

THE WRITINGS
OF
SAMUEL ADAMS

VOLUME IV.

1778-1802

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THE WRITINGS
OF
SAMUEL ADAMS

COLLECTED AND EDITED

BY

HARRY ALONZO CUSHING

VOLUME IV

1778-1802

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

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in this Life within moderate Bounds, and it is time for me to reduce them to a narrower Compass. You speak of "Neglect," "Ingratitude" &c. But let us entertain just Sentiments. A Citizen owes everything to the Commonwealth. And after he has made his utmost Exertions for its Prosperity, has he done more than his Duty? When Time enfeebles his Powers & renders him unfit for further Service, his Country, to preserve its own Vigour will wisely call upon others; and if he decently retreats to make Room for them he will show that he has not yet totally lost his Understanding. Besides, there is a Period in Life when a Man should covet the exalted Pleasure of Reflection in Retirement.

I thank you, my dear Sir, for the information you gave M^{rs} A of M^r Dugans coming. Pray let her know that I receivd her Letter & am well. My Comp^{ts} to the Circle about you.

Your affectionate,

ARTICLE, UNSIGNED.

[*Boston Gazette*, April 16, 1781; a draft is in the Samuel Adams Papers, Lenox Library.¹]

Extract of a Letter from the Southward.

"BEFORE this will reach you, your Countrymen will have finished the important business of electing their Legislators, Magistrates and Governors for the ensuing year. I hope they have made a wise choice. At least, from the opinion I entertain of their virtue, I

¹ Endorsed by Adams: "The foregoing was sent to M^r Edes by the Post Mar 27, 81."

am persuaded they have acted with all that deliberation and caution which the solemnity of the transaction required. They may then reflect, each one on his own integrity, and appeal to the Monitor within his breast, that he has not trifled with the sacred trust reposed in him by GOD and his country—that he has not prostituted his honor and conscience to please a friend or a patron—that he has not been influenced with the view of private emolument to himself and his family, but has faithfully given his vote for the candidate whom he thought most worthy the choice of free and virtuous citizens—I congratulate that Legislator, Magistrate & Governor, who *knows* that neither smiles, entreaties, gifts, dissimulation, intrigue, nor any base and dishonorable practices have procured him this exalted station. His fellow citizens, *unsolicited* by him, have called him into their service, from the opinion they have formed of his integrity and adequate abilities.—He feels himself happy in their opinion of him—happy is he indeed, if he *is conscious he deserves it.*

But our countrymen will not imagine, that having filled the several departments of government, they have no further concern about it. It is, I humbly conceive, their duty and interest to attend to the manner in which it is administered by those whom they have entrusted. How often has the finishing stroke been given to public virtue, by those who possessed, or seemed to possess many amiable virtues? GUSTAVUS VASA was viewed by the Swedes as the deliverer of their country from the Danish yoke. The most implicit obedience, says the historian, was considered by them as a debt of gratitude, and a virtue.

He had many excellent qualities. His manners were conciliating—His courage and abilities great—But the people by an entire confidence in him suffered him to lay a foundation for absolute monarchy. They were charmed with his moderation and wisdom, qualities which he *really* possessed ; but they did not consider his ambition, nor had they a thought of his views. They found peace restored, order established, justice administered, commerce protected, and the arts and sciences encouraged, and they looked no further. They did not imagine, that he who had been the instrument of recovering the independence of their country, could be the very man who was to effect the ruin of their liberties. By the Constitution of Sweden their kings were elective, and the powers of the crown were exceedingly limited. The unsuspecting people even voluntarily gave up their right of election, and suffered *Gustavus* to enlarge the powers of the crown, and entail it in his own family! This is the account which the history of Sweden has given us ; and it affords an instance among a thousand others, of the folly and danger of trusting even *good men* with power, without regarding the use they make of it. Power is in its nature incroaching ; and such is the human make, that men who are vested with a share of it, are generally inclined to take more than it was intended they should have. The love of power, like the love of money, increases with the possession of it ; and we know, in what ruin these baneful passions have involved human societies in all ages, when they have been let loose and suffered to rage uncontrouled—*There is no restraint like the pervading eye of the*

virtuous citizens.—I hope therefore our countrymen will constantly exercise that right which the meanest of them is intitled to, and which is particularly secured to them by our happy constitution, of inquiring freely, but decently, into the conduct of the public servants. The very being of the Commonwealth may depend upon it. I will venture to appeal to the experience of ancient Republicks, to evince the necessity of it; and it is never more necessary than in the infancy of a Commonwealth, and when the people have chosen honest men to conduct their affairs. For, whatever is done at a time nearly contemporary with the constitution, will be construed as the best exposition of it; and a mistaken principle of a virtuous ruler, whose public conduct is generally good, and always supposed to be honestly intended, carries with it an authority scarcely to be resisted, and precedents are thus formed which may prove dangerous—perhaps *fatal.*—
