

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN ADAMS.



*Portrait of a man
from a portrait by Robert Rant*

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THE
WORKS
OF
✓
JOHN ADAMS,

SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

WITH
A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,
NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY
HIS GRANDSON
CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

VOL. IX.

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CONTENTS OF VOLUME IX.

		PAGE
1799.		
July	23. To O. WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY .	3
	24. T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE, TO JOHN ADAMS	3
	27. To J. McHENRY, SECRETARY OF WAR	4
August	1. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	5
	1. T. PICKERING TO JOHN ADAMS	5
	3. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	7
	4. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	8
	5. To B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY	8
	5. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	9
	6. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	10
	8. To B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY	12
	13. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	13
	14. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	15
	16. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	15
	23. To B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY	16
	24. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	16
	29. To T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	18
	29. B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY, TO JOHN ADAMS	18
September	4. To B. STODDERT, (private)	19
	9. T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE, TO JOHN ADAMS	21
	9. C. LEE, ATTORNEY-GENERAL, TO T. PICKERING, SECRE- TARY OF STATE, 2 Sept. (inclosed)	21
	11. T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE, TO JOHN ADAMS	23

		PAGE
1799.		
September	13. B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY, TO JOHN ADAMS	25
	14. TO B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY	29
	16. TO T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	29
	18. TO J. McHENRY, SECRETARY OF WAR	30
	18. O. ELLSWORTH TO JOHN ADAMS	31
	19. TO T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	31
	21. TO T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	33
	21. TO B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY	33
	21. TO THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENT	34
	22. TO CHIEF JUSTICE ELLSWORTH	34
	23. TO T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	35
	24. T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE, TO JOHN ADAMS	36
	26. TO B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY	37
October	5. O. ELLSWORTH TO JOHN ADAMS	37
	6. C. LEE, ATTORNEY-GENERAL, TO JOHN ADAMS	38
	16. TO T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	39
	16. TO B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY	39
	18. TO T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	40
November	12. TO T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	41
	15. TO O. WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY	41
December	2. TO A. J. DALLAS	42
	7. TO T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE	42
	NOTES ON SOME OBSERVATIONS OF THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY	43
	24. TO TOBIAS LEAR	44
	27. TO MRS. WASHINGTON	45
1800.		
January	13. THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENT TO THE PRESIDENT	46
March	10. TO HENRY KNOX	46
	10. TO BENJAMIN LINCOLN	46
	31. TO B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY	47
	31. TO J. McHENRY, SECRETARY OF WAR	48

CONTENTS.

vii

1800.	PAGE
April	8. THOMAS JOHNSON TO JOHN ADAMS 48
	11. TO THOMAS JOHNSON 49
	23. TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND HEADS OF DEPARTMENT 50
May	6. J. MCHENRY, SECRETARY OF WAR, TO JOHN ADAMS . 51
	10. TO T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE 53
	12. T. PICKERING, SECRETARY OF STATE, TO JOHN ADAMS 54
	12. TO TIMOTHY PICKERING 55
	15. TO J. MCHENRY, SECRETARY OF WAR 56
	16. TO THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND THE DISTRICT-ATTORNEY OF PENNSYLVANIA 56
	17. TO O. WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY . 57
	20. TO THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENT 57
	20. THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENT TO THE PRESIDENT . 59
	21. TO C. LEE, SECRETARY OF STATE PRO TEM. 60
	22. TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON 61
	26. TO W. S. SMITH 61
	26. TO BENJAMIN STODDERT 62
	26. B. STODDERT TO JOHN ADAMS 62
June	20. TO ALEXANDER HAMILTON 63
July	11. TO J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE 63
	23. TO B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY 64
	25. TO S. DEXTER, SECRETARY OF WAR 65
	30. TO J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE 66
	31. TO J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE 66
	31. TO J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE 67
August	1. TO J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE 68
	2. TO J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE 69
	3. TO B. STODDERT, SECRETARY OF THE NAVY 70
	6. TO O. WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY . 71
	7. TO J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE 71
	7. TO J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE 72
	11. TO J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE 73

		PAGE
1800.		
August	12. To JOHN TRUMBULL	74
	13. To S. DEXTER, SECRETARY OF WAR	76
	13. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	76
	14. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	77
	26. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	78
	27. To O. WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY	78
	27. To BARNABAS BIDWELL	79
	30. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	80
September	4. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	80
	5. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	82
	9. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	82
	10. To JOHN TRUMBULL	83
	18. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	84
	27. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	84
	30. To S. DEXTER, SECRETARY OF WAR	86
October	3. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	86
	4. To O. WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY	87
	9. To S. DEXTER, SECRETARY OF WAR	88
November	8. O. WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, TO JOHN ADAMS	88
	10. To O. WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY	89
	10. JOHN JAY TO JOHN ADAMS (private)	89
	11. O. WOLCOTT, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, TO JOHN ADAMS	90
	24. To JOHN JAY	90
December	19. To JOHN JAY	91
1801.		
January	24. To GEORGE CHURCHMAN AND JACOB LINDLEY	92
	26. To ELIAS BOUDINOT	93
	27. To RICHARD STOCKTON	94
	31. To J. MARSHALL, SECRETARY OF STATE	95
	31. To S. DEXTER, SECRETARY OF WAR	95
February	4. JOHN MARSHALL TO JOHN ADAMS	96

CONTENTS.

ix

1801.

		PAGE
February	4. TO JOHN MARSHALL	96
	4. TO JOSEPH WARD	96
	7. TO ELBRIDGE GERRY	97
	10. TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE	98
March	28. OLIVER WOLCOTT TO JOHN ADAMS	99
April	6. TO OLIVER WOLCOTT	100

SPEECHES TO CONGRESS.

1797.

March	4. INAUGURAL SPEECH TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS	105
May	16. SPEECH TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS	111
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE SENATE	119
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	120
November	23. SPEECH TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS	121
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE SENATE	126
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	127

1798.

December	8. SPEECH TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS	128
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE SENATE	134
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	135

1799.

December	3. SPEECH TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS	136
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE SENATE	140
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	141
	23. REPLY TO THE ADDRESS OF THE SENATE ON THE DEATH OF GEORGE WASHINGTON	142

1800.

November	22. SPEECH TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS	143
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE SENATE	147
	REPLY TO THE ANSWER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES	148

		PAGE
	MESSAGES TO CONGRESS.	
1797.		
May	31. MESSAGE TO THE SENATE, NOMINATING ENVOYS TO FRANCE	150
June	12. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, RESPECTING THE TERRITORY OF THE NATCHEZ	151
	23. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, ON AFFAIRS WITH ALGIERS	152
July	3. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, COMMUNICATING INFORMATION RESPECTING SPAIN	154
1798.		
January	8. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, ANNOUNCING THE RATIFICATION OF AN AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION	154
February	5. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, RELATIVE TO A FRENCH PRIVATEER	155
March	5. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, TRANSMITTING DESPATCHES FROM FRANCE	156
	19. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, TRANSMITTING DESPATCHES FROM FRANCE	156
April	3. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, TRANSMITTING DESPATCHES FROM FRANCE	158
June	21. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, ON THE STATE OF AFFAIRS WITH FRANCE	158
July	17. MESSAGE TO THE SENATE, TRANSMITTING A LETTER FROM GEORGE WASHINGTON	159
1799.		
January	8. MESSAGE TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, RESPECTING CERTAIN ACTS OF BRITISH NAVAL OFFICERS	159
	CIRCULAR TO THE COMMANDERS OF ARMED VESSELS OF THE U. STATES, 29 DECEMBER, 1798, (inclosed)	160
	28. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, TRANSMITTING A FRENCH DECREE, RESPECTING NEUTRAL SAILORS	161
February	15. MESSAGE TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, RESPECTING THE SUSPENSION OF A FRENCH DECREE	161
	18. MESSAGE TO THE SENATE, NOMINATING AN ENVOY TO FRANCE	161

CONTENTS.

xi

	PAGE
1799.	
February 25. MESSAGE TO THE SENATE, NOMINATING THREE ENVOYS TO FRANCE	162
December 19. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, ANNOUNCING THE DECEASE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON	163
1800.	
January 6. MESSAGE TO BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS, TRANSMITTING A LETTER OF MARTHA WASHINGTON	164
14. MESSAGE TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, TRANSMITTING A LETTER OF JOHN RANDOLPH, JR.	165
1801.	
21. MESSAGE TO THE SENATE, TRANSMITTING A REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE	166
March 2. MESSAGE TO THE SENATE, ON THE CONVENTION WITH FRANCE	167

PROCLAMATIONS.

1797.	
March 25. PROCLAMATION FOR AN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION OF CONGRESS	168
1798.	
March 23. PROCLAMATION FOR A NATIONAL FAST	169
July 13. PROCLAMATION REVOKING THE EXEQUATURS OF THE FRENCH CONSULS	170
1799.	
March 6. PROCLAMATION FOR A NATIONAL FAST	172
12. PROCLAMATION CONCERNING THE INSURRECTION IN PENNSYLVANIA	174
June 26. PROCLAMATION, OPENING THE TRADE WITH CERTAIN PORTS OF ST. DOMINGO	176
1800.	
May 9. PROCLAMATION, OPENING THE TRADE WITH OTHER PORTS OF ST. DOMINGO	177
21. PROCLAMATION, GRANTING PARDON TO THE PENNSYLVANIA INSURGENTS	178

ANSWERS TO ADDRESSES.

1797.	
August 23. TO THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES	180
1798.	
April TO THE MAYOR, ALDERMEN, AND CITIZENS OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA	182

1798.		PAGE
April	26. TO THE CITIZENS OF PHILADELPHIA, THE DISTRICT OF SOUTHWARK, AND THE NORTHERN LIBERTIES	. 183
	30. TO THE INHABITANTS OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND	184
May	1. TO THE INHABITANTS OF BRIDGETON, IN THE COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND, IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY	. 185
	2. TO THE CITIZENS OF BALTIMORE, AND BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND	. 186
	7. TO THE YOUNG MEN OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, THE DISTRICT OF SOUTHWARK, AND THE NORTHERN LIBERTIES, PENNSYLVANIA	. 187
	7. TO THE INHABITANTS AND CITIZENS OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS	. 189
	8. TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA	. 190
	8. TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTY OF BURLINGTON, NEW JERSEY	. 191
	10. TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN OF HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT	. 192
	12. TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE BOROUGH OF HARRISBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA	. 193
	22. TO THE YOUNG MEN OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS	. 194
	28. TO THE GRAND JURY FOR THE COUNTY OF PLYMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS	. 195
	31. TO THE SOLDIER CITIZENS OF NEW JERSEY	. 196
June	2. TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN OF BRAINTREE, MASSACHUSETTS	. 197
	TO THE YOUNG MEN OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK	. 197
	TO THE INHABITANTS OF QUINCY, MASSACHUSETTS	. 199
	2. TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS	. 200
	15. TO THE LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS	. 200
	25. TO THE INHABITANTS OF ARLINGTON AND SANDGATE, VERMONT	. 202
	29. TO THE LEGISLATURE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE	. 203
	TO THE STUDENTS OF DICKINSON COLLEGE, PENNSYLVANIA	. 204
	TO THE STUDENTS OF NEW JERSEY COLLEGE	. 205

CONTENTS.

xiii

1798.	PAGE
	TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEGISLATURE OF CON- NECTICUT 207
	TO THE CINCINNATI OF RHODE ISLAND 208
July	14. TO THE INHABITANTS OF DEDHAM AND OTHER TOWNS IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK, MASSACHUSETTS . 209
	TO THE INHABITANTS OF CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS . 210
	TO THE STUDENTS OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY, IN MAS- SACHUSETTS 211
	TO THE FREEMASONS OF THE STATE OF MARYLAND . 212
	TO THE INHABITANTS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, MARY- LAND 213
	TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTY OF MIDDLESEX, VIRGINIA 214
	TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE MILITIA OF BOTETOURT, VIRGINIA 215
August	11. TO THE INHABITANTS OF CINCINNATI AND ITS VICINITY 215
	13. TO THE INHABITANTS OF HARRISON COUNTY, VIRGINIA 216
	. TO THE YOUNG MEN OF RICHMOND, VIRGINIA . . 217
	TO THE INHABITANTS OF ACCOMAC COUNTY, VIRGINIA 218
	31. TO THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK 219
September	7. TO THE BOSTON MARINE SOCIETY, MASSACHUSETTS . 220
	15. TO THE CINCINNATI OF SOUTH CAROLINA . . . 222
	22. TO THE GRAND JURY OF DUTCHESS COUNTY, NEW YORK 223
	26. TO THE GRAND JURY OF ULSTER COUNTY, NEW YORK 224
	TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE TOWN OF NEWBERN, NORTH CAROLINA 225
	26. TO THE SIXTH BRIGADE OF THE THIRD DIVISION OF NORTH CAROLINA MILITIA 226
October	3. TO THE GRAND JURORS OF HAMPSHIRE COUNTY, MAS- SACHUSETTS 227
	5. TO THE INHABITANTS OF MACHIAS, DISTRICT OF MAINE 227
	11. TO THE OFFICERS OF THE FIRST BRIGADE, THIRD DIVI- SION OF MASSACHUSETTS MILITIA 228

		PAGE
1798.		
October	19. TO THE MILITIA AND INHABITANTS OF GUILFORD COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA	229
	31. TO THE OFFICERS OF THE THIRD DIVISION OF GEORGIA MILITIA	230
1799.		
April	3. TO THE GRAND JURY OF MORRIS COUNTY IN NEW JERSEY	231
	8. TO THE CITIZENS, INHABITANTS OF THE MISSISSIPPI TERRITORY	232
1800.		
June	5. TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE CITY OF WASHINGTON	233
	11. TO THE CITIZENS OF ALEXANDRIA	233
July	1. TO THE CORPORATION OF NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT	234
August	15. TO THE INHABITANTS OF THE COUNTY OF EDGECOMBE, NORTH CAROLINA	235
1801.		
March	26. TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF MASSACHUSETTS	236

CORRESPONDENCE ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE BOSTON PATRIOT.

PRELIMINARY NOTE	239
TO THE PRINTERS OF THE BOSTON PATRIOT	241
THE INADMISSIBLE PRINCIPLES OF THE KING OF ENGLAND'S PROCLAMATION OF OCTOBER 16, 1807, CONSIDERED	312

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE.

1770.		
August	9. TO CATHARINE MACAULAY	331
1773.		
December	17. TO JAMES WARREN	333
	22. TO JAMES WARREN	334
1774.		
April	9. TO JAMES WARREN	336
May	14. TO WILLIAM WOODFALL	337
June	25. TO JAMES WARREN	338
July	23. TO JOHN TUDOR	340

CONTENTS.

xv

1774.				PAGE
July	25.	JOSEPH HAWLEY TO JOHN ADAMS	. . . . .	. 342
September	29.	TO WILLIAM TUDOR	. . . . .	. 346
December	12.	TO EDWARD BIDDLE	. . . . .	. 348
	28.	TO JAMES BURGH	. . . . .	. 350
1775.				
January	3.	TO JAMES WARREN	. . . . .	. 352
March	15.	TO JAMES WARREN	. . . . .	. 354
June	10.	TO MOSES GILL	. . . . .	. 356
	18.	TO ELBRIDGE GERRY	. . . . .	. 357
		TO GEORGE WASHINGTON	. . . . .	. 359
July	29.	TO JOSIAH QUINCY	. . . . .	. 360
November	5.	TO ELBRIDGE GERRY	. . . . .	. 362
	14.	JOSEPH HAWLEY TO JOHN ADAMS	. . . . .	. 364
	23.	TO JAMES OTIS	. . . . .	. 365
	25.	TO JOSEPH HAWLEY	. . . . .	. 366
	25.	TO MRS. MERCY WARREN	. . . . .	. 368
1776.				
January	6.	TO GEORGE WASHINGTON	. . . . .	. 370
	15.	SAMUEL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS	. . . . .	. 371
April	29.	TO JAMES OTIS	. . . . .	. 374
May	18.	R. H. LEE TO JOHN ADAMS	. . . . .	. 374
	26.	TO JAMES SULLIVAN	. . . . .	. 375
	29.	TO BENJAMIN HICKBORN	. . . . .	. 378
	30.	TO SAMUEL COOPER	. . . . .	. 381
June	1.	TO ISAAC SMITH	. . . . .	. 382
	2.	TO HENRY KNOX	. . . . .	. 384
	3.	TO PATRICK HENRY	. . . . .	. 386
	4.	TO HUGH HUGHES	. . . . .	. 388
	4.	TO RICHARD HENRY LEE	. . . . .	. 389
	9.	TO WILLIAM CUSHING	. . . . .	. 390
	12.	TO JOHN LOWELL	. . . . .	. 392
	12.	TO OAKES ANGIER	. . . . .	. 394
	12.	TO FRANCIS DANA	. . . . .	. 395

		PAGE
1776.		
June	14. TO SAMUEL CHASE	396
	16. TO JAMES WARREN	398
	21. TO ZABDIEL ADAMS	399
	22. TO BENJAMIN KENT	401
	22. TO NATHANAEL GREENE	402
	22. TO SAMUEL H. PARSONS	405
	23. TO JOHN SULLIVAN	407
	23. TO JOHN WINTHROP	409
	24. TO WILLIAM TUDOR	411
	24. TO SAMUEL CHASE	412
July	1. TO ARCHIBALD BULLOCK	414
	1. TO SAMUEL CHASE	415
	3. TO MRS. ADAMS	417
	9. TO SAMUEL CHASE	420
	10. TO JOSEPH WARD	422
	18. TO JONATHAN MASON	422
	21. TO J. D. SERGEANT	424
	25. TO THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF MASSACHUSETTS	426
	27. TO JAMES WARREN	427
August	16. TO FRANCIS DANA	429
	19. TO SAMUEL H. PARSONS	431
	21. TO JONATHAN MASON	432
	25. TO JOSEPH HAWLEY	433
	29. TO WILLIAM TUDOR	436
September	4. TO SAMUEL COOPER	439
	8. TO JAMES WARREN	440
	8. TO SAMUEL ADAMS	441
	16. SAMUEL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS	441
	14. TO SAMUEL ADAMS	443
	30. SAMUEL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS	446
1777.		
January	9. SAMUEL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS	448

CONTENTS.

xvii

		PAGE
1777.		
February	3. To JAMES WARREN . . . . .	. 450
	12. To JAMES WARREN . . . . .	. 452
March	18. To JAMES WARREN . . . . .	. 456
	21. To JOHN AVERY, JUNIOR . . . . .	. 457
	22. To WILLIAM TUDOR . . . . .	. 459
April	8. To WILLIAM GORDON . . . . .	. 461
	27. To JAMES WARREN . . . . .	. 462
	29. To JAMES WARREN . . . . .	. 463
May	6. To JAMES WARREN . . . . .	. 464
	16. THOMAS JEFFERSON TO JOHN ADAMS . . . . .	. 465
	26. To THOMAS JEFFERSON . . . . .	. 466
October	17. B. FRANKLIN TO JAMES LOVELL . . . . .	. 468
December	6. To ELBRIDGE GERRY . . . . .	. 469
	24. To JAMES LOVELL . . . . .	. 471
1778.		
February	8. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 472
November	27. To JAMES LOVELL . . . . .	. 473
December	15. To MRS. WARREN . . . . .	. 474
1779.		
February	20. To JAMES LOVELL . . . . .	. 476
	28. To SAMUEL COOPER . . . . .	. 478
June	13. JAMES LOVELL TO JOHN ADAMS (confidential) . . . . .	. 480
September	10. To ELBRIDGE GERRY . . . . .	. 483
	20. To THOMAS MCKEAN . . . . .	. 484
	27. JAMES LOVELL TO JOHN ADAMS (confidential) . . . . .	. 486
	28. JAMES LOVELL TO JOHN ADAMS (confidential) . . . . .	. 489
	29. ELBRIDGE GERRY TO JOHN ADAMS . . . . .	. 491
October	4. HENRY LAURENS TO JOHN ADAMS . . . . .	. 496
	17. To JAMES LOVELL . . . . .	. 499
	25. To JAMES LOVELL . . . . .	. 501
	25. To HENRY LAURENS . . . . .	. 503
November	4. To ELBRIDGE GERRY . . . . .	. 505
	4. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 507

		PAGE
1780.		
September	23. TO EDMUND JENINGS	509
October	2. TO JONATHAN JACKSON	510
1782.		
June	17. TO JAMES WARREN	511
September	6. TO JAMES WARREN	513
November	17. TO JONATHAN JACKSON	514
1783.		
April	12. TO ARTHUR LEE	517
November	4. SAMUEL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS	519
1784.		
January	14. ELBRIDGE GERRY TO JOHN ADAMS	521
February	22. TO A. M. CERISIER	522
March	24. TO CHARLES SPENER	523
August	27. TO JAMES WARREN	524
November	4. TO FRANCIS DANA	526
December	13. TO MRS. WARREN	528
1785.		
February	25. THE ABBÉ DE MABLY TO JOHN ADAMS	529
April	24. TO BENJAMIN WATERHOUSE	530
	27. TO SAMUEL ADAMS	532
August	21. TO JOHN JEBB	532
September	6. TO ARTHUR LEE	536
	10. TO JOHN JEBB	538
	25. TO JOHN JEBB	543
December	12. R. H. LEE TO JOHN ADAMS	544
1786.		
February	3. TO COUNT SANSFIELD	546
April	13. SAMUEL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS	547
May	26. TO COTTON TUFTS	548
June	2. TO COTTON TUFTS	549
1787.		
January	27. TO BENJAMIN HICHBORN	550
June	12. TO PHILIP MAZZEI	552
September	3. R. H. LEE TO JOHN ADAMS	553

CONTENTS.

xix

		PAGE
1787.		
October	3. ARTHUR LEE TO JOHN ADAMS	554
1788.		
December	2. TO BENJAMIN RUSH	556
	3. TO THOMAS BRAND-HOLLIS	557
1789.		
May	20. TO RICHARD PRICE	558
August	18. TO HENRY MERCHANT	559
	30. TO SILVANUS BOURN	561
September	17. TO JAMES SULLIVAN	562
November	7. TO MARSTON WATSON	562
1790.		
April	19. TO RICHARD PRICE	563
	18. TO BENJAMIN RUSH	565
June	1. TO ALEXANDER JARDINE	567
	1. TO THOMAS BRAND-HOLLIS	568
	11. TO THOMAS BRAND-HOLLIS	569
September	13. TO THOMAS WELSH	571
1791.		
January	23. TO JOHN TRUMBULL	572
March	10. TO HANNAH ADAMS	574
1797.		
April	6. TO JOSEPH WARD	574
1799.		
January	3. TO HENRY GUEST	575
1800.		
December	3. TO DR. OGDEN	576
	28. TO F. A. VANDERKEMP	576
	30. TO ELBRIDGE GERRY	577
1801.		
March	11. CHRISTOPHER GADSDEN TO JOHN ADAMS	578
	23. TO SAMUEL DEXTER	580
	24. TO THOMAS JEFFERSON	581
	31. TO BENJAMIN STODDERT	582
April	6. TO THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE	583
	16. TO CHRISTOPHER GADSDEN	584

		PAGE
1802.		
January	26. To SAMUEL A. OTIS . . . . .	. 585
November	30. To THOMAS TRUXTON . . . . .	. 586
December	20. To JOSHUA THOMAS, JAMES THACHER, AND WILLIAM JACKSON . . . . .	. 587
1804.		
March	3. To F. A. VANDERKEMP . . . . .	. 588
1805.		
February	5. To F. A. VANDERKEMP . . . . .	. 589
1807.		
May	1. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 591
	11. To WILLIAM HEATH . . . . .	. 594
	21. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 596
	23. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 599
1808.		
September	3. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 600
	27. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 602
December	26. To J. B. VARNUM . . . . .	. 604
1809.		
February	16. F. A. VANDERKEMP . . . . .	. 608
March	11. To SKELTON JONES . . . . .	. 610
	13. To DANIEL WRIGHT AND ERASTUS LYMAN . . . . .	. 613
April	12. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 616
	20. To JOSEPH LYMAN . . . . .	. 619
June	19. To SAMUEL PERCEY . . . . .	. 621
December	15. To F. A. VANDERKEMP . . . . .	. 624
1810.		
January	21. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 626
1811.		
January	29. To DAVID SEWALL . . . . .	. 627
February	9. To JOSIAH QUINCY . . . . .	. 629
	18. To JOSIAH QUINCY . . . . .	. 633
August	28. To BENJAMIN RUSH . . . . .	. 635

APPENDIX.

A. BROKEN HINTS, TO BE COMMUNICATED TO THE COMMITTEE OF CONGRESS FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS, BY JOSEPH HAWLEY	641
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if they fight well, and captivate their enemies, they will acquire glory and encouragement at home, and England or France may determine for themselves whether they will declare war. I believe neither will do it, because each will be afraid of our joining the other. If either should, in my opinion, the other will rescind; but if we should have both to fight, it would not be long before one or the other would be willing to make peace, and I see not much difference between fighting both and fighting England alone. My heart is with the Spanish patriots, and I should be glad to assist them as far as our commerce can supply them.

I conclude with acknowledging that we have received greater injuries from England than from France, abominable as both have been. I conclude that whatever the government determines, I shall support as far as my small voice extends.

N. B. The tribute and the British licenses must be prohibited with adequate penalties.

TO F. A. VANDERKEMP.

Quincy, 16 February, 1809.

I have yours of the 18th of January. When you receive your diploma, you will have no fees to pay. We have not yet adopted any regulation which requires fees from the members elected. Perhaps it would be prudent in future to adopt such a measure, and give a salary to our secretary. Our officers are now men of so much business, and so dependent on it for the support of their families, that they cannot attend enough to the business of the Academy. I would send you our transactions, if I knew how. I spoke to Dr. Morse and Dr. Kirkland, but they have not informed me of a conveyance.

The Dutch history, as you say, should be instructive to us. The alliance with England has in the end been fatal to Holland. The close connection between the house of Hanover and the house of Orange, the Dutch policy to depend upon the protection of the English fleet, has given preponderance to the four agricultural provinces over the three maritime provinces, and

induced the States General to neglect and abandon the marine for the purpose of maintaining a standing army for the Prince of Orange to review daily on the parade at the Hague. In consequence, their independence has been lost. Beware! Oh, my country, beware! lest you suffer English or French intrigues to render a naval power unpopular in America.

Robert Morris (since you ask me my opinion of him) was a frank, generous, and manly mortal. He rose from nothing but a naked boy, by his industry, ingenuity, and fidelity, to great business and credit as a merchant. At the beginning of our revolution, his commerce was stagnated, and as he had over-traded, he was much embarrassed. He took advantage of the times, united with the whigs, came into Congress, and united his credit, supported by my loans in Holland, and resources of the United States. By this means he supported his credit for many years; but at last grew extravagant, as all conquerors and extraordinary characters do, and died as he had lived, as I believe, all his days, worth very little solid capital. Like Lafontaine in his epitaph, he might say,

“Jean s'en alla comme il était venu,
Mangea le fonds avec le revenu.”

If you write dialogues of the dead, you must not put into the mouth of Dumas your correct notions of government. He, poor man, was too dependent on the French, and too devoted to democracy, to advocate the true system of government. I say with you and Voltaire, —

“Vivons, écrivons, aimons, buvons, cher Horace!”

We may be reduced to hard necessities. The two most powerful, active, and enterprising nations that ever existed are now contending with us. The two nations, to whom mankind are under more obligations for the progress of science and civilization than to any others, except the Hebrews. This consideration affects me more than the danger from either or both. I excepted the Hebrews, for in spite of Bolingbroke and Voltaire, I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation. If I were an atheist, and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the

nations. If I were an atheist of the other sect, who believe or pretend to believe that all is ordered by chance, I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a supreme, intelligent, wise, almighty sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization. I cannot say that I love the Jews very much neither, nor the French, nor the English, nor the Romans, nor the Greeks. We must love all nations as well as we can, but it is very hard to love most of them.

Our medium is depreciated by the multitude of swindling banks, which have emitted bank bills to an immense amount beyond the deposits of gold and silver in their vaults, by which means the price of labor and land and merchandise and produce is doubled, tripled, and quadrupled in many instances. Every dollar of a bank bill that is issued beyond the quantity of gold and silver in the vaults, represents nothing, and is therefore a cheat upon somebody.

Solomon built Palmyra, the ruins of which show that his magnificence was not a fable.

TO SKELTON JONES.

Quincy, 11 March, 1809.

I received yesterday your favor of the month of August, 1808, and if the following answers to your questions will be any gratification to your curiosity, or any aid to your work, they are at your service.

1. My father was John Adams, the son of Joseph Adams, the son of another Joseph Adams, the son of Henry Adams, who all lived independent New England farmers, and died and lie buried in this town of Quincy, formerly called Braintree, and more anciently still, Mount Wollaston. My mother was Susanna Boylston, daughter of Peter Boylston, of Brookline, the oldest son of Thomas Boylston, a physician who came from England in 1656, and purchased a farm in that town near Boston.