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A CIRCULAR LETTER

To the COMMITTEES of SOUTH-CAROLINA.

Charlestown, June 30, 1775.

FELLOW-CITIZENS,

THIS year will be a grand epocha in the history of mankind. In this conspicuous and ever-memorable year, America has been abused, and Britain has disgraced herself, in an unexampled manner. All the guilt of all the English ministers of state, from the reign of the First William, to the conclusion of the late war, does not equal the guilt that British ministers have incurred since the latter period. The measure of their iniquity appears now full. They seem fixed in the pursuit of their plan to enslave America, in order that they might enslave Great-Britain; to elevate the monarchy, that has been placed on a throne only to govern under the law—into a throne above all law. But, divine providence has inspired the Americans with such virtue, courage, and conduct, as has already attracted the attention of the universe, and will make them famous to the latest posterity. The Americans promise to arrest the hand of tyranny, and to save even Britannia from shackles.

In a former letter we declared to you, that there was "but little probability of deciding the present unhappy public disputes, by the pacific measures we have hitherto pursued." Our ideas were just, and with the deepest grief, yet firmest resolution, we now announce to you, that the bond of civil war, is not only actually drawn, but stained with blood! The king's troops have at length commenced hostilities against this continent; and not confining their ungenerous attacks, against men in arms defending their properties, they have slaughtered the unarmed, the sick, the helpless: having long insisting they were oppressed, they have now massacred our fellow-subjects in Massachusetts-Bay. Mark the event! These enormities were forever perpetrated, when the divine vengeance pursued the guilty, even from the rising up of the sun, until the going down of the same: the king's troops were discomfited; they met before our injured friends; the night saved them from total destruction.

But see, in what manner the American civil war commenced; and we lay before you the case, as stated by general Gage on the one part, and by the voice of America on the other.

The general sent a detachment of about 800 soldiers into the country, to seize and destroy the property of the people of the Massachusetts-Bay. This detachment, in their way to Concord, at Lexington, saw "about 200 men drawn up on a green, and when the troops came within 100 yards of them (a situation out of the line of their march) they began to fire off." The soldiers upon "observing this," "ran after them, to surround and disarm them. Some of them, who had jumped over a wall, then fired four or five shot at the troops," and, "upon this," the soldiers "began a scattered fire, and killed several of the country people." Clear as it is, even from this state, that the king's troops, by running after, actually attacked the provincials peaceably filing off; yet general Gage has the integrity to entitle his narrative of this unfortunate affair, "a circumstantial account of an attack on his majesty's troops by a number of the people of Massachusetts-Bay." But men will excuse to be surprised at this, when they are told the general makes no scruple to violate even a solemn engagement. After the general's defeated troops returned to Boston, he declared, that if the inhabitants of that de-

voted city would deliver up their arms, he would permit them to retire from the town, with their effects: They delivered up near 3000 stand of arms—and to this day, they are, in shameful breach of the capitulation, detained in captivity, patiently enduring the calamities of famine.

However, the voice of America thus describes the commencement of this unnatural war: about eight or nine hundred soldiers came in sight, just before sunrise, of about 100 men, training themselves to arms, as usual; and the troops running within a few rods of them, the commanding officer called out to the militia, "disperse you rebels, damn you, throw down your arms and disperse." Upon which the troops huzza'd—immediately one or two officers discharged their pistols, and then there seemed to be a general discharge from the whole body. Eight Americans were killed upon the spot, and nine were wounded. The soldiers, in a few minutes, resumed their march to Concord; and there, speedily destroyed a considerable quantity of flour and other stores belonging to the public. Another party of militia, about 150 men, alarmed at such violence, had assembled near a bridge at Concord. The soldiers fired upon them, and killed two men. It was this repeated act of deadly hostility that roused the Americans to repel force by force. They now returned the fire—beat the king's troops out of the town, and compelled them to retreat to Lexington, where they met a reinforcement of 1000 fresh men, and two pieces of cannon. The militia being, by this time, increased in their numbers, they soon dislodged the troops from this post; who, during the remainder of the day, made a precipitate retreat through the American fire, and gained a place of safety under cover of the night: In this battle of Lexington, the Americans had 39 men killed, and 19 wounded. The king's troops lost 266 men, killed, wounded, and missing; and, by subsequent accounts, it appears, that, in consequence of that action, general Gage's army has sustained a diminution of 1000 men, by death, wounds, prisoners, desertion, surreits, and other incapacities of service. For the troops being four-and-twenty hours on duty, marched, fought, and fled, 43 miles in that time, without the least refreshment. Let it be remembered, that these 1800 British regulars, consisting of the picked men of the whole army—grenadiers, light infantry, and marines, carefully prepared for the expedition, were defeated and driven, by about 1200 American militia, brought to repel an unexpected attack, and marched in accidental parties upon the spur of the occasion. Let it be delivered down to posterity, that the American civil war broke out on the 19th day of April, 1775.—An epoch that, in all probability, will mark the declension of the British empire!

Such an important event as the actual commencement of civil war, caused the convention of the congress, on the first of June, in order, that some provision might be made against impending calamities. The congress rose on the 22d instant; and it is our duty to inform you, and through you, the public at large, of the material transactions of this important session.

As a first step for our defence, it was thought expedient to unite the inhabitants of the colony, "as a band in her defence against every foe;" and to this purpose, on the fourth day of June, immediately after the celebration of divine service, in congress, an association was signed by all the members present, solemnly engaging their lives and fortunes. In the space of four days, the association was voluntarily subscribed by almost every inhabitant in Charlestown, and transmitted into the country.