

COLLECTION OF PAPERS

ON

POLITICAL, LITERARY

AND

MORAL SUBJECTS.

BY NOAH WEBSTER, LL. D.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE observations on the Revolution in France, in this collection, were written and published in the year 1794, during the heat of the revolution, when I was frequently receiving fresh accounts of the ferocities of the violent reformers, exhibiting the appalling effects of popular factions.

The Essay on the Rights of Neutral Nations, owes its origin to the enormous outrages on the commerce of the United States, committed by the belligerent powers, during the French Revolution. It was published in New York in the year 1802. The principal points in it have a bearing on the *Right of Search*; a subject now agitated in this country, as it is in Great Britain and in France. An eminent jurist in Philadelphia, considers this essay as one of the best, if not the best work that has appeared on this subject. He mentions particularly the ground on which I have placed the jurisdiction of nations on the ocean. In the papers signed CURTIUS, the treaty of 1795 is vindicated on the principles of the law of nations, so called. In the essay on neutral rights, I give my own opinions.

A particular motive I have in this publication, is to record my testimony against the audacious practice of publishing misrepresentations, falsehood, and calumny, for party purposes. By this practice, the most virtuous, meritorious, and patriotic statesmen are vilified, and their influence impaired or destroyed; the harmony of our public councils is disturbed; and the co-operation of our citizens, in measures indispensable to our national prosperity, is prevented. In short, this practice frustrates the great object of a republican government, by subjecting our citizens to the sway of some petty oligarchy, changeable every fourth year. I have been a witness to the evil effects of this licentiousness, from the formation of the government, and I question whether any other age or nation has furnished an example of public calumnies of equal extent, and attended with equal injury to the morals and interests of the community.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE UNITED STATES.

THE origin of the two great political parties which have agitated the United States for half a century ; the causes which have produced and sustained them ; and their injurious effects upon public measures—are subjects of deep interest to the citizens of our confederacy. As it has fallen to my lot to be well acquainted with the origin and history of these parties, it may be interesting to the present generation, most of whom have been born since they originated, to see a brief narrative of facts relating to their origin, their respective motives and measures of policy, and to their influence in disturbing public harmony, embarrassing our national councils, and interrupting the prosperity of the country.

The claims of Great Britain to govern the people of this country, when in a colonial state ; to tax them at pleasure, and impose restrictions on their trade, roused an opposition which resulted in open resistance by force, and which terminated in a revolution. As the inhabitants of the colonies were generally attached to their father-land, small causes could not have induced them to withdraw from it, by dissolving all connection with its government. But the stamp act and other acts of the British Parliament which our fathers deemed unconstitutional and oppressive, gradually produced a conviction in the minds of the more intelligent citizens of this country, that it was necessary to resist the British claims at all hazards.

In order to prepare the minds of our citizens for such a resistance, our leading statesmen deemed it necessary to attempt to detach the affections of the people from the British government and nation, by presenting to their view the corruptions of that government, as well as the consequences of their claim to “bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever.” Among other things they insisted much on the oppressiveness of the *excise* laws of Great Britain, and on the injustice and corrupt use of *pensions*. These articles are specified for the purpose of showing the effects which the writings of the fathers of the Revolution afterward had on the measures of our own government. The declamations against the oppressive operation of the excise laws of Great Britain, excited, in this country, an extreme popular odium against that mode of taxation ; and this odium directed against the duties of excise, laid by Congress upon distilled spirits, was among the most powerful causes of the insurrection in Pennsylvania. The arguments which our writers had used against the oppressive laws of Great Britain, to alienate our citizens from the British government, were turned with effect against a similar law of our own government.

Still more general and violent was the opposition in this country to *pensions*. It was represented, and probably with truth, that the administration in England used the power of granting pensions for corrupt



purposes. Yet the practice of bestowing pensions on old public servants, civil and military, when they retired from office, was and is a noble feature in the British government. But popular opinion, in this country, made little or no distinction between pensions; they were all condemned as unjust, and the continual clamors against them served the purpose of increasing the alienation of our citizens from the British government. The prejudices thus excited against the practice of granting pensions, were, at the close of the revolutionary war, directed against the grant of half-pay to the officers of the American army, and its substitute, the grant of five years' full pay, to indemnify them for the losses they sustained by receiving in payment a depreciated currency.

Hence in the first organization of our government under the present constitution, Congress granted pensions only to certain disabled officers or the widows of officers; neglecting to pension most of those who had assisted in achieving our independence, who descended into their graves without an indemnification for their losses.

An extreme jealousy of the powers of the government, which had been excited and fastened on the minds of the American people by an opposition to the claims of the British Parliament, began very early to be manifested in this country by popular resolutions against an undue extension of the powers of our own government. An example of this jealousy occurred in the county of Fairfax in Virginia, before the definitive treaty of 1783 was signed.

On the 30th of May, 1783, the representatives of that county in the house of delegates, received instructions from their constituents on several subjects. Among other things, they were instructed to oppose all attempts of Congress to obtain a perpetual revenue. The people, giving instructions, considered the requisition of Congress on the states for revenue, as exhibiting strong proofs of a lust of power. They expressed a decided opposition to the proposal of Congress, Oct. 10, 1780, for appropriating the proceeds of unappropriated lands that might be ceded to the United States. They also recommended to their representatives in the legislature, to endeavor to obtain an instruction from the general assembly to the Virginia delegation in Congress, against sending ambassadors to the courts of Europe; on the ground that, in the circumstances then existing, the United States were unable to defray the expense. They added that such appointments could hardly fail of producing dangerous combinations, factions and cabals in the great council of America; and from the great distance, and the difficulty of knowing and examining their conduct, they argued that there was danger that some of the persons sent might be corrupted and pensioned, by the courts near which they might reside. They supposed that consuls would be sufficient to answer every good purpose.

Not long after appeared, in the northern states, a public opposition to the resolve of Congress, granting to the officers of the revolutionary army five years' extra pay, to make good their losses by the depreciation of continental bills. It must be remarked that Congress, to make good such losses, had at first passed a resolve to grant the officers half pay for life. This grant alarmed the people, who considered it as the beginning of that odious practice of pensioning, which existed in Great

Britain; and such was the clamor excited by it, that Congress substituted for it the grant of five years' full pay, which was generally called the *commutation*.

The commutation however did not satisfy the people. On the 4th of July, 1783, a popular meeting was held in Amenia, in Dutchess County, N. Y., in which it was resolved that the officers of the late army were, neither in justice nor equity entitled to half-pay or to five years' full pay, for the following reasons:

1. Because when they entered the service, neither Congress nor the state engaged to them any such thing, and that, if in the hour of distress with Congress, the officers availed themselves of a promise for the same, neither the honor nor the justice of the state was pledged to fulfill it.

2. Because the depreciation of their pay had been fully made up, while most of the citizens had equally suffered by depreciation of the currency.

3. Because they judged it unjust to make an odious and partial distinction between officers and privates.

4. Because the state had engaged to the officers a generous bounty in the best lands in the state.

5. Because such *pensions* would lay a foundation to enslave a free state.

6. Because it would make an undue discrimination between the service of the line and of the militia. And

Lastly, because such *pensions* would endanger the making so many drones in the state hive.

On the 15th of July, 1783, a town meeting was held in Torrington, in Connecticut, in which the justice of the five years' pay to the officers was called in question. The meeting resolved, that although they had the highest opinion of the merits of the officers, and admitted that strict justice ought to be awarded to them; yet that many of them had found employment in the army, when they had lost other employment; that many of them had enriched themselves; that men who had entered the army poor, had returned in affluence; that it was doubtful whether Congress had the power to make a grant of extra compensation to the officers; they believed not; that such a grant was not a charge of the war; that deranged officers were to receive a *pension*; that officers continuing in the army were to receive a *pension*; that *pensions* were always agreeable to men in office, but destructive to the community. Such was the substance of their objections. Several other towns held meetings and passed similar resolves on this subject.

On the 21st of August, a town meeting was held in Killingworth, in which the grant to the officers was boldly denounced. It was resolved, that Congress had no power to make such a grant, and that the states were not bound to make it good. The meeting closed by the appointment of a committee to correspond with the other towns on the subject.

Major William Judd, of Farmington, who had been an officer in the army, was designated by his brother officers, to procure for them the certificates or securities, to which they were entitled under the resolve of Congress. He repaired to the seat of government, and petitioned Congress to adjust the claims of the officers; that the balances might be received. On the 22d of March, 1783, Congress passed a resolution



for the purpose. Major Judd received the securities, and was on his return, when on Sabbath evening, August 3d, the time when he was expected to arrive in Farmington, the populace collected with a view to seize the securities, to prevent them from being delivered to the officers. He had notice of their design and avoided them. The next morning, the populace assembled at his house, but the Major could not be found. Disappointed of their object, they resolved themselves into a town meeting. In this proceeding, they anticipated the town meeting which had been previously warned to be held the next day.

In this meeting, the most respectable people of the town attended, and an unanimous vote was passed, condemning, "in terms of the highest resentment," the conduct of Major Judd, declaring that it tended to the subversion of the rights of the people, and merited the severest reprehension of the town. They then appointed a committee to serve Major Judd with a copy of the vote. The subject of commutation was then discussed, and the grant of Congress was denounced as unjust, impolitic, oppressive to the people, subversive of the principles of a republican government, and a dangerous precedent.

The meeting then appointed a committee to correspond with the committees of other towns, with power to propose a convention of delegates to consult on the means of counteracting the effect and operation of the commutation.

On the 23d of August, a committee consisting of Thomas Seymour, Hugh Ledlie, George Smith, Seth Collins and Daniel Pitkin, of Hartford, John Robbins of Wethersfield, and Wait Goodrich of Glastenbury, notified that a meeting or general convention of delegates of towns should be held at Middletown, on the first Wednesday of September then next, to consider what ought to be done upon the subject of the commutation, in order to some constitutional mode of redress.

On the 16th of September following, the town of Hartford gave instructions to their representatives, in the legislature, Thomas Seymour and George Pitkin. In these instructions, the representatives were expressly directed strenuously to oppose all encroachments of the American Congress on the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the separate states, and every assumption of power not expressly vested in them by the confederation; to thoroughly investigate the question whether Congress had power to grant half pay for life to the officers of the army, or five years' full pay, as an equivalent; to use their utmost endeavors that the vacant lands in the United States might be ceded and appropriated for the general benefit of the United States. They recommended to them to use their influence to obtain an instruction from the General Assembly to the Connecticut delegation in Congress against sending ambassadors to the courts of Europe; it being an expense, which in the existing circumstances, they deemed unnecessary and insupportable; and finally the gentlemen were instructed to exert themselves, that *placemen* and *pensioners* and every other superfluous officer of state should be discontinued and removed.

The proposed convention met in Middletown on the 3d day of September, but a majority of the towns not being represented, they adjourned to meet again on the 30th of the month. In their proceedings, they recommended to the freemen to instruct their representatives,



early to set on foot, at the next session of the Assembly, a candid and thorough inquiry into the extent of the powers of Congress; and if it should be found that Congress, in granting the commutation to the officers, had exceeded their powers, then the most effectual constitutional means were to be used to relieve the people from that burden.

In this convention an attempt was made to effect an entire change in the council or senate of the state; all the members who had assisted in conducting the country through the war were to be displaced; a nomination of other men was made; but the printers in Connecticut declining to print it, it was sent to New York, printed and privately circulated.

To aid the attempt to change the members of the council, the most ridiculous tales were circulated to render them odious. One story, aimed particularly at the Hon. Oliver Wolcott of Litchfield, the father of the late Gov. Wolcott, was propagated with great industry and no little success in Litchfield County; viz. that this gentleman had said, "we shall never have good times, till a poor man is obliged to live on sheep's head and pluck." This ridiculous falsehood was so far believed, in that county, that Mr. Wolcott came near to lose his election to the next legislature. The same or a similar story was circulated respecting the Huntington family in Norwich. This miserable artifice however did not succeed, and the former councilors were re-elected.

At the second meeting of the convention at Middletown on the 30th of September, about fifty towns were represented, which, at that time, were a majority of the towns in the state. Nothing however of importance was done, except to address a petition or remonstrance to the General Assembly on the subject of the commutation. They adjourned to meet again on the 16th of December following.

At the meeting in December, the convention issued a recommendation to the people of the state to peruse a pamphlet published by Judge Burke of South Carolina, against the establishment of the society of the Cincinnati, by the officers of the late army. This society was considered by many persons as the germ of an order of nobility; and so violent was the popular jealousy respecting it, that a general meeting of the society was afterward held in Philadelphia, in which Gen. Washington presided, and the more objectionable articles of their constitution were expunged.

This convention adjourned to meet at the same place on the third Tuesday of March then next. They met accordingly on the 16th of the month and framed an address to the good people of Connecticut, in which they urged their objections to the resolve of Congress, granting extra pay to the officers, and also against the society of the Cincinnati. In the closing paragraph, the convention stated that as the Cincinnati had adjourned to meet in July then next, they thought best to adjourn the convention till August; but they never afterward assembled. The able discussions of the subject, during the winter of 1783-4, had convinced a majority of citizens that the resolve of Congress was expedient, and that opposition to the measure was wrong, and would be ineffectual. At the election in April, a large majority of the towns elected representatives who supported the measures of Congress; and at the session of the Assembly in May following, an act was passed granting power to

Congress to lay an impost of five per cent. on imported goods, for the purpose of raising a revenue.

Thus ended this formidable opposition to the acts of Congress, which, for several months, threatened a revolution or entire change of rulers in this state.\*

This opposition to the measures of Congress gave rise to the democratic party in Connecticut. It proceeded from honest motives, an extreme jealousy of power in the hands of rulers; a jealousy which had been manifested by the colonists from the first settlements in America; a jealousy which had resisted all the efforts of the British government to bring New England under a general governor, to be appointed by the crown; a jealousy which had been fanned into a flame by the stamp act, and which finally determined the colonists to resist the British claims by force.

The party thus formed on the question of the right of Congress to grant extra pay to the officers, constituted about one third or one fourth of the citizens. On the question of ratifying the constitution in 1788, the votes of the convention were one hundred and twenty-eight in the affirmative, and forty in the negative. And this was nearly the proportion for several years, till new questions arose in the administration of the government under the constitution of the United States.

And in this place I will take the liberty to correct a common error in popular opinion, in regard to the parties at the time the constitution was formed. It is well known that the friends and supporters of the ratification were denominated *Federalists*; and the opposers *anti-federalists*. It has often been alledged, in recent times, that the *federalists* were in favor of a *consolidation* of the several states, which should reduce them to the condition of mere corporations under the general government. But this is a mistake; the federalists were never the advocates of a consolidation; they were opposed to it. The mistake arose from the fact that the opposers of the ratification were apprehensive that the

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\* It may be remarked, that of the discontents among the people on account of this resolve of Congress, we have no history. The subject of the convention in Connecticut is not mentioned in Marshall's *History of the Life of Washington*; it is not mentioned in most of the histories for schools now used, and except a brief account in my *History of the United States*, this portion of the history of Connecticut is all a blank to the present generation.

The popular discontents respecting the commutation of half pay, appeared in Massachusetts. In February, 1784, a committee of the towns of Wrentham and Medway, with the advice of the selectmen of the towns of Franklin and Billingham, sent a letter to the selectmen of Boston, and to all the towns in the county of Suffolk, to take into consideration the commutation, and also the act of Massachusetts, granting an impost to raise a revenue to Congress, without proper restrictions. The committee further voted to desire the several towns in Suffolk, to choose a delegate or delegates, to meet at the house of Mrs. Woodward, innholder in Dedham, on the third Wednesday in March, to take into consideration these subjects and advise to some measures for the redress of grievances.

A town meeting was held in Boston; the letter from the committee of Wrentham and Medway was laid before the meeting, and the subjects debated. On the 15th day of March, the town, by their clerk, William Cooper, returned an answer, expressing their disapprobation of the county meeting proposed, and of any attempt to oppose the resolves of Congress. This letter, it is believed, prevented any further proceedings of towns on this subject.

These letters are published at large in the *Connecticut Courant* of March 30, 1784.



powers vested in Congress were too extensive, and that the *effect would be to destroy the sovereignty of the states, and result in a consolidation.* But at the time when the subject of ratification was under discussion, the anti-federal or democratic part of our citizens never charged the federalists with the *design* to effect a consolidation. This is a modern calumny.

It is a remarkable fact that the democratic party, with few or no exceptions, opposed the ratification of the constitution; and beyond a question, had that opposition succeeded, anarchy or civil war would have been the consequence. The federalists *made* the frame of government, and with immense efforts, procured it to be ratified, in opposition to nearly one half of the citizens of the United States, headed by some of the ablest men in the Union.

During the first session of Congress, the same parties existed, and arranged themselves on different sides of several important questions which occupied the deliberations of that body. The democratic party opposed the funding of the public debt of the United States, and the assumption of the state debts; those important measures which were necessary to do justice to the creditors, and revive the credit and the languishing commerce of the United States. The genius of Hamilton, and the wisdom and firmness of Washington, and his federal supporters, overcame the opposition; the public debts were funded, courts were established, and the government in all its departments was organized.

One of the objections to the funding of the debts, arose from the apprehension that the United States would contract a permanent debt, like that which oppresses the British nation. Mr. Jefferson's mind was filled with this terrific phantom. It is strange that a single glance at the immense resources of this country, should not have dissipated all such apprehensions.

Another objection to the funding of the public debts, arose from the depreciated value of the evidences of those debts, which had sunk to one-eighth of the nominal sum, and to a great extent, had been sold at that value. It was considered unjust that the purchasers of those securities, who had given for them only one-eighth of their original value, should have them funded at par; and Mr. Madison introduced into the House of Representatives a proposition for a discrimination, which should give to the original holders of the securities a part of their original value. This project was defeated.

It may be here remarked how erroneously the opposers of the constitution reasoned in regard to its operation and effects. One of the strongest objections to the constitution, proceeded from an apprehension that the federal government would reduce the states to mere corporations; in other words, would produce a consolidation. Events have shown that the danger is on the other side, and that we have most cause of fear that the states will be too strong for the federal government.

Soon after the government was organized, and business began to be prosperous, a new cause of party contention arose from an effort of Mr. Jefferson and his friends to divert the trade of this country from Great Britain to France. The pretext for this change was the restrictions which Great Britain laid on the commerce of this country. To prove that Great Britain imposed higher duties on our exports to that



country and her colonies, and subjected our trade to more severe restrictions than France laid upon our commerce to that kingdom and her colonies, Mr. Jefferson sent to Congress a lengthy report on the privileges and restrictions of our trade in the several countries of Europe. Soon after this report, Mr. Madison introduced into the House of Representatives a series of resolutions, adapted to carry into effect the purpose of Mr. Jefferson, and encourage a trade with France, in preference to that with Great Britain. — These resolutions occasioned animated debates, but they were ultimately negatived.

In these efforts of Mr. Jefferson and his friends to change the course of our trade, it was easy to discover the strong predilection of that party for a connection with France. Popular feeling also was on the side of France. The people of this country had not forgotten their sufferings from the British armies, and particularly the cruelties practiced on American prisoners, during the Revolution. On the other hand, the assistance rendered to the United States by France, in support of independence, had conciliated the favor and friendship of our citizens for that country. In addition to these circumstances, Mr. Jefferson's long residence in France, in the character of American minister, and the coincidence of his principles with those of the most eminent French authors and philosophers, had produced in him a strong predilection for that nation; while he entertained the bitterest enmity to Great Britain. Of this he has left abundant evidence in his published letters.

Through the instrumentality of these means, the democratic party became, in some measure, identified with the partisans of France. Subsequent events strengthened this union.

It is well known that after the treaty of peace with Great Britain in 1783, the government of that country refused to deliver, to the United States, the forts on our northern frontier, until the British merchants had received payment of the debts due to them from our citizens, for goods sold to them before the Revolution. At the same time, citizens of the southern states demanded, from the British government, compensation for the slaves which the British armies had carried away at the close of the war. The controversy between the two governments, on these subjects, was violent, obstinate, and extremely embarrassing to the President. This controversy was adjusted by the treaty negotiated by Mr. Jay. The British government agreed to pay for the slaves, and the United States stipulated to pay the debts due from our citizens to British merchants.

But new causes of controversy arose. The revolution in France, which had just put an end to the monarchy, had alarmed the kings of the neighboring nations, and they combined to check the progress of French principles; or at least to prevent them from overturning their thrones. One of the methods adopted by Great Britain to distress France, was to prevent neutral nations from supplying that country with provisions for food, as well as munitions of war. The British statesmen knew the predilection of American citizens for France, and for a republican government, which they supposed the French would establish. It was therefore the policy of Great Britain to prevent the United States from joining France in her contest with the combined powers. This was probably one motive which induced the British gov-

ernment to issue an order of council, directing their ships to capture American vessels, and conduct them into her ports for adjudication. In consequence of this order, the ocean was swept of American vessels. These captures raised a spirit of universal indignation in the United States, and very much strengthened the democratic party.

Other causes contributed to the same effect. After the death of the King of France, and the commencement of the republican form of government, the French rulers began to entertain the project of revolutionizing Europe by overthrowing monarchies. This project they supposed to be so congenial to the opinions of the Americans, that they expected our government would readily unite with France, in resisting the combination of kings to defeat the purpose. With a view to bring the United States into alliance with France, Mr. Genet was dispatched, as minister to this country, authorized to induce our government to join France in defending herself against the combined powers, and in extending republican principles and forms of government.

Mr. Genet landed at Charleston, in South Carolina, and without presenting his credentials to the President, he proceeded to constitute French consuls to be judges of admiralty, with authority to condemn British vessels taken as prizes, and sent into port by French privateers fitted out in American harbors. He also commissioned men to be military officers for raising troops to invade the Spanish possessions on our southern border. On his way to the north, he promoted the formation of democratic societies to support him in attempts to draw this country into an alliance with France. These societies held meetings, and passed violent resolutions in favor of French principles. The democratic society in Kentucky assumed a high tone in demanding the free right to enter and navigate the Mississippi, the mouth of which was within the Spanish territories. They charged our government with neglect of their interests in not procuring a free navigation of that river. Their claim to such freedom was reasonable, but the right to it was to be obtained by negotiation, and their charges against the executive of the United States of neglecting to obtain it were not to be justified.

The conduct of the French minister gave great offense to our citizens and to the executive. He evidently supposed that his influence, favored by a predilection of our citizens for a republican form of government, and supported by the democratic societies, was sufficient to control the measures of our government. Hence when President Washington issued a proclamation recommending neutrality, and manifested a firm determination to oppose the designs of France, Mr. Genet *appealed to the people*. This bold and rash declaration ruined his cause. The President was not a man to surrender his authority to a foreign minister, and he demanded his recall.

In the midst of the most perplexing difficulties, with a popular French minister intriguing to draw this country into an alliance with France, in her war with the combined powers, and boldly usurping rights of sovereignty in the United States; compelled to struggle with the opposition of some of his cabinet, and with many popular leaders of the democratic party, acting in concert with the French minister, President Washington stood as firm as a rock; and to his popularity chiefly was this country indebted for its escape from a connection with France,

which would have involved the fate of this country with hers, in the most obstinate contest ever witnessed in Europe.

But the democratic party in this country had now become identified with the French partisans in the United States. To show how intimately these parties were united in views, and how much dependence the French had on the leaders of the democratic party in this country, I will relate an anecdote.

In the month of August, 1793, I was in New York at the house of a Mr. Bradley in Maiden Lane, where Mr. Genet and his suit were lodging. While sitting at dinner, I related the news which had just been received, that a British vessel had arrived in the harbor of Boston, a prize to a French privateer, and that the marshal of the district had taken possession of the vessel, by order of our government, to prevent her from being condemned by the French consular court of admiralty. On hearing this fact, Mr. Paschal, a secretary of Mr. Genet, immediately remarked that *General Washington was making war on the French nation*. He spoke in French, not knowing that any person at table, except his countrymen, understood him. Mr. Genet immediately said that our government was bringing this country back under the power of Great Britain. This remark excited my spirit to reply bluntly, that our government could no more bring us again under the dominion of Great Britain, than they could remove Catskill mountains, or words to that effect. I asked him if he thought Gen. Washington, Mr. Jefferson, and Mr. Hamilton were fools. Mr. Genet replied instantly, "Mr. Jefferson is no fool."

I informed Mr. Wolcott, controller of the treasury, of this conversation, and he, after advising with some members of the cabinet, wrote to me, requesting me to send him an affidavit of the facts. This was done, and the affidavit is among the papers of the late Governor Wolcott.

The policy of President Washington was pacific; he knew the interests of his country required the continuance of peace, and to this object he devoted all his authority, and directed all his measures. To effect an adjustment of controversies with Great Britain, he nominated Mr. Jay, as special envoy to negotiate a treaty with the government of that kingdom, and this embassy was successful. The great questions respecting the surrender of the northern forts by Great Britain, and the claims of British merchants for debts due from our citizens, were settled.

This event frustrated the project and hopes of the democratic party in this country, of forming an alliance with France in her revolutionary struggle. Their disappointment was manifested by continued ebullitions of the bitterest opposition to Mr. Jay's treaty.\* Never was the rancor of party spirit exhibited with more force, than in the writings which filled the opposition prints on that occasion. A specimen of that rancor is furnished by a paragraph published in Davis's Gazette, in Richmond, Virginia. It was in these words:—

"Notice is hereby given, that in case the treaty entered into by that d—d arch-traitor, J—n J—y, with the British tyrant, should be ratified,

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\* "I join with you in thinking the treaty an execrable thing."—*Jefferson's Letter to E. Rutledge*, Vol. III, p. 317.



a petition will be presented to the General Assembly of Virginia, at their next session, praying that the said state may recede from the Union, and be left under the government and protection of one hundred thousand free and independent Virginians."

"P. S. As it is the wish of the people of the said state to enter into a treaty of amity, and commerce, and navigation, with any other state or states of the present Union, *who* are averse to returning again under the galling yoke of Great Britain, the printers of the (at present) United States are requested to publish the above notification."

Notwithstanding the violent opposition made to this treaty by the democratic party, and by many of the federal party, President Washington, after long deliberation, set his signature to its ratification. The event proved how erroneous was popular opinion in regard to the merits of that treaty; for in its operation, it proved to be highly favorable to the commercial interests of this country, and the expiration of certain articles at the end of ten years, was deeply regretted.

But the adjustment of our controversy with Great Britain did not put an end to our troubles. The inveterate contest between France and the combined powers continued, with a bitterness that set at defiance all the established rules of international law by which the rights of neutral nations had been protected. Great Britain, for the purpose of crippling France, issued orders for blockading French ports; and in retaliation, the French government issued orders for blockading British ports. Thus our commerce was subjected to interruption by the cruisers of both nations; our ships were taken and condemned by both, and scarcely to this day have our merchants been indemnified for their losses.

Another cause of continual irritation, was the orders of the British government for impressing seamen on board of American ships. These orders did not extend to the impressment of native Americans, but of British born subjects, in American service. By the laws or established usages of Great Britain, a British subject can not alienate his allegiance to the British crown. Hence naturalization of subjects in the United States gives no protection to British subjects in American ships. In executing these orders, it sometimes happened that native Americans were impressed from our ships. This was justly considered an outrageous injury; and to compel Great Britain to relinquish this practice, was a principal reason for declaring war against that nation in 1812.

During the whole period of President Washington's administration, and amid the most perplexing difficulties, that great man maintained the most rigid impartiality toward the belligerent nations; his integrity, firmness, justice, and love of his country, remained unshaken. But his prudence could not shield him from incessant abusive attacks in the democratic papers. He was charged with partiality to Great Britain, and his cabinet with enmity to republican principles. He bore the calumnious charges with astonishing magnanimity; but his sensibility was at times so wounded that he vented complaints. "I wonder," said he, "why I am so much abused; I do as well as I can."

We have a specimen of the charges of the democratic party against President Washington's administration, in a letter of Mr. Jefferson to his Italian friend, Mazzei, who had resided some time in this country.

The letter was written in April, 1796, some months after the ratification of the treaty negotiated by Mr. Jay. The copy from which was made the first translation published in this country, was a version in French, printed in the *Moniteur* of January 15, 1797, to which were attached severe animadversions on the conduct of our government toward France, charging it with the basest ingratitude. The paper containing this letter was put into my hands in April, 1797, by Mr. Epaphras Jones of Hartford, who had just returned from France. I was then the editor of two papers in New York—the *Minerva*, afterward the *Commercial Advertiser*, and the *Herald*, afterward the *Spectator*. The letter of Mazzei attracting my attention, I translated it and published it in my papers.

On the appearance of this letter in Philadelphia, it attracted the notice of the public, and particularly of the members of the cabinet. Mr. Jefferson did not deny the authenticity of the letter, but he alledged that it had been altered or incorrectly translated. On comparing the published copy with that which has been since published in the correspondence of Mr. Jefferson with his friends, (Vol. III, p. 327,) it appears that there is no material difference except in a misprint of the word *form* instead of *forms*. This misprint would make the writer, Mr. Jefferson, charge his political opposers with attempting to give us the *form* of the British government, instead of the *forms* or ceremonies of the British court, which he alledged to be his meaning. The fact of Mr. Jefferson's denial of the correctness of the published copy, induced Col. Pickering to write to me in New York, requesting me to send to him the French original. I complied with this request, and the letter in the original, with a translation, was published in the *Gazette of the United States*. The French paper, the *Moniteur*, was then returned to me, and as I was under an obligation to deliver it to Mr. Jones, I had the precaution to make a correct copy of the original French, and to procure it to be attested, as a true copy, by Mr. afterward Chief Justice Kent. This copy is now in my possession, and I will give it in the original and in plain English.

Florence, le 1er Janvier.

*Lettre de M. Jefferson, ci-devant Ministre des Etats Unis en France, et Secrétaire au department des affaires étrangères, a un citoyen de Virginie.*

Cette lettre littéralement traduite, est adressée a M. Mazzei, auteur des *Recherches Historiques et Politiques sur les Etats Unis d'Amerique*, demeurant en Toscane.

“Notre état politique a prodigieusement changé, depuis que vous nous avez quitté. Au lieu de ce noble amour de la liberté et de ce gouvernement republicain, qui nous ont fait passer triomphans a travers les dangers de la guerre, un parti Anglican-monarchico-aristocratique s'est élevé. Son objet avoué est de nous imposer la substance, comme il nous a déjà donné les formes de gouvernement Britannique; cependant le corps principal de nos citoyens reste fidele aux principes republicains. Tous les propriétaires fonciers sont pour ces principes, ainsi qu'une grande masse d'hommes a talens. Nous avons contre nous republicains le pouvoir executif, le pouvoir judiciaire, deux des trois



branches de la legislature, tous les officiers du gouvernement, tous ceux qui aspirent a l'être, tous les hommes timides qui preferent le calme du despotisme a la mer orageuse de la liberté, les marchands Bretons, et les Americaines qui trafiquent avec des capitaux Bretons, les speculateurs, les gens interessees dans la banque et dans les fonds publics, etablissements inventés dans des vues de corruption, et pour nous assimuler au modele Britannique dans ses parties pourries.

"Je vous donnerais la fièvre, si je vous nommais les apostats qui ont embrassé ces hérésies, des hommes qui etaient des Solomons dans le conseil, et des Samsons dans les combats, mais dont la chevelure a été coupée par la catin Angleterre.

"On voudrait nous ravir cette liberté que nous avons gagnée par tant de travaux et de dangers. Mais nous la conserverons; notre masse de poids et de richesse est trop grand pour que nous ayons a craindre qu'on tente d'employer la force contre nous. Il suffit que nous nous reveillions, et que nous rompions les liens lilliputiens dont il nous ont garottes pendant le premier sommeil qui a succédé a nos travaux. Il suffit que nous arretons les progress de ce système d'ingratitude et injustice envers la France, de que on voudrait nous aliener pour nous rendre a la influence Britannique, etc."

A true copy from a French paper, entitled "Gazette Nationale, ou le Moniteur Universel," 6 Pluviose, l'an 5 de Republique.

JAMES KENT.

New York, May 22, 1797.

Florence, 6th of January.

*Letter of Mr. Jefferson, formerly Minister of the United States in France, and Secretary in the department of foreign affairs, to a citizen of Virginia.*

This letter, literally translated, is addressed to Mr. Mazzei, author of *Historical and Political Researches on the United States of America*, resident in Tuscany.

"Our political state has been prodigiously altered since you have left us. Instead of that noble love of liberty and of republican government, which enabled us to pass triumphantly through the dangers of the war, an Anglican, monarchical, aristocratical party has arisen. Their avowed object is to impose on us the substance, as they have already given us the forms of the British government. Nevertheless, the principal body of our citizens remains faithful to republican principles. All our landholders are in favor of those principles; so also the great mass of men of talents. We republicans have against us the executive power, the judiciary power, two of the three branches of the legislature; all the officers of the government; all those who aspire to offices; all timid men who prefer the calm of despotism to the stormy sea of liberty; the British merchants and Americans who trade with British capitals; the speculators, the people who are interested in the banks and in the public funds; establishments invented for the purpose of corruption, and to assimilate us to the British model in its corrupt parts.

"I should give you a fever, if I should name to you the apostates who have embraced these heresies, the men who were Soloracns in



council, and Samsons in combat, but whose locks have been shorn by the harlot England.

“These men would ravish from us that liberty which we gained by so many labors and dangers. But we shall preserve it; our mass of weight and of wealth is too great to suffer us to fear that our opposers will employ force against us. It is enough that we are awake, and that we shall break the lilliputian ties with which they have bound us, during the first slumber which succeeded our toils. It is sufficient that we arrest the progress of that system of ingratitude and injustice toward France, from which they would alienate us, to subject us to British influence, etc.”

To this letter were subjoined the following remarks in the *Moniteur*.

[“This interesting letter from one of the most virtuous and enlightened citizens of the United States, explains the conduct of the Americans in regard to France. It is certain that of all the neutral and friendly powers, there is none from which France had a right to expect more interest and succors than from the United States. She is their true mother country, since she has offered to them their liberty and independence. Ungrateful children, instead of abandoning her, they ought to have armed in her defense. But if imperious circumstances had prevented them from openly declaring for the republic of France, they ought at least to have made demonstrations and excited apprehensions in England, that at some moment or other they should declare themselves. This fear alone would have been sufficient to force the cabinet of England to make peace. It is clear that a war with the United States would strike a terrible blow at the commerce of the English, would give them uneasiness for the preservation of their possessions on the American continent, and deprive them of the means of conquering the Dutch and French colonies.”

“Equally ungrateful and impolitic, the Congress hastens to encourage the English, that they might pursue in tranquillity their war of extermination against France, and to invade the colonies and the commerce of England. They sent to London a minister, Mr. Jay, known by his attachment to England, and his personal relations to Lord Grenville, and he concluded suddenly a treaty of commerce which united them with Great Britain, more than a treaty of alliance.

“Such a treaty, under all the peculiar circumstances, and by the consequences which it must produce, is an act of hostility against France. The French government in short has testified the resentment of the French nation, by breaking off communication with an ungrateful and faithless ally, until she shall return to a more just and benevolent conduct. Justice and sound policy equally approve this measure of the French government. There is no doubt it will give rise, in the United States, to discussions which may afford a triumph to the party of good republicans, the friends of France.”

“Some writers, in disapprobation of this wise and necessary measure of the Directory, maintain that in the United States, the French have for partisans only certain demagogues who aim to overthrow the existing government. But their impudent falsehoods convince no one, and prove only what is too evident, that they use the liberty of the press to serve the enemies of France.”]

The charges against President Washington and his supporters, the federalists, so boldly affirmed in this letter, I know to be the foulest misrepresentations that ever characterized political enmity. I was well acquainted with the leading men in the cabinet and in our public councils at that time; with several of them I had had an intimate acquaintance for ten, twenty or thirty years; and I know, as well as one man can know the opinions of others, that there was no Anglican, monarchical, aristocratical party among them; and that the banks and the public funds were *not* contrivances invented for the purposes of corruption, and for assimilating us to the British government in its corrupt parts. The men who composed the councils of the country, under President Washington, were all republicans in principle, men of the firmest integrity, and as sound patriots as ever honored a free country. The funding of the public debts was a measure dictated by a high sense of justice to the public creditors, and by the soundest policy, as were all the laws and measures of the first Congress under the present constitution. It was this policy which, being pursued by Washington and his successors, revived the credit and the commerce of the United States, and gave them an exalted name among the nations of the earth. There was not a man in Washington's cabinet, and I believe not in the federal party, who wished to extend the measures of the government beyond the legitimate limits of the constitution.

The charge of a predilection for monarchy among the leading men of the federal party, was however continually repeated in the public prints; and as this charge had no small influence in alienating the minds of honest citizens from the administration of Washington, it deserves a more particular notice.

The person most generally charged with being a monarchist, was Gen. Hamilton. This charge is unfounded; that gentleman never advocated the establishment of a monarchy in the United States. He believed that the mixed kind of government in Great Britain, formed the best constitution that had ever been devised. If that form of government is not the best that men can devise, yet the success of that government in raising the British nation to power and wealth, and in giving stability to public measures, may well justify Mr. Hamilton's opinion.

But Mr. Hamilton knew and declared that a monarchy could not be established in the United States; and it is proof of great ignorance or of great hypocrisy, for men of this generation, the younglings of yesterday, to charge the federalists of a former generation with the design to erect a monarchy in this country. It was a principle then acknowledged, that a nation consisting mostly of independent landholders would never consent to yield the powers of government to a single man. Mr. Hamilton, well versed in the history of republics, and foreseeing evils like those which this country has experienced, and is now suffering, wished to incorporate into the constitution, the most effectual guards against corruption and factions. But the highest toned propositions which he made, for this purpose, in the convention which framed the constitution, were, that the president, the senate, and judges of the supreme court, should hold their offices during their good behavior, and the house of representatives should be elected by the people, to serve three years.



Events have shown how well Mr. Hamilton understood the character of a popular government. Nor was he singular in his opinions. Intelligent and reflecting men, at that period, generally entertained similar opinions; and our past history furnishes woful evidence to verify them. That such was the fact, may appear from the following remarks of a disciple of Washington, published forty years ago.

“Nothing is so fatal to truth and tranquillity, as party spirit; it is rash, imperious, unyielding, unforgiving. Blind to truth and deaf to argument, it sees no merit in an enemy; no demerit in a friend. Urged by the passion or convenience of the moment, it rushes impetuously to the attainment of its object, regardless of events, and forgetting that its own example may be drawn into precedent, and under a change of parties, prove a two-edged sword as fatal to friends as foes.

“To a man versed in the history of nations, the condition of parties in the United States presents nothing new, but the men and the forms of proceeding. The general principles, views, and passions displayed, are the same as have characterized parties in all ages and countries. Individuals of aspiring minds, who have been mortified by neglect, or irritated by the agitations of successful competition; men who can neither bear an equal nor yield to a superior, have the address to enlist into their service, the credulous and illiterate multitude. To oppose them, men of principle unite and form a party; public measures are proposed or attacked with zeal; opposition begets obstinacy; argument is resisted by will; mutual concessions are either not proposed or are rejected; and laws passed under such circumstances are either soon repealed, or are ineffectual in their operation.

“Parties thus arrayed against each other, often lose sight of the original points of difference, or magnify trifling differences into matters of vast concern to the public. Zeal is inflamed to enthusiasm; a regard to truth is extinguished in the desire of victory; and moderation yields to the apprehension of defeat. Then begins the reign of corruption; each party determines to triumph; and neither constitution nor law, religion nor morality, reputation nor conscience, can raise effectual barriers to restrain their passions and pursuits.

“In this warfare of parties, the adherents to each voluntarily put themselves under a favorite leader, and take a popular name. Thus organized, each party rallies under the name and the leader, with the *esprit du corps* for the moving principle; forgetting the origin, or ignorant of the motives of the association. The leader is stimulated by pride; his adherents, by the sound of his name, or by the appellation of the party, which is neither understood nor intelligible. A white rose, a red rose, a cockade; round-head or cavalier, whig or tory, federalist or democrat, or other insignificant appellation, becomes the rallying point for a headstrong populace, prepared for violence.

“In the effervescence of popular passions, the leader who has gained the confidence of a party must feed the hopes and gratify the expectations of his adherents. Applying to faction the military maxim of M. Porcius Cato, ‘*Bellum seipsum alit,*’ war feeds or sustains itself—a victorious leader supplies the wants and secures the attachment of his followers by dividing among them the spoils of the vanquished. Then commences the reign of persecution and revenge. The man



who mounts into office on popular confidence, may rise with impunity above the constitution of his country, and trample on the rights of the people. Under the specious titles of a *republican* and *friend of the people*, he may exercise the despotism of a Frederick. The men who flatter the people become their masters; and the party, which, while a minority, will lick the dust to gain the ascendancy, becomes in power, violent, vindictive, and tyrannical."

These opinions, when first published in 1802, may be considered as *predictions*. What are they now but *history*?

The slanderous charges against the leading federalists continued to be repeated, until a majority of the people of the United States were brought to believe them; then followed a change of the administration. From the time when the anti-federal party assumed the more popular appellation of *republican*, which was soon after the arrival of the French minister in 1793, that epithet became a powerful instrument in the process of making proselytes to the party. The influence of *names* on the mass of mankind, was never more distinctly exhibited, than in the increase of the democratic party in the United States. The popularity of the denomination of the *republican party*, was more than a match for the popularity of Washington's character and services, and contributed to overthrow his administration. The misrepresentations which effected this change, impressed falsehood upon the minds of a great portion of the citizens of the United States, and particularly of the western states. These falsehoods are often repeated and republished, to the prejudice of the soundest republicans, and firmest friends of our beloved country. So entirely perverted is public opinion, that the term *federalist*, the honored appellation of Washington, of the members of his cabinet, and of the whole party which framed the constitution, put it in operation, and saved the country from anarchy or civil war, or from both, is now used as a term of reproach.

The incessant attacks on General Washington and his adherents, for several years, succeeded at length in rendering that great and good man so unpopular, that it is doubtful whether, if he had been a candidate for election at the expiration of his second term of office, he would have received a majority of votes for president. But at the close of that term, he declined a re-election, and retired.

On the very day when General Washington became a private citizen, there appeared in the *Aurora*, the leading democratic paper in Philadelphia, the following article.

"'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' was the pious ejaculation of a man who beheld a flood of happiness rushing on mankind. If there ever was a time that would license its reiteration, the time has now arrived, for the man who is the source of misfortunes to our country, is this day reduced to a level with his fellow citizens, and is no longer possessed of power to multiply evils on the United States. If there was ever a period for rejoicing, this is the moment. Every heart in unison with the peace and happiness of the people, ought to beat high with exultation, that the name of Washington from this day ceases to give currency to political iniquity, and to legalize corruption; a new era that promises much to the people; for public measures must now stand on their own merits;

and nefarious projects can be no longer supported by a name. When a retrospect is taken of the Washington administration for eight years, it is a subject of the greatest astonishment, that a single individual could have cankered the principles of republicanism in an enlightened people, and should have carried his designs against public liberty so far as to put in jeopardy its very existence. Such however are the facts; and with them staring us in the face, this day ought to be a day of jubilee in the United States."—*Aurora*, March 4, 1797.

Who can read or hear this infamous libel on Washington and his administration, without indignation and amazement?

President Washington, in his last message to Congress, recommended the formation of a navy competent to defend our commerce and our sea-coast. Mr. Adams, his successor, countenanced the same proposition. But this project was strenuously opposed by the democratic party, more particularly by members of Congress from the southern states. A few frigates and other smaller vessels of force had been built, with a special reference to the protection of our seamen and our commerce against the Algerines; but an increase of naval force was violently opposed. One member of Congress said openly, that if our little navy was on fire, and he could extinguish the fire by spitting, he would not spit.

This opposition to a naval force was subdued by the brilliant victories of our frigates in the war of 1812. To the honor of the candid Monroe, it ought to be related that at the first session of Congress after those victories, he acknowledged his error in opposing the establishment of a navy, and avowed his purpose of supporting it. From that time the opposition to the establishment of a navy ceased. Certain it is, that if the commerce and sea-coast of the United States ever need defense from an enemy, the most economical and most effectual means of defense must be on the ocean.

Mr. Adams, in administering the government, pursued, with some exceptions, the general course of policy which President Washington had adopted. But during his administration, an attempt was made to check the flood of slander with which our government had been for many years assailed; and further, to counteract the influence of spies, who were supposed to swarm in the country. For these purposes, Congress passed two laws, called the alien and sedition laws. These acts raised a violent clamor; they were denounced as unconstitutional; and the ablest men in Virginia employed their pens in composing most pointed resolutions in opposition to these laws. So far do those resolutions proceed in arguing in favor of state rights, that their authority was cited in vindication of the efforts of South Carolina to resist certain measures of Congress; efforts which threatened a nullification of the confederacy.

With regard to the sedition law it may be remarked, that this act of Congress created no new offense. The publication of malicious falsehood, to the injury of government, was and is a crime at common law; and some of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States have pronounced this law of Congress to be constitutional. But though constitutional, it was probably not expedient; for a law of that kind can not, in this country, be enforced. When political parties of nearly



equal strength, are arrayed against each other, any law restricting the licentiousness of the press, will be denounced as unconstitutional. The publication of falsehood can not be restrained by law. The sedition law expired by its own limitation.

In regard to the alien law, it may be stated, that laws of a similar tenor have existed in all civilized countries. A state of enmity and war between nations has led the governments to employ spies or secret emissaries in an enemy's country, to detect schemes of hostile policy, or to seduce citizens of such country into their interest. At the time when Congress enacted the alien law, and for years previous, it was believed that emissaries of foreign nations were employed to gain our citizens to promote their views, and seduce them into a connection with some of the belligerent powers of Europe. Certain it is that party spirit, in this country, was greatly exasperated by agents of the French government in the United States.

During the heat of the French revolution, I superintended the publication of two newspapers in New York; of course I was carefully watched by the partisans of France, as these papers were established for the purpose of vindicating and supporting the policy of President Washington, which those partisans alledged to be unfriendly to the French interest. When conversing with gentlemen in the coffee-house, I sometimes turned round suddenly and found a Frenchman just behind me, standing with his ear as near me as convenient, listening to the conversation. ••

The alien law was justified by the general policy and usage of all nations, and by peculiar circumstances then existing in this country. With regard to alien enemies, such a law now exists in our statute book, and it was executed by President Madison, during the war of 1812, upon Mr. Stuart, the English consul residing in New London.\*

The division of the citizens of the United States into two political parties originated in principle or honest views; at least with a great portion of those citizens; but when formed these parties were converted into the instruments of personal ambition.

The principal cause of the parties now existing in this country, and one which will endure as long as the constitution, is the election of the chief magistrate. The power of the president to appoint most of the officers of government, and to remove them at pleasure, gives to him, and to the candidates for that office, almost unlimited influence, and means of corruption; and we are not to suppose that such means will be neglected. While these powers are vested in that magistrate, our country will never cease to be harassed with scrambling for offices, and violent political agitations. And if corruption is used, it is the corruption of the citizens on whom depends the election of the president; and the chief magistrate, elected by a party, will usually or always be the president of a party, rather than of the nation.

Parties, to some extent, will exist in all free governments; but in this country, the constitution, the fundamental form of government, is

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\* It may be noticed that the celebrated orator and patriot, Patrick Henry of Virginia, approved the alien and sedition laws, as good measures.—*Wirt's life of that gentleman*, p. 271, ed. 1841.

adapted to call them into existence, and perpetuate them. The powers of the president for appointing and removing officers, are sources of endless contentions in election; contentions which will produce every species of corruption, sometimes violence, and always instability of public measures. With these provisions in the constitution, such evils can no more be prevented by prohibitions and penalties, than the laws of gravity can be suspended by human power. In this assertion, I am warranted by the whole tenor of the divine oracles, in the description of the character of man; by the history of mankind from Adam to this day, every chapter of which verifies the Scriptures; and by the observations of every man who has lived half a century. The reason is obvious; government is restraint; but our constitution, instead of restraining the selfishness and ambition of men, those unconquerable passions which occasion the principal political disorders, presents the most powerful motives to excite them into action. The emoluments of office operate as bounties to excite and encourage factions.

These are some of the principal causes which rend our nation into irreconcilable parties, frustrating all efforts at union, and with the collision of interests growing out of the different circumstances of the states, defeat all attempts to establish a permanent system of laws and measures of general utility, which are demanded by all our national interests.

Thus it happens that some of the provisions of the constitution, intended to be the principal means of securing popular rights, on republican principles, become the instruments of interminable discord.

The limitation of the tenure of the presidential office to one term may mitigate the evils, but will not wholly remove the cause. Nor will changes of men have the desired effect. If the United States are ever to enjoy tranquillity, with general contentment of the citizens, and with a wise and stable system of public measures, while the president is elective, two things are indispensable: the first is, that the candidates for that office shall be deprived, utterly deprived of the power of intriguing for the office: the second is, the establishment of a senate on such principles as to secure their entire independence, that they may effectually check the proceedings of the other branch of the legislature. The independence of each branch of the government is the sheet anchor of constitutional liberty.

There are other causes of public evils in our nation which are more obstinate and formidable than an injudicious mode of electing a chief magistrate. There are, among all classes and all parties of our citizens, erroneous opinions respecting the principles of republican government, which are at variance with experience, and forbid us to expect, that while these prevail, we can ever have a wise, efficient, peaceful, and stable government. These errors are deeply rooted in this country; they will not yield to argument; they must be left to experiment, and can be corrected only by disappointment and suffering. In the mean time, the general character and operations of the government will be essentially the same as at present. Occasionally the correction of a mistake may produce a temporary alleviation of distress, a kind of lucid interval in national disorders, but no radical cure.



If the citizens of this country expect redress from arguments and appeals to the people; from incessant complaints of illegal proceedings in elections and legislation; from bitter criminations and recriminations of parties; from the influence of the press; from education in schools, and discussions on morality; or if they expect that the triumphs of either party, with splendid dinners, long speeches, and boisterous hurrahs over dinner tables, will unite discordant opinions and interests, restrain selfishness, ambition, and corruption, subdue the spirit of insubordination, the contempt of law and constitution now prevalent, and subject the mass of people to the influence of truth, by correcting their errors, and detaching them from their seducers,—they unquestionably indulge a most fatal illusion.

A discussion of the great causes of our political and commercial disorders, is not within my design. On one subject, however, I must take the liberty to make a few remarks.

The citizens of the United States profess to constitute a *Christian* nation; but they have attempted to establish a government solely by the help of *human reason*. Our constitution recognizes no Supreme Being, and expresses no dependence on Divine aid for support and success. In this respect, the framers of the constitution are rebuked, not only by the Scriptures, but by heathen sages. Says Cicero, "I never thought any religion to be despised. I have always considered the foundation of our state to be laid in religious institutions, and that without the favor of Heaven, the republic would never have arrived to its present flourishing condition."\*

But what say the sacred writers? "Take ye wise men and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you." "Thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness, and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God."†

Such are the directions of inspired truth; but in the selection of men to make and execute the laws, is any regard paid to these commands? Even if we had no divine precepts on the subject, every intelligent man might know that the characters here described are the only suitable persons to be intrusted with government.

Human reason is imperfect, subject to error and perversion from a thousand causes, proceeding from ignorance, from prejudice, from interest, from deception. To aid men in the proper use of this faculty, and in the exercise of the intellectual powers, the Creator has furnished them with laws and precepts of positive authority, and binding on the conscience. The observation of these laws is essential to the safety and happiness of human society in all relations, domestic, civil, and political. It is not possible to deviate from the divine precepts, either in the choice of rulers, or in the administration of laws, without exposing society to evils. In electing to office men wholly incompetent or vicious, our citizens depart from divine precepts, renounce divine author-

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\* De Nat. Deorum, lib. 3.

† Dent. i, 13; Ex. xviii, 21; 2 Sam. xxiii, 3.

ity, and become responsible for all the evil consequences of their reliance on their own reason. It is an eternal truth, that when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.

The institution of the Sabbath was designed by the Creator for most important purposes; and the proper observance of it would do more to preserve peace and order in society, than the prohibitions and penalties of law. But the desecration of this day is sanctioned by the government in the transportation of the mails. Thus we are at war with the principles of public tranquillity; at war with our duty; at war with our interest; at war with heaven.

It is certain that a government thus formed, and thus administered, can not be a good government; it is not possible. It is the irreversible decree of heaven, that in all governments founded by human wisdom, and conducted only by human reason, corruption and disorders must ultimately compel men to resort to physical force for the execution of law and the preservation of public peace. These facts and principles may be considered as unalterable, so long as the throne of the Almighty and his moral government remain unshaken.