

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.

1850.

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Rec. May 22, 1873

CAMBRIDGE:
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BOLLES AND HOUGHTON.

For the purpose of clearly distinguishing the passages of the Autobiography from the Diary, they are, in all cases, marked with brackets at each end of the extract; and, when so brief as to be placed among the foot notes under the text, they are indicated by an asterisk, instead of the small numerals prefixed to the editor's explanations.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

1775. September. [At the appointed time, we returned to Philadelphia, and Congress were reassembled. Mr. Richard Penn had sailed for England, and carried the petition, from which Mr. Dickinson and his party expected relief. I expected none, and was wholly occupied in measures to support the army and the expedition into Canada. Every important step was opposed, and carried by bare majorities, which obliged me to be almost constantly engaged in debate; but I was not content with all that was done, and almost every day I had something to say about advising the States to institute governments, to express my total despair of any good from the petition or any of those things which were called conciliatory measures. I constantly insisted that all such measures, instead of having any tendency to produce a reconciliation, would only be considered as proofs of our timidity and want of confidence in the ground we stood on, and would only encourage our enemies to greater exertions against us; that we should be driven to the necessity of declaring ourselves independent States, and that we ought now to be employed in preparing a plan of confederation for the Colonies, and treaties to be proposed to foreign powers, particularly to France and Spain; that all these measures ought to be maturely considered and carefully prepared, together with a declaration of independence; that these three measures, independence, confederation, and negotiations with foreign powers, particularly France, ought to go hand in hand, and be adopted all together; that foreign powers could not be expected to acknowledge us till we had acknowledged ourselves, and taken our station among them as a sovereign power and independent nation;¹ that now

¹ The following memorandum gives in brief the system probably dilated upon in the speeches of the writer at this time:—

Mem. The confederation to be taken up in paragraphs. An alliance to be formed with France and Spain. Ambassadors to be sent to both courts. Gov-

we were distressed for want of artillery, arms, ammunition, clothing, and even for flints; that the people had no markets for their produce, wanted clothing and many other things, which foreign commerce alone could fully supply, and we could not expect commerce till we were independent; that the people were wonderfully well united, and extremely ardent. There was no danger of our wanting support from them, if we did not discourage them by checking and quenching their zeal; that there was no doubt of our ability to defend the country, to support the war, and maintain our independence. We had men enough, our people were brave, and every day improving in all the exercises and discipline of war; that we ought immediately to give permission to our merchants to fit out privateers and make reprisals on the enemy; that Congress ought to arm ships, and commission officers, and lay the foundation of a navy; that immense advantages might be derived from this resource; that not only West India articles, in great abundance, and British manufactures, of all kinds, might be obtained, but artillery ammunitions and all kinds of supplies for the army; that a system of measures, taken with unanimity and pursued with resolution, would insure us the friendship and assistance of France.

Some gentlemen doubted of the sentiments of France; thought she would frown upon us as rebels, and be afraid to countenance the example. I replied to those gentlemen, that I apprehended they had not attended to the relative situation of France and England; that it was the unquestionable interest of France that the British Continental Colonies should be independent; that Britain, by the conquest of Canada and her naval triumphs during the last war, and by her vast possessions in America and the East Indies, was exalted to a height of power and preëminence that France must envy and could not endure. But there was much more than pride and jealousy in the case. Her rank,

ernment to be assumed in every Colony. Coin and currencies to be regulated. Forces to be raised and maintained in Canada and New York. St. Lawrence and Hudson Rivers to be secured. Hemp to be encouraged, and the manufacture of duck. Powder-mills to be built in every Colony, and fresh efforts to make saltpetre. An address to the inhabitants of the Colonies. The committee for lead and salt to be filled up, and sulphur added to their commission. Money to be sent to the paymaster, to pay our debts and fulfil our engagements. Taxes to be laid and levied. Funds established. New notes to be given on interest for bills borrowed. Treaties of commerce with France, Spain, Holland, Denmark, &c.

her consideration in Europe, and even her safety and independence, were at stake. The navy of Great Britain was now mistress of the seas, all over the globe. The navy of France almost annihilated. Its inferiority was so great and obvious, that all the dominions of France, in the West Indies and in the East Indies, lay at the mercy of Great Britain, and must remain so as long as North America belonged to Great Britain, and afforded them so many harbors abounding with naval stores and resources of all kinds, and so many men and seamen ready to assist them and man their ships; that interest could not lie; that the interest of France was so obvious, and her motives so cogent, that nothing but a judicial infatuation of her councils could restrain her from embracing us; that our negotiations with France ought, however, to be conducted with great caution, and with all the foresight we could possibly obtain; that we ought not to enter into any alliance with her, which should entangle us in any future wars in Europe; that we ought to lay it down, as a first principle and a maxim never to be forgotten, to maintain an entire neutrality in all future European wars; that it never could be our interest to unite with France in the destruction of England, or in any measures to break her spirit, or reduce her to a situation in which she could not support her independence. On the other hand, it could never be our duty to unite with Britain in too great a humiliation of France; that our real, if not our nominal, independence, would consist in our neutrality. If we united with either nation, in any future war, we must become too subordinate and dependent on that nation, and should be involved in all European wars, as we had been hitherto; that foreign powers would find means to corrupt our people, to influence our councils, and, in fine, we should be little better than puppets, danced on the wires of the cabinets of Europe. We should be the sport of European intrigues and politics; that, therefore, in preparing treaties to be proposed to foreign powers, and in the instructions to be given to our ministers, we ought to confine ourselves strictly to a treaty of commerce; that such a treaty would be an ample compensation to France for all the aid we should want from her. The opening of American trade to her, would be a vast resource for her commerce and naval power, and a great assistance to her in protecting her East and West India possessions, as well as her fisheries; but that the bare dis-

memberment of the British empire would be to her an incalculable security and benefit, worth more than all the exertions we should require of her, even if it should draw her into another eight or ten years' war.

When I first made these observations in Congress, I never saw a greater impression made upon that assembly or any other. Attention and approbation were marked upon every countenance. Several gentlemen came to me afterwards, to thank me for that speech, particularly Mr. Cæsar Rodney, of Delaware, and Mr. Duane, of New York. I remember these two gentlemen in particular, because both of them said that I had considered the subject of foreign connections more maturely than any man they had ever heard in America; that I had perfectly digested the subject, and had removed, Mr. Rodney said, all, and Mr. Duane said, the greatest part of his objections to foreign negotiations. Even Mr. Dickinson said, to gentlemen out of doors, that I had thrown great light on the subject.

These and such as these, were my constant and daily topics, sometimes of reasoning and no doubt often of declamation, from the meeting of Congress in the autumn of 1775, through the whole winter and spring of 1776.

Many motions were made, and after tedious discussions, lost. I received little assistance from my colleagues in all these contests; three of them were either inclined to lean towards Mr. Dickinson's system, or at least chose to be silent, and the fourth spoke but rarely in Congress, and never entered into any extensive arguments, though, when he did speak, his sentiments were clear and pertinent and neatly expressed. Mr. Richard Henry Lee, of Virginia, Mr. Sherman, of Connecticut, and Mr. Gadsden, of South Carolina, were always on my side, and Mr. Chase, of Maryland, when he did speak at all, was always powerful, and generally with us. Mr. Johnson, of Maryland, was the most frequent speaker from that State, and, while he remained with us, was inclined to Mr. Dickinson for some time, but ere long he and all his State came cordially into our system. In the fall of 1776, his State appointed him General of militia, and he marched to the relief of General Washington in the Jerseys. He was afterwards chosen Governor of Maryland, and he came no more to Congress.

In the course of this winter appeared a phenomenon in Phila-

delphia, a disastrous meteor, I mean Thomas Paine. He came from England, and got into such company as would converse with him, and ran about picking up what information he could concerning our affairs, and finding the great question was concerning independence, he gleaned from those he saw the common-place arguments, such as the necessity of independence at some time or other; the peculiar fitness at this time; the justice of it; the provocation to it; our ability to maintain it, &c. &c. Dr. Rush put him upon writing on the subject, furnished him with the arguments which had been urged in Congress a hundred times, and gave him his title of "Common Sense." In the latter part of winter, or early in the spring, he came out with his pamphlet. The arguments in favor of independence I liked very well; but one third part of the book was filled with arguments, from the Old Testament, to prove the unlawfulness of monarchy, and another third, in planning a form of government for the separate States, in one assembly, and for the United States, in a Congress. His arguments from the Old Testament were ridiculous, but whether they proceeded from honest ignorance or foolish superstition on one hand, or from wilful sophistry and knavish hypocrisy on the other, I know not. The other third part, relative to a form of government, I considered as flowing from simple ignorance, and a mere desire to please the democratic party, in Philadelphia, at whose head were Mr. Matlack, Mr. Cannon, and Dr. Young. I regretted, however, to see so foolish a plan recommended to the people of the United States, who were all waiting only for the countenance of Congress to institute their State governments. I dreaded the effect so popular pamphlet might have among the people, and determined to do all in my power to counteract the effect of it. My continual occupations in Congress allowed me no time to write any thing of any length; but I found moments to write a small pamphlet, which Mr. Richard Henry Lee, to whom I showed it, liked so well, that he insisted on my permitting him to publish it. He accordingly got Mr. Dunlap to print it, under the title of "Thoughts on Government, in a letter from a gentleman to his friend." Common Sense was published without a name, and I thought it best to suppress my name too. But as Common Sense, when it first appeared, was generally by the public ascribed to me or Mr. Samuel Adams, I soon regretted

that my name did not appear. Afterwards I had a new edition of it printed, with my name and the name of Mr. Wythe, of Virginia, to whom the letter was at first intended to be addressed.¹ The gentlemen of New York availed themselves of the ideas in this morsel, in the formation of the constitution of that State. And Mr. Lee sent it to the convention of Virginia, when they met to form their government, and it went to North Carolina, New Jersey, and other States. Matlack, Cannon, Young, and Paine, had influence enough, however, to get their plan adopted in substance in Georgia and Vermont, as well as Pennsylvania. These three States have since found them such systems of anarchy, if that expression is not a contradiction in terms, that they have altered them and made them more conformable to my plan.

Paine, soon after the appearance of my pamphlet, hurried away to my lodgings and spent an evening with me. His business was to reprehend me for publishing my pamphlet; said he was afraid it would do hurt, and that it was repugnant to the plan he had proposed in his *Common Sense*. I told him it was true it was repugnant, and for that reason I had written it and consented to the publication of it; for I was as much afraid of his work as he was of mine. His plan was so democratical,² without any restraints or even an attempt at any equilibrium or counterpoise, that it must produce confusion and every evil work. I told him further, that his reasoning from the Old Testament was ridiculous, and I could hardly think him sincere. At this he laughed, and said he had taken his ideas in that part from Milton; and then expressed a contempt of the Old Testament, and indeed of the Bible at large, which surprised me. He saw that I did not relish this, and soon checked himself with these words: "However, I have some thoughts of publishing my thoughts on religion, but I believe it will be best to postpone it to the latter part of life." This conversation passed in good humor, without any harshness on either side; but I perceived in him a conceit of himself and a daring impudence, which have been developed more and more to this day.

The third part of *Common Sense*, which relates wholly to the question of independence, was clearly written, and contained a

¹ This Essay will be found in another portion of this work.

² This was the very objection made in the State of Virginia to his own, as will appear hereafter in a remarkable letter of Patrick Henry to the author.

tolerable summary of the arguments which I had been repeating again and again in Congress for nine months. But I am bold to say there is not a fact nor a reason stated in it, which had not been frequently urged in Congress. The temper and wishes of the people supplied every thing at that time; and the phrases, suitable for an emigrant from Newgate, or one who had chiefly associated with such company, such as, "The Royal Brute of England," "The blood upon his soul," and a few others of equal delicacy, had as much weight with the people as his arguments. It has been a general opinion that this pamphlet was of great importance in the Revolution. I doubted it at the time, and have doubted it to this day. It probably converted some to the doctrine of independence, and gave others an excuse for declaring in favor of it. But these would all have followed Congress with zeal; and on the other hand it excited many writers against it, particularly "Plain Truth," who contributed very largely to fortify and inflame the party against independence, and finally lost us the Allens, Penns, and many other persons of weight in the community.

Notwithstanding these doubts, I felt myself obliged to Paine for the pains he had taken, and for his good intentions to serve us, which I then had no doubt of. I saw he had a capacity and a ready pen; and, understanding he was poor and destitute, I thought we might put him into some employment where he might be useful and earn a living. Congress appointed a Committee of Foreign Affairs, not long after, and they wanted a clerk. I nominated Thomas Paine, supposing him a ready writer and an industrious man. Dr. Witherspoon, the President of New Jersey College, and then a delegate from that State, rose and objected to it with an earnestness that surprised me. The Doctor said he would give his reasons; he knew the man and his communication; when he first came over, he was on the other side, and had written pieces against the American cause; that he had afterwards been employed by his friend, Robert Aitkin, and finding the tide of popularity run rapidly, he had turned about; that he was very intemperate, and could not write until he had quickened his thoughts with large draughts of rum and water; that he was, in short, a bad character, and not fit to be placed in such a situation. General Roberdeau spoke in his favor; no one confirmed Witherspoon's account, though the

truth of it has since been sufficiently established. Congress appointed him; but he was soon obnoxious by his manners, and dismissed.

There was one circumstance in his conversation with me about the pamphlets, which I could not account for. He was extremely earnest to convince me that "Common Sense" was his first born; declared again and again that he had never written a line nor a word that had been printed, before "Common Sense." I cared nothing for this, and said nothing; but Dr. Witherspoon's account of his writing against us, brought doubts into my mind of his veracity, which the subsequent histories of his writings and publications in England, when he was in the custom-house, did not remove. At this day it would be ridiculous to ask any questions about Tom Paine's veracity, integrity, or any other virtue.

I was incessantly employed through the whole fall, winter, and spring of 1775 and 1776, in Congress during their sittings, and on committees on mornings and evenings, and unquestionably did more business than any other member of that house. In the beginning of May, I procured the appointment of a committee, to prepare a resolution recommending to the people of the States to institute governments. The committee, of whom I was one, requested me to draught a resolve, which I did, and by their direction reported it.¹ Opposition was made to it, and Mr. Duane called it a machine to fabricate independence, but on the 15th of May, 1776, it passed. It was indeed, on all hands, considered by men of understanding as equivalent to a declaration of independence, though a formal declaration of it was still opposed by Mr. Dickinson and his party.

Not long after this, the three greatest measures of all were carried. Three committees were appointed, one for preparing a declaration of independence, another for reporting a plan of a treaty to be proposed to France, and a third to digest a system of articles of confederation to be proposed to the States. I was appointed on the committee of independence, and on that for preparing the form of a treaty with France. On the committee of confederation Mr. Samuel Adams was appointed. The committee of independence were Thomas Jefferson, John

¹ See page 489.

Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston. Mr. Jefferson had been now about a year a member of Congress, but had attended his duty in the house a very small part of the time, and, when there, had never spoken in public. During the whole time I sat with him in Congress, I never heard him utter three sentences together. It will naturally be inquired how it happened that he was appointed on a committee of such importance. There were more reasons than one. Mr. Jefferson had the reputation of a masterly pen; he had been chosen a delegate in Virginia, in consequence of a very handsome public paper which he had written for the House of Burgesses, which had given him the character of a fine writer.¹ Another reason was, that Mr. Richard Henry Lee was not beloved by the most of his colleagues from Virginia, and Mr. Jefferson was set up to rival and supplant him. This could be done only by the pen, for Mr. Jefferson could stand no competition with him or any one else in elocution and public debate.

Here I will interrupt the narration for a moment to observe, that, from all I have read of the history of Greece and Rome, England and France, and all I have observed at home and abroad, eloquence in public assemblies is not the surest road to fame or preferment, at least, unless it be used with caution, very rarely, and with great reserve. The examples of Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson, are enough to show that silence and reserve in public, are more efficacious than argumentation or oratory. A public speaker who inserts himself, or is urged by others, into the conduct of affairs, by daily exertions to justify his measures, and answer the objections of opponents, makes himself too familiar with the public, and unavoidably makes himself enemies. Few persons can bear to be outdone in reasoning or declamation or wit or sarcasm or repartee or satire, and all these things are very apt to grow out of public debate. In this way, in a course of years, a nation becomes full of a man's enemies, or at least, of such as have been galled in some controversy, and take a secret pleasure in assisting to humble and mortify him. So much for this digression. We will now return to our memoirs.

¹ Afterwards published in Great Britain under the title of "A summary View of the Rights of British America." Mr. Jefferson's account of it is given in the first volume of his grandson's publication of his papers, p. 7.

The committee had several meetings, in which were proposed the articles of which the declaration was to consist, and minutes made of them. The committee then appointed Mr. Jefferson and me to draw them up in form, and clothe them in a proper dress.¹ The sub-committee met, and considered the min-

¹ It is due to Mr. Jefferson here to say that his recollection of the event here described, materially differs from this account. In the month of August, 1822, Colonel Timothy Pickering addressed to Mr. Adams a letter of inquiry, respecting the origin of the Declaration of Independence. His reply contains so many other interesting particulars, besides those which relate to the single purpose of the letter, that it appears peculiarly suitable for insertion in this place in full.

TO TIMOTHY PICKERING.

6 August, 1822.

SIR:—Your favor of the 2d instant has proscribed a dismal plan, which I was never very well calculated to execute; but I am now utterly incapable. I can write nothing which will not be suspected of personal vanity, local prejudice, or Provincial and State partiality. However, as I hold myself responsible at this age, to one only tribunal in the universe, I will give you a few hints at all hazards.

As Mr. Hancock was sick and confined, Mr. Bowdoin was chosen at the head of the Massachusetts delegation to Congress. His relations thought his great fortune ought not to be hazarded. Cushing, two Adamses, and Paine, all destitute of fortune, four poor pilgrims, proceeded in one coach, were escorted through Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, into Pennsylvania. We were met at Frankfort by Dr. Rush, Mr. Mifflin, Mr. Bayard, and several other of the most active sons of liberty in Philadelphia, who desired a conference with us. We invited them to take tea with us in a private apartment. They asked leave to give us some information and advice, which we thankfully granted. They represented to us that the friends of government in Boston and in the Eastern States, in their correspondence with their friends in Pennsylvania and all the Southern States, had represented us as four desperate adventurers. "Mr. Cushing was a harmless kind of man, but poor, and wholly dependent on his popularity for his subsistence. Mr. Samuel Adams was a very artful, designing man, but desperately poor, and wholly dependent on his popularity with the lowest vulgar for his living. John Adams and Mr. Paine were two young lawyers, of no great talents, reputation, or weight, who had no other means of raising themselves into consequence, than by courting popularity." * We were all suspected of having independence in view. Now, said they, you must not utter the word independence, nor give the least hint or insinuation of the idea, either in Congress or any private conversation; if you do, you are undone; for the idea of independence is as unpopular in Pennsylvania, and in all the Middle and Southern States, as the Stamp Act itself. No man dares to speak of it. Moreover, you are the representatives of the suffering State. Boston and Massachusetts are under a rod of iron. British fleets and armies are tyrannizing over you; you yourselves are personally obnoxious to them and all the friends of government; you have been long persecuted by them all; your feelings have been hurt, your passions excited; you are thought to be too warm, too zealous, too sanguine. You must be, therefore, very cautious; you must not come forward with any bold measures, you must not pretend to take the lead. You

* Compare this with the language of the Rev. Jacob Duché, in his letter to General Washington: "Bankrupts, attorneys, and men of desperate fortunes, are the colleagues of Mr. Hancock." *Graydon's Memoirs of his own Time*, Littell's edition, Appendix, p. 432.

utes, making such observations on them as then occurred, when Mr. Jefferson desired me to take them to my lodgings, and

know Virginia is the most populous State in the Union. They are very proud of their ancient dominion, as they call it; they think they have a right to take the lead, and the Southern States, and Middle States too, are too much disposed to yield it to them."

This was plain dealing, Mr. Pickering; and I must confess that there appeared so much wisdom and good sense in it, that it made a deep impression on my mind, and it had an equal effect on all my colleagues.

This conversation, and the principles, facts, and motives, suggested in it, have given a color, complexion, and character, to the whole policy of the United States, from that day to this. Without it, Mr. Washington would never have commanded our armies; nor Mr. Jefferson have been the author of the Declaration of Independence; nor Mr. Richard Henry Lee the mover of it; nor Mr. Chase the mover of foreign connections. If I have ever had cause to repent of any part of this policy, that repentance ever has been, and ever will be, unavailing. I had forgot to say, nor had Mr. Johnson ever been the nominator of Washington for General.

Although this advice dwelt on my mind, I had not, in my nature, prudence and caution enough always to observe it. When I found the members of Congress, Virginians and all, so perfectly convinced that they should be able to persuade or terrify Great Britain into a relinquishment of her policy, and a restoration of us to the state of 1763, I was astonished, and could not help muttering, in Congress, and sometimes out of doors, that they would find, the proud, domineering spirit of Britain, their vain conceit of their own omnipotence, their total contempt of us, and the incessant representation of their friends and instruments in America, would drive us to extremities, and finally conquer us, transport us to England for trial, there to be hanged, drawn and quartered for treason, or to the necessity of declaring independence, however hazardous and uncertain such a measure might be.

It soon became rumored about the city that John Adams was for independence. The Quakers and proprietary gentlemen took the alarm; represented me as the worst of men; the true-blue sons of liberty pitied me; all put me under a kind of coventry. I was avoided, like a man infected with the leprosy. I walked the streets of Philadelphia in solitude, borne down by the weight of care and unpopularity.* But every ship, for the ensuing year, brought us fresh proof of the truth of my prophecies, and one after another became convinced of the necessity of independence. I did not sink under my discouragements. I had before experienced enough of the wantonness of popularity, in the trial of Preston and the soldiers, in Boston.

You inquire why so young a man as Mr. Jefferson was placed at the head of the Committee for preparing a Declaration of Independence? I answer; It was the Frankfort advice, to place Virginia at the head of every thing. Mr. Richard Henry Lee might be gone to Virginia, to his sick family, for aught I know, but that was not the reason of Mr. Jefferson's appointment. There were three committees appointed at the same time. One for the Declaration of Independence, another for preparing articles of Confederation, and another for preparing a treaty to be proposed to France. Mr. Lee was chosen for the Committee of Confederation, and it was not thought convenient that the same person should be upon both. Mr. Jefferson came into Congress, in June, 1775, and brought with him a reputation for literature, science, and a happy talent of

* Dr. Benjamin Rush says of the Author, in a manuscript in the Editor's hands, — "I saw this gentleman walk the streets of Philadelphia alone, after the publication of his intercepted letter in our newspapers, in 1775, an object of nearly universal scorn and detestation."

make the draught. This I declined, and gave several reasons for declining. 1. That he was a Virginian, and I a Massachu-

composition. Writings of his were handed about, remarkable for the peculiar felicity of expression. Though a silent member in Congress, he was so prompt, frank, explicit, and decisive upon committees and in conversation, not even Samuel Adams was more so, that he soon seized upon my heart; and upon this occasion I gave him my vote, and did all in my power to procure the votes of others. I think he had one more vote than any other, and that placed him at the head of the committee. I had the next highest number, and that placed me the second. The committee met, discussed the subject, and then appointed Mr. Jefferson and me to make the draught, I suppose because we were the two first on the list.

The sub-committee met. Jefferson proposed to me to make the draught. I said, "I will not." "You should do it." "Oh! no." "Why will you not? You ought to do it." "I will not." "Why?" "Reasons enough." "What can be your reasons?" "Reason first—You are a Virginian, and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second—I am obnoxious, suspected, and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third—You can write ten times better than I can." "Well," said Jefferson, "if you are decided, I will do as well as I can." "Very well. When you have drawn it up, we will have a meeting."

A meeting we accordingly had, and conned the paper over. I was delighted with its high tone and the flights of oratory with which it abounded, especially that concerning negro slavery, which, though I knew his Southern brethren would never suffer to pass in Congress, I certainly never would oppose. There were other expressions which I would not have inserted, if I had drawn it up, particularly that which called the King tyrant. I thought this too personal; for I never believed George to be a tyrant in disposition and in nature; I always believed him to be deceived by his courtiers on both sides of the Atlantic, and in his official capacity only, cruel. I thought the expression too passionate, and too much like scolding, for so grave and solemn a document; but as Franklin and Sherman were to inspect it afterwards, I thought it would not become me to strike it out. I consented to report it, and do not now remember that I made or suggested a single alteration.

We reported it to the committee of five. It was read, and I do not remember that Franklin or Sherman criticized any thing. We were all in haste. Congress was impatient, and the instrument was reported, as I believe, in Jefferson's handwriting, as he first drew it. Congress cut off about a quarter of it, as I expected they would; but they obliterated some of the best of it, and left all that was exceptionable, if any thing in it was. I have long wondered that the original draught has not been published. I suppose the reason is, the vehement philippic against negro slavery.

As you justly observe, there is not an idea in it but what had been hackneyed in Congress for two years before. The substance of it is contained in the declaration of rights and the violation of those rights, in the Journals of Congress, in 1774. Indeed, the essence of it is contained in a pamphlet, voted and printed by the town of Boston, before the first Congress met, composed by James Otis, as I suppose, in one of his lucid intervals, and pruned and polished by Samuel Adams.

Your friend and humble servant.

On the national anniversary succeeding the date of this letter, Colonel Pickering quoted the latter part of it, in the course of some remarks made by him at a celebration of the day in Salem. This drew forth a letter, from Mr. Jefferson to Mr. Madison, denying its accuracy, particularly in the matter of the sub-com-

settensian. 2. That he was a southern man, and I a northern one. 3. That I had been so obnoxious for my early and constant zeal in promoting the measure, that any draught of mine would undergo a more severe scrutiny and criticism in Congress, than one of his composition. 4. and lastly, and that would be reason enough if there were no other, I had a great opinion of the elegance of his pen, and none at all of my own. I therefore insisted that no hesitation should be made on his part. He accordingly took the minutes, and in a day or two produced to me his draught. Whether I made or suggested any correction, I remember not. The report was made to the committee of five, by them examined, but whether altered or corrected in any thing, I cannot recollect. But, in substance at least, it was reported to Congress, where, after a severe criticism, and striking out several of the most oratorical paragraphs, it was adopted on the fourth of July, 1776, and published to the world.

mittee, and attributing the error to the failing memory of eighty-eight, the assumed age of Mr. Adams at the time.* Mr. Jefferson did not then know, what the present publication of the Autobiography shows, not to speak of Mr. Pickering's letter of inquiry, that almost the identical statement had been made, not only in conversation long before, but also in this record, by Mr. Adams, nearly twenty years earlier, so that, if it be an error, it cannot be attributed merely to age.

Perceiving also the awkward nature of the charge made by one — himself — having, at the moment, nearly attained fourscore, Mr. Jefferson disclaims all reliance upon his recollection, and appeals to the unequivocal authority of his notes, made at the time. This seemed conclusive testimony, sufficient to set the matter at rest forever. But if by those notes is to be understood no more than what has since been published under that name, in the first volume of his correspondence, it is clear, on examination, that they present no evidence, excepting that which may be implied by their affirming nothing in corroboration.

The question, in itself, does not rise beyond the character of a curiosity of literature, as the substantial facts in both accounts are the same. The case having been stated, the reader must be left to form his opinions from the materials before him.

Among the papers left by Mr. Adams, is a transcript, by his own hand, of the Declaration of Independence, very nearly as it appears in Mr. Jefferson's first draught. This must have been made by him before the paper had been subjected to any change in committee, as none of the alterations which appear on the original, as made at the instance of Dr. Franklin, and but one of the two suggested by himself, are found there. Several variations occur, however, in the phraseology, and one or two passages are wholly omitted. The most natural inference is, that he had modified it to suit his own notions of excellence, without deeming the alterations worth pressing in committee. As Mr. Jefferson says that his draught was submitted separately, first to Mr. Adams, and afterwards to Dr. Franklin, the presence of this copy does not affect the question of the correctness of either version of the proceedings.

* Jefferson's *Memoir and Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 375.

The committee for preparing the model of a treaty to be proposed to France, consisted of Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Franklin, Mr. John Adams, Mr. Harrison, and Mr. Robert Morris. When we met to deliberate on the subject, I contended for the same principles which I had before avowed and defended in Congress, namely, that we should avoid all alliance which might embarrass us in after times, and involve us in future European wars; that a treaty of commerce which would operate as a repeal of the British acts of navigation so far as respected us, and admit France into an equal participation of the benefits of our commerce, would encourage her manufactures, increase her exports of the produce of her soil and agriculture, extend her navigation and trade, augment her resources of naval power, raise her from her present deep humiliation, distress, and decay, and place her on a more equal footing with England, for the protection of her foreign possessions; and maintaining her independence at sea, would be an ample compensation to France for acknowledging our independence, and for furnishing us, for our money, or upon credit for a time, with such supplies of necessaries as we should want, even if this conduct should involve her in a war; if a war should ensue, which did not necessarily follow, for a bare acknowledgment of our independence, after we had asserted it, was not by the law of nations an act of hostility, which would be a legitimate cause of war. Franklin, although he was commonly as silent on committees as in Congress, upon this occasion, ventured so far as to intimate his concurrence with me in these sentiments; though, as will be seen hereafter, he shifted them as easily as the wind ever shifted, and assumed a dogmatical tone in favor of an opposite system. The committee, after as much deliberation upon the subject as they chose to employ, appointed me to draw up a plan and report. Franklin had made some marks with a pencil against some articles in a printed volume of treaties, which he put into my hand. Some of these were judiciously selected, and I took them, with others which I found necessary, into the draught, and made my report to the committee at large, who, after a reasonable examination of it, agreed to report it. When it came before Congress, it occupied the attention of that body for several days. Many motions were made to insert in it articles of entangling alliance, of exclusive privileges, and of warranties of

possessions; and it was argued that the present plan reported by the committee held out no sufficient temptation to France, who would despise it and refuse to receive our Ambassador. It was chiefly left to me to defend my report, though I had some able assistance, and we did defend it with so much success that the treaty passed without one particle of alliance, exclusive privilege, or warranty.¹

¹ This plan of a treaty is found in the second volume of the Secret Journals of Congress, pp. 7 – 30.