

# THE Declaration, Of the *Gentlemen, Merchants, and Inhabitants of BOSTON, and the Countrey Adjacent. April 18th. 1689.*

§ I. WEE have seen more than a decad of years rolled away, since the *English* World had the Discovery of an horrid *Po|pish Plot*; wherein the bloody *Devoto's* of *Rome* had in their Design and Prospect no less than the extinction of the *Protestant Religion*: which mighty Work they called *the utter subduing of a Pestilent Heresie*: wherein (they said) there never were such hopes of Success since the Death of *Queen Mary* as now in our dayes. And we were of all Men the most insensible, if we should apprehend a Countrey so remarkable for the true Profession and pure Exercise of the Protestant Religion as *New-England* is, wholly unconcerned in the Infamous Plot; to crush and break a Countrey so intirely and signally made up of *Reformed Churches*, land at length to involve it in the miseries of an utter Extirpation: must needs carry even a Super erogation of merit with it, among such as were intoxicated with a Bigotry inspired into them by the great *Scarlet Whore*.

§ II. To get us within the reach of the de|solation desired for us, it was no improper thing that we should first have our *Charter* Valcated and the hedge which kept us from the wild Beasts of the field effectually broken down. The accomplishment of this was hastned by the unwearied solicitations and slanderous accusati|ons of a man for his *Malice* and *Fals-hood* well known unto us all.

Our *Charter* was with a most injurious pre|tence (& scarce *that*) of Law, Condemned before it was possible for us to appear at *Westminster* in the legal defence of it: and without a fair leave to answer for our selves concerning the crimes falsly laid to our charge, we were put under a *President* and *Councill*, without any liberty for an Assembly which the other *American Planta|tions* have, by a Commission from his *Majesty*.

§ III The Commission was as *Illegal* for the forme of it, as the way of obtaining it was *Mal|licious* and *unreasonable*: yet we made no re|sistance thereunto as wee could easily have done; but chose to give all *Man-kind* a demonstration of our being a people sufficiently dutifull and loyall to our King: and this with yet more Sa|tisfaction because wee took pains to make our selves believe as much as ever we could of the Whedle then offer'd unto us; That his *Majestys* desire

was no other then the happy encrease & advance of these *Provinces* by their more immediate dependance on the *Crown of England*. And we were convinced of it by the courses immediately taken to damp and spoyle our *trade*; wherof decayes and complaints presently filled all th Countrey; while in the mean time nei|ther the Honour nor the Treasure of the King was at all advanced by this new Model of our Affairs, but a considerable Charge added unto the Crown.

§ IV. In little more than half a Year we saw this Commission superseded by another, Yet more Absolute and Arbitrary, with which Sr. *Edmond Andross* arrived as our Governour: who besides his Power, with the Advice and Consent of his Council, to make Laws and raise Taxes as he pleased; had also Authority by himself to Muster and Employ all Persons residing in the Territory as occasion shall serve; and to transfer such Forces to any English Plantation in *America*, as occasion shall require. And several Companies of *Red Coats* were now brought from *Europe*, to support what was to be Imposed upon us, not without repeated Menaces that some hundreds more were intended for us.

§ V. The Government was no sooner in these Hands, but care was taken to load Preferments principally upon such Men as were strangers to, and haters of the People: and every ones Observation hath noted, what Qualifications recommended a Man to publick Offices and Employments, only here and there a *good man* was used, where others could not easily be had;

[Page \[unnumbered\]](#) the Governour himself with assertions now and then falling from him made us jealous that it would be thought for his Majesties Interest, if this People were removed and another succeeded in their room: And his far fetched Instruments that were growing Rich among us, would gravely inform us, that it was not for His Maiesties Interest that we should thrive. But of all our oppressors we were chiefly *Squeezed* by a crew of abject Persons fetched, from *New-York* to be the tools of the adversary standing at our right hand; by these were extraordinary and intollerable sees extorted from every one upon all occasions, without any Rules but those of their own insatiable avarice and beggary; and even the probate of a will must now cost as many *Pounds* perhaps as it did *Shillings* here|tofore; nor could a small Volume contain the other Illegalities done by these *Horse-leaches* in the two or three years that they have been sucking of us; and what Laws they made it was as impossible for us to know, as dangerous for us to break; but we shall leave the men of *Ipswich* and of *Plimouth* (among others) to tell the Story of the kindness which has been shown 'em upon this account. Doubtless a land so Ruled as once *New-England* was, has not without many years and sighs beheld the wicked walking on every side and the vilest men exalted.

§ VI It was now plainly affirmed both by some in open Council and by the same in private converse, that the people in *New-England* were all *Slaves* and the only difference between them and *Slaves* is their not being bought and sold; and it was a maxim delivered in open Court unto us by one of the Council, that we must not think the Priviledges of *English* men would follow us to the end of the world: Accordingly we have been treated with multiplied contradictions to *Magna Charta*, the rights of which we laid claim unto. Persons who did but peaceably object against the raising of Taxes without an Assembly have been for it Fined, some twenty, some thirty, and others fifty Pounds. Packt and pickt Juries have been very common things among us, when under a pretended form of Law the trouble of some perhaps honest and worthy Men has been aimed at: but when some of this Gang have been brought upon the Stage, for the most detestable Enormities that ever the Sun beheld, all Men have with Admiration seen what methods have been taken that they might not be treated according to their Crimes. Without a Verdict, yea, without a Jury sometimes have People been fined most unrighteously; and some not of the meanest quality have been kept in long and close Imprisonment without any the least Information appearing against them, or an *Habeas Corpus* allowed unto them. In short, when our Millstones have been a little out of Money, 'twas but pretending some Offence to be enquired into, and the most innocent of Men were continually put into no small expence to answer the Demands of the Officers, who must have Money of them, or a Prison for them: though none could accuse them of any Misdemeanour.

§ VII. To plunge the poor People every where into deeper Incapacities, there was one very comprehensive abuse given to us; multitudes of Pious and Sober Men through the Land scrupled the mode of Swearing on the Book, desiring that they might Swear with an uplifted hand, agreeable to the ancient custome of the Colony; and though we think we can prove that the Common Law amongst us (as well as in some other places under the *English Crown*) not only indulges, but even commands and enjoyns the rite of lifting the hand in *Swearing*; yet they that had this doubt were still put by from serving on any Juries; and many of them were most unaccountably Fined and Imprisoned. Thus one grievance is a *Trojan Horse*, in the Belly of which it is not easy to recount how many insufferable Vexations have been contained.

§ VIII. Because these things could not make us miserable fast enough, there was a notable Discovery made, of, we know not what *flaw* in all our *Titles to our Lands*; and, though *besides* our purchase of them from the Natives, and, *besides* our actual peaceable unquestioned Possession of them, for near threescore years, and besides the Promise of K. *Charles II.* In his Proclamation

sent over to us, in the Year 1683. that *no man here shall receive any Prejudice in his Free-Hold or Estate*: we had the Grant of our Lands, under the Seal of the *Council of Plimouth*, which Grant was Renewed and Confirmed unto us by King *Charles I.* Under the great Seal of *England*; and the *General Court* which consisted of the *Pattentees* and their Associates, had made particular Grants hereof to the several *Towns* (though 'twas now deny'd by the Governour, that there was any such Thing as a *Town*) among us; to all which Grants the *General Court* annexed for the further securing of them, A *General Act* Published under the Seal of the Colony, in the Year 1684. Yet we were every day told, *That no man* Page [unnumbered] *was owner of a Foot of Land in all the Colony.* Accordingly, *Writs of Intrusion* began every where to be served on People; that after all their sweat and their cost upon their formerly purchased Lands, thought themselves *Free holders* of what they had. And the Governour caused the Lands pertaining to these and those *particular men*, to be measured out, for his Creatures to take possession of; and the *Right Owners*, for pulling up the Stakes, have passed through Molestations enough to tire all the patience in the world. They are more than a few, that were by Terrors driven to take *Pattents* for their Lands at excessive rates, to save them from the next that might Petition for them: and we fear that the forcing of the people at the *Eastward* hereunto gave too much Rise to the late unhappy Invasion made by the *Indians* on them. *Blanck Pattents* were got ready for the rest of us, to be Sold at a Price, that all the Money and Moveables in the Territory could scarce have paid. And several *Towns* in the Country, had their *Commons* beg'd by Persons (even by some of the Council themselves) who have been privately encouraged thereunto, by those that sought for occasions to impoverish a Land already *Peel'd, Meeted out and Trodden down.*

§ IX All the Council were not engaged in these Ill actions but those of them which were true Lovers of *their Country*, were seldom admitted to, and seldomer consulted at the Debates which Produced these unrighteous things: Care was taken to keep them under disadvantages; and the Governour with five or six more did what they would We bore all these, and many many more such things, without making any attempt for any Relief; only *Mr. Mather* purely out of Respect unto the good of his Afflicted Country, undertook a Voyage into *England*; which, when these men suspected him to be preparing for, they used all manner of Craft and Rage, not only to interrupt his *Voyage*, but to ruine his *Person* too. God having through many Difficulties given him to arrive at *White-Hall*, the King more than once or twice Promised him a certain *Magna Charta* for a speedy redress of many things which we were groaning under: and in the mean time said, *That our Governour should be written unto, to forbear the measures that he was upon.* However, after this, we were injured in

those very things, which were complained of; and besides what wrong hath been done in our civil Concerns, we suppose the *Ministers*, and the *Churches* every where have seen our Sacred Concerns a pace going after them: How they have been Discountenanced, has had a room ‹◇› the reflections of every man, that is not a stran|ger *in our Israel*.

§ X And yet that our Calamity, might not be terminated here, we are again Briar'd in the Per|plexities of another *Indian War*; how, or why, is a mystery too deep for us to unfold. And tho' 'tis judged, there are not *one hundred* of our ene|emies, yet an Army of *one thousand* English hath been raised for the Conquering of them; which Army of our poor Friends and Brethren now under *Popish Commanders* (for in the Army as well as in the Council Papists are in Commission) Has been under such a conduct that not one *In|dian* hath been kill'd, but more English are sup|posed to have died through sickness, and hard|sh•p, and in a way little satisfactory to their Friends, then we have adversaries there alive; and the whole War hath been so managed, that we can't but suspect in it, a branch of the Plot, *to bring us Low*; which we propound further to be in due time enquired into.

§ XI We did nothing against these Proceed|ings, but only cry to our God; they *have caused the cry of the Poor to come unto him, and he hears the cry of the Afflicted*. We have been quiet hi|therto; and so still we should have been, had not the Great God at this time laid us under a *double engagement* to do something for our security: be|sides, what we have in the strangely unanimous inclination, Which our Countrymen by extream|est necessities are driven unto. For first, we are Informed that the rest of the English *America* is Alarmed with just and great fears, that they may be attaqu'd by the *French*, who have lately ('tis said) already treated many of the English with worse then *Turkish Crueltys*; and while we are in equal danger of being surprised by them, it is high time we should be better guarded, then we are like to be while the Government remains in the hands by which it hath been held of late. Moreover, we have understood, (though the *Governour* has taken all imaginable care to keep us all ignorant thereof) that the Almighty God hath been pleased to prosper the noble undertaking of the Prince of *Orange*, to preserve the three Kingdoms from the horrible brinks of Popery and Slavery, and to bring to a Condign punishment those *worst of men*, by whom *English Liberties* have been destroy'd; in compliance with which Glorious Action, we ought surely to follow the Patterns which the Nobility, Gentry and Com|monalty [Page \[unnumbered\]](#) in several parts of the Kingdom have set before us, tho•gh *they* therein have chiefly proposed to prevent what *we* already endure.

§ XII. We do therefore seize upon the persons of those few *Ill men* which have been (next to our sins) the grand authors of our miseries: Resolving to secure them, for what Justice, Orders from his Highness with the *Parliament* shall direct, lest ere we are aware we *find* (what we may *fear*, being on all sides in danger) our selves to be by them given away to a Forreign *Power*, before such orders can reach unto us; for which Orders we now Humbly wait. In the mean time firmly believing: that we have endeavoured nothing but what meer Duty to God and our *Country* calls for at our Hands, we commit our *Enterprise* unto the Blessing of Him, *who hears, the cry of the Oppressed*; and advise all our Neighbours for whom we have thus ventured our selves to joyn with us in Prayers and all just Actions for the Prosperity of the Land.

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