(Copy of the first Draught by G M.)

A Declaration of Rights made by the Representatives of the good People of Virginia, assembled in full and free Convention; which Rights do pertain to them and their Posterity, as the Basis and Foundation of Government.)

1.° That all Men are created equally free & independent, & have certain inherent natural Rights, of which they can not, by any Compact, deprive or divest their Posterity; among which are the Enjoyment of Life & Liberty, with the Means of acquiring & possessing Property, & pursuing & obtaining Happiness & Safety.

2.° That all Power is by God & Nature vested in, & consequently derived from the People; that Magistrates are their Trustees & Servants, and at all Times amenable to them.

3. That Government is or ought to be instituted for the common Benefit, protection & Security of the People, Nation, or Community. Of all the various Modes & Forms of Government that is best, which is capable of producing the greatest Degree of Happiness & Safety, & is most effectually secured against the Danger of mal-Administration; and that whenever any Government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a Majority of the Community hath an indubitable, unalienable & indefeasible Right, to reform, alter, or abolish it, in

such

such Manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public Weal.

Same
ditto

4. That no Man, or Set of Men are intitled to exclusive or separate Emoluments or Privileges from the Community, but in Consideration of public Services; which not being descendible, neither ought the Offices of Magistrate, Legislator, or Judge to be hereditary.

5. That the legislative & executive Powers of the State should be separate & distinct from the Judicial; and that the Members of the two first may be restrained from Oppression by feeling & participating the Burthens of the People, they should at fixed Periods, be reduced to a private Station, & return into that Body from which they were originally taken, and the Vacancys be supplied by frequent, certain & regular Elections.

Same for
the following [illegible]
[illegible]

Same ex-
cept change
of one Word
the
assembly
in lieu of
Legislature

6. That Elections of Members to serve as Representatives of the People in the Legislature, ought to be free, and that all Men having sufficient Evidence of permanent common Interest with, & Attachment to the Community, have the Right of Suffrage, and can not be taxed, or deprived of their Property for public Uses, without their own Consent, or that of their Representatives so elected, nor bound by any Law to which they have not, in like Manner, assented for the common Good.

Same
verbatim

7. That all Power of suspending Laws, or the Execution of Laws, by any Authority, without Consent of the Representatives of the People, is injurious to their Rights, and ought not to be exercised.

That

Same verbatim

8. That in all capital or criminal Prosecutions, a Man hath a Right to demand the Cause & Nature of his Accusation, to be confronted with the Accusers & Witnesses, to call for Evidence in his Favour, and to a speedy Trial by an impartial Jury of his Vicinage, without whose unanimous Consent He can not be found guilty, nor can he be compelled to give Evidence against himself; and that no Man be deprived of his Liberty, except by the Law of the Land, or the Judgment of his Peers.

Same abbrev.

9. That excessive Bail ought not to be required, nor excessive Fines imposed, nor cruel & unusual Punishments inflicted.

Same with 11th abbrev.

10. That in Controversies respecting Property, and in Suits between Man & Man, the ancient Trial by Jury is preferable to any other, & ought to be held sacred.

Same with 12

11. That the Freedom of the Press is one of the great Bulwarks of Liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic Governments.

Same abbrev. with 13th

12. That a well regulated Militia, composed of the Body of the People trained to Arms, is the proper, natural, & safe Defence of a free State; that standing Armies, in Time of Peace, should be avoided, as dangerous to Liberty; and that, in all Cases, the Military should be under strict Subordination to, & governed by the Civil-power.

13. That no free Government, or the Blessing of Liberty, can be preserved to any People, but by a firm Adherence to

Justice

Justice, Moderation, Temperance, Frugality & Virtue, and by frequent Recurrence to fundamental Principles.

14. That Religion, or the Duty which we owe to our Creator, and the Manner of discharging it, can be directed only by Reason & Conviction, not by Force or Violence, and therefore that all Men should enjoy the fullest Toleration in the Exercise of Religion, according to the Dictates of Conscience, unpunished, & unrestrained by the Magistrate, unless under Colour of Religion, any Man disturb the Peace, the Happiness, or the Safety of Society: And that it is the mutual Duty of all to practise Christian Forbearance, Love, & Charity towards each other.

Same
in Sub-
stance
with
the 16th

The Idea
of toleration
is struck
out &
free Exercise
of Religion
inserted

2 more articles were added Viz the 10th & 14th
in the adopted Bill — not of fundamental nature

This Declaration of Rights was the first in America; it received few Alterations or additions in the Virginia Convention (some of them not for the better) and was afterwards closely imitated by the other United States.

Virginia
Declaration
of Rights
in 1776.