

AN
ANSWER

TO

ALEXANDER HAMILTON'S

LETTER,

CONCERNING

THE PUBLIC CONDUCT AND CHARACTER

OF

JOHN ADAMS, Esq.

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

By A CITIZEN OF NEW-YORK.

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AN

ANSWER, &c.

SIR,

THE time in which we live, is distinguished by great and extraordinary events; it is an age of intrigue and dissimulation, of folly and jealousy, of revolutions and convulsions. All the passions of the human heart are in a ferment, and every rational being from the throne to the cottage is agitated by the picturesque circumstances of the day. Although removed upwards of three thousand miles from the sanguinary theatre of Europe, our public and private Councils are influenced, biaſſed and sometimes deranged by foreign intrigue, domestic ambition, and impassioned factions. The sword of the Revolution is scarcely returned to its scabbard, and the sacred wounds of our patriots are still open and bleeding. Yet plans are organized, at this early hour, to blast the prosperity, and undermine the liberties of our country. By pecuniary doctours, emigration and flatteries, the cause of monarchy has taken root in the hearts of the ignorant and the unwary. But there is an enlightened spirit in our country to resist its progress. 1776 is not yet forgotten, and silent millions are in readiness to sacrifice their lives on the altar of public liberty; they have sworn to support the Constitution of their choice, and to preserve it inviolable from the machi-

nations of ambition, and the sport of arbitrary power. We are not yet ripe enough for unconditional submission. Liberty is not yet despoiled of her charms, nor slavery deprived of its horrors, and the yeomanry are not yet prepared to render up homage, and feed on a scanty pittance in misery and in tears. Until you can corrupt the moral features of man, he regards his liberty as the inseparable companion of his life.

You have vainly endeavoured to repel the charge of monarchism which has a thousand times been reiterated from Newhampshire to Georgia. Although the Anglo-European feels himself at home in your society, experience affords a lesson of caution to the genuine American. The proceedings of the General Convention bear witness against you, establish beyond controversy, your attachment to arbitrary government, and the information of the Attorney General of Maryland, marks you out as the daring enemy of republicanism. In this ever memorable disgrace Morris took a part, under the disappointed expectation of basking and fattening in the sunshine of courtly favour. When all your schemes proved abortive: When you found it impossible to raise a Guelph to the throne, did you not assert that the Constitution would answer your purpose, as it opened a latitude for the encroachments of arbitrary power? Whilst Secretary of the Treasury, was it not your earnest endeavour to assimilate our government to that of Great-Britain? She offered you a system of Finance that has drawn tears from miserable millions, and you servilely adopted it. The evil consequences of this adoption, are not yet fully felt, although it has filled this infant republic with stock-jobbers, speculators, and peculators. Although it has robbed the hoary soldier of his labours, and left him to wander with his family and his wounds on an

unfeeling world, whilst the friends of Moloch and of George are seated in triumph, and environed with wealth. But this is not the only evidence that justifies the opinion of the President. Whoever has analyzed your character, and drawn aside the veil of dissimulation, must feel an irresistible conviction that nature has made ambition the principle lever of all your actions. What a painful mortification to be excluded from the Councils of your country! Cannot we here draw forth the motives that originated your illiberal attack on the character of the President, who had too much judgment and independence to submit to the leading strings of the ex-Secretary? Here was disappointed ambition; here was abundant reason to libel Mr. Adams, and injure the cause of his party; here is a clue to that mysterious character, whose power, if equal to his will, would bestride the world.

The first prominent charge against Mr Adams, is, his inability to administer the government; that he has an imagination "sublimated and eccentric" that his judgment is defective, and that he is incapable of a steady adherence to any systematic plan of conduct. How is this established? You have understood, but cannot vouch for its authenticity, that Mr. Adams was the friend and advocate of annual enlistments, and argued the propriety of changing the commander in chief every year. On evidence so slender, no man should be convicted, if, however, they really were his sentiments, they demonstrate a prudent jealousy so essentially necessary in revolutionary times; he saw in the history of other ages and nations, the destructive evils that had resulted from the unlimited and unconditional grant of power. A standing soldiery will become attached to their chief, and an ambitious chief, when a favourable opportunity occurs, will

strike at the vitals of his country, and riot on the grave of public happiness. The days of Cæsar with their tragical features are still fresh in our memories, they will plead to the latest ages, the folly and impolicy of a permanent military, and a permanent leader. It is further urged, that our country was deficient in characters qualified to command, and that Washington was alone capable of uniting the interests of the country, and combining together a naked, ill-fed, and undisciplined soldiery. This suggestion is palpably false, and unworthy of a serious refutation. I feel a veneration for Washington, and emotions of gratitude for his disinterested exertions which no tongue can adequately express. But at the time of his appointment to the chief command, his principles and military virtues were little known. A circumstance that justified the want of too implicit confidence on the part of Mr. Adams.

Your observations relative to a certain private journal of Mr. Adams, are surpassingly trivial and low, they demonstrate the imbecility of your cause, and point out the base malignity of your heart. The incident with madam Vergennes, on which you have commented as if it was a matter of moment, is not susceptible of the turn you have given it, without a gross and violent distortion of common sense. You, perhaps might have succeeded better on that occasion, if any thing more had been *necessary than a pecuniary gratification*.

The letter of Mr. Adams to Tench Coxe, which has given rise to so many illiberal comments, was evidently written in some jocular moment. The style is simple, unaffected, and seemingly as if not intended, announces some very important truths and well authenticated facts. The circumstance of the Pinckney's

having been school fellows of the Marquis of Carmarthen, is not of so very trifling and indifferent a nature. Prejudices formed at an early period of life seldom forsake us, they modify character, and give an unchangeable colouring to the moral attributes of man.

Is the suspicion of Mr. Adams respecting British influence without reasonable foundations? Has not Great-Britain from the earliest times, endeavoured to answer her purpose by intrigue and by money when incapable by the force of arms? Is it forgotten what was attempted on a member of Congress during the revolutionary war? Have not the Councils of France been distracted and continually annoyed by these base engines of national corruption? Have not the leading characters in administration uniformly evinced the warmest affection for the court of St. James, when the Ambassadors of France were rejected and despised? Have you not in common with your party occasionally forgotten that you was an American, and warmly panegyrised the government of Great Britain? In fine, have not the agents of that country been the inmates of your heart, and accessible to the secrets of our cabinet? Under circumstances so strong and impressive is there a loop left to hang a doubt on?

The close of this remarkable letter contains a prophecy that has long since been fulfilled. "The continual accession of foreigners will endanger and destroy our peace, if we know not how to govern them; they will moreover corrupt our elections, and tear us to pieces." Will any man who bears the smallest veneration for truth, deny this unhappy fact? The federalist and the monarchist, who meet in more points than they differ, have waged an inveterate warfare with the republican interest of this country; in the

city of New-York, in particular, many Englishmen, hot from the country of crimes and slavery, have endeavoured, with federal aid, to controul and corrupt our elections. Our laws of naturalization have admitted these vipers in our bosom, and nothing but republican energy has hitherto supported the endangered liberty of our country.

When you became a member of Congress, your acute penetration discovered symptoms of a party already formed, too well disposed to subject the interest of the United States to the management of France, which you resolved to resist. Was it not at once natural and reasonable, that we should feel the warmest emotions of gratitude towards a power that relieved us in the hour of danger, difficulty, and necessity? Would it not have been the basest injustice, to have forgotten in a moment, the liberal services that were rendered us at that eventful period? There is ground to presume that you have mistaken this honest enthusiasm, for an undue compliance to foreign power, and that this want of discernment originated the party of which you have so long been the puissant leader. If this has been the only cause of your persecutions, charge it to your ignorance, and hold yourself accountable for the mischiefs you have invited on your country, by fomenting divisions and distracting its councils. Wishing to derogate as much as possible from the merit of Mr. Adams, you hold up Mr. Jay as principal negociator in our first treaty with Great-Britain. No certain determination can be formed on this point, but every candid thinker will deny your position, if he reflects on Mr. Jays' last negociation with the same power; when an instrument was formed inexpressibly destructive to the commercial interest of this country, his friend endeavour-

ed to poultice its defects, but all the sophistry and ravings of Camillus were in vain. Daily experience developes its evils, and many of its warmest abettors are now its most inveterate enemies.

Much is said on Mr. Adam's complaint of unfair treatment, in not having been permitted to take an equal chance with Washington, by leaving the votes to an uninfluenced current. As this fact is not well authenticated, it will be discredited or confided in, according to your moral respectability ; in truth Mr. Adams has long been an honest and faithful servant of his country, and his strenuous exertions during the revolution, were, perhaps as essential to our independence, as the more brilliant achievements of General Washington*.

With how much grace and art have you endeavoured to draw a parallel between the character of Pinckney and Washington. It is a misfortune for your candidate that he is so little known in the world. Has he been an indifferent spectator of the interesting events of the times ? Has he willfully excluded himself from public affairs, when the difficulties of his country was in want of such ennobling qualifications ? Or is he notwithstanding your encomiums incapable of the duties of a statesman ? How many impositions have been practised in every age and country, through the impulse of folly, or the intrigue of ambition. If Heliogabillus could insult the Roman Senate by introducing a horse to its councils ; may not designing politicians have their views in advancing and promoting the election of an animal more particularly distinguish-

* Such is the opinion entertained by the friends of Mr. Adams, and not by the author of this pamphlet, and those who know how to estimate characters.

ed by the length of his ears, than the energy of his mind.

From the late public address of Tenck Coxe, what opinion is entertained of you by every honest and reflecting American? Has he not proved to the world that you are the zealous friend of monarchical government, and consequently a dangerous character under any republican system? Is it not to be presumed then, that the man you so strenuously advocate, has a heart that vibrates in unison with your own; that his principles are unfriendly to the general disposition of his country; and that on every favourable opportunity he would endeavour to fret away the great and essential principles of the federal constitution? But your sanguine expectations are defeated, and the genuine friend of his country, the meritorious Jefferson is destined to preside over a great and free people: The whole tenor of his life is capable of the most rigid scrutiny; uninfluenced by interest, by flattery, or by money; like Marcus Curius Dentatus, he can point to his turnips and spurn at the bribes of the *Samnites*. The most flattering encomiums are passed on Mr. Pinckney for having effected a favorable treaty with the court of Madrid. It is asserted that many thorny difficulties existed between the two countries, and that his successful negotiation was therefore deserving of the highest commendation. Every man who is acquainted with the circumstances of these times, who recollects the paralysed condition of Spain, will determine without hesitation, that some better test is necessary to establish the political consequence of Mr. Pinckney. It is well known, that the Spanish territories, on the Mississippi, was by themselves considered a very precarious tenure, and that if equal advantage had been withheld, a spirit beyond the mountains

would have justified its pretensions under the force of arms. How distinguished then is the merit of this deservedly unknown man! This great and striking likeness of the immortal Washington! It is not my intention to hold up Mr. Adams as an immaculate character, but candor requires that he should be rescued from disgusting calumnies, which envy, malice and disappointed ambition have heaped upon him. His theory of Government is congenial with your own and Mr. Pinckneys' sentiments; it breathes destruction to the freedom and happiness of man; it seeks the aggrandizement of a few, and the prostration and debasement of one moiety of society. When a theory is far advanced in the minds of men, the practice marches quick in the rear, circumspection and fear may retard its movements, but every favorable incident for experiment accelerates its progress; for many years after the revolution the American people were unsuspecting and happy, the smiles of peace were acceptable after the arduous toils of war. The sword was forgotten except in some innocent evening tale, and the most unlimited confidence was reposed in the leaders of the government, the wildest credulity could not have imagined at that early hour, that those who had shared in the hardships of the struggle, were meditating to blast the fruits of a glorious revolution. Under such circumstances, poisonous and infectious principles were disseminated, a conciliatory spirit towards Great-Britain was inculcated, and every practicable measure pursued to soften the resentment of the American people; to favour the plans of ambition, gratitude was discarded as a virtue, and an English inveteracy was organized against the government of France, under the disgraceful expectation, that in proportion as our dissatisfaction with the latter was

increased, our affection for the former would be invigorated ; to this end, the labours of Porcupine and Fenno were uniformly directed, characters who have met their merited doom, and who have been compelled to take a seat with the basest and the meanest of mankind. The next step was to trample on the spirit of the Constitution, and to pervert it to their sinister purposes by unwarrantable constructions, that gave energy to the Federal government at the expence of the individual states. Constructions that threatened the liberty of the people, and aimed at the consolidation of the country ; both in congress and the judiciary department these facts have been fully and strongly exemplified. Amidst all these prospects of Federal republican villany, our elections were invaded by bribes and by intrigue ; the honest patriot became an outcast, and the daring enemies of the country, monopolized the suffrages of a *degraded people*. Men who had shared the first and highest honours of their country, (not forgetting yourself) were peddling at the polls, with the most rancorous principles, and the most degrading falsehoods ; the crew of the ship Ocean was indiscriminately murdered to forward the success of the Federal candidates, and to lessen the respectability of the republican cause ; British agents, contractors and factors united in your plans, and enjoyed the pleasing dreams of monarchy, colonization and slavery. The points you had gained by such base and dishonorable means gave you a majority in congress, and saddled the country with alien and sedition laws, conceived in the spirit of a transatlantic pattern ; laws for which public necessity never called, but which served to shade and protect the follies and vices of administration ; laws that were intended to hold a certain description of foreigners in awe, and to restrain the liberty of the

press, the only certain guarantee of public freedom and national happiness. Take away this grand republican essential, and the elements of society are rooted out forever ; but all your projects have proved abortive, and those connected with you are sinking into irretrievable disgrace. Now is the time, agreeable to your favorite author (Machiæval) to bring the government back to its original principles. Now is the time to wash away its impurities, and to render it worthy of the American people.

Little was it expected that your party would have made an explosion so soon. Your seeming unity of action, intimated firmness, duration and design, and perhaps you might have calculated on unchangeable perpetuity, if envy, ambition, and the loaves and fishes had been out of the question ; but there is a truth with which every mind must be impressed, it is as palpable and glaring as an age of experience can render it, that vice cannot long be consistent, and that sooner or later it betrays itself and exposes its hedious deformities.

You frequently speak of the extreme egotism of Mr. Adams ; but may not the charge be reiterated. In truth, the leading points of your dissatisfaction with the President, will, on accurate self-examination be discovered to be your own contemptible domestics, which too often controul and bias you to the most dishonorable determinations. What reasonable ground had you to feel offended with the President ; was there none other than a refusal to consult you as to the propriety of sending our envoys to negotiate with France ? If you had formed a true estimate of your own character, if you could have looked into the public sentiment, you would hardly have undertaken a journey to Trenton, under the plausible pretence of counsel-

ling the secretary at war. The President was too well acquainted with your demerits and intrigues, to listen to your advice; he conjectured with a penetration worthy of a statesman, that something destructive was meditated in the dark and gloomy recesses of your mind. Did he distrust his ministers? it was because their passions had resolved against amicable arrangements with France, and because he chose rather to comply with the general wish of his country, than provoke an unjustifiable and destructive warfare with one of the greatest and most powerful nations of Europe. By taking umbrage at the conduct of the President, on this occasion, have you not betrayed an unpardonable egotism, a vanity without bound, and a criminal disposition towards the peace and prosperity of your country?

Who was it that manfully resisted foreign influence, and thereby invited so much ungenerous persecution in the subsequent stages of his political life? Against what great and important character, by whose will the destiny of nations should be regulated has the President directed his rancour and resentment? Who was there to find fault with the conduct of Mr. Adams on his neglecting to confirm Mr. Hamilton as commander in chief after the death of Gen. Washington? (Oh! this was a grievous fault! This was a painful stroke to the bosom of ambition!) Who has sacrificed the interest of his family to the prosperity of his country? Who has devoted the best part of his life to the service of society in counsel and in the field? Who has had the bold insincerity to declare, that in the cardinal points of public and private rectitude, above all, in pure and disinterested zeal for his country, that he will not shrink from a comparison with any arrogant pretender to superior and exclusive merit? Who con-

trouled the New-York elections, and represented himself the umpire and leader of the federal party, it was a gentleman by the name of EGO, so notorious in every page of your pamphlet. *Is there any thing more in this, than "a harmless foible."* In your ardent desire to be appointed commander in chief, some deductions may be made to prove the restless ambition that lurks in your bosom. Have you not been the strenuous advocate of an extensive military establishment? Did you not assert, and erroneously imagine, that the temper of the times was suited to commence the existence of a standing army? And was you not convinced from the relative situation of our country, that no solid advantage would ever be derived from it? What could have been your aim in the propagation of such sentiments, but personal aggrandizement at the painful expence of public liberty and social happiness? Remember, that at this enlightened period of society, political hypocrisy is liable to detection, and that the disgusting age of chivalry and vassalage is gone. Remember that you are an American citizen, and that every Cæsar has reason to tremble at the ides of March. Long degraded and insulted man has resumed his privileges, and vindicated his rights. An ennobling courage has succeeded to niggardly submission, and villanous oppression has vanished before the intrepid and irresistible march of mind. Imagine yourself in Turkey and your principles at home. But in America, neither an age or a century can render them acceptable and congenial with the feelings of a magnanimous people. With an ignorant community chains are tolerable, but in a country where science has beamed, what daring despot will measure the strength of a peasants arm. Corruption may venture indirectly to assail the integrity of man, but all its

efforts will be vain ; his house is built on a rock ; thunders may roll their tempests, he stands unhurt and defies their rage. The cause of humanity is hourly gaining ground ; encrimsoned Europe is recovering her rights, and the slumbering Ottoman begins to feel the nobility of his nature : How under such an attitude of human affairs could you have the weakness to imagine that your ambitious projects could be answered ? The uniform experience of mankind has measured the baneful consequences of a standing army. We all know, that as commander in chief of a strong military force, you would have gained an undue influence in society ; an influence to which neither your talents or your virtue entitle you ; an influence that might have made slaves of a few and fawning sycophants of many. But the sword and the mytre have lost their veneration, and the great majority of our country is invulnerable to corruption.

Your reflections on the official conduct of the President, respecting our negociations with France, are of a nature too extraordinary to escape notice. They confirm beyond the power of denial, the opinion I had long since formed of your political character. They demonstrate your inveterate and destructive hostility to the government of France. They point out your coincidence of mind with the British ministry, in interrupting the cause of republicanism, and provoking and encouraging a war of extermination ; a war that has been carried on by deception, corruption, and terror. What a happy opportunity unfolded itself for the expression of federal indignation, when General Pinckney was refused to be received by the government of France. The friend of Old England, the patronized refugee, and the apostate American, united in their relentment against the glorious struggles of a magna-

nimous people. Here was a lucky moment by unfounded accusations against France, to cover the hideous deformities of a British ministry. Here was a field opened to second the designs of an infamous faction in the very bosom of our country. Here was an unlimited grant for the impressment and butchery of our seamen ; for the plunder of our ships ; and the debasement of our national character.

If it should even be consented that France treated us ill by a refusal of Pinckney, will not every considerate politician reprobate the conduct of the federal party at that critical juncture ? Whilst their property was waiting under their feet, the most degrading delusion induced them to cultivate the puny friendship of the haughtiest and most insidious power in Europe. This was no disparagement of national honor—this was no wound to national independence. Habitual concession had worn away the delicate sensibility of American character. The refusal of Mr. Pinckney by France, has covered a multitude of British sins, and so deep is the attachment of monarchism rooted in the hearts of many a federalist and anglo-American : So complete their weakness and madness, that although cloathed in rags and reduced to beggary by spoliations on our commerce, the tune of “ God save the king,” is still an ingredient in their morning devotions. Why was it that France would not accept of Mr. Pinckney ? Was it because she was indisposed to terms of friendship to this country ? Or will you not rather say that the unfeeling tone of your party and of administration, opened some little ground for national resentment ? Our prints were loaded with the most unfounded calumnies ; and a struggle was reprobated the noblest in the annals of time, with which the liberty and happiness of unborn millions is essentially connected.

Your disaffection to their cause commenced, according to your own confession, in the year 1792, when British gold had not yet opened those scenes of horror and desolation, of cruelty and blood, that attended the latter stages of their revolution. Your animosity towards them unquestionably may be ascribed to the painful apprehension, that a spirit was diffusing itself terrible to thrones and the debasing establishments of the earth. This was the spirit you had resolved to resist : but the giant strides of liberty are not to be impeded by the effeminate efforts of a pigmy politician. Under circumstances like these, would not France have diminished her importance by the admission of Pinckney, a character whose animosity to republicanism can only be equalled by your own ? Morris had given them a lesson of caution, and they too well knew that his mind were composed of the same hostile and rancorous materials.

Mr. Pinckney having been rejected by the French government from the strongest political reasons, a commission of three was determined on as the only certain road to an amicable adjustment of differences. The republicans cherished and supported the plan as essentially connected with the substantial interest of the country. But many federalists; notwithstanding what you have advanced, loudly exclaimed against the measure, called for war, and encouraged a more intimate connection with perfidious Britain. You are not excluded from this number : your tongue and your pen were both employed to favor its success. Cannot this fact be illustrated by a circumstance which among other considerations renders you unworthy of executive confidence ? Did you not open your budget to the Bishop of Autun ? Was you not duped, deluded, and outwitted by an emigrant priest ? When

he had fully possessed himself of the state of the country ; when he had learnt that Great-Britain was an object of more affectionate regard than France ; was it not to be expected that the prime-minister of France would feel a degree of coolness towards our envoys ? But it was a coolness marked with discrimination that protected and honored the character of Mr. Gerry. With what affected pride is the name of Pinckney spoken of as an efficient member of this commission ; when, if his conduct on that occasion is duly estimated, he deserves to be neglected and forgotten. This was a glorious opportunity to invigorate the cause of federalism, and strengthen the nerves of the British faction. " Tribute was demanded as a preliminary to negociation." But remember that federalism provoked the demand, and that a serious dereliction of republican virtues was truly deserving of such treatment.

The capricious conduct of the President in forming the last mission is certainly very reprehensible ; altho' in the event he acted like a prudent and dispassionate politician, yet many circumstances connected with the embassy, place him in the most disagreeable and unfavourable light. Suspended in the air, by conflicting sentiments and discordant persuasions, there was a doubtful tendency to heaven or to earth, to negociation or to resistance. Atè hot from hell, had counselled with Federalism, and unkenned the dogs of war ; but the loud voice of the public called for peace, amidst the interested remonstrances of peculating commissaries and an indolent and useless soldiery. No dangers threatened us at home or from abroad, and the wisdom of Congress disbanded a military establishment that annoyed the tranquillity of society, and that inevitably tended to the degradation of public morals.

The citizen and the soldier had already dissolved their connection, and the meanest vices were patronized by the pretended friends of liberty.

Is it not a matter of serious regret, that the last pacific effort of the President has been crowned with success? Is it not an unhappy circumstance, that a friendly intercourse should be established with a nation, *whom no treaty, no convention can bind*? Is it not an awful consideration, that a republic should be countenanced, which has shaken the thrones of kings, and waged a successful war against the tyrants and destroyers of mankind? Is it not criminal in the highest degree, to cultivate the friendship of a people, who have loosened the bonds of moral intercourse, and despoiled the venerable altars of the unknown God? Would it not have been more prudent in the Executive, to have suspended negotiation until the re-establishment of the house of Bourbon, and the extinction of republican manism and popular licentiousness?

Every genuine friend to this country feels his security enlarged by the establishment of republicanism in France. If their revolutionary struggle had been unsuccessful, monarchy would, perhaps, have assumed a tone inauspicious to the future liberty of our country, for the vicious aristocracy of Europe has many kindred spirits amongst us. The innocent and virtuous shades of liberty would soon have been invaded by the tyranny of power, and republicanism a unit amidst the empires of the world, might have fallen a victim to irritated despotism. Another republic is an acquisition of the highest moment to the friends of humanity. It is planted on a soil that will nourish its growth. The strokes of tyranny cannot injure it; for eternity has measured its duration. The plains of Europe are whitened with the bones of innocent and

guilty millions : the fatherless and the motherless are bewailing their loss in this sanguinary war ; but yet the purchase is cheap. Providence has authorised it, and ages of liberty and happiness are destined to succeed to centuries of misery, depression, and servitude.

The French republic always felt the warmest affection for the American people. Even amidst the turbulent scenes of their revolution, the rights of neutrality would never have been violated, if necessity had not compelled them—if the toryism of the country had not insulted them—and if our political organs had not spoken a language unfriendly to their prosperity. The breach, however, is closed, and an honorable treaty has been negociated, contrary to the advice of Mr. Hamilton—contrary to the wishes of non-consulted ministers—and, contrary to the sentiments of a contemptible anglo-American faction. Debilitated Britain mourns the event ; and her transatlantic agents are prostrate in the dust.

If Mr. Adams had descended to consult his ministers, what must have been our situation ? If *your* intrusive advice had been received, what would have been the condition of your country ? Embroiled in an unprofitable war, commerce would have been at a stand, and the cause of liberty on the decline. A standing soldiery would have gluttonized on the substance of society, and insidious vice would have waylaid every ennobling feeling of the breast. These would have been days of clover to a federal army, but days of tribulation and sorrow to the virtuous philanthropist.

“ Another revolution, another constitution overthrown,” was a cogent reason against opening a negotiation. Unsettled in their affairs and capricious in their measures, it was impossible to calculate on a

permanent compliance with any convention whatsoever. This is expressly the language of the British ministry, and the superficial pretence that supports the war in Europe. Furnish me an instance in which the revolutionary government of France has departed from any solemn stipulation with her neighbours; has she violated the laws of nations in that gross and dishonorably way that distinguishes the cabinet of St. James; has she made power the measure of her justice, and the umpire of her differences? Has she respected the rights of humanity, or offered an insult without the strongest provocations? No, ever magnanimous, the fair and immutable principles of justice, have been the faithful guardians of her conduct. But it was a degrading mission, the honor and interest of the country was at stake. How delicate is your sensibility when the Frenchman pricks with a pin, but how callous is your bosom when the Englishman stabs at the vitals of your country. In the one case resentment boils and vents in calumny; in the other a savage joy unfeelingly riots on the public misfortune.

In your mind the interested inducements to accept a place in our administration are few and feeble, and therefore the consoling honour of Presidential respect, ought to have been bestowed on the ministry at Trenton, as an additional compensation for their political toils. Five thousand dollars is a niggardly salary that must inevitably “involve pecuniary sacrifice to every *honest** man of pre-eminent talents.” Recollect that we live in a republican country, and that a national economy is necessary to its existence, that we contracted an immense debt, for which our honour and resources are pledged, and that the funding system has not yet

* The word “honest” stands in italics to render it conspicuous; a circumstance that leads me to think you have not forgotten yourself.

convinced the American people that a national debt is a national blessing. England may squander millions on ministers, whilst her streets are crowded with beggars ; a proud and licentious nobility may waste at entertainments, the hard earned fruits of a tax-ridden peasantry.

A spectacle of this kind may gladden the heart of a villain, but who that feels as a man, can suppress the resentment of his heart ?

Independent of pecuniary considerations, public ingratitude is a serious ground of complaint. Your own experience has shewn how illy the patriot may be requited for the most important services. Instead of enjoying the affectionate homage of your countrymen, your conduct has been reviled. “ A large harvest of obliquy has been your share, and calumnies more dangerous than a two-edged sword have been vomited forth against a fair and unblemished reputation. A reputation which I have the unblushing confidence to assert, will not yield in merit to any arrogant pretender whatsoever. The *respectable* Pickering, and the *deserving* M’Henry, have unfortunately fallen victims to similar evils. After a long and painful struggle to benefit their country, and to beguile a whisper from the trumpet of fame, the President has dismissed them as undeserving of his confidence : and an ungrateful people has loaded them in exile with reproaches of the blackest dye. The wheel of fortune may recall you with the Pickerings and the M’Henrys, the Daytons, and the Morris’s into consideration again. But until that uncertain hour arrives, console yourselves, if you can, with

Mens conscia recti mendacia famæ spurnat.

You have adduced a number of superficial arguments to prove, that the million ought to have been

suspended agreeable to the wishes of our ministers, and have endeavoured to mark out a line of action that would have been truly degrading to the American character. The unsettled situation of French affairs, and the uncertain prospect of a general peace, were the two great hinges on which your objections turned. But has not the deep-sighted politician been deceived, and has not a peace been accelerated by the firm determination of the President? If your miserable artifice had been practised by furnishing ministers abroad with secret instructions, the sincerity of our government would have been questioned by other nations, and a jealous vigilance would have retarded the most desirable arrangement; France on a discovery would have kept us at a distance; and an expensive military establishment would have accumulated the burthens of an already dissatisfied people. Is it not wonderful, passing wonderful! that you should feel yourself injured by the disrespect of the President, when your conduct has afforded so many circumstances that tend to the diminution of his confidence? What a mortification to vanity and ambition, to obliterate an unmerited compliment from an official report! Surely the President cannot be reproached for his conduct on this occasion; but M^r Henry only, the distinguished particeps in your foibles and your follies. If his discernment had not been blind to the impressions of truth, how could he consistently have eulogized you in company with Washington, whose name has an alliance with virtue, whilst yours seeks shelter under a diametrically opposite principle? Was it ill-treatment, then, in the President to dismiss a man who possessed too many demerits for his station, and who abused language by lavishing praises, where censure should have held her dominion? A continuance of such a charac-

ter in office, would have been highly criminal in the Executive, and in the highest degree insulting to the public understanding. The intemperate conduct of Pickering throughout the whole of his administration, has left no ground for public respect. His political death can only be lamented by that cordial British faction, of whose existence Mr. Adams had but too many assurances. Let the two unfortunate outcasts console themselves with the consideration, that it is not unpleasant to die in company.*

The conduct of the President in the pardoning of Fries and others, is truly meritorious. Notwithstanding the censure that his enemies have measured against him, he exercised a prerogative of mercy, and restored a number of unfortunate victims to their families, their friends, and the world. Public indignation would have been aroused by their execution, and consequences of an alarming nature would have ensued, in which even government itself would have received a wound. The genius of a republic is mildness ; the wheel, the gibbet, and the guillotine, may answer an advantage under the reign of terror ; but with freemen they are objects of horror and detestation. They suit the calamitous reign of a Caligula, and not the enlightened period in which you demand their exercise. Recollect, Sir, that this manly resistance to these laws, originated in a persuasion that they operated unequally, and plundered the public indirectly ; that excisemen and public officers consumed the greatest portion of a tax that was collected by threats, by insults, and oppression : a tax that exposed the circumstances of men by daily visitations and nocturnal searches : a tax that has emanated from the criminal sentiment, that there is a swinish multitude who must be governed by de-

* Louis the 14th when in extremity, and surrounded by his friends, declared that it was pleasant to die in company.

ception ; and who would raise up their hands against direct application. The public mind, at the time of resistance to the tax, was extremely agitated : it was penetrated with a sense of its injustice and the extent of its oppression. The military that was raised on that occasion, was in a tenfold adequate to suppress the insurrection. On their approach to East-Town disaffection was gone, and only a few scattered individuals could be seized as the violaters of the laws.* The return of the military was attended with circumstances of disgrace, that will only be recorded in the pages of infamy and crimes. Every place they halted at, some act of madness, licentiousness, or folly, was perpetrated to the lasting dishonor of the citizen soldier.

Did the pardon of Mr. Adams under the considerations that have been mentioned, seem like a concession to his political enemies? Can that be deemed a temporising spirit which is regulated by justice and tempered by an amiable clemency? Could he loose any respect as executive magistrate, with discerning friends, or the warmest enemies, by one of the most agreeable features of his administration? That he was at variance with himself as well as with sound policy, is perhaps no more than the vagrant sentiment of a sanguinary bosom, and a disappointed enemy. Cruel measures are oftentimes ruinous, and a government is never better established, than when supported by the enlightened will of a country. Barbarity awakens enemies, mercy inspires friendship and ameliorates the heart. That insurrection has been organized down to the very liberties of Philadelphia, is the suggestion

* It is generally understood that an old woman was the principal cause of the insurrection, that she had scalded an exciseman by accident, which was represented as having been done through intention ; the horn of state was immediately blown, and the strong arm of government seized on her husband.

of guilty apprehension, or the extravagant sentiment of a disordered imagination. That Mifflin could have advanced such an opinion, will not, cannot be credited; but the dead can be quoted to justify a falsehood, whilst the living to answer certain purposes, may injure their memory.

According to your own confession you have causes of personal dissatisfaction with Mr. Adams, which perhaps would have sunk into oblivion, if he had confirmed you as commander in chief. But were there not characters of older merit in the country, more deserving of the situation than yourself, or have they all fallen under the destroying hand of time? What has been your consequence in the field, to justify such arrogant pretensions? Is your body distinguished by honorable wounds? Is your experience adequate to a station that calls for extraordinary talents and disciplined valour? You are either a soldier by experience or by instinct; but point out the field where you reaped a laurel or merited an ovation. Have you dreamt that you possessed the martial qualities of a Frederick and a Marlborough, a Turenne and a marshal Saxe? let the hour of vigilance inform you, that your imagination must have been intoxicated by the most delirious vanity.

Having already pointed out some extraordinary defects in your political creed, it is time to make a nearer approach, and investigate those cardinal points of private rectitude, which your boldness has opened to the severest investigation. It would seem from the firmness of your assertion, that you either have forgotten the occurrences of late years, or that the most flagrant violations of morality are not regarded as criminal. If old age had worn away the retentive faculties of your mind, we might be reduced to believe that some of the most *transporting* and *luxuriant* occurren-

ces of your life were cancelled from your memory. But as such an opinion is not warranted you are destined to appear a hardened offender against the rules of propriety, and those delicate ties that embrace our happiness, and give a zest to existence ; altho' an inveterate enemy to France, have you not proven by your female intrigues, that a spirit of gallantry is one of the strongest characteristics of your heart ; fortunately for yourself you breathe a northern latitude ; in some warmer climate, where the passions are more inflamed, your sensual desires would have levelled you with the beasts of the field ; even the frosts of America are incapable of cooling your blood, and the eternal snows of Nova Zembla would hardly reduce you to the standard of common propriety.

What might have been the fate of Reynolds, if you had been commander in chief, and the country in a state of war, when the fair Maria engrossed your affection ? Would you not have followed the footsteps of David, and placed this modern Uriah in the front of battle ? Is it not probable that your moral elements have derived their character from a perusal of the lives of Abraham and of Lott, of David and of Solomon, who lived in times when polygamy was countenanced, and when that amiable and valuable sex was less venerated and respected, than in modern days. But the customs of the ancients shall plead you no excuse ; the loud voice of Nature rises up against you ; she reproaches in the most solemn and impressive language, a monopoly that lowers and debases the human species, and that breathes discord and misery, notwithstanding a profusion of every earthly blessing. Well might you complain of your poverty, when you resigned the office of secretary of the treasury : that enchanting calypso, under the extravagance of your attachment had fingered your purse ; she saw into

your weakness, and knew how to govern you by the strictest attentions and the most beguiling flatteries. Oh! these were sweet and elysian days, this was a time that awakened all the soft and tender fibres of the heart: the shortened hours danced away amidst the affecting smiles of Love and Joy, the little cupids played around, and Sorrow and Melancholy deserted the interesting mansion of those congenial souls; it was a picture of bliss and rapture, to which every scene hitherto witnessed was absolute mockery. It was a scene on which the voluptuous Antoniette would have dwelt with the most cordial satisfaction; it was a scene of extacy, the like of which no tongue can tell, and which no eye before had witnessed. But, alas! pleasures so intense are of ephemeron duration; a nipping frost unexpectedly came, and this once happy pair were separated for ever. The public began to smell the rat, and see, after a long delusion, that the favorite sinking fund was playing a loosing game. Now public character was at stake, and precious confessions became necessary to silence the resentment of the people. The Cyprian Goddess remonstrated in vain, the unfortunate Maria, was doomed to an exposure of all others, the most poignant and afflicting to female sensibility.

From even this slender survey of your private morality, was it not the most arrogant presumption to challenge an investigation. *What becomes of your cardinal points, if mankind are permitted to speak the truth?* The human mind is a unit, and it may be asserted with firmness and with truth, that he who entertains no respect for the relations of private life, cannot be trusted with safety in a public capacity, if the virtue to resist temptation in the one case is not sufficiently masculine, there is every reason to suspect it will betray its effeminacy in the other.

After treating you with all the delicacy that was due to your character and performance; after proving by a summary of the strongest testimony, your attachment to monarchy; after developing the vain and ambitious spirit that impels your actions; after enumerating the circumstances that occasioned your explosion; and, after pointing out the immoral features of your private life, I proceed to discuss the merit of the candidates for the presidency.

Having no personal dissatisfaction with Mr. Adams, I shall treat his character with deference and with candour. It has long been a received opinion, that he is friendly to monarchism and hereditary establishments, for the proof and confirmation of which we must appeal to his writings and confidential conversations. The spirit of his defence of the constitutions, certainly breathes a tone of mind illy suited to the genius of a republican government; although he has not favored us with an open avowal, yet the indirect intimations of his disposition leave no room for the smallest doubt. In addition to this, let any ingenuous mind weigh the developement of Tench Coxe, and I defy him to pronounce favorably on the political creed of the President. Whether monarchy found him a friend in early life, or whether his soul became tainted by his European visits, I will not venture to determine, but there is ground to suspect that the splendor and magnificence of royalty, have had some influence on a mind not too well confirmed in a knowledge of the rights of mankind.

Mr. Adams has very slender pretensions to consistency of character; his first speech to both houses of Congress, is of a truly equivocal nature. Popularity was evidently his aim, he wished to monopolize as far as he was capable, the friendly disposition of the public. At that particular juncture, it was of service to

his country, as it lessened the bitterness of party, and the venom of faction, as it opened a field of accommodation with a nation which deserved more of us than intemperate federalism had been willing to grant. His firmness on some occasions is truly respectable and particularly manifested in the dismissal of Pickering and M'Henry, and in his refusal to consult a disappointed intruder. At other times again his conduct is marked with weakness, improper compliance, and unnecessary concessions. His understanding may have sustained some injury by the assaults of time, but it never could have been very masculine or brilliant. His writings bear testimony against his intellect, they are often confused and unmeaning, and tainted with the most painful vanity ; *so much for the Duke of Braintree.*

The next in order is Mr. Pinckney of whom little can be said, as he is little known on the theatre of active public life. You have called him before the public, and loaded him with the most extravagant praise. If your sincerity could not be doubted, he would pass for one of the brightest luminaries of our country. His wisdom, his firmness and his calm deliberation would certainly entitle him to the suffrages of the people ; but the public understanding cannot be so glaringly imposed on. Some proof of his worth is necessary, before he can have a reasonable ground to expect the highest magistracy of the country. If contrary to all expectation, he should be raised to that eminence, what have not the friends of republicanism to apprehend ? The reins of government would be held by a private individual in disgrace, and the honorable office of President would be filled by an automaton. Principles would be inculcated and disseminated inauspicious to Liberty. The Constitution would receive a wound, and energy would be heaped

on energy to crush the spirit of the people, and to indemnify ambition in its daring invasions.

I now come to a character, which misrepresentation cannot stain, and which the breath of calumny has vainly endeavoured to injure. It is the worthy and venerable Jefferson, who has walked with dignity in every public and private calling, and whom every honest man in Europe and America will love and esteem; the man whose mind is illumed with science, and whose heart is replete with good; the man who has stood firm and unshaken amidst the venality of courts, and the temptations of power; the man who edited the Declaration of Independence, and who under every sacrifice grappled his heart to the freedom of his country. Amidst all the little revolutions and commotions that have occurred under our government, has not the conduct of Jefferson been distinguished by the most exemplary wisdom and virtue? the love he bore his country out-weighed every private consideration;—his magnanimous soul would not stoop to the degrading measures of his cotemporaries in office. An enemy to sycophants, and deaf to flatteries, he merits the confidence of the American. Deep in research, and cool in deliberation, a precipitate sacrifice of the public prosperity can never be apprehended. Washington loved him and knew his worth; he felt a security in his advice, that gave a firmness and dignity to the whole of his administration. If it is of importance to a country that the national character should be respected, let us choose a man at the head of public affairs; whose virtue and whose knowledge is universally esteemed, and who by his unfulled course of life, and his patriotic firmness, has proved that no party considerations can draw him from the duties of his station and the interest of his country; could it have been imagined that so many ministers of the gospel would have risen up against him, and that the sanctity of the pulpit would have been violated by the tongue of slander, and the bitterest anathemas? could it have been imagined that the duties of religion would have been neglected; that the altar of God would have been deserted, for the propagation of the basest and meanest calumnies? But there are other motives that have given rise to the disgusting clamor of these fanatic priests: it is not the good of their country, and the cause of morals, that has induced them to desert the duties of their station; they are looking forward to those *happy days*, when a meritricious union shall be formed between church and state; when public councils shall be controuled by a clerical nod, and when the exactions of the titheman shall grind the face of the poor.