

MARYLAND GAZETTE

THURSDAY, JULY 17, 1777.

L O N D O N .

From the GENERAL EVENING POST.

City of WINCHESTER.

The voluntary CONFESSION OF JAMES AITKEN, commonly called JOHN the PAINTER, now a prisoner in the county gaol of Southampton, and under sentence of death, for burning the dock-yard at Portsmouth, taken this seventh day of March, 1777.

S A I T H, that he was born at Edinburgh, the 28th of September, 1752; his mother now living, as he believes. Curiosity led him to Virginia, in America, at the age of twenty-one, as an adventurer, to seek his fortune.—

Left America in March, 1775. In October 1775, by the name of James Boswell, enlisted a private soldier in the 32d regiment at Gravesend, marched to Chatham next day, from whence he soon deserted; was not concerned in the fire in Temple-street, Bristol, nor privy to it. Broke into Mr. Morgan's warehouse alone, no person concerned with him in that, or any other accident that ensued in that city. He intended to set fire to two houses in Portsmouth, in order to employ the engines, whilst the fire might spread in the rope-yard. Broke into Mr. Morgan's warehouse at Bristol, in order to burn it, that the engines might be there employed, whilst the shipping was burning, and the quay, for which purpose he left a candle burning in said warehouse, and because that fire did not take effect, he afterwards set fire to the warehouse in Quay-lane, by getting over the top of the door. Mr. Deane told him, when the work was done (meaning burning the dock-yard at Portsmouth, Woolwich, and Bristol harbour, but not the houses) he should make his escape, and come, if possible, to him at Paris, and he should be rewarded. As a reward, his own expectations prompted him to hope that he should be preferred to a commission in the American army.

When after setting fire to the rope-yard, he left Portsmouth, to wit, the next night, being Sunday, he reached London, and went to Dr. ———, in Westminster, to whom he had a verbal recommendation from Mr. Deane, who gave him at Paris, the doctor's name in writing, and place of abode; but the doctor would give him no countenance, and therefore did not relate the particulars of the mischief he had done, to him; but hinted to him that he would soon see or hear, by the papers, of an extraordinary accident that had happened.

And he afterwards wrote such an account in a letter to him, which he left himself at the doctor's house, with a person who came to the door; which for the sake of truth he relates, and without intention of casting any slur on the character of an innocent man.

That he saw the doctor the day following in ——— coffee-house, and told him, that he would do all the prejudice he could to this kingdom; at which the doctor replied, "He could not be of opinion with him, in that respect, for that he got his bread in that kingdom, and therefore would not be concerned with him." And seeing that the doctor did not approve of his conduct, he hoped he would not inform against him. To which the doctor said, "he did not like to inform against any man." When at Paris, he was assisted by Mr. Deane with 12 six livre pieces; he asked for no more, neither did he receive from him any bank bill, draft, or note whatever.

After leaving London, at High-Wycombe, he broke into a house, and took away a few lincens, consisting of caps, handkerchiefs, but nothing of value. He then went to Oxford, from thence to Abingdon, where he attempted to break into two houses, silversmiths or watchmakers, but without effect. From thence he went to Fairford, where he broke into a house, and took from thence a number of stockings and handkerchiefs, and a metal watch, and near fifty shillings, in silver and halfpence; the watch he pledged for 16 shillings, in the name of James Hill, at a pawnbroker's in Calle-street, Bristol. After this, without attempting anything, but having prepared some of his ingredients, he went from Bristol to Plymouth, with intent to set fire to the dock-yard there; twice he reached the top of the wall, but the watchmen being near, he could hear them talk together, especially the last night, therefore he desisted. He never committed, or attempted to commit any robbery, but when he was like to be short of money.

After leaving Plymouth, he returned once more to Bristol with a determined resolution then to set fire to the shipping in the harbour; and in his way to Bristol, at Taunton, he attempted to break into the house of a silversmith, or watchmaker, without effect.

He attempted the shipping a second time, but on account of the vigilance and strictness of the watch, then kept on the quay and in the ships, his attempt proved abortive. He likewise attempted on the Saturday morning, but in vain, to get into a stable or coach-house on the quay, in order to set fire to it; but seeing a man lying in a cart near the place, he desisted.

On the Sunday morning following, he set fire to the warehouse in Bristol, in Quay-lane, which he effected in the following manner, viz. He bought some coarse flax on the quay, and some turpentine at another place, but where he cannot remember; and with these and charcoal, matches and gunpowder, and striking a spark of light on tinder, to which he set a proper match, he effected his purpose. The match was made of touch-paper, and as that consumed to the end, the powder being laid and wrapt up likewise in touch-paper, it of course took fire, and so, he presumes, it instantly mounted into a blaze. Then he left the town, but seeing no fire behind, he returned back part of the way, till at

last, hearing the city was on fire, he then went on to Sodbury, and so crossed the country to Mashfield, and to Chippenham and Calne. But the first night after the fire, he slept at Sodbury; the second night he broke open the door of an out-house near it, where he slept, and left behind him in the morning a dark lantern. On the Wednesday night he went to Calne, and being near short of money, broke open Mr. Lowe's house, which robbery, as it is known, he need not enlarge upon it. He left a parcel, with a pistol and other things in it, in the church porch of Calne.

At Bristol, he first broke into Mr. Morgan's warehouse, and there prepared the combustibles for setting fire to the shipping.

He never was in the 45th regiment, neither did he go to America in any regiment.

He never said that one Brooks, or any other prisoner in Newgate, would be hanged, as was sworn against him in his trial; neither doth he know any man by the name of Brooks.

His father was a blacksmith at Edinburgh, and he was apprenticed to a painter there, served his time out, and then had his indentures delivered up, which he usually carried about in his pocket, and afterwards burnt them, which gave rise to the story of his destroying papers to the value of three hundred pounds.

Those were the things of value which he means to express by what he had burnt.

As to any merchant in London, or any other person, except Dr. D——, he had no recommendation to, or conversation with, respecting the many unhappy accidents before related.

That he stopped a post-chaise between Portsmouth and Petersfield, with a gentleman and lady in it, some considerable time before the fire, and robbed them of nine shillings and sixpence; of which he returned two shillings.

The latter end of December, 1775, he enlisted at Chard, in Somerset, into the 13th regiment, and a few days after deserted.

At Ilichfield, as hath been publicly mentioned, he followed the trade of a painter, also at Birmingham, with Mr. Robinson, at Warrington, and many other places.

That he had committed, and attempted to commit, several other robberies and burglaries, but of no material account to mention.

Declares, that all the acts herein mentioned, of a public, as well as of a private nature, were of his own-motion, and that he was not advised or intigated thereto by any person whatever, except what is before related, and that he had no accomplice.

One other circumstance strikes his present recollection, which he is desirous to mention, and which happened in the city of Norwich, at the house of Mr. Mark, where he stole two silver table spoons, and a pair of silver buckles, in the spring of 1776.

JAMES AITKEN.

Signed by James Aitken, and protested to contain the truth only, in the presence of us, this 7th day of March, 1777.

GEORGE DURNFORD, N. P. SMITH,

Two of his majesty's justices of the peace in and for the city of Winchester.

T. LAWRENCE, of the Bear-Inn, Devises.

Mr. Lawrence, of Devises, who attended the unhappy criminal at Winchester, in consequence of a letter received from him, and who was present at, attested his above confession, has favoured us with the following letter, which he received from him since by post. 'Tis in his own hand writing, dated from Winchester, immediately after receiving the sacrament, on Sunday the 5th instant, and witnessed by George Durnford, Esq.

Dear Mr. Lawrence, I have sent you inclosed a further confession of some particulars, which, with the others, I humbly desire you will regulate into a proper stile, and publish them, for the satisfaction of the world, and the clearing of the innocent.

I humbly beg, for the compassion you have for me as a dying man, that you will write to my sorrowful mother concerning my unhappy fate; but in the softest terms possible: as her grief, I know, will be very great on hearing of it.—Dear Sir, may the peace of God abide with you always—Amen.

I James Aitken was born in the city of Edinburgh, was brought up from the 9th to the 15th year of my age, in Harriot's hospital, then was put an apprentice to a painter for seven years, which time I served out; after that I came to London, and went to America as an indentured servant, with capt. John Robinson, but when there, I made a verbal agreement with him, to pay him 24l. Virginia money for my liberty, but after paying some of it to him, and a little more of it to Mr. Graham, I left that province without paying the rest of it, and went into North-Carolina, from whence I failed for England, and landed at Liverpool, May the 5th or 6th, 1775, where I have committed many enormous crimes since, many of which I have told you. Amongst others, I stopped a chaise or litter near Cambridge, and took from the man a bad shilling; I think, some time about the month of August, 1776. Some time after, I broke into a house a few miles from Warrington, viz. between that and Holmes hannel, and took from thence handkerchiefs and other things, and of money something less than 20 shillings, I think. After that I broke into a house in a town a few miles from Coventry, and there took away a great quantity of handkerchiefs, sixpence in silver, and the rest in halfpence; I believe this was

in the beginning of October, 1776. After that, in a few days, and a few miles from Basingstoke, I committed a rape upon a girl that was keeping sheep, to my shame be it said.

I likewise committed a burglary in the house of Mr. Newman, glazier in Rumfey, and stole a few things out of it, among which were two diamonds, such as glaziers use.

Besides these I have committed a great number of crimes of a more petty nature (that may less concern the general world, both now and in my unhappy life) but I beg forgiveness of all the world, as they would wish to be forgiven of God. And I, for my part, freely forgive all mankind, none excepted, even as I wish myself to be forgiven of God.

PROVIDENCE June 21.

The following is a copy of an intercepted letter from a person at Rhode-Island, to Ned Winslow, at Plymouth, and is here inserted by way of specimen of the lying abilities of the Tories, never more necessary than at this time to clear each other's desponding spirits.

"Dear Sir, I cannot omit this opportunity of returning you, and the rest of my friends, my many thanks, for your civilities to Mrs. Esdaile, during the time we were at Plymouth. There is no expressing the joys of our little party, on being safely landed among our own people. We found your amiable daughter here well and in high spirits. I don't know how many colonels, majors, &c. &c. the white wench's black eyes (according to Shakepear) have smote. Bo h Mrs. Hutchinson and herself intended writing to all their friends by this opportunity.

"The rebel game, I take it, will be up this summer, when I fancy they will lose at a d—d rate. Poor Ticonderoga, we are credibly informed, was taken by gen. Carleton the 27th of last month! Philadelphia will soon follow the same fate. Lord Howe is gone or going very soon up the Delaware with a large force, and I suppose the general beats his march by land about the same time, with a considerable army. He has at least 30,000, with continentals, which is at least 10,000, the last return being 7800. Your son I hear is well at New-York, whom I hope soon to see, but at present we have no opportunity. I suppose you have heard of the boasted exploits of the yankees, in an attempt on the picket-guard last Wednesday night, and two nights after, on this island; and I make no doubt but they have, according to custom, killed 2 or 300 of the enemy: three they have killed, and wounded one, but done in a rascally manner. I should write more, but the bearer of this is going directly. My respects and compliments to all friends. I am, dear Sir, your much obliged humble servant,

SAMUEL ESDAILE."

Rhode Island, June 17, 1777.

Extract of a letter from a gentleman of distinction in Connecticut, dated the 16th instant.

"Our army at the northward is very healthy, and well supplied with necessaries. The design of the enemy's approach on the Lake appears to have been to receive some wheat and other provisions from Gilliland's creek, and a number of cattle collecting on the opposite shore, which happily we had secured from them. They soon disappeared, and are returned with some disappointment. There hath been no appearance of them since. Gen. St. Clair, and the French general De Formoy, with their suites, left Albany the 8th for Ticonderoga; the former takes the command at that post. The Indian treaty ended to their satisfaction. The account of burning seven houses at St. John's, and one at Isle aux Noix, is confirmed. Eleven hundred of the enemy died at or near Montreal, during the winter. The 2d instant 24 sail of shipping from England arrived at Sandy Hook; on the 3d 16 came to New-York, some of them full of soldiers, part British, part Hessians. Great preparations are making in New-York; the enemy's capital movement seems to be designed against Philadelphia; and 'tis expected they will at the same time send a considerable body of troops into Connecticut."

NEW-HAVEN, June 25.

Yesterday se'nnight, the enemy from their cruizers, landed a considerable number of men at Sachem's Head, about four miles from Guilford town, and took off a number of cattle and sheep; and burnt a house and barn of Mr. Solomon Leet's, with great part of his furniture, &c. before the inhabitants had time to assemble and oppose the invaders.

Monday last, a small privateer from Connecticut river, took a sloop of 30 tons, near Huntingdon, Long-Island, having on board a quantity of flour, &c.

Yesterday two of the enemy's ships passed our harbour, standing to the eastward.

PHILADELPHIA.

We can assure the public, from undoubted authority, that upwards of three thousand six hundred people have taken the oath or affirmation of allegiance to this state, before the magistrates of this city, within these ten days past.

By letters from New-Jersey, we learn, the enemy have burnt between 25 and 30 of the principal houses, in that part of the country they passed in their late rout. We also learn that the enemy have returned to Amboy and Staten-Island; to plan some other manœuvre. The light horse from New England, and 43 of the brass field-pieces, lately imported into New-Hampshire from France, are arrived at head-quarters.

Port-Tobacco, June 17, 1777. Partnership betwixt Dr. JAMES CRAIK and ALTER HANSON JENIFER having expired on infant (June) by reason of Dr. Craik's ac- of a military appointment, this is to desire all who are indebted them; for the practice of d surgery, to settle their accounts immedi- the subscriber; and as many have been ever since the copartnership commenced, such asonably expect longer indulgence.

W. H. JENIFER.

June 18, 1777. persons indebted to the subscriber, by bond, or open account, are desired immediately their respective accounts with Dr. WALTER CRAIK (who I have constituted my attorney in law) and as the debts due me have been very ding, they cannot take it amiss that I have ordered all, who do not make immediate to be sued, without respect to persons.

JAMES CRAIK.

June 18, 1777. POUNDS REWARD. away last Monday morning, from Bush-Creech ge, near Frederick-Town, two NEGRO

, a country born fellow, about 32 or 34 years feet 8 or 9 inches high, thin faced, he belonged to Mr. Thomas Johnson, late of Lan- creek, in Calvert county; had on and with felt hats, country linen shirt and trousers, a set without sleeves, figured with white. BEY, about 23 years of age, 5 feet 9 or 10 high, not very black, was lately purchased of uel Wilkins, of Princess-Anne, in Somerset had on a country linen shirt, old country shoes, shoes lately soled.

were both seen at Mansfield's, on their way, ed, to Annapolis or Calvert county, though y probably separate, and each make for the came from.

ounds for taking up and securing them, or ings for either.

ROGER JOHNSON.

WANTED, the PUBLIC, A NUMBER OF ABOURERS.

Apply to MAJOR FULFORD.

Annapolis, June 17, 1777. KE GAOL last night, the following prisoners,

MAS BYRNE, committed on suspicion of for- out five feet eight inches high, of a dark tion, long visaged, black short hair: Had on, made his escape, a felt hat, red silk handker- dotted with white, an old blue coat with short light coloured cloth jacket, regimental made,

ctons marked M country made shoes, with a M

ble small pair of brass buckles in them.

RO JEM, under sentence of death, about nine inches high, between fifty and sixty years and has a lump on his forehead something like Had on, when he made his escape, a light-coat, turned up with white.

PH WILLIAMS, committed for want of fe- for his good behaviour, about 30 years of age, n inches high, has short light coloured hair, a dy complexion, and has thick lips: Is much liquor, and when intoxicated therewith is ex- ably abusive.—Any person who apprehends any above persons, and secures them, so that they had again, shall receive five pounds reward for each of them.

committed to my custody, as a runaway, a ne- n, named ISAAC, formerly the property of the osep Williams, and says he belongs to Benja- rby, of Montgomery county. His master is requested to take him away and pay charges.

THOMAS DEALE, Sheriff of Anne-Arundel county.

ERE is in the possession of Robert Tyler, rince-George's county, taken up as a stray, a rrel MARE, about five or six years old, twelve and a half high, has a blaze in her face, bay, and branded on the off buttock thus, —; he d gallops, and is dull. The owner may here- in on proving his property, and paying

Annapolis, May 15, 1777.

CESSITY COMPELS THE MEASURE.

E term of the COPARTNERSHIP between WALLACE, DAVIDSON, and JOHNSON, expired on the first day of January last, and the cruel and unjust war prosecuting by Great-Britain the freedom of America, rendering it im- able to renew the same; notice is hereby given, mutual consent the said PARTNERSHIP was dis- solved that day accordingly: It is necessary, there- our affairs be settled; wherefore we earnestly re- all persons indebted to the concern in any man- make full and immediate payment, which has so long neglected by many, who, taking advan- the times,

from such conduct lenity ought not to be ed, yet such as have it not in their power imme- to settle their open accounts by payment, are, last time, desired to settle the same by bonds:

branch of the business in the management of our JOHNSON, in London, will with fidelity be care- tended to, until the completion thereof; and ends experience of his past conduct; we hope, ntly recommend him to their future favours, er his judgment, for mutual benefits, may di- to settle.

WALLACE, DAVIDSON, and JOHNSON.

GREEN.