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THE
WORKS OF
OF
JOHN ADAMS.

SECOND PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

WITH

A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

AND ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY

HIS GRANDSON

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

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TO BENJAMIN RUSH.

Quincy, 21 January, 1810.

Learned, ingenious, benevolent, beneficent old friend of 1774! Thanks for "the light and truth," as I used to call the *Aurora*, which you sent me. You may descend in a calm, but I have lived in a storm, and shall certainly die in one.¹

I never asked my son any questions about the motives, designs, or objects of his mission to St. Petersburg.² If I had been weak enough to ask, he would have been wise enough to be silent; for although a more dutiful and affectionate son is not in existence, he knows his obligations to his country and his trust are superior to all parental requests or injunctions. I know therefore no more of his errand than any other man. If he is appointed to be a Samson to tie the foxes' tails together with a torch or firebrand between them, I know nothing of it. One thing I know, we ought to have had an ambassador there these thirty years; and we should have had it, if Congress had not been too complaisant to Vergennes. Mr. Dana was upon the point of being received, and had a solemn promise of a reception, when he was recalled. Under all the circumstances of those times, however, I cannot very severely blame Congress for this conduct, though I think it was an error. It is of great importance to us at present to know more than we do of the views, interests, and sentiments of all the northern powers. If we do not acquire more knowledge than we have, of the present and probable future state of Europe, we shall be hoodwinked and bubbled by the French and English.

Of Mr. Jackson, his talents, knowledge, manners, or morals, I know nothing, but am not unwilling to think favorably of them all. His conduct to our President and his minister is not, however, a letter of recommendation of his temper, policy, or discretion. His lady was an intimate acquaintance of my daughter, and consequently well known to both my sons at

¹ "I inclose a few numbers of the *Aurora*. Shall we descend in a calm or a storm to our graves?" *B. Rush to J. A.*

² "We are told your son is gone to Petersburg to put a torch to the flame of war, and that we are to be allies of France, and of all the powers on the Baltic, in it." *B. R. to J. A.*

Berlin. Thomas speaks handsomely of her person and accomplishments.

I have not seen, but am impatient to see, Mr. Cheetham's life of Mr. Paine. His political writings, I am singular enough to believe, have done more harm than his irreligious ones. He understood neither government nor religion. From a malignant heart he wrote virulent declamations, which the enthusiastic fury of the times intimidated all men, even Mr. Burke, from answering as he ought. His deism, as it appears to me, has promoted rather than retarded the cause of revolution in America, and indeed in Europe. His billingsgate, stolen from Blount's Oracles of Reason, from Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Béren-ger, &c., will never discredit Christianity, which will hold its ground in some degree as long as human nature shall have any thing moral or intellectual left in it. The Christian religion, as I understand it, is the brightness of the glory and the express portrait of the character of the eternal, self-existent, independent, benevolent, all powerful and all merciful creator, preserver, and father of the universe, the first good, first perfect, and first fair. It will last as long as the world. Neither savage nor civilized man, without a revelation, could ever have discovered or invented it. Ask me not, then, whether I am a Catholic or Protestant, Calvinist or Arminian. As far as they are Christians, I wish to be a fellow-disciple with them all.

TO DAVID SEWALL.

Quincy, 29 January, 1811.

I have received your favor of the 24th, and it revived or restored many of the sensations of my youth.

The last trial before a special court of Vice-Admiralty in Boston, before the revolution, was of Ansell Nickerson for piracy and murder on the high seas.

The case was very singular and unaccountable. Nickerson took a passage on board a small vessel, and sailed from Boston for Cape Cod, with three or four other men. The next day, or next but one, the vessel was found with Nickerson alone on