as Bunker) Hill, some 75 feet high, commanding Boston, and separated from it by a sheet of water. The British officers might have landed men so as to take the line of entrenchments in the rear, or might have raked it from end to end from the water. They chose to send 2500 men over in boats, and charge straight up the hill. The all- important question was whether the “ embattled farmers ” within the works would stand fire. Not a shot from the line of entrenchments returned the scattering fire of the advancing column until the latter was within a hundred feet ; then a sheet of flame ran along the line, and, when the smoke cleared away, the charging troops were retreat­ing down the hill. The officers moved the men again to the assault, with exactly the same result. At the third assault the ammunition of the farmers was exhausted ; but they retreated fighting stubbornly with gun-stocks, and even with stones. “ The success,” wrote Gage to the ministry, “ has cost us dear ; the trials we have had show the rebels are not the despicable rabble too many have supposed them to be.” He had lost 1100 out of 2500 men. A serious American loss was that of Warren, a Boston leader of high promise.

1. While Washington was endeavouring to form an army out of the heterogeneous material around Boston, another American force was attempting to drive the British out of Canada. On the last day of the year 1775, in an assault on Quebec, one of the leaders, Montgomery (p. 790), was killed, and another, Benedict Arnold, was wounded. Shortly afterwards the American force was driven back into the northern part of New York, near the Canada line, where it held its ground. Congress began in June the issue of bills of credit, or “continental currency,” as a substitute for taxation—a most unhappy step. The bills soon began to depreciate. Congress insisted on holding them to be legal tender ; but it had not seized, as it might have done, the power of taxation, in order to provide for the redemption of the bills; and its recommendation to com­mittees of safety to treat as enemies of their country those who should refuse to receive the bills at their face value never accomplished its object. Successive emissions of paper enabled Congress to support the army for a few years, and even to begin the organization of a navy. Privateers and public armed vessels had been sent out by the several colonies ; the first American fleet, of eight vessels, sailed in February 1776, but its cruise accom­plished little.
2. All this time Congress had been protesting its horror of the idea of independence ; and the colonial congresses had instructed their delegates not to counten­ance any such project. The last petition to the king was adopted by Congress in July 1775, and sent to London by the hands of Richard Penn. It besought the king to consider the complaints of the colonists, and to obtain the repeal of the Acts which they had found intolerable. The news of the battle of Bunker Hill had preceded Penn ; the king refused to answer the petition ; but by a pro­clamation (August 23, 1775) he announced the existence of open rebellion in the colonies, and called on all good subjects to give any information of those persons in Great Britain who were aiding and abetting the rebellion. This was but the first of a series of attacks on that strong sentiment in Great Britain which felt the cause of the colonies to be the old cause of English liberty. At the opening of the struggle this sentiment was intense : officers resigned their commissions rather than serve in America ; the great cities took open ground in favour of the colonies ; and some of the English middle classes wore mourning for the dead at Lexington. As the war increased in its intensity this sentiment necessarily decreased ; but, even while parliament was supporting the war by votes of more than two to one, the ministry was constantly ham­pered by the notorious consciousness that the real heart of England was not in it. Even when 25,000 men were voted at the king’s wish, provision had to be made to obtain them from Germany. Privilege and officialism were against the colonies; the popular heart and conscience were either ignorant or in favour of them.
3. But in America everything spoke of war. Howe, who had succeeded Gage, passed a very bad winter. His men were often short of supplies ; their quarters were uncom­fortable ; and their efforts to better their position were a severe infliction upon the inhabitants. Along the coast the commanders of British ships acted everywhere as if on the borders of an enemy’s country; Gloucester, Bristol, Falmouth, and other defenceless towns were cannonaded ; and the flag of the king tended more and more to appear that of an enemy. On the first day of the new year the distinctive standard of the thirteen united colonies was raised at Washington’s headquarters. It introduced the stripes of the present flag, but retained the crosses of St George and St Andrew on a blue ground in the corner, the whole implying the surviving acknowledgment of the royal power, with the appearance of a new nation. When inde­pendence had eliminated the royal element, the crosses were replaced (1777) by stars, as at present. Congress had been compelled to go so far in national action as to threaten reprisals for the threats of special punishment by the ministry. The first step towards the ultimate applica­tion for admission to the family of nations was really taken in November 1775, when Franklin, Jay, and three other delegates were appointed a committee to maintain inter­course with friends of the colonies “ in Great Britain, Ire­land, and elsewhere”; the main importance of the appoint­ment was in the last two words. The end of the year left independence in the air, though hardly spoken of.
4. Thomas Paine turned the scale (January 9, 1776) by the publication of his pamphlet *Common Sense.* His argument was that independence was the only consistent line to pursue ; that “ it must come to that some time or other”; that it would only be more difficult the more it was delayed ; and that independence was the surest road to union. Written in simple language, it was read every­where ; and the open movement to independence dates from its publication. In the meantime events were urging Congress on. Washington in March seized and fortified Dorchester Heights, to the south of Boston and command­ing it. Before the British could move upon the works, they had been made so strong that the garrison evacuated the place (March 17, 1776), sailing away to Halifax on the fleet. For the moment the British had hardly an organ­ized force within the thirteen colonies ; Charles Lee had just seized New York city and harbour; and the ministry seemed not only hostile, but impotent. The spirit of Con­gress rose with success. It had already ordered (November 25, 1775), on receipt of news of instructions to British war-vessels to attack American seaport towns “ as in the case of actual rebellion,” that British war-vessels or trans­ports should be open to capture; now (March 23, 1776) it declared all British vessels lawful prize. It then went on (April 6) to open all American ports to the vessels of all other nations than Great Britain, still forbidding the slave trade. It had even opened communication with the French court, which, using the name of a fictitious firm in Paris, was shipping money, arms, and supplies to the colonies. All these were acts of an independent power ; and colony after colony, changing the colonial into State forms of government, was instructing its delegates to vote for independence. In May some of the colonies had become too impatient to wait longer, for it was evident that the king had finally ranged himself against the new