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dead."¹⁴ We do not even know for certain if Jefferson signed on the fourth of July, when twelve states agreed to the resolution, or the fifteenth, when the action became unanimous. Julian Boyd makes out a good case for the fourth. The broadsides of the time heralded the fourth rather than the second as the great day of the century.¹⁵ All that we can be absolutely certain of about Jefferson's activities on the Fourth of July 1776 is that he recorded the temperature at 6 A.M. as 68° Fahrenheit, that he purchased a thermometer, and recorded the highest temperature of the day at 76°, and that he paid for seven pairs of women's gloves, in the happy expectation, it would seem, of a return to Monticello.¹⁶ For what is missing on this day above all others in Jefferson's life we must especially regret the destruction of his letters to his wife.

John Page wrote to Jefferson on July 20, "I am highly pleased with your Declaration. God preserve the United States. We know the Race is not to the swift nor the Battle to the Strong. Do you not think an Angel rider in the Whirlwind and directs this Storm?"¹⁷ But Jefferson left nothing to indicate either his immediate comprehension of the importance of what he had written, or, like John Adams, some precience of the destiny of the infant nation at whose birth he had been the most important attending physician. Having finished his congressional assignment, he seems to have had one overpowering impulse, to get out of Philadelphia and back to his wife.

On June 30, two days after having finished writing some of the most memorable political phrases of all time, Jefferson wrote to Edmund Pendleton in Virginia begging him to find a substitute for him in Congress. He would serve in Philadelphia "with cheerfulness," he said, only "till the expiration of our year."¹⁸ Not a word about the Declaration! The next day he did mention it, but only in a defensive letter to William Flem-

ing. "If any doubt has arisen as to me, my country will have my political creed in the form of a 'Declaration &c' which I was lately directed to draw. This will give decisive proof that my own sentiment concurred with the vote they instructed us to give."¹⁹ So he said, in effect, to his patriot friends who suspected his loyalty to the Revolution, "Let this be proof that I am with you." Indeed it was.

Jefferson was optimistic at the moment that the war would be over and won in three months. But his chief reason for wanting to return to Virginia, as he hinted in his letters, was that his wife was pregnant again, and it would seem that he was determined to be in Monticello for her confinement. To Edmund Pendleton he explained somewhat ambiguously: "I am sorry the situation of my domestic affairs renders it indispensably necessary that I should solicit the substitution of some other person here in my room. The delicacy of the house will not require me to enter minutely into the private causes which render this necessary."²⁰ But other men's wives were also pregnant. Abigail Adams would bear a stillborn child while John was in Philadelphia, and many a soldier would die in battle without ever having seen the child he had begotten before he left home.

Pendleton, who was fond of Jefferson, wrote back to him in exasperation: "I can but lament that it is not agreeable and convenient to you, for I do not Assent to your being unqualified, tho' I readily do to your usefulness in the Representative body [at Williamsburg] where having the Pleasure of Mrs. Jefferson's Company, I hope you'll get cured of your wish to retire so early in life from the memory of man, and exercise your talents for the nurture of Our new Constitution."²¹

It is clear that Pendleton—with his slur about "the Pleasure of Mrs. Jefferson's Company"—did not know about the nature of Martha Jefferson's health problem,