

they are members, but also to particular statutes and regulations, to which they have voluntarily subscribed, and which usually produce, besides an uniformity of opinions, a common zeal and enthusiasm.

It should not be omitted, that even the composition of society in the English colonies, rendered the inhabitants averse to every species of superiority, and inclined them to liberty. Here was but one class of men; the mediocrity of their condition tempted not the rich and the powerful of Europe, to visit their shores; opulence, and hereditary honors, were unknown among them; whence no vestige remained of feudal servitude. From these causes resulted a general opinion that all men are by nature equal; and the inhabitants of America would have found it difficult to persuade themselves that they owed their lands and their civil rights to the munificence of princes. Few among them had heard mention of Magna Charta; and those who were not ignorant of the history of that important period of the English revolution, in which this compact was confirmed, considered it rather a solemn recognition, by the king of England, of the rights of the people, than any concession. As they referred to heaven the protection which had conducted them through so many perils, to a land, where at length they had found that repose which in their ancient country they had sought in vain; and as they owed to its beneficence the harvests of their exuberant fields, the only and the genuine source of their riches; so not from the concessions of the king of Great Britain, but from the bounty and infinite clemency of the King of the universe, did they derive every right; these opinions, in the minds of a religious and thoughtful people, were likely to have deep and tenacious roots.

From the vast extent of the province occupied, and the abundance of vacant lands, every colonist was, or easily might have become, at the same time, a proprietor, farmer, and laborer.

Finding all his enjoyments in rural life, he saw spring up, grow, prosper, and arrive at maturity, under his own eyes, and often by the labor of his own hands, all things necessary to the life of man; he felt himself free from all subjection, from all dependence; and individual liberty is a powerful incentive to civil independence. Each might hunt, fowl and fish, at his pleasure, without fear of possible injury to others; poachers were consequently unknown in America. Their parks and reservoirs were boundless forests, vast and numerous lakes, immense rivers, and a sea unrestricted, inexhaustible in fish of every species. As they lived dispersed in the country, mutual affection was increased between the members of the same family; and finding happiness in the domestic circle, they had no temptation to seek diversion in the resorts of idleness, where men