

XVII

INDEPENDENCE DECLARED

I am not induced by motives of pride, party, or resentment to espouse the doctrine of separation and independence; I am clearly, positively, and conscientiously persuaded that it is the true interest of this continent to be so; that everything short of *that* is mere patchwork.

From *Paine's Common Sense*.



Boulder commemorating the battle of Lexington.

90. The First Continental Congress.—The king at once took measures to carry the Intolerable Acts into effect. General Gage was made governor of Massachusetts, and more soldiers were sent to Boston. The harbor of that city

was closed to all incoming and outgoing vessels. This harsh treatment led to the calling of a Congress—known as the First Continental Congress—which met at Philadelphia (September 5, 1774). At this Congress there were delegates from all the colonies except Georgia. Observe how the movement for union among the colonies was gaining strength. In the New England Confederation (p. 60) four colonies were represented; at the Albany Congress (p. 107) seven colonies; at the Stamp Act Congress nine colonies; in the First Continental Congress twelve colonies.

The First Continental Congress declared that no government had the right to deprive Americans of their life, liberty, or property, and asserted that the colonists had every right that an Englishman had. But the most important thing done by this Congress was to pass the following resolution of sympathy: "That this Congress approves the opposition of the inhabitants of Massachusetts to the execution of the late acts of Parliament, and if the same shall be attempted to be carried into execution by force, in such case all America ought to support them in their opposition."