

ernment, entitled to, and possessing, an equal right to acquire property, in every part of the British dominions; the war having been most unjustly prosecuted, with a design, on the part of the British king and ministry, to enslave this country, rendered it the duty of the people of America, in order to preserve their property, their liberty and safety, to cast off the British, and to erect new and independent governments, capable of securing their liberty and property, and to form alliances and connections, in support of that independence, and these necessary and those important ends of all societies. No notice was given to those, who held property in this country, that the people of America intended to declare themselves independent; the inhabitants of Great-Britain, deceived by the artifices of their rulers, and frequent and deceptive professions of doing justice to America, had no reason to suppose that the people of this country would be compelled to declare themselves independent. Under these circumstances, the declaration of independence was made, in such manner as to dissolve the former political connection between America and Great-Britain, but not with an intention, either declared or implied, as we conceive, to destroy such private rights of property as had been antecedently acquired in this country, by persons who happened to be in the British dominions at the time independence was declared.

Our opinion, that the consequence which you deduce from the declaration of independence, and upon which you formed your bill, did not result from that act, is founded on the following considerations. It was well known, that there were many persons residing in England and other parts of the British dominions, when the declaration of independence was made, who were friends to America, and to whom the intention of taking that step could not be known. If congress could have supposed a construction would be given to the declaration of independence, to deprive all residents in the British dominions of property in this country, we presume they would have been explicit and particular in declaring this consequence, and would have given notice, that those who intended to hold their property, and become subjects of the United States, should repair to some one of them, by a particular day, or relinquish all claim to property with-