

**T H E W O R K S**

**o f**

**J O H N A D A M S .**

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.

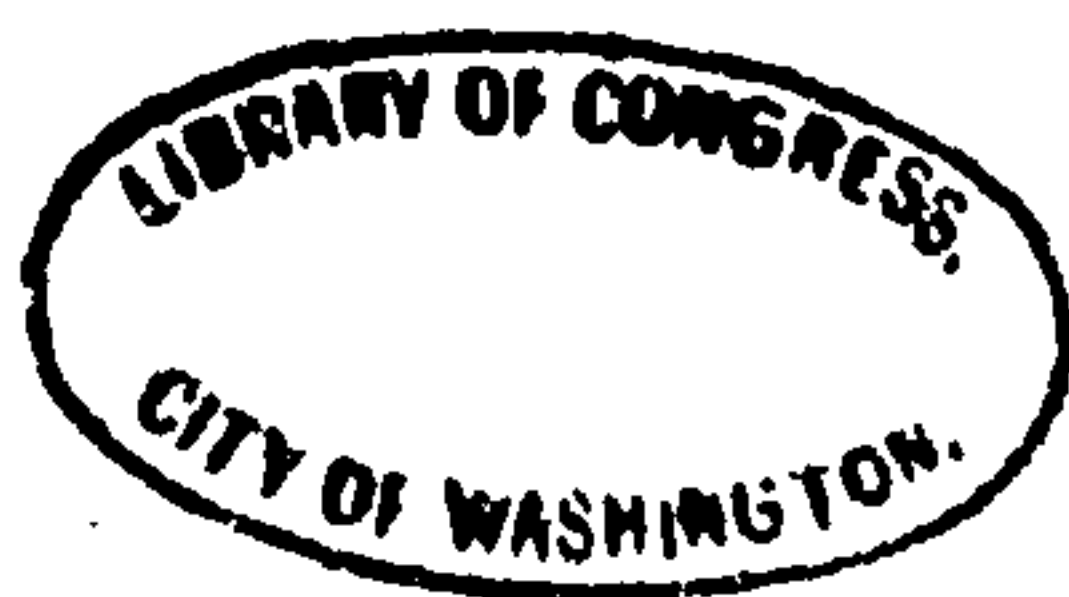
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## P R E F A C E.

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“In the winter of 1776 there was much discussion in Congress concerning the necessity of independence, and advising the several States to institute governments for themselves under the immediate authority and original power of the people. Great difficulties occurred to many gentlemen in making a transition from the old governments to new, that is, from the royal to republican governments. In January, 1776, Mr. George Wythe, of Virginia, passing an evening with me, asked me what plan I would advise a colony to pursue, in order to get out of the old government and into a new one. I sketched in words a scheme, which he requested me to give him in writing. Accordingly, the next day, I delivered to him the following letter. He lent it to his colleague, Richard Henry Lee, who asked me to let him print it; to which I consented, provided he would suppress my name; for if that should appear, it would excite a continental clamor among the tories, that I was erecting a battering-ram to demolish the royal government and render independence indispensable

“QUINCY, 21 July, 1811.”

The copy of the pamphlet to which this notice was prefixed in writing on the fly-leaf, is now separated from it, and neither that nor any other has been discovered among the papers. Judge Cranch, when preparing his Memoir of Mr. Adams for the Columbian Institute at Washington, was unable to find it in print.

The first edition, making a duodecimo of twenty-eight pages, was printed in Philadelphia, by John Dunlap, and copies are yet preserved in that city. The Editor has seen not less than three in the City Library, an institution rich in the early pamphlets of the Revolution. It is not probable that many ever found their way to Massachusetts. Certainly, none are known to exist there at the present time. A reprint was made of it the same year, by John Gill, in Queen Street, Boston, a copy of which is now in the Library of the American Antiquarian Society, at Worcester. It makes sixteen pages, 12mo, of paper and print far inferior to the original edition. Since that period it has been repeatedly printed; upon one occasion it was attributed to Mr. Jefferson, but most frequently it has appeared in connection with notices of the life of the author.

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government consisted of no more than two of the three estates, which we have spoken of before, that is, of royalty and aristocracy; it remained, therefore, still necessary to admit the people into some share of the government; and the patricians growing so insolent in time, (as I shall show hereafter,) that the plebeians could no longer endure it, the latter took arms, and obliged them to relinquish part of their authority, lest they should lose the whole. On the other hand, the consuls and senators still retained so much power in the commonwealth as enabled them to support their rank and dignity with honor. This struggle gave birth to certain officers, called *tribunes of the people*; after the creation of whom, that state became more firm and compact, every one of the three degrees above mentioned having its proper share in the government. And so propitious was fortune to it, that although it was changed from a monarchy into an aristocracy, and afterwards into a democracy, by the steps and for the reasons already assigned, yet the royal power was never entirely abolished and given to the patricians, nor that of the patricians wholly to the plebeians. On the contrary, the authority of the three estates being duly proportioned and mixed together, made it a perfect commonwealth. And this was owing in a great measure, if not altogether, to the dissensions that happened betwixt the patricians and plebeians, as shall be shown more at large in the following chapters.

## ALGERNON SIDNEY.

“ SOME small numbers of men, living within the precincts of one city, have, as it were, cast into a common stock, the right which they had of governing themselves and children, and, by common consent, joining in one body, exercised such power over every single person as seemed beneficial to the whole; and this, men call perfect democracy. Others chose rather to be governed by a select number of such as most excelled in wisdom and virtue; and this, according to the signification of the word, was called aristocracy. When one man excelled all others, the government was put into his hands under the name of monarchy. But the wisest, best, and by far the greatest part of mankind, rejecting these simple species, did form governments, mixed or composed of the three, as shall be proved hereafter, which com-



monly received their respective denomination from the great part that prevailed, and did deserve praise or blame, as they were well or ill proportioned." p. 22, § 9.

"The best governments of the world have been composed of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy."

"As for democracy, I believe it can suit only with the convenience of a small town, accompanied with such circumstances as are seldom found. But this no way obliges men to run into the other extreme, inasmuch as the variety of forms, between mere democracy and absolute monarchy, is almost infinite. And if I should undertake to say, there never was a good government in the world that did not consist of the three simple species of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, I think I might make it good. This at the least is certain, that the government of the Hebrews, instituted by God, had a judge, the great sanhedrim, and general assemblies of the people. Sparta had two kings, a senate of twenty-eight chosen men and the like assemblies. All the Dorian cities had a chief magistrate, a senate, and occasional assemblies. The cities of Ionia, Athens, and others, had an Archon, the Areopagi, &c., and all judgments concerning matters of the greatest importance, as well as the election of magistrates, were referred to the people. Rome, in the beginning, had a king and a senate, while the election of kings and judgments upon appeals remained in the people; afterwards, consuls representing kings and vested with equal power, a more numerous senate, and more frequent meetings of the people. Venice has at this day a duke, the senate of the *pregadi*, and the great assembly of the nobility, which is the whole city; the rest of the inhabitants being only *incolæ*, not *cives*; and those of the other cities or countries are their subjects, and do not participate in the government.

"Genoa is governed in like manner. Lucca not unlike to them. Germany is at this day governed by an emperor, the princes or great lords in their several precincts; the cities by their own magistrates; and by general diets, in which the whole power of the nation resides, and where the emperor, princes, nobility, and cities have their places in person, or by their deputies. All the northern nations which, upon the dissolution of the Roman empire, possessed the best provinces that had composed it, were under that form, which is usually called the

Gothic polity. They had king, lords, commons, diets, assemblies of estates, cortes, and parliaments, in which the sovereign powers of those nations did reside, and by which they were exercised. The like was practised in Hungary, Bohemia, Sweden, Denmark, Poland; and, if things are changed in some of those places within a few years, they must give better proofs of having gained by the change, than are yet seen in the world, before I think myself obliged to change my opinion.

“Some nations, not liking the name of king, have given such a power as kings enjoyed in other places to one or more magistrates, either limited to a certain time, or left to be perpetual, as best pleased themselves; others, approving the name, made the dignity purely elective. Some have in their elections principally regarded one family as long as it lasted; others considered nothing but the fitness of the person, and reserved to themselves a liberty of taking where they pleased. Some have permitted the crown to be hereditary as to its ordinary course: but restrained the power, and instituted officers to inspect the proceedings of kings, and to take care that the laws were not violated. Of this sort were the Ephori of Sparta, the Maires du Palais, and afterwards the constable of France, the justiciar in Aragon, the reichshofmeeter in Denmark, the high steward in England; and in all places, such assemblies as are beforementioned under several names, who had the power of the whole nation, &c.” p. 138, ch. ii. § 16.

“It is confessed, that a pure democracy can never be good, unless for a small town, &c.” p. 147, § 18.

“As to popular government in the strictest sense, that is, pure democracy, where the people in themselves, and by themselves, perform all that belongs to government, I know of no such thing; and, if it be in the world, have nothing to say for it.

“If it be said that those governments in which the democratical part governs most, do more frequently err in the choice of men, or the means of preserving that purity of manners which is required for the well-being of a people, than those wherein aristocracy prevails, I confess it, and that in Rome and Athens, the best and wisest men did for the most part incline to aristocracy. Xenophon, Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus, Cicero, and others were of this sort. But if our author there seek patrons for his absolute monarchy, he will find none but Pha-

laris, Agathocles, Dionysius, Catiline, Cethegus, Lentulus, with the corrupted crew of mercenary rascals who did, or endeavored to set them up; these are they, quibus ex honesto nulla est spes; they abhor the *dominion of the law*, because it curbs their vices, and make themselves subservient to the lusts of *a man* who may nourish them." p. 161, ch. ii. § 19.

"Being no way concerned in the defence of democracy, &c., I may leave our knight, like Don Quixote, fighting against the phantasms of his own brain, and saying what he pleases against such governments as never were, unless in such a place as San Marino, near Sinigaglia, in Italy, where a hundred clowns govern a barbarous rock that no man invades, and relates nothing to our question." p. 165, § 21.

The republic of San Marino, next to that of Millingen in Switzerland, is the smallest republic in Europe. The limits of it extend no farther than the base of the mountain on which it is seated. Its insignificance is its security. No neighboring prince ever thought it worth his while to destroy the independency of such a beehive.\*

"However, more ignorance cannot be expressed, than by giving the name of democracy to those governments that are composed of the three simple species, as we have proved that all the good ones have ever been; for, in a strict sense, it can only suit with those where the people retain to themselves the administration of the supreme power; and more largely, when the popular part, as in Athens, greatly overbalances the other two, and the denomination is taken from the prevailing part." p. 258.

## MONTESQUIEU.

*Spirit of Laws.* † — *Of the Constitution of England.*

"In every government there are three sorts of power, — the legislative; the executive, in respect to things dependent on the law of nations; and the executive, in regard to things that depend on the civil law.

"By virtue of the first, (that is, the legislative power,) the prince or magistrate enacts temporary or perpetual laws, and

\* See *Blainville's Travels*, vol. ii. p. 227; *Addison's Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*.

† Book 11, c. vi.