

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN ADAMS.



John Adams

BOSTON

PUBLISHED BY CHARLES C. LITTLE & JAMES BROWN.

Adams, John, Pres. U.S.

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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. II.

BOSTON:

CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN.

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D I A R Y .

THESE are loose fragments of journal in the hand-writing of JOHN ADAMS upon scraps of paper scarcely legible, from 18 November, 1755, to 20 November, 1761. They were effusions of mind, committed from time to time to paper, probably without the design of preserving them; self-examinations at once severe and stimulative; reflections upon others, sometimes, not less severe upon his friends; thoughts such as occur to all, some of which no other than an unsullied soul would commit to writing, mingled with conceptions at once comprehensive and profound.

J. Q. A.

1755. NOVEMBER 18. We had a very severe shock of an earthquake. It continued near four minutes. I then was at my father's in Braintree, and awoke out of my sleep in the midst of it. The house seemed to rock and reel and crack, as if it would fall in ruins about us. Chimneys were shattered by it within one mile of my father's house.¹ *

¹ This is the first entry, and is printed because it seems to have originated the plan of a Diary. It refers to one of the most memorable events of the kind which ever took place. The destruction of the city of Lisbon occurred on the first day of this month. Although less severe in its effects on this side of the Atlantic, it is yet remembered as the worst ever known in English America. "It seems to have been greater in Massachusetts than any other colony. In Boston, many chimneys and walls of houses were much shattered, but no house thrown down." The government noticed it by appointing a day of fasting and prayer.

* [In the public exercises at Commencement I was somewhat remarked as a respondent, and Mr. Maccarty, of Worcester, who was empowered by the selectmen of that town to procure them a Latin master for the grammar school, engaged me to undertake it. About three weeks after Commencement in 1755, when I was not yet twenty years of age, a horse was sent me from Worcester, and a man to attend me. We made the journey, about sixty miles, in one day, and I entered on my office.

For three months I boarded with one Greene, at the expense of the town, and by the arrangement of the selectmen. Here I found Morgan's Moral Philosopher, which I was informed had circulated with some freedom in that town, and that the principles of Deism had made considerable progress among persons in that and other towns in the county.]

1756. January 16. Reading Hutcheson's Introduction to Moral Philosophy. Dined with Major Chandler.*

18. Sunday. Heard Mr. Maccarty.¹

February 11. I am constantly forming, but never executing good resolutions. I take great pleasure in viewing and examining the magnificent prospects of Nature that lie before us in this town. If I cast my eyes one way, I am entertained with the savage, unsightly appearance of naked woods, and leafless forests. In another place a chain of broken and irregular mountains throws my mind into a pleasing kind of astonishment. But if I turn myself round, I perceive a wide, extensive tract before me made up of woods and meadows, wandering streams and barren plains, covered in various places by herds of grazing cattle and terminated by the distant view of the town.²

12. Thursday. Heard Mr. Welman preach the lecture, and drank tea with him at home; where he made this observation, namely, that "Dr. Mayhew was a smart man, but he embraced some doctrines not generally approved."³

13. Friday. Supped at Major Gardiner's, and engaged to keep school at Bristol, provided Worcester people at their ensuing March meeting should change this into a moving school,⁴ not otherwise. Major Greene this evening fell into some conversation with me about the Divinity and satisfaction of Jesus Christ. All the argument he advanced was, "that a mere crea-

¹ The Rev. Thaddeus Maccarty, pastor of the first parish of Worcester for thirty-seven years, and the person who engaged the writer to come to Worcester. In the Autobiography he is mentioned with respect and esteem. He had been driven from the town of Kingston a few years before this because he was suspected of liberality to Whitefield. *Coll. Mass. Hist. Society*, vol. xiii., p. 209.

² Worcester at this time contained a population certainly not exceeding 1500.

³ Rev. Jonathan Mayhew, afterwards the well known pastor of the West Church in Boston. Religious opinions had been for a long time the principal subject of difference among the people of Worcester, as indeed they were everywhere in Massachusetts. A few years before this, Mr. Maccarty and Mr. Mayhew had been brought into direct competition as candidates for settlement in the parish, and the former carried the day with only two votes dissenting.

⁴ "The instructor of those days was migratory, revolving in his circuit round a centre not then fixed to a particular location." *Lincoln's Worcester*, 297.

* [The family of the Chandlers were well-bred and agreeable people, and I as often visited them as my school and my studies in the lawyer's office would admit, especially Colonel Gardner Chandler, with whom I was the most intimate.]

The Chandlers exercised great influence in the county of Worcester until they took the side of government in the revolution, and lost their position.

ture or finite being could not make satisfaction to infinite justice for any crimes," and that "these things are very mysterious." Thus mystery is made a convenient cover for absurdity.

15. Sunday. Staid at home reading the Independent Whig.¹

Very often shepherds that are hired to take care of their masters' sheep go about their own concerns and leave the flock to the care of their dog. So bishops, who are appointed to oversee the flock of Christ, take the fees themselves but leave the drudgery to their dogs, that is, curates and understrappers.

16. Monday. We have the most moderate winter that ever was known in this country. For a long time together we have had serene and temperate weather, and all the roads perfectly settled and smooth like summer.

The Church of Rome has made it an article of faith that no man can be saved out of their church, and all other religious sects approach to this dreadful opinion in proportion to their ignorance, and the influence of ignorant or wicked priests.

Still reading the Independent Whig.

Oh! that I could wear out of my mind every mean and base affectation; conquer my natural pride and self-conceit; expect no more deference from my fellows than I deserve; acquire that meekness and humility which are the sure mark and characters of a great and generous soul; subdue every unworthy passion, and treat all men as I wish to be treated by all. How happy should I then be in the favor and good will of all honest men and the sure prospect of a happy immortality!

18. Wednesday. Spent an hour in the beginning of the evening at Major Gardiner's, where it was thought that the design of Christianity was not to make men good riddle-solvers, or good mystery-mongers, but good men, good magistrates, and good subjects, good husbands and good wives, good parents and good children, good masters and good servants. The following questions may be answered some time or other, namely, — Where do we find a precept in the Gospel requiring Ecclesiastical Synods? Convocations? Councils? Decrees? Creeds? Confessions?

¹ By Thomas Gordon, the Translator of Tacitus and author of Cato's Letters. His works have passed into oblivion, but at this period they were much read on account of their free and independent spirit. The Tacitus and Cato's Letters are placed by the side of Sidney and Locke and Bacon, in a special bequest of Josiah Quincy, Jun., to his son in his last will. "Memoir," &c., p. 350.

Oaths? Subscriptions? and whole cart-loads of other trumpery that we find religion encumbered with in these days?

19. Thursday. No man is entirely free from weakness and imperfection in this life. Men of the most exalted genius and active minds are generally most perfect slaves to the love of fame. They sometimes descend to as mean tricks and artifices in pursuit of honor or reputation as the miser descends to in pursuit of gold. The greatest men have been the most envious, malicious, and revengeful. The miser toils by night and day, fasts and watches, till he emaciates his body to fatten his purse and increase his coffers. The ambitious man rolls and tumbles in his bed, a stranger to refreshing sleep and repose, through anxiety about a preferment he has in view. The philosopher sweats and labors at his book, and ruminates in his closet, till his bearded and grim countenance exhibits the effigies of pale want and care and death, in quest of hard words, solemn nonsense, and ridiculous grimace. The gay gentleman rambles over half the globe, buys one thing and steals another, murders one man and disables another, and gets his own limbs and head broke for a few transitory flashes of happiness. Is this perfection, or downright madness and distraction?

20. Friday. Symptoms of snow. Writing Tillotson.¹

21. Saturday. Snow about ankle deep. I find, by repeated experiment and observation in my school, that human nature is more easily wrought upon and governed by promises, and encouragement, and praise, than by punishment, and threatening, and blame. But we must be cautious and sparing of our praise, lest it become too familiar and cheap, and so, contemptible; corporal as well as disgraceful punishments depress the spirits, but commendation enlivens and stimulates them to a noble ardor and emulation.

22. Sunday. Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law-book, and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged, in conscience, to temperance and frugality and industry; to justice and kindness and charity

¹ This means that the writer, who was at this time inclining to the ministry, was engaged in copying large extracts from the works of Tillotson. A volume still remains, written in a very minute hand, and filled with passages from the works of various authors.

towards his fellow men; and to piety, love, and reverence, towards Almighty God. In this commonwealth, no man would impair his health by gluttony, drunkenness, or lust; no man would sacrifice his most precious time to cards or any other trifling and mean amusement; no man would steal, or lie, or in any way defraud his neighbor, but would live in peace and good will with all men; no man would blaspheme his Maker or profane his worship; but a rational and manly, a sincere and unaffected piety and devotion would reign in all hearts. What a Utopia; what a Paradise would this region be! Heard Thayer all day. He preached well. Spent the evening at Colonel Chandler's, with Putnam, Gardiner, Thayer, the Doctor¹ and his lady, in conversation upon the present situation of public affairs, with a few observations concerning heroes and great commanders, — Alexander, Charles XII., Cromwell.

24. Tuesday. We are told that Demosthenes transcribed the history of Thucydides eight times, in order to imbibe and familiarize himself with the elegance and strength of his style. Will it not be worth while for a candidate for the ministry to transcribe Dr. Tillotson's works?

27. Friday. All day in high health and spirits. Writing Tillotson. That comet which appeared in 1682 is expected again this year; and we have intelligence that it has been seen about ten days since, near midnight, in the east. I find myself very much inclined to an unreasonable absence of mind, and to a morose and unsociable disposition; let it therefore be my constant endeavor to reform these great faults.

28. Saturday. Attended Mrs. Brown's funeral. Let this and every other instance of human frailty and mortality prompt me to endeavor after a temper of mind fit to undergo this great change.

1756. March 1. Monday. Wrote out Bolingbroke's Reflections on Exile.

2. Tuesday. Began this afternoon my third quarter.* The great and Almighty author of nature, who at first established

¹ Probably Dr. Willard, with whom he soon afterwards took up his abode.

* [Three months after this, (during the second quarter,) the Selectmen procured lodgings for me at Dr. Nahum Willard's. This physician had a large practice, a good reputation for skill, and a pretty library. Here were Dr. Cheyne's works, Sydenham, and others, and Van Swieten's Commentaries on Boerhaave. I read a good deal in these books and entertained many thoughts of becoming a physician and a surgeon.]

those rules which regulate the world, can as easily suspend those laws whenever his providence sees sufficient reason for such suspension. This can be no objection, then, to the miracles of Jesus Christ. Although some very thoughtful and contemplative men among the heathen attained a strong persuasion of the great principles of religion, yet the far greater number, having little time for speculation, gradually sunk into the grossest opinions and the grossest practices. These, therefore, could not be made to embrace the true religion till their attention was roused by some astonishing and miraculous appearances. The reasoning of philosophers, having nothing surprising in them, could not overcome the force of prejudice, custom, passion, and bigotry. But when wise and virtuous men, commissioned from heaven, by miracles awakened men's attention to their reasonings, the force of truth made its way with ease to their minds.

3. Wednesday. Natural philosophy is the art of deducing the general laws and properties of material substances from a series of analogous observations. The manner of reasoning in this art is not strictly demonstrative, and, by consequence, the knowledge hence acquired is not absolutely scientific, because the facts that we reason upon are perceived by sense, and not by the internal action of the mind contemplating its ideas. But these facts being presumed true in the form of axioms, subsequent reasonings about them may be in the strictest sense scientific. This art informs us in what manner bodies will influence us and each other in given circumstances, and so teaches us to avoid the noxious, and embrace the beneficial qualities of matter. By this art, too, many curious engines have been constructed to facilitate business, to avert impending calamities, and to procure desired advantages.

6. Saturday. Rose at half after four. Wrote Bolingbroke's letter on retirement and study.

7. Sunday. Heard Mr. Maccarty all day. Spent the evening and supped at Mr. Greene's with Thayer. Honesty, sincerity, and openness I esteem essential marks of a good mind. I am, therefore, of opinion that men ought, (after they have examined with unbiased judgments every system of religion, and chosen one system, on their own authority, for themselves,) to avow their opinions and defend them with boldness.

12. Friday. Laid a pair of gloves with Mrs. Willard* that she would not see me chew tobacco this month.

14. Sunday. Heard Mr. Maccarty, all day, upon Abraham's faith in offering up Isaac. Spent the evening very sociably at Mr. Putnam's. Several observations concerning Mr. Franklin,¹ of Philadelphia, a prodigious genius, cultivated with prodigious industry.

15. Monday. I sometimes in my sprightly moments consider myself, in my great chair at school, as some dictator at the head of a commonwealth. In this little state I can discover all the great geniuses, all the surprising actions and revolutions of the great world, in miniature. I have several renowned generals but three feet high, and several deep projecting politicians in petticoats. I have others catching and dissecting flies, accumulating remarkable pebbles, cockle shells, &c., with as ardent curiosity as any virtuoso in the Royal Society. Some rattle and thunder out A, B, C, with as much fire and impetuosity as Alexander fought, and very often sit down and cry as heartily upon being outspelt, as Cæsar did, when at Alexander's sepulchre he recollected that the Macedonian hero had conquered the world before his age. At one table sits Mr. Insipid, foppling² and fluttering, spinning his whirligig, or playing with his fingers, as gaily and wittily as any Frenchified coxcomb brandishes his cane or rattles his snuff-box. At another, sits the polemical divine, plodding and wrangling in his mind about "Adam's fall, in which we sinned all," as his Primer has it. In short, my little school, like the great world, is made up of kings, politicians, divines, L. D.'s, fops, buffoons, fiddlers, sycophants, fools, coxcombs, chimney sweepers, and every other character drawn in history, or seen in the world. Is it not, then, the highest pleasure, my friend, to preside in this little world, to bestow the proper applause upon virtuous and generous actions, to blame and punish every vicious and contracted trick, to wear out of the tender mind every thing that is mean and little, and fire the

¹ Benjamin Franklin, whose growing reputation in Europe, on account of his experiments in electricity, was coming back to increase his reputation at home.

² There is no such English word, but its meaning is clear enough.

* [The family of the Willards of Lancaster were often at Worcester, and I formed an acquaintance with them, especially Abel Willard, who had been one year with me at College, and had studied the law under Mr. Pratt in Boston. With him I lived in friendship.]

I go upon the supposition that government is at an end. All distinctions are thrown down. All America is thrown into one mass. We must aim at the minutiae of rectitude.

Mr. Jay. Could I suppose that we came to frame an American constitution, instead of endeavoring to correct the faults in an old one — I can't yet think that all government is at an end. The measure of arbitrary power is not full, and I think it must run over, before we undertake to frame a new constitution.

To the virtue, spirit, and abilities of Virginia, we owe much. I should always, therefore, from inclination as well as justice, be for giving Virginia its full weight.

I am not clear that we ought not to be bound by a majority, though ever so small, but I only mentioned it as a matter of danger, worthy of consideration.¹

6. Tuesday. Went to Congress again; received by an express an intimation of the bombardment of Boston,² a confused account, but an alarming one indeed; God grant it may not be found true.

7. Wednesday. Went to Congress again, heard Mr. Duché read prayers; the collect for the day, the 7th of the month, was most admirably adapted, though this was accidental, or rather providential. A prayer which he gave us of his own composition was as pertinent, as affectionate, as sublime, as devout, as I ever heard offered up to Heaven.³ He filled every bosom present.⁴

¹ "The mode of voting in this Congress was first resolved upon; which was, that each Colony should have one voice; but, as this was objected to as unequal, an entry was made on the journals to prevent its being drawn into precedent in future." *Letter of Connecticut Delegates to Governor Trumbull*, 10 October, 1774.

² This rumor grew out of the seizure made by an armed force under orders from General Gage, of the gunpowder belonging to the Province, stored in Charlestown. See *Frothingham's History of the Siege of Boston*, p. 13.

³ The subsequent conduct of Mr. Duché did not prove him worthy of the commendation here awarded. In his letter to General Washington he most pointedly sneers at the New England delegates, to whom he was indebted for the distinction of being selected. Their motive is explained in Samuel Adams's letter to Dr. Joseph Warren, dated 9 September. See *Force's American Archives*, 1774, c. 802. *Sparks's Washington*, vol. v. p. 476.

⁴ This is more fully spoken of by the writer in a private letter to his wife, dated the 16th instant, of which, the following is the substance:—

"When the Congress first met, Mr. Cushing made a motion that it should be opened with prayer. It was opposed by Mr. Jay of New York, and Mr. Rut-

Dined with Mr. Miers Fisher, a young Quaker and a lawyer. We saw his library, which is clever. But this plain Friend and his plain though pretty wife, with her Thees and Thous, had provided us the most costly entertainment; ducks, hams, chickens, beef, pig, tarts, creams, custards, jellies, fools, trifles, floating islands, beer, porter, punch, wine, and a long &c. We had a large collection of lawyers at table; Mr. Andrew Allen, the Attorney-General, a Mr. Morris, the Prothonotary, Mr. Fisher, Mr. McKean, Mr. Rodney; besides these, we had Mr. Reed, Governor Hopkins, and Governor Ward. We had much conversation upon the practice of law in our different Provinces, but at last we got swallowed up in politics, and the great question of parliamentary jurisdiction. Mr. Allen asks me, from whence do you derive your laws? How do you entitle yourselves to English privileges? Is not Lord Mansfield on the side of power?

8. Thursday. Attended my duty on the committee all day,

ledge of South Carolina, because we were so divided in religious sentiments; some Episcopalians, some Quakers, some Anabaptists, some Presbyterians, and some Congregationalists, that we could not join in the same act of worship. Mr. Samuel Adams arose and said, 'he was no bigot, and could hear a prayer from a gentleman of piety and virtue, who was at the same time a friend to his country. He was a stranger in Philadelphia, but had heard that Mr. Duché (Dushay they pronounce it,) deserved that character, and therefore he moved that Mr. Duché, an episcopal clergyman, might be desired to read prayers to the Congress to-morrow morning.' The motion was seconded and passed in the affirmative. Mr. Randolph, our President, waited on Mr. Duché and received for answer that, if his health would permit, he certainly would. Accordingly, next morning he appeared with his clerk and in his pontificals, and read several prayers in the established form, and then read the collect for the seventh day of September, which was the thirty-fifth Psalm. You must remember, this was the next morning after we heard the horrible rumor of the cannonade of Boston. I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seemed as if Heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read on that morning.

"After this, Mr. Duché, unexpectedly to every body, struck out into an extemporary prayer, which filled the bosom of every man present. I must confess, I never heard a better prayer, or one so well pronounced. Episcopalian as he is, Dr. Cooper himself never prayed with such fervor, such ardor, such earnestness and pathos, and in language so elegant and sublime, for America, for the Congress, for the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially the town of Boston. It has had an excellent effect upon every body here. I must beg you to read that Psalm. If there was any faith in the sortes Virgilianæ, or sortes Homericæ, or especially the sortes Biblicæ, it would be thought providential.

"It will amuse your friends to read this letter and the thirty-fifth Psalm to them. Read it to your father and Mr. Wibird. I wonder what our Braintree churchmen would think of this. Mr. Duché is one of the most ingenious men, and best characters, and greatest orators in the episcopal order upon this continent; yet a zealous friend of liberty and his country."