

INTRODUCTION.

At the session which began in November, 1784, the following resolve was assented to by both branches of the legislature:

RESOLVED, That Mr. Frederick Green, printer to this state, be directed to collect and print, in one or more volumes, one hundred copies of all the acts of assembly (now in force) passed since the twenty-sixth of November, seventeen hundred and sixty-three, to the end of this session of assembly, under the direction of Alexander C. Hanson and Samuel Chase, Esquires, with the bill of rights, and constitution and form of government, the confederation, and the resolutions of the conventions, and the proceedings of the convention that framed the constitution, at the public expence, and subject to the disposal of the general assembly; and that the intendant of the revenue be directed to advance Mr. Green such a sum of money as he may think proper, to assist him in the execution of the work.

ALTHOUGH the superintendence of the following publication was committed to two persons, the gentleman, whose superior talents might have enabled him to render complete satisfaction, did not think proper to share in the undertaking. It required more time and application, than could be spared from more interesting and important engagements.

THE person, therefore, who may be styled the editor, was left to form his own construction of the resolve, and to obey it in the best manner his abilities would admit. He directed to be printed at large all subsisting public acts of assembly, the operation of which was not already past; the proceedings of the last convention, so far as in any manner they respect the declaration of rights, and the constitution and form of government; the subsisting resolves of convention, and the articles of confederation. The order in which all these are disposed, is such as to him and the printer appeared most convenient. He has given only abstracts of the public acts which, notwithstanding they may be termed perpetual laws, have spent their operation; and abstracts also of all acts relating to parishes, schools, and small societies or bodies of men. He has likewise given the substance of every temporary law which contained provisions remarkable enough to merit a particular notice. Of the rest he has inserted only the titles, with here and there a short historical note.

IN framing the index, he did not imitate the plan of his respectable predecessor; because no index ought to be relied on for the substance of the act it refers to. He thought it sufficient to point out the act itself; and for that purpose he has adopted such heads as will probably occur to those conversant in laws; and he has even sometimes placed the same thing under several different heads.

As he was fully apprized of the difficulty of adapting an index to every man's taste and turn of mind, he was particularly attentive to that part of his undertaking. He might indeed have declined it altogether; but, without it, his performance would have been deplorably defective, and the most diligent inquirer might be baffled in his researches after some of the laws comprehended in this collection. With respect to the propriety of making the title correspond with each enacting clause, it may suffice to mention the following circumstance. The editor had been told, that a chancery jurisdiction was conferred on the general court in all cases where the chancellor is to be made a party to a bill in equity. He made several fruitless searches for the law, and at length, in the progress of this revision, he found it most unaccountably inserted in the middle of an act relating to the estates of deceased persons.

IT is the office of an index to remedy the inconvenience of defective titles, and, at one view, to point out every provision belonging to each particular head. It is hoped the index at the end of this volume will answer these purposes. But unless our legislators will condescend to adopt the hint, or avail themselves of their own better wisdom, the same inconvenience will speedily recur.