of which~~ ^{having} to contra-
dict the uniform tenor of the rest, [all of which] ^{have} in direct object the
establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. to prove this let facts be
submitted to a candid world, [for the truth of which we pledge a faith
yet unsullied by falsehood]

(END OF 1ST PAGE).

he has refused his assent to laws the most wholesome and necessary for the pub-
lic good:

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

he has refused to pass other laws for the accomodation of large districts of people
unless those people would relinquish the right of representation ^{in the legislative}, a right
inestimable to them, & formidable to tyrants only:

he has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, & distant from
the depository of their public records for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance
with his measures;

he has dissolved Representative houses repeatedly [^{& continually}] for opposing with
manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

~~time after such Dissolutions~~ ^{time after such Dissolutions}, he has refused for a long ~~space of time~~ ^{time}, to cause others to be elected,
whenever the legislative powers, incapable of annihilation, have returned to
the people at large for their exercise, the state remaining in the mean time
exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, & convulsions within.

he has endeavored to prevent the population of these states, for that purpose
obstructing the laws for naturalization of foreigners; refusing to pass others
to encourage their migrations hither; & raising the conditions of new ap-
propriations of lands:

he has ^{obstructed} [suffered] the administration of justice [totally ^{by} to cease in some of these
~~states~~ ^{stated}] refusing his assent to laws for establishing judiciary powers:

he has made [ours] judges dependant on his will alone, for the tenure of their offices,
and amount of their salaries.

he has erected a multitude of new offices [by a self-assumed power] & sent hi-

-ther swarms of officers to harass our people & eat out their substance:

he has kept among us in times of peace, ~~standing~~ ^{without ~~our~~ consent of our} standing armies [& ships of war] ^{legislate}

he has affected to render the military independent of & superior to the civil power:

he has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitu-
-tions and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his assent to their ^{acts of} pretended ~~acts~~
of legislation, for quartering large bodies of armed troops among us;

for protecting them by a mock-trial from punishment for any murders
^{which} they should commit on the inhabitants of these states;

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

for imposing taxes on us without our consent;

for depriving us ^{in many cases} of the benefits of trial by jury;

for transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences:

for abolishing the free system of English laws in a neighboring province, established there in an arbitrary govern-
-ment, and enlarging its borders so as to render it at once an example & fit instrument for introducing the same into
-other parts of the continent.

(END OF 2^D PAGE)

Dr Franklin

abolishing our most ^{valuable} ~~important~~ laws

for taking away our charters, ^{altering} fundamentally the forms of our governments,

for suspending our own legislatures & declaring themselves invested with power to
legislate for us in all cases whatsoever:

he has abdicated government here, ^{by declaring us out of his protection & waging war against us.} [withdrawing his governors, & declaring us out
of his allegiance & protection:]

he has plundered our seas, ravaged our coasts, burnt our towns & destroyed the
lives of our people:

he is at this time transporting large armies of ^{Scotch and other} foreign mercenaries to compleat
the works of death, desolation & tyranny already begun with circumstances
^{scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages and totally}
of cruelty & perfidy, unworthy the head of a civilized nation

^{he has endeavored to excite} domestic insurrections among us, and has
endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian
savages, whose known rule of warfare is an indiscriminate destruction of
all ages, sexes, & conditions [of existence:]

[he has incited treasonable insurrections of our fellow-citizens, with the

allurements of forfeiture & confiscation of our property.
he has constrained others ^{to take arms} ~~to take arms~~ ^{to bear arms against their country & to do}
~~or to fall themselves by their hands~~ ^{to become the executioners of their friends & brethren}
he has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's most sa-
-cred rights of life & liberty in the persons of a distant people who never of-
fended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemis-
-phere, or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. This
piratical warfare, the opprobrium of infidel powers, is the warfare of the
Christian king of Great Britain determined to keep open a market
where MEN should be bought & sold he has prostituted his negative
for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this
determining ~~take upon a market where MEN should be bought & sold~~:
execrable commerce; and that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact
of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms
amongus, and to purchase that liberty of which he has deprived them,
by murdering the people upon whom he also obtruded them: thus paying
off former crimes committed against the liberties of one people, with crimes
which he urges them to commit against the lives of another.]

in every stage of these oppressions" we have petitioned for redress in the most humble
terms"; our repeated petitions have been answered ^{only} by repeated injuries. a prince
whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant" is unfit
to be the ruler of a people ^{free} [who mean to be free" future ages will scarce believe'
that the hardness of one man, adventured within the short compass of twelve years
to ^{erect} a foundation for broad & undisguised, for tyranny
only, ~~of tyranny~~, over a people fostered & reared in principles
of liberty: freedom.]

Nor have we been wanting in attentions to our British brethren: we have
warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend a juris-
-diction over ^{us} [these our states] we have reminded them of the circumstances of
our emigration & settlement here, [no one of which could warrant so strange a
pretension: that these were effected at the expence of our own blood & treasure,
unassisted by the wealth or the strength of Great Britain: that in constituting

WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

FRIENDS AND FELLOW-CITIZENS :

The period for a new election of a citizen to administer the Executive Government of the United States being not far distant, and the time actually arrived when your thoughts must be employed in designating the person who is to be clothed with that important trust, it appears to me proper, especially as it may conduce to a more distinct expression of the public voice, that I should now apprise you of the resolution I have formed, to decline being considered among the number of those out of whom a choice is to be made.

I beg you, at the same time, to do me the

justice to be assured that this resolution has not been taken without a strict regard to all the considerations appertaining to the relation which binds a dutiful citizen to his country; and that, in withdrawing the tender of service, which silence, in my situation, might imply, I am influenced by no diminution of zeal for your future interest; no deficiency of grateful respect for your past kindness; but am supported by a full conviction that the step is compatible with both.

The acceptance of, and continuance hitherto in, the office to which your suffrages have twice called me, have been a uniform sacrifice of inclination to the opinion of duty, and to a deference for what appeared to be your desire. I constantly hoped that it would have been much earlier in my power, consistently with motives which I am not at liberty to disregard, to return to that retirement from which I had been reluctantly drawn. The strength of my inclination to do this, previous to the last election, had even led to the preparation of an

address to declare it to you ; but mature reflection on the then perplexed and critical posture of our affairs with foreign nations, and the unanimous advice of persons entitled to my confidence, impelled me to abandon the idea.

I rejoice that the state of your concerns, external as well as internal, no longer renders the pursuit of inclination incompatible with the sentiment of duty or propriety ; and am persuaded, whatever partiality may be retained for my services, that, in the present circumstances of our country, you will not disapprove my determination to retire.

The impressions with which I first undertook the arduous trust were explained on the proper occasion. In the discharge of this trust, I will only say, that I have with good intentions contributed towards the organization and administration of the Government the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. Not unconscious in the outset of the inferiority of my qualifications, experience, in my own eyes — perhaps still more in the eyes of others

—has strengthened the motives to diffidence of myself: and every day the increasing weight of years admonishes me, more and more, that the shade of retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome. Satisfied that if any circumstances have given peculiar value to my services, they were temporary, I have the consolation to believe that, while choice and prudence invite me to quit the political scene, patriotism does not forbid it.

In looking forward to the moment which is intended to terminate the career of my public life, my feelings do not permit me to suspend the deep acknowledgment of that debt of gratitude which I owe to my beloved country for the many honors it has conferred upon me; still more for the steadfast confidence with which it has supported me; and for the opportunities I have thence enjoyed of manifesting my inviolable attachment, by services faithful and persevering, though in usefulness unequal to my zeal. If benefits have resulted to our country from these

services, let it always be remembered to your praise, and as an instructive example in our annals, that, under circumstances in which the passions, agitated in every direction, were liable to mislead; amidst appearances sometimes dubious, vicissitudes of fortune often discouraging: in situations in which, not unfrequently, want of success has countenanced the spirit of criticism,—the constancy of your support was the essential prop of the efforts, and a guarantee of the plans, by which they were effected. Profoundly penetrated with this idea, I shall carry it with me to my grave, as a strong incitement to unceasing vows, that Heaven may continue to you the choicest tokens of its beneficence: that your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual: that the free Constitution, which is the work of your hands, may be sacredly maintained; that its administration, in every department, may be stamped with wisdom and virtue: that, in fine, the happiness of the people of these States, under the auspices of liberty, may be made complete, by so careful a preservation and so prudent a use of

this blessing as will acquire to them the glory of recommending it to the applause, the affection, and the adoption of every nation which is yet a stranger to it.

Here, perhaps, I ought to stop; but a solicitude for your welfare, which cannot end but with my life, and the apprehension of danger natural to that solicitude, urge me, on an occasion like the present, to offer to your solemn contemplation, and to recommend to your frequent review, some sentiments, which are the result of much reflection, of no inconsiderable observation, and which appear to me all-important to the permanency of your felicity as a people. These will be afforded to you with the more freedom, as you can only see in them the disinterested warnings of a parting friend, who can possibly have no personal motive to bias his counsel; nor can I forget, as an encouragement to it, your indulgent reception of my sentiments on a former and not dissimilar occasion.

Interwoven as is the love of liberty with every ligament of your hearts, no recommendation of mine is necessary to fortify or confirm the attachment.

The unity of government, which constitutes you one people, is also now dear to you. It is justly so; for it is a main pillar in the edifice of your real independence — the support of your tranquillity at home, your peace abroad, of your safety, of your prosperity, of that very liberty which you so highly prize. But as it is easy to foresee that, from different causes and from different quarters, much pains will be taken, many artifices employed, to weaken in your minds the conviction of this truth; as this is the point in your political fortress against which the batteries of internal and external enemies will be most constantly and actively (though often covertly and insidiously) directed, — it is of infinite moment that you should properly estimate the immense value of your national union to your collective and individual happiness; that you should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment

to it; accustoming yourselves to think and speak of it as of the palladium of your political safety and prosperity; watching for its preservation with jealous anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest even a suspicion that it can, in any event, be abandoned; and indignantly frowning upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacréd ties which now link together the various parts.

For this you have every inducement of sympathy and interest. Citizens by birth or choice, of a common country, that country has a right to concentrate your affections. The name of *American*, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism, more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have, in a common cause, fought and triumphed together; the independence and liberty you possess are the

work of joint counsels and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings, and successes.

But these considerations, however powerfully they address themselves to your sensibility, are greatly outweighed by those which apply more immediately to your interest; here every portion of our country finds the most commanding motives for carefully guarding and preserving the union of the whole.

The North, in an unrestrained intercourse with the South, protected by the equal laws of a common government, finds, in the productions of the latter, great additional resources of maritime and commercial enterprise, and precious materials of manufacturing industry. The South, in the same intercourse, benefiting by the agency of the North, sees its agriculture grow, and its commerce expand. Turning partly into its own channels the seamen of the North, it finds its particular navigation invigorated; and while it contributes, in different ways, to nourish and increase the general mass of the national navigation, it looks forward to the protection of a maritime strength to

which itself is unequally adapted. The East, in like intercourse with the West, already finds, and in the progressive improvement of interior communication, by land and water, will more and more find, a valuable vent for the commodities which it brings from abroad, or manufactures at home. The West derives from the East supplies requisite to its growth and comfort: and what is perhaps of still greater consequence, it must, of necessity, owe the secure enjoyment of indispensable outlets for its own productions, to the weight, influence, and the future maritime strength of the Atlantic side of the Union, directed by an indissoluble community of interest as one nation. Any other tenure by which the West can hold this essential advantage, whether derived from its own separate strength, or from an apostate and unnatural connection with any foreign power, must be intrinsically precarious.

While, then every part of our country thus feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find, in the united

mass of means and efforts, greater strength, greater resource, proportionably greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations; and what is of inestimable value, they must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves, which so frequently afflict neighboring countries, not tied together by the same government; which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues, would stimulate and embitter. Hence, likewise, they will avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments, which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty; in this sense it is that your union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other.

These considerations speak a persuasive language to every reflecting and virtuous mind, and exhibit

the continuance of the Union as a primary object of patriotic desire. Is there a doubt, whether a common government can embrace so large a sphere? Let experience solve it. To listen to mere speculation, in such a case, were criminal. We are authorized to hope, that a proper organization of the whole, with the auxiliary agency of governments for the respective subdivisions, will afford a happy issue to the experiment. It is well worth a fair and full experiment. With such powerful and obvious motives to Union, affecting all parts of our country, while experience shall not have demonstrated its impracticability, there will always be reason to distrust the patriotism of those, who, in any quarter, may endeavor to weaken its bands.

In contemplating the causes which may disturb our Union, it occurs, as a matter of serious concern, that any ground should have been furnished for characterizing parties by geographical discriminations — Northern and Southern — Atlantic and Western : whence designing men may endeavor to excite a

belief that there is a real difference of local interests and views. One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts, is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heart-burnings which spring from these misrepresentations; they tend to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection. The inhabitants of our western country have lately had a useful lesson on this head: they have seen in the negotiation by the Executive, and in the unanimous ratification by the Senate, of the treaty with Spain, and in the universal satisfaction at that event throughout the United States, a decisive proof how unfounded were the suspicions propagated among them, of a policy in the General Government, and in the Atlantic States, unfriendly to their interests in regard to the Mississippi: they have been witnesses to the formation of two treaties — that with Great Britain, and that with Spain, which secure to them everything they could

desire in respect to our foreign relations, towards confirming their prosperity. Will it not be their wisdom to rely for the preservation of these advantages on the Union by which they were procured? Will they not henceforth be deaf to those advisers, if such there are, who would sever them from their brethren, and connect them with aliens?

To the efficacy and permanency of your Union, a Government for the whole is indispensable. No alliance, however strict between the parts, can be an adequate substitute; they must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which all alliances, in all time, have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a Constitution of Government better calculated than your former for an intimate Union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This Government, the offspring of our own choice, uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in

the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The bases of our political systems, is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of Government: but the Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power, and the right of the people to establish Government, presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established Government.

All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberation and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive to this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency.

They serve to organize faction, to give it an artificial and extraordinary force, to put in the place of the delegated will of the nation, the will of a party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community : and, according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of ill-concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans, digested by common counsels, and modified by mutual interests.

However combinations or associations of the above description may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men, will be enabled to subvert the power of the people, and to usurp for themselves the reins of Government ; destroying, afterwards, the very engines which had lifted them to unjust dominion.

Towards the preservation of your Government, and the permanency of your present happy state,

it is requisite, not only that you steadily discountenance irregular oppositions to its acknowledged authority, but also that you resist with care the spirit of innovation upon its principles, however specious the pretexts. One method of assault may be to effect, in the forms of the Constitution, alterations which will impair the energy of the system, and thus to undermine what cannot be directly overthrown. In all the changes to which you may be invited, remember that time and habit are at least as necessary to fix the true character of governments as of other human institutions; that experience is the surest standard by which to test the real tendency of the existing constitution of a country; that facility in changes, upon the credit of mere hypothesis and opinion, exposes to perpetual change, from the endless variety of hypothesis and opinion; and remember, especially, that for the efficient management of your common interests, in a country so extensive as ours, a Government of as much vigor as is consistent with the perfect security

of liberty, is indispensable. Liberty itself will find in such a Government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian. It is, indeed, little else than a name, where the Government is too feeble to withstand the enterprises of faction, to confine each member of the society within the limits prescribed by the laws, and to maintain all in the secure and tranquil enjoyment of the rights of person and property.

I have already intimated to you the danger of parties in the State, with particular reference to the founding of them on geographical discriminations. Let me now take a more comprehensive view, and warn you, in the most solemn manner, against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally.

This spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature, having its root in the strongest passions of the human mind. It exists under different shapes, in all Governments, more or less stifled, controlled, or repressed: but in those of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy.

The alternate domination of one faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissension, which, in different ages and countries, has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads, at length, to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result, gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual: and, sooner or later, the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation on the ruins of public liberty.

Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which, nevertheless, ought not to be entirely out of sight), the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it.

It serves always to distract the public councils, and enfeeble the public administration. It agitates

the community with ill-founded jealousies and false alarms ; kindles the animosity of one part against another ; foment, occasionally, riot and insurrection. It opens the door to foreign influence and corruption, which find a facilitated access to the Government itself, through the channels of party passions. Thus the policy and the will of one country are subjected to the policy and will of another.

There is an opinion that parties, in free countries, are useful checks upon the administration of the Government, and serve to keep alive the spirit of liberty. This, within certain limits, is probably true ; and in Governments of a monarchical cast, patriotism may look with indulgence, if not with favor, upon the spirit of party. But in those of the popular character, in Governments purely elective, it is a spirit not to be encouraged. From their natural tendency, it is certain there will always be enough of that spirit for every salutary purpose. And there being constant danger of excess, the effort ought to be, by force of public opinion, to mitigate and

assuage it. A fire not to be quenched, it demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume.

It is important, likewise, that the habits of thinking, in a free country, should inspire caution in those intrusted with its administration, to confine themselves within their respective constitutional spheres, avoiding, in the exercise of the powers of one department, to encroach upon another. The spirit of encroachment tends to consolidate the powers of all the departments in one, and thus to create, whatever the form of Government, a real despotism. A just estimate of that love of power, and proneness to abuse it which predominates in the human heart, is sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of this position. The necessity of reciprocal checks in the exercise of political power, by dividing and distributing it into different depositories, and constituting each the guardian of the public weal, against invasions by the others, has been evinced by experiments, ancient and modern; some of them

in our own country, and under our own eyes. To preserve them must be as necessary as to institute them. If, in the opinion of the people, the distribution or modification of the constitutional powers be, in any particular, wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free Governments are destroyed. The precedent must always greatly overbalance, in permanent evil, any partial or transient benefit which the use can, at any time, yield.

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume

could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation *desert* the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles.

It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular Government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free Government. Who, that is a sincere friend to it, can look with indifference upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

Promote, then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a

Government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.

As a very important source of strength and security, cherish public credit. One method of preserving it is to use it as sparingly as possible; avoiding occasions of expense by cultivating peace, but remembering also that timely disbursements to prepare for danger, frequently prevent much greater disbursements to repel it; avoiding, likewise, the accumulation of debt, not only by shunning occasions of expense, but by vigorous exertions in time of peace to discharge the debts which unavoidable wars may have occasioned; not ungenerously throwing upon posterity the burden which we ourselves ought to bear. The execution of these maxims belongs to your representatives, but it is necessary that public opinion should co-operate. To facilitate to them the performance of their duty, it is essential that you should practically bear in mind, that towards the payment of debts there must be revenue; that to have revenue there must be

taxes; that no taxes can be devised, which are not more or less inconvenient and unpleasant; that the intrinsic embarrassment inseparable from the selection of the proper objects (which is always a choice of difficulties), ought to be a decisive motive for a candid construction of the conduct of the Government in making it, and for a spirit of acquiescence in the measures for obtaining revenue, which the public exigencies may at any time dictate.

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all; religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be that Provi-

dence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! is it rendered impossible by its vices?

In the execution of such a plan, nothing is more essential than that permanent inveterate antipathies against particular nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded; and that, in place of them, just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The nation which indulges towards another an habitual hatred, or an habitual fondness, is, in some degree, a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection; either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest. Antipathy in one nation against another, disposes each more readily to offer insult and injury, to lay hold of slight causes of umbrage, and to be haughty and intractable, when accidental or trifling occasions of dispute occur. Hence frequent collisions, obstinate, envemomed, and bloody

contests. The nation, prompted by ill-will and resentment, sometimes impels to war the Government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The Government sometimes participates in the national propensity, and adopts, through passion, what reason would reject; at other times it makes the animosity of the nation subservient to projects of hostility, instigated by pride, ambition, and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the liberty, of nations, has been the victim.

So, likewise, a passionate attachment of one nation to another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest, in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter, without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others, which is apt doubly

to injure the nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained, and by exciting jealousy, ill-will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld; and it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation) facility to betray, or sacrifice the interest of their own country, without odium; sometimes even with popularity; gilding with the appearance of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.

As avenues to foreign influence in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practise the art of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils! Such an attachment of a small

or weak, towards a great and powerful nation, dooms the former to be the satellite of the latter.

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow-citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be *constantly* awake; since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican Government. But that jealousy, to be useful, must be impartial; else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defence against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation, and excessive dislike for another, cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil, and even second, the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots, who may resist the intrigues of the favorite, are liable to become suspected and odious; while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people, to surrender their interests.

The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is, in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop.

Europe has a set of primary interests, which to us have none, or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves, by artificial ties, in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.

Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course. If we remain one people, under an efficient Government, the period is not far off when we may defy material injury from external annoyance; when we may take such an attitude as will cause the neutrality we may at any time resolve upon, to be scrupulously

respected ; when belligerent nations, under the impossibility of making acquisitions upon us, will not lightly hazard the giving us provocation ; when we may choose peace or war, as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel.

Why forego the advantages of so peculiar a situation ? why quit our own to stand upon foreign ground ? Why, by interweaving our destiny with that of any part of Europe, entangle our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalship, interest, humor, or caprice ?

It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world ; so far, I mean, as we are now at liberty to do it ; for let me not be understood as capable of patronizing infidelity to existing engagements. I hold the maxim no less applicable to public than to private affairs, that honesty is always the best policy. I repeat it, therefore, let those engagements be observed in their genuine sense. But, in my opinion, it is unnecessary, and would be unwise to extend them.

Taking care always to keep ourselves, by suitable establishments, on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.

Harmony, and a liberal intercourse with all nations, are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying, by gentle means, the streams of commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing, with powers so disposed, in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, and to enable the Government to support them, conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and mutual opinions will permit, but temporary, and liable to be, from time to time, abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view, that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another;

that it must pay, with a portion of its independence, for whatever it may accept under that character; that by such acceptance it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favors, and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not giving more. There can be no greater error than to expect, or calculate upon, real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard.

In offering to you, my countrymen, these counsels of an old and affectionate friend, I dare not hope they will make the strong and lasting impression I could wish; that they will control the usual current of the passions, or prevent our nation from running the course which has hitherto marked the destiny of nations; but if I may even flatter myself that they may be productive of some partial benefit, some occasional good; that they may now and then recur to moderate the fury of party spirit,

to warn against the mischiefs of foreign intrigues, to guard against the impostures of pretended patriotism : this hope will be a full recompense for the solicitude for your welfare by which they have been dictated.

How far, in the discharge of my official duties, I have been guided by the principles which have been delineated, the public records, and other evidences of my conduct, must witness to you and the world. To myself, the assurance of my own conscience is, that I have at least believed myself to be guided by them.

In relation to the still subsisting war in Europe, my proclamation of the 22d of April, 1793, is the index to my plan. Sanctioned by your approving voice, and by that of your Representatives in both Houses of Congress, the spirit of that measure has continually governed me, uninfluenced by any attempts to deter or divert me from it.

After deliberate examination, with the aid of the best lights I could obtain, I was well satisfied that

our country, under all the circumstances of the case, had a right to take, and was bound in duty and interest to take, a neutral position. Having taken it, I determined, as far as should depend upon me, to maintain it with moderation, perseverance, and firmness.

The considerations which respect the right to hold this conduct, it is not necessary on this occasion to detail. I will only observe, that, according to my understanding of the matter, that right, so far from being denied by any of the belligerent powers, has been virtually admitted by all.

The duty of holding a neutral conduct may be inferred, without any thing more, from the obligation which justice and humanity impose on every nation, in cases in which it is free to act, to maintain inviolate the relations of peace and amity towards other nations.

The inducements of interest, for observing that conduct, will best be referred to your own reflections and experience. With me, a predominant

motive has been to endeavor to gain time to our country to settle and mature its yet recent institutions, and to progress, without interruption, to that degree of strength and consistency which is necessary to give it, humanly speaking, the command of its own fortunes.

Though, in reviewing the incidents of my administration, I am unconscious of intentional error; I am, nevertheless, too sensible of my defects not to think it probable that I may have committed many errors. Whatever they may be, I fervently beseech the Almighty to avert or mitigate the evils to which they may tend. I shall also carry with me the hope, that my country will never cease to view them with indulgence; and that, after forty-five years of my life dedicated to its service with an upright zeal, the faults of incompetent abilities will be consigned to oblivion, as myself must soon be to the mansions of rest.

Relying on its kindness in this, as in other things, and actuated by that fervent love towards

it which is so natural to a man who views in it the native soil of himself and his progenitors for several generations, I anticipate, with pleasing expectation, that retreat in which I promise myself to realize, without alloy, the sweet enjoyment of partaking, in the midst of my fellow-citizens, the benign influence of good laws under a free Government—the ever favorite object of my heart—and the happy reward, as I trust, of our mutual cares, labors, and dangers.

GEORGE WASHINGTON.

United States, 17th September, 1796.

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