

Reverend Mr. Harris, or his Letter to the Reverend Mr. Barclay, published in the MARYLAND GAZETTE, No. 1544.

Talbot County, 20th of August 1771.

What must be the Assurance of the Man who was capable, without our Privy and Consent, of setting Mr. Montgomery's Name and mine to a Minute that, as appears from the foregoing Declaration, never existed among the original Minutes of the Eastern Shore Clergy? This Mr. Neill has done. He does, therefore, stand chargeable with taking a very unwarrantable Freedom with us, with misrepresenting his Brethren, and with an Imposition on the Publick.

Sensible that he could neither produce the Minute, nor any Order from the Clergy to transmit a Copy of it to Mr. Harris, with the Sanction of Mr. Montgomery's Name and mine, Mr. Neill now sculkingly takes Shelter under "verbal Directions" from the President. In his Letter to Mr. HARRIS, he says, "the Clergy ordered a Copy of their Opinion to be by him transmitted to Mr. Harris." In his late Publication he tells us—he had "verbal Directions from the President" to communicate it to him (Mr. Harris.)

Thus he plainly differs from, and contradicts himself, and has fairly discharged the more prudent Part of Mankind, at least, from paying any Regard to his Assertions. But who that saw his Letter to Mr. Harris, signed by me as President, and a "true Copy" by Mr. Montgomery as Clerk, ever suspected that it would end in a Minute that never existed, and in "verbal Directions" that never were given? Mr. Neill has too mean an Opinion of the Publick, if he hopes to pay or put it off with such Coin.

Mr. Neill tells us—that "on the Second Day, when he returned to Mr. Barclay's, which was about Twelve o'Clock, Mr. President acquainted him that the Clergy had re-assumed the Consideration of Mr. Harris's Letter, and had passed the following Votes:—It is the unanimous Opinion of the Clergy, that Mr. Harris's Letter favours more of *Toddy* than Truth, and is plentifully dashed with Forgeries and Falshoods. Nem. Con." By the Way, "a unanimous Vote, Nem. Con." is "a Mode of Compulsion, I believe, peculiar to Mr. Neill."—He goes on to tell us, that "as the President seemed to acquire a very great Weight, from the Dignity of his Seat, and carry every Thing with a dictatorial Authority, the Clergy were silent." Thus, as it should seem, by the "dictatorial Authority" of the President, and the Tameness and Silence of the Clergy, were Mr. Neill's Minutes so far made out. All this is pretty plausible, but happens to labour under one great Defect; and that is, it is not true. It cannot but seem strange and unaccountable that the Clergy, after determining, on the First Day of their Meeting, not to take any Notice of Mr. Harris's Letter, should yet, on the Second Day, re-assume the Consideration of it, without any one Motive or Argument offered to induce them to depart from their prior Resolution. Is it not probable that, if the President acquainted him with the aforesaid "unanimous Vote, Nem. Con." Mr. Neill would have had Recourse to the Minutes, and have copied it from thence; or, if he had not found it there, have desired it might be entered before he sent it in the Name of the Clergy? This he might, with the greatest Ease, have obtained. For who would object to entering "a unanimous Vote, Nem. Con."—Had the Clergy passed any such Vote, Mr. Neill had the Matter too much at Heart to have suffered it to remain unentered. Now there appears not any such Entry; and, therefore, 'tis probable that such a Vote never was passed. Besides; what a tame and silly Set of Mortals does he make the Clergy appear to be!—According to Mr. Neill they were "silent," and every Thing was carried by the "dictatorial Authority of the President!" Herein Mr. Neill must excuse me.—There were, among the Clergy, Gentlemen, who, in Parts and Understanding, were greatly superior to him, and who would have refuted and spurned at such overbearing Management. I have not met with one Clergyman that can recollect any Thing of re-assuming the Consideration of Mr. Harris's Letter, or of my acquainting Mr. Neill with the aforesaid "unanimous Vote, Nem. Con." For my Part I do not remember a Title of it, and do aver it to be false. But not to rest the Matter on my own Assertion, and that it may not appear to be unsupported by any other Evidence, I shall here subjoin a Letter I received from the Reverend Mr. Brown, who, as he accompanied Mr. Neill to the Talbot Court House, and came back with him to the Meeting, must be allowed to be a very competent Witness of what passed immediately on his Return. The Letter follows.

"REVEREND SIR, "You are pleased to desire I would give you an Account of what I remember to have passed at our Meeting, last May, relating to Mr. Harris's Letter. "When I came to Mr. Barclay's, the Evening of the First Day of the Meeting, that Letter was first presented to me, and I was informed, by the Gentlemen then present, that the Meeting had resolved to take no Notice of it. Next Morning Mr. Neill and I walked to the Court-House, and returned together. I do not remember to have heard that the Consideration of it was re-assumed, nor that any such Vote was passed, as,—"That it is the unanimous Opinion of the Clergy that Mr. Harris's Letter favours more of *Toddy* than Truth, and is plentifully dashed with Forgeries and Falshoods." I am, Reverend S I R, Dorset, Aug. 28, Your Obedt. Servant, T. BROWN.

This seems to bode no good to the "unanimous Vote, Nem. Con." but I shall next, still more effectually to refute Mr. Neill's Assertions and Charges, take Leave to lay before the Publick the following Attestation by several of the Clergy.

"We were present at the Meeting of the Eastern Shore Clergy, held at the Reverend Mr. Barclay's, on the 22d 1771, and on the following Day; and do hereby testify, that the Clergy, on hearing the Reverend Mr. Harris's Letter read, determined, on the spot, not to take any Notice of it, but remember NOT to have re-assumed the Consideration of it on the next Day. What passed between Mr. President and Mr. Neill was so much in the Way of Banter and Joke that the Clergy thought it not worth their while to attend to it. It must be acknowledged that the President put the Questions and took the Votes with Candour, behaved himself with Moderation, and did not assume any dictatorial Authority over the Clergy. PHILIP WALKER, DANIEL MAYNADIER, JOHN ROSSE, JOHN MONTGOMERY."

"N. B. We concur with our Brethren in the above, excepting what relates to the Transactions of the Second Day, when we were not present. JACOB H. HINDMAN, THOMAS ALKIN, JOHN SCOTT."

A true Copy From the Original. Test. JOHN GORDON. Alas! for Mr. Neill's "unanimous Vote, Nem. Con." Alas! for his Minutes! Alas! for the President's "dictatorial Authority!"—They are in a desperate Condition, and just ready to take their Flight! The Reverend Mr. Keene was pleased to write me the following Letter:

"REVEREND SIR, Sept. 14, 1771. "Your Letter, with which you have been pleased to favour me, has been delivered by Mr. Thomas Gordon; who, at the same Time, put into my Hand a Paper signed by Six of our Brethren, relative to a mischievous Dispute subsisting between the Reverend Mr. Neill and yourself. I remember, on the First Day the Clergy met at Mr. Barclay's, Mr. Harris's Letter was read, and the Question being asked, if the Clergy would take any Notice of it, an Answer was returned in the Negative. I do NOT remember the Clergy re-assumed the Consideration of Mr. Harris's Letter afterwards; yet, when I reflect, that Mr. Gordon dictated, and even wrote great Part of the Letter designed for an Answer for Mr. Neill to Mr. Harris, I cannot reconcile the Part Mr. Gordon acted with my Notions of Banter and Joke, therefore am not at Liberty to sign, with my Brethren, the Paper above mentioned. I am, Reverend S I R, With Respect, your, &c. SAMUEL KEENE."

Mr. Keene being almost an entire Stranger to me, and quite unacquainted with my Manner, might easily mistake me, and think me serious when I was really in joke. This is probably the Case, as in this Matter he differs from all his Brethren that I have conversed with. He does NOT remember, however, that the Clergy re-assumed the Consideration of Mr. Harris's Letter, and is an Evidence of Course against Mr. Neill's "unanimous Vote, Nem. Con." Strange "unanimous Vote, Nem. Con." that is almost unanimously contradicted! The Reverend Mr. Read favoured me with a Letter to the following Effect:

"REVEREND SIR, Sept. 14, 1771. "I received yours by Mr. Banning, desiring an honest Answer to some Queries. I am really sorry Matters should be carried to such a Length, that either you or Mr. Neill should require Proof for the Veracity of what you assert. But to satisfy your Request, I do not remember any Thing relative to your First and Third Queries. As to your Second Query, I must confess that I looked upon what you said as a Jest and Banter. As to your Fourth Query, I do NOT remember that you exercised the Office of a Dictator, but behaved as became the Place you then filled. Am, S I R, your, &c. ROBERT READ."

Mr. Read has been kind enough to favour me with a Copy of his Letter to Mr. Neill, which it may not be improper to insert in this Place. It follows.

"S I R, "I received yours, desiring me to give you what Information I could relative to the Clergy's Observations on Mr. Harris's Letter. I remember that the Words, as printed in the Maryland Gazette, were SPOKEN by Mr. Gordon, with this Difference only, instead of *Toddy* is added *Hypocriisy*. But whether they were intended to be entered on the Minutes, as the Opinion of the Eastern Shore Clergy, I do NOT remember, but suppose they were not, as they are NOT in the Copy of the Minutes I took. I can't say I gave any particular Attention to the Conversation that passed on that Subject, as I thought the Letter not worth our Notice, and was busied in writing, &c."

Mr. Neill has thought proper to publish only such Part of this Letter as seemed to favour his own Side of the Question, and to suppress the rest. But this is not all; the Part he has published he has most disingenuously altered. Mr. Read says, "that the Words, as printed in the Maryland Gazette, were SPOKEN by Mr. Gordon." Mr. Neill apprehending the Term "spoken" to be against him, as indeed it is, very candidly substituted in room of it the Word "said," as being of more dark and doubtful Signification, and therefore fitter for his Purpose. Now what Sort of Compulsion must Mr. Neill be? Is he not justly a Matter of more than HONEST ARTS? Good God! has Mr. Neill cast off all Regard to Truth, to Honour, to Conscience?—Poor Man! little does he think, that by such low Artifice, and Meanness of Management, he reflects Dishonour upon his own Order, and erects a Monument of Disgrace to himself. It had been a Thousand Times better to have published Mr. Read's Letter honestly, and without any Variation, or any Part suppressed; for he that, in giving

Evidence, speaks the Truth, but not the whole Truth, is guilty of ——— let the Publick say what. The Reverend Mr. Barclay was pleased to write me as follows.

"REVEREND SIR, Sept. 12, 1771. "In Answer to yours of the 10th, permit me to observe, that what related to the proper Business of our Meeting, viz the Preservation of our Rights, I did endeavour closely to attend to. What came before us occasionally, such as Mr. Harris's Letter, I did not so carefully attend to. However, in Compliance to your Desire, shall give an Account of what passed concerning it, to the best of my Remembrance. "When Mr. Neill communicated Mr. Harris's Letter to the Meeting, he seemed desirous that some Notice should be taken of it, but almost every one present having declared that there ought not, Mr. Neill seemed to acquiesce in what was so apparently the general Opinion of his Brethren, and I do not remember that a Vote was taken. "I never did hear of the Consideration of that Letter re-assumed, nor any Vote passed concerning it the Second Day," nor any Thing relating thereto, except what appeared to me to be mere Whim and Jest of yours, to which I paid little Regard, being otherwise engaged.—Had I supposed that there was any Thing serious in what then passed, I should not have failed to have testified my Dissent; and I dare appeal both to Mr. Neill and yourself, whether I should not have acted a very inconsistent Part, if I had not done so.—As Mr. Neill was pleased to communicate the Letter to me, before the Meeting at my House, I then freely gave him my Sentiments concerning it. The same I did to you, and to several Brothers before the Meeting.—The Letter appeared to me, from the Perusal thereof, to be artful and insidious, therefore I was of Opinion, that the proper Manner to treat it, was to take no Notice of it; that, leaving others to judge for themselves, we should do our Duty and unite, not in an "Address and Opposition to the Governor and Assembly," as was falsely insinuated to be "intended," but in respectful Addresses to the Governor and Assembly, "relative" to what we believed to be a Violation of publick Faith, highly injurious to the present Ministers of Religion, and tending to sap the Foundations of the Establishment made for religious Worship in the Province, and therefore such as we ought to oppose. "It is but Justice to declare, that your general Behaviour as President, did not deserve the Charge you mention, and that you did put the Questions, and take the Votes fairly, and with Candour.—Indeed I cannot think that Mr. Neill would have represented the Matter as he has done, had he not been very much under the Influence of Passion, which is ever an Enemy to that Candour and calm Recollection, so necessary in making an impartial Representation of our own Conduct, much more the Conduct of those from whom we differ. The Perusal of his Publication gave me the greatest Uneasiness, which yours which occasioned it also did.—Permit me to request of you (and I would do the same of Mr. Neill had I an equal Opportunity) that you would be pleased to put an End to such Publications, as give Pain to your Friends and Pleasure to your Enemies, as well as to the Enemies of the Church, who rejoice in seeing the Clergy engaged in mutual Recriminations at this Time, when not only our Rights are invaded, but such Means used to induce or oblige us to relinquish them, as are contrary to Justice, destructive of mutual Faith, and subversive of the Principles of our civil Constitution. I remain with Respect, your, &c. JOHN BARCLAY."

Mr. Neill tells us, that "when he had transcribed the Centure on Mr. Harris's Letter, the President proposed, that when he (Mr. Neill) sent the above Minutes, something more should be added." Now the Centure on Mr. Harris's Letter is contained in the aforesaid "unanimous Vote, Nem. Con." But it appears, from the Declaration of the Gentlemen, that such a Minute does not exist, and, from the Attestation of the Clergy, that such a Vote never was taken. The Centure on Mr. Harris's Letter, as Mr. Neill calls it, is neither to be found among the Clergy's original Minutes, nor was it ever reduced to Writing by me. With what Truth then can he mention it as a Minute? Or, from whence did he "transcribe" it? To "transcribe" from what was never reduced to Writing, is an Art peculiar, I believe, to Mr. Neill. Or, perhaps, he "transcribed" from what he had written with his own Hand; in that Case he must be universally acknowledged as ——— an ORIGINAL. Upon the whole, it is evident, from the very ample and respectable Testimony I have produced, that Mr. Neill's "unanimous Vote, Nem. Con." and the "dictatorial Authority," by which, he says, the President carried every Thing, never existed but in his own mistaken Fancy; and that, therefore, Mr. Neill is a FALSE ACCUSER of his Brethren. I shall now, ingenuously, and with all the Regard that is due to Truth, acquaint the Publick with the Part I acted in this Matter, and with my View in acting it. On the First Day of the Meeting, when the Clergy determined not to take any Notice of Mr. Harris's Letter, I perceived Mr. Neill to be highly offended at it. His Spirit was grieved, and his Heart was vexed. I confess, I was not very sorry to see it. For, from the Temper Mr. Neill appeared to be in, I concluded that the Clergy had dropped the Consideration of that Letter, there was yet some Prospect, that he would take it upon himself. I was even willing to provoke a Paper-War between them. I thought it would break no Bones, and might be productive of some Entertainment.—When Mr. Neill moved that I should answer Mr. Harris's Letter, I declined it, and said that, as the Letter was directed to him, it was properly his Business to answer it. In this he seemed to acquiesce and I made not the least Doubt of his entering the Lists with Mr. Harris.—I remember, I threw out these Words.—"This Letter

"favours more of *Toddy* than of Truth." This was no sooner said, than applauded by Mr. Neill. I think he took the Words down in Writing. I was now persuaded my Scheme would take. In some Time after, I said—"suppose you add"—and is plentifully dashed "with Forgeries and Falshoods." This was received by him with still greater Marks of Joy, and to writing again he went. The Words were never reduced to Writing by me, nor was there ever any Motion made, or Vote passed, to enter them among our Minutes. Little, indeed, did I think I was dictating Minutes all this while. No! All I meant was to furnish Mr. Neill with a few Hints, as he seemed to like them, to be made use of in a private Letter to Mr. Harris; and I did no more think of a Minute, than I did of the Monument.

An Anecdote, communicated by the Reverend Mr. Keene, warmed me a little, and made me speak of Mr. Harris with a greater Degree of Austerity. Mr. Keene informed us, "That Mr. Harris had, frequently in Conversation with him, lamented the sad State of the Church in Maryland, and expressed his Fears that her Rights would be given up or betrayed by some false Brethren." I did not, I confess, hear this without some Emotions of Repentment. Such a Duplicity provoked me, and I let Nature speak what Nature thought. Had Mr. Harris, however, been on the Spot, he should have been treated with equal Freedom. For I was, and am still, much offended with his talking to the Publick in a Stile so different from what he made use of to his Brethren in private. It was also observed, that the People of Kent-Island were much pleased with Mr. Harris, and he with them. Offended as I was with Mr. Harris, I hastily quitted my Seat, and, going to a Table where there were Pens, Ink, and Paper, wrote the following Sentence—"The Clergy do heartily and sincerely wish, that as the People of Kent-Island seem to be so much pleased with the Letter-writer, and that as he himself appears to be quite contented with his Situation, that he may long continue in it." The Inaccuracy of this Sentence is a pretty plain Proof that it was written in an Hurry. In the little Time I had to think, I concluded that Mr. Neill might, in a private Letter, send to Mr. Harris this Sentence, as a Mark of the Clergy's Displeasure at the Duplicity of his Conduct. This Sentence had Reference, not to Mr. Harris's Letter, but to the Anecdote. How then could Mr. Neill apply it, as a Minute, to the Letter, to which it had no Relation? He has, indeed, applied it to a Purpose, to which, I never did once, in my most secret Thoughts, apply it.

However, as I wrote this Sentence without consulting, or being authorized by the Clergy, as must have been evident even to Mr. Neill himself, I confess my Rashness, and acknowledge the Error. 'Tis difficult for a Man to speak of himself. But, I trust, I can truly say, that I have long outlived the false and little Greatness of that Pride, which prompts one rather to persist in, than to retract an Error. I can assure Mr. Harris that his Continuance on Kent-Island, with his numerous Family, (a Circumstance then unknown to me) for ONE Year, will appear sufficiently "long" to me as well as to most of the Eastern Shore Clergy, who, I am persuaded, do not grudge him any Thing, that either his own Merit may entitle him to, or the Humanity and Benevolence of his Superiors may dispose them to bestow upon him. The Remarks I made on Mr. Harris's Letter I judged would never be mentioned in any other Way, than in a private Letter from Mr. Neill to him. I never did intend them for the Publick. I do not think it very decent to offer such Stuff to the Publick; and I am sure no one could be more confounded than I was, when I saw them published as the "unanimous Opinion of the Eastern Shore Clergy," though they might, with equal Truth, have been published as the Opinion of the Eastern Shore Planters. I made the Remarks in the Way of Banter and Merriment, and wrote the Sentence in some Heat and Hurry; and therefore could not be very fond of seeing them in Print. For, if many Matters, mentioned amidst our Friends, in the Freedoms of Conversation, or under the Influence of Provocation, were to be repeated in the Publick Ear, it would, I fear, put most People to the Blush. The Controversy, I judged, would be carried on between Mr. Neill and Mr. Harris, and go no farther. But nothing ran in Mr. Neill's Head but Minutes; And as MIDAS, by his Touch, turned every Thing into Gold; so Mr. Neill, by his Pen or his Pencil, turned every Thing I could either speak or write, in reference to Mr. Harris's Letter, into a Minute. His own Weight, though heavy, he judged, perhaps, too light for Mr. Harris, and was therefore inclined, by Means of his Minutes, to throw the Weight of his Brethren into the Scale, and so crush, effectually, his poor Brother Harris.

Thus have I, so far as my own Recollection (assisted by that of several of my Brethren) would serve me, acquainted the Publick with the Part I acted in this Matter, and with my View in acting it. Truth has its Features, and Probability its Grounds; and I doubt not but the judicious and impartial Publick will be able to trace the one, and discern the other, in the Account I have given. But admitting for once, that Mr. Neill's Minutes, as he calls them, had been genuine, and that he had been ordered by the Clergy, as he tells Mr. Harris, to transmit a Copy of the same to him, I would beg Leave to ask—What Right had Mr. Neill to vary, to alter, or to change any Words or Expressions in those Minutes?—In Room of the Word "*Toddy*," he has substituted "Hypocriisy," a very bad Exchange indeed! And, though in the Sentence I wrote, the Clergy's Will were, That "Mr. Harris might long continue in his present Situation," yet this would not satisfy the humane and benevolent Mr. Neill. He has altered it into a Wish, "That Mr. Harris might continue in that Parish—TO THE END OF HIS DAYS!" To his Minutes, thus changed and altered, he has had the Assurance, without our Privy or Consent, to sign

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