American nation. Virginia spoke in most emphatic tones ; and one of her delegates, Richard Henry Lee, moved a resolution in Congress for independence, seconded by John Adams (June 7, 1776). A committee to draw up a declara­tion in conformity with the resolution was chosen, consist­ing of Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, John Adams, Franklin, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Robert R. Livingston of New York ; but the resolution was not adopted until July 2, 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 connexion between them and the state of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved.”

1. Jefferson had come from Virginia with the reputa­tion of a very ready and able writer ; and the committee, by common consent, left the preparation of the first draft of the Declaration of Independence to him. He wrote it almost at one heat ; and, though parts of it were rejected or modified by Congress, the whole instrument, as it was adopted by that body (July *4,* 1776), must stand as Jefferson’s own work. John Adams was its champion on the floor of Congress, for Jefferson was not a public speaker, —and the coincidence of the deaths of these two men, just fifty years afterwards (July 4, 1826), was a remarkable one. The language of the Declaration, like that of all the Ameri­can state-papers of the time, was strong and direct. Ignor­ing parliament, it took every act of oppression which had been aimed at the colonies as the act and deed of the king ; it concluded that “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 ”; and it announced the independence of the United States in the terms of the resolution already stated. The date of its adoption is, by the decision of the Supreme Court, the date of the legal existence of the United States in matters of municipal law.
2. Meanwhile clouds were gathering about the young republic. A British expedition was beaten off from Charles­ton (June 28) ; but two days afterwards a stronger force, under Howe, landed on Staten Island, just below New York city. The ministry, abandoning New England, had decided to transfer the war to the middle colonies. Here was the originally alien element among the colonies (§ 7), though the ministry was disappointed in it ; here was the commercial element, which had sometimes been willing to prefer profit to patriotism ; above all, the Hudson gave a safe path for British frigates, so that the British forces might control at the same time the road into Canada and the moat which should cut off New England from the other colonies. Most of the reasons which made the open­ing of the Mississippi a severe blow to the Confederacy in 1863 applied to the capture of New York city and the operations in the Hudson river in 1776.
3. Washington had hurried to New York city as soon as Boston had surrendered, but his preparations were not far advanced when Howe appeared (June 30). He and his brother, Admiral Lord Howe, the commander of the fleet, had high hopes of receiving the confidence of both parties to the struggle, by reason of their hereditary connexion with the crown and the liking of the colonies for their elder brother, killed at Ticonderoga ; and they brought conciliatory proposals and the consent of the ministry to an unofficial exchange of prisoners. The country was now committed to independence, and in August Howe began offensive operations. Washington’s force numbered 27,000, about four-fifths of them having never seen action ; and about one-third of his army had been placed on Long Island. Howe had 31,000 trained soldiers, largely Hessians; and he debarked 20,000 of them on Long Island, beating Putnam (p. 790), the American commander there, and driving him into Brooklyn (August 27). The British hesitated to attack the American works there, so that Washington was able to draw off the defeated force, and the British followed slowly to the New York side of the river. Through September and October Washington retreated northwards, fighting stubbornly, until he reached the strong defensive positions where the mountains begin to make a figure in the landscape north of New York city. Here he faced about, and prepared to give battle from behind fortifications. Again Howe hesitated, and then turned back to occupy New York.
4. Howe was cut off from the water-way to Canada by Washington’s fortification of the highlands, but his lieu­tenant, Cornwallis, secured a lodgment by surprise on the other side of the Hudson, and thus drew Washington across the river to oppose him. Forced to retreat through New Jersey, pursued by the British, Washington at least used up the month of December in the retreat. But affairs were in a desperate plight. His army had been driven across the Delaware ; the British held all New Jersey, and were only waiting for the river to freeze over to “ catch Washington and end the war”; Philadelphia was in a panic, and Congress had taken refuge in Baltimore, leaving Washington with almost dictatorial powers ; hosts of half­hearted people were taking British protections and return­ing to their allegiance ; and the time was one which “ tried men’s souls.” Washington’s soul was proof against all tests ; and in the midst of his discouragements he had already planned that which was to be the turning-point of the war. The advanced post of the British was one of Hessians, under Rahl, at Trenton, on the Delaware. Seiz­ing all the boats on the river, and choosing the night of Christmas, on the probability that the Hessians would be drunk, he crossed the river, assaulted the town with the bayonet, and captured the garrison. Taking his prisoners to Philadelphia, he recrossed the river on the last day of the year, and reoccupied Trenton. Cornwallis brought almost all his available forces towards that place ; and Washington’s diminishing army was in greater danger than before. Leaving his camp-fires burning, he abandoned his position by night, swept around the sleeping British forces, met, fought, and captured at Princeton (January 3, 1777) a detachment on its march to Trenton, and threat­ened the British base of supplies at New Brunswick. It was only a threat ; but it served its purpose of drawing Cornwallis off from Philadelphia.
5. New Jersey is crossed from south-west to north­east by a spur of the Alleghanies. Thus far operations had been confined to the flat country to the south; Wash­ington now swept on to the northern or mountainous part, and the day after Princeton fixed his headquarters at Morristown, where they really remained almost all through the rest of the war. He was aided by the unwillingness of the British to attack entrenchments. His long line across New Jersey was everywhere strong ; the British could now reach Philadelphia only by passing in front of his line and risking a flank attack ; and they at once drew in their outposts to New Brunswick. With the exception of the occupation of Newport by the British, and attacks on minor outlying places, as Danbury, there was a short breathing space.
6. Kalb, Kosciusko, Conway, and other foreign officers were already serving in the American army; Pulaski (p.79O), Steuben (p. 790), and others were soon to come. Some of the minor foreign acquisitions of this sort were selfish, conceited, and troublesome; the most unselfish and devoted was the young Marquis de la Fayette, who came this year with a shipload of supplies as his gift to the republic. Franklin made his appearance at the French court (December 7, 1776) as one of the American envoys, and