This 1782 broadside—a satirical “epitaph” for King George III after Britain’s defeat in the Revolution—was published by the noted Philadelphia printer, Francis Bailey. As official printer for Congress and Pennsylvania during the war, Bailey had published many official documents including the Declaration of Independence. His press poured forth annual almanacs, editions of the New Testament, a newspaper The Freeman’s Journal, and a monthly magazine entitled The United States Magazine. Known as a fervent Patriot (and later an anti-Federalist), Bailey may have penned this scathing and provocative condemnation of George III and Parliament. It’s quite a piece: in one page it encapsulates the history of the Revolutionary period, voices the Patriots’ utter contempt for British leadership, and celebrates in verbal fireworks and graphic flourish the triumph of the “thirteen glorious republics.” [See annotated text on the following pages.]
EPITAPH

_Broadside published by Francis Bailey, printer, Philadelphia, 1782; 40 x 29 cm. (15.7 x 11.4 in.)_

_TEXT OF EPITAPH_

INDIGNANT Reader,
Whoever thou art, more especially an AMERICAN,
Lift up thine eyes, be thankful, rejoice, and behold!
On a level with former Tyrants,
Knock’d down and tumbled in the dust like his equestrian statue at New-York.
Relinquished, utterly rejected, and deposited, as a security for AMERICA,
In sackcloth and ashes, stratum super stratum corruption with corruption,
Food for profligate Ministers, corrupt Parliaments,
bloody rapacious Nabobs, venal Placemen,
time-serving Pensioners, and deceitful, bribing, pretending, peace-making Commissioners.
The residuum and political remnant of George the III.
Button-Maker;
An enemy to liberty, an ungrateful, inexorable TYRANT,
Of inglorious memory, and an eternal disgrace to those (who are falsely) called the Lord’s Anointed!
In him was completely verified that saying of St. Paul’s,
“Evil communication corrupts good manners.”
A king, who, while on his earthly throne, pursued various villainous schemes to obtain,
Arbitrary Power,
And that divinity of all Tyrants
GOLD!
By fleecing, in the most shameful manner his subjects, to support luxury, ambition, balls, assemblies, theatres, concerts, routs, races,

_ANNOTATIONS_

French depiction of the destruction of the statue of King George III in New York City, July 9, 1776; 177-, detail.
(Slaves were not involved in tearing down the statue.)
sackcloth and ashes: ancient attire as penitence for sins.
stratum super stratum: layer upon layer (Latin).
Ministers: officials of king’s cabinet (not clergymen).
Nabobs: wealthy influential merchants.
Placemen, Pensioners: officials appointed by the king, often irrespective of qualifications.
bribing . . . Commissioners: In 1778 a British negotiator tried to bribe three members of the Continental Congress, news of which further antagonized Patriots.

Button-Maker: George III was often satirized in caricatures as the “royal button maker” due to his interest in mechanical devices.

Evil communication . . . . : 1 Corinthians 15:33 [King James], translated as “bad company corrupts good morals” in the New American Standard Bible.

King George III, oil portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1779 (detail)
bal-pares, cornelli-masquerades, Stratford-jubilees, Ranelagh-regattas, effeminate Italian fiddlers, emasculated singers, and the whole complicated round of Nocturnal Pleasures.

Making baubles of the laws of the land,
A joke of liberty and property,
Foot balls of petitions and remonstrances,
Kicking heels overhead, religion, justice and humanity,
Turning topsy-turvy, charters and bills of right.

Like NERO, burning cities through wantonness, starving, poisoning, smothering, putting thousands to the sword, and, wading knee deep with secret pleasure, in the blood of his subjects to gratify a brutal devilish Revenge:

Like SYLLA and CESAR, bribing parliaments, and feasting soldiers, (the execrable instruments of his tyranny) with visionary confiscated lands of the friends of Liberty.

Like JAMES II, dispensed with the laws, and made continual innovations upon the Constitution.

Like CHARLES I, raised a rebellion in the land.
Like CARACALLA, loaded the people in all the provinces, with grievous, arbitrary taxes, to reduce them to a state of poverty and Vassalage.

Like PHARAOH, hardening his heart, and contumaciously persisting, through often admonished of the fatal Consequences.

Like CALIGULA, overflowing with vanity and pride, commanded his image to be set up in the Temple;
So he, (as though making it a point to affront his maker) by suffering himself to be addressed by the blasphemous title of “Most Sacred Majesty.”

Like HIMSELF only, by swearing, while he wore the crown, and carried the sword, his subjects should bow down in “Unconditional Submission,” 'Till they were humbled, and brought under his FEET.
Like a LION, greedy of his prey;
And,
Like a CORMORANT, never satisfied, although crammed with millions, gorging and disgorging eternally, and eternally craving more.
So that
His sceptre became broken,
His crown transformed into a fool’s cap,
And his THRONE (the throne of his ancestors) which in ancient days was the seat of regal power, the meridian and pinnacle of human glory, visibly declining, and in all human probability, (unless a miracle interpose, which cannot be expected in his favour) will shortly become a Footstool to the most christian, most illustrious, and most invincible, LOUIS XVI.

Now Reader attend!
On the ever memorable and auspicious 4th day of July, in the year of our Lord, 1776, after near a sixteen years tyrannical reign, it was declared unto this second Nebuchadnezzar, even while his fleet and army were riding, (as he thought) TRIUMPHANTLY at New-York,
casting forth their threats, and bellowing out death and destruction, by the voices and hand-writing of THREE MILLION of AMERICAN FREEMEN (Tories excepted) “Thy kingdom is departed from thee.”
Thus, a most glorious INDEPENDENCY Commenced;
And the period of his tyrannical race being ended, after galloping through and trampling under foot the principles of the Constitution,
His popularity spent, hated, despised, contemned and justly cast off by his American subjects, he sunk to his deserved insignificance and obscurity; over a free people to reign no more.
Yet, by a fatality peculiar to himself, did this frantic, infatuated, inflexible, pertinacious Briton pursue, with diabolical rage and unrelenting fury, the Ignis Fatuus of AMERICA.
By sending his impotent fleets and armies to burn, plunder, desolate, and hover round her coasts, to gain (if possible) admittance, like the elder Satan, who scaled the walls of

Paradise.

But, behold! in due time, (even while his hopes and expectations were raised to the highest pitch, from false intelligence of detestable Refugees, those shooters of fire-brands, arrows and death, emphatically called Vipers, and the lying spirit of an infernal RIVINGTON!

which had gone forth).

By the permission of kind PROVIDENCE,

The directing hand of a Godlike Hero!

A mighty WASHINGTON!

And the generous assistance of our magnanimous ALLY;
The Ignis Fatuus led him on to his destruction, bewilder’d him,
His fleet was beaten, taken, and scatter’d,
A bloody CORNWALLIS Burgoy’n’d,
As was some time before,
A BURGOYNE Cornwalliss ’d,
And their whole armies CAPTURED.

In consequence of which (shewing not the least disposition towards amendment or repentance) he became spiritless, exhausted, perturabted, mortified, distracted, humbled, and seized with fits of trepidation, “demoniac frenzy, moon-struck madness,”

HE FELL UNPITIED,
mourning over, and shedding thirteen silent tears, for his lost colonies, and sunk precipitant to rise no more;

And the gate of America, immediately closed, for ever against him; of which the fall of a jewel from his crown, (on his coronation day) was a type, a forerunner, a sad Omen!

which, (although melancholy in its nature) cre-

false intelligence . . . : false reports from American Loyalists.

James Rivington: editor of Loyalist newspapers in New York City.

magnanimous Ally: France.

Cornwallis & Burgoyne: British generals defeated at Yorktown (1781) and Saratoga (1778).

demoniac frenzy . . . : i.e., mental illness; lines from John Milton’s epic poem, Paradise Lost (1667).

By the end of his life, George III was incapable of ruling and in 1811 his eldest son was named regent. Nine years later George died. The long-held theory that he suffered from porphyria has been challenged—bipolar disorder now considered a likely alternative.

__Timothy J. Peters


ated an universal joy, among
the powers of EUROPE, and himself the laughing stock of the nations of the
EUROPE.
A Memento-mori, and an instructive lesson to future
Tyrants.

Neither was his
Omnipotent Parliament
Less agitated by the shock, in the PANDEMONIUM,
Rueful countenances succeeded whispers,
Groans, sighs, and an hideous gabble ensued,
Horrible dissentions, discord, and despair started up,
Followed by a hum, like the sound of mighty waters;
Pride, fury, and disappointment together rose, in the
character of the
Minden-Hero,
with crest erect, loud storming
War! War! War!
But on the sudden appear of
Independence,
Who gave him a frown,
Pride fell back, fury stood transfixed, and disappointment
disappointed, staggered, hung down his
head, and became instantaneously
D U M B.

BOREAS rose next, with a subtle, keen edge,
and with the voice of thunder, blew his last blast;
but on an oblique view of
General Washington’s Picture,
the Thunderer (expiring in an echo) grew insensibly
moderate, reluctantly soften’d, and faintly
and inarticulately breathed
Peace! Peace! Peace!

Now a jangling noise, now various sentiments started
up, and as various interpretations (for “a house
divided against itself cannot stand”) ’till
confusion on confusion rolled, like the
waters of the ocean disturbed by
a mighty leviathan, & closed
the scene in a downright
hubbub of various languages, resembling those
at the confusion of
BABEL.
Thus was begun,
And by a progressive series of remarkable events,
continued and brought about,
The most wonderful Revolution
since
Noah’s Flood;

Memento mori (Latin): Remember death; i.e.,
remember, man, that death awaits us all.

Minden-Hero: satirical reference to Lord George Germain,
(also known as Lord George Sackville), Secretary of State
for American Affairs, who was court-martialed and found
guilty for refusing to order a charge during the Battle of
Minden [Germany] in 1759, during the Seven Years’ War.

Boreas: caricature nickname for Prime Minister Lord North
(Boreas: Greek god of the North Wind). On learning of
Cornwallis’s surrender in October 1781, Lord North despaired
of winning the war and resigned the next spring.

the Thunderer: Lord North.

Caricature of George III and Prime Minister Lord North as
the “state cooks” bemoaning the loss of the colonies
(overturned pan of fish) in front of a map labelled “Plan of
North America,” London, 10 Dec. 1781 (detail)

George III: “O Boreas, the loss of these fish will ruin us
forever.”
North: “My honored liege never fret. Minden & I will
cook em yet.”
And out of the ruins of a cast off, sunken reprobate
Monarchy,
ascended upwards
(like the smoke of an
accepted sacrifice, and with
radiant light, like the beams of the
sun in his meridian splendor, spreading
every way instantaneous, like a shooting star,
to the wonder and joy of the whole universe)
thirteen glorious Republics.

May the Light above,
far more resplendent than the flashes of his favourite
gunpowder,

GRANT,
That his deeds be recorded in the memory of all true
patriots, until the general conflagration, resuscitation,
and renovation of all things, never to be thought
of, but to be execrated, by those Americans,
whom he hath, and those whom he would have
plundered; and that like

NEBUCADNEZZAR I.
his hairs may grow as eagles feathers,
his nails like birds claws, and in-
stead of grass his food be thistles,
to graze on, not seven only,
but seventy times seven
years, thrice told, on
the summit of the
highest mountain
in North Britain,
but never like
him to reign
again.

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*general conflagration:* the Final Judgment,
the Second Coming of Christ.