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BIOGRAPHY

OF THE SIGNERS TO THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

J. Sanderson & R. Waln, Jr.

VOL. VIII.

Eastern District of Pennsylvania, to wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the twentieth day of February, in the fifty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1827, R. W. Pomeroy, of the said District, hath deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

"Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence.—Vol, VIII."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned." And also to the act, entitled, "An act supplementary to an act, entitled, 'An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,' and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

D. CALDWELL,
Clerk of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

CONTENTS.

	Page
Gerry,	7
Rodney,	81
Harrison,	127
Paca,	175
Ross,	187
John Adams,	203

ELBRIDGE GERRY.

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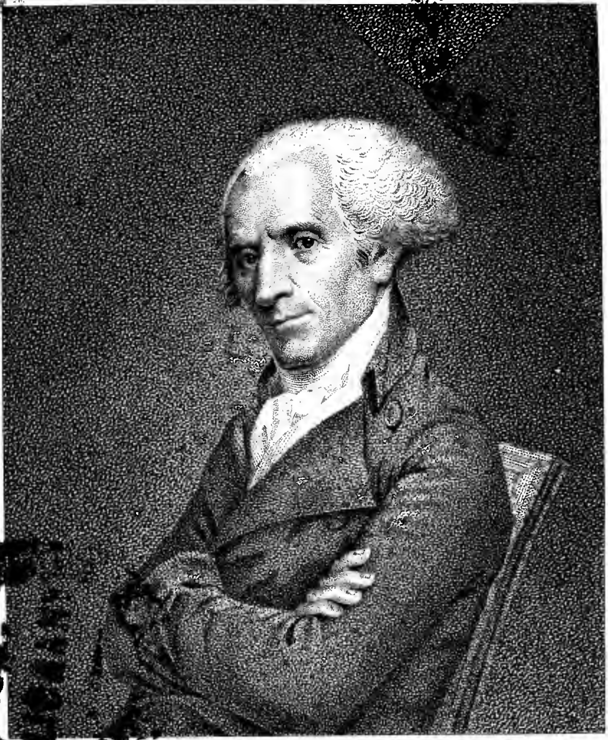

ELBRIDGE GERRY.

Engraved by J.B. Longacre from a drawing by Vanderlyn.

ELBRIDGE GERRY.

Elbridge Gerry was born in the small town of Marblehead, in the province of Massachusetts Bay, in the month of July, 1744. Of his family and early history, we have been able to obtain but few particulars, and indeed in recording the history of his life, important and interesting as it is, we have greatly to regret the difficulty of obtaining materials, beyond the common and temporary records which are open to the public inspection.

The father of Mr. Gerry is said to have been a respectable merchant of Marblehead, and to have acquired a considerable fortune by his commercial pursuits. His son was placed at Harvard University, where he passed through the usual collegiate studies with much literary reputation and success; he there received the degree of bachelor of arts in the year 1762. After leaving college, he turned his attention to that line of life in which his father's prosperity seemed to hold out the greatest inducements to a young and enterprising mind; and he plunged at once into the most active pursuits of commerce. His fairness, correctness and assiduity, and the extensive knowledge of commercial concerns which he acquired from his father's experience and his own exertions, were crowned with good fortune, and while yet young in business and in years, he had acquired a considerable estate and a very high standing at Marblehead.

These circumstances of course soon pointed him out for public office, and indeed his own inclinations seemed to have been turned at an early period to the political concerns of the province, which were daily becoming more and more serious and important. On the twenty-sixth of May, 1773, he took his seat in the general court of Massachusetts Bay, as the representative of his native town, and he became from that moment one of the most zealous political leaders of our country. The time, indeed, was one of the most extreme interest; and the period had arrived in the controversy between Great Britain and her colonies, when the province was called on to take a leading part which demanded unusual firmness and effort. It had become necessary to oppose more decidedly and resolutely the arbitrary measures of the British ministry; or to yield, in utter hopelessness and despair, to such laws as the parent government, in the wanton exercise of power, might impose. The crisis was momentous; and the patriots of Massachusetts were not insensible of the difficulties and dangers which they had to encounter, in defence of civil liberty. They had to contend with a mighty nation—with its artful agents among themselves, and with the fears and prejudices of some of their fellow citizens. There was, indeed, a very general dissatisfaction and complaint, as to the oppressive measures of the British administration: but many had a hope of more favourable terms; and some were so fearful of the consequences, that they preferred submitting to the pleasure of the king and parliament. A resort to arms in opposing the authority of Great Britain, was not contemplated as an immediate, nor, necessarily, as an ultimate measure. But some more full and explicit expression of the sentiments of the people against the severe policy and arbitrary principles of ministry, was considered absolutely requisite at this time, to prevent greater acts of oppression, and to preserve from utter annihilation, the rights and privileges of freemen. With this view, in the preceding year, a very large committee had been chosen by the town of Boston, to state the rights of the colonies and to correspond with the other towns of the province on the grievances which they all in common endured. As soon as the general court met, early in the year 1773, they followed up the energetic course which had been thus adopted, and entered at once into a long and able controversy with the governor on the subject of their violated rights. They passed strong resolutions, declaring the assumption of power by the British parliament to be in direct violation of their charter and the constitution of the country; and they adopted the system which afterwards proved of incalculable benefit, of corresponding with the other colonies on the subject of their mutual grievances.

On the twenty-eighth of May, two days after Mr. Gerry had taken his seat in the house, Mr. Adams brought forward his celebrated resolutions to appoint a standing committee of correspondence and inquiry, whose business it should be to obtain the most early and authentic intelligence, of all such acts and resolutions of the British parliament, or proceedings of administrations as may relate to, or affect the British colonies in America; and to keep up and maintain, a correspondence and communication with our sister colonies, respecting these important considerations; and the result of such their proceedings, from time to time, to lay before the house.

Of this committee, Mr. Gerry was chosen a member, a proof of the high standing and character, he had attained even before he entered the legislature. In all the proceedings of the committee he took an active and prominent part, and as his capacious mind gradually unfolded its powers, his assiduity and attention to business, rendered him a most useful member of the legislature.

In the month of June, we find Mr. Gerry warmly supporting Mr. Adams, in the measures he brought forward and pursued towards governor Hutchinson, on receiving from Dr. Franklin the celebrated letters written to England with the evident intention of increasing the bitter feelings which there existed against the province. He also zealously united himself with that bold and distinguished patriot in most of those resolute measures, which he introduced about this period, and which resulted in the overthrow of the royal government of the province. To trace these various subjects would be to write the history of Massachusetts rather than the life of Mr. Gerry, for although he was a principal mover in them, it was in union with other patriots and with the general cooperation of the whole body of the people. Through the eventful scenes which marked the year 1774, the impeachment of the judges, the opposition to the importation of tea and to the Boston port bill, the establishment of the system of non-intercourse, and the arrangement of a close correspondence with the other colonies, he was active among the foremost. He also took a decided part in promoting the meetings which were held in all the large counties of the province, composed of committees from every town to express their sentiments on the alarming state of the country, and to consult for the liberties and welfare of the people.

In the month of August, general Gage, who had succeeded governor Hutchinson in the administration of the province had issued precepts for the choice of representatives to meet at Salem, the first week in October. But, afterwards, in consequence of the county conventions, which proposed a provincial congress, and advised that they should not acknowledge or act with "Mandamus" counsellors, he declared by proclamation, that they were excused from assembling. On the recommendation of these county meetings, however, delegates were chosen from all the towns; and assembled at Salem on the seventh of October. Neither the Governor nor the council appeared to administer the usual oaths: and had they attended with that view, the delegates, no doubt, would have declined taking them. They formed themselves into a provincial congress; and immediately adjourned to Concord, where they met three days after, and proceeded to public business. Immediately upon their organization here, they appointed a committee of several leading delegates to consider the state of the province, and of this Mr. Gerry was a leading and conspicuous member. They prepared directly an address to the governor which was approved by the congress, in which after an apology for having thus assembled, and observing that the distressed situation of the province, owing to the many grievances and oppressions under which the people groaned, had brought them together to prevent impending ruin, and provide for the public safety; they remonstrated against his hostile measures, which threatened to involve the province in the horrors of civil war. They declared their attachment to Britain, their loyalty to the king, and their love of order and tranquillity: but added, "that when the power of government, which was originally designed for the security and welfare of the people, was employed to harass and enslave them, it became a curse, rather than a blessing." They complained of the late act of parliament, by which their charter was directly violated, their rights abridged, justice perverted, and even murders were licensed; and which, if carried into execution, would reduce them to abject slavery; of the large military force in the capital, and of the fortifications erected at its entrance, as most oppressive and insulting, not only to the inhabitants of Boston, but to all the people of the province. They urged him to discontinue these offensive preparations; and declared that the citizens would not be satisfied until these hostile works were wholly demolished. Congress then adjourned to Cambridge, where they met the following week.

This assembly was composed of patriotic and resolute men, prepared for any measure which should be deemed wise or proper for the restoration or defence of their violated rights. They continued to meet by adjournments from time to time during the month, and to consult and adopt measures for the defence and safety of the province. They declared the counsellors appointed by the king and ministry unconstitutional; they recommended the people to refrain as much as possible from purchasing imported articles and goods of every description; the constables and collectors of taxes were ordered, not to pay any sums to the treasurer of the province, who had then become less opposed to the policy of ministers, and would be likely to pay over the same to the officers of the crown; but to retain it, and to pay it afterwards, as the congress might direct. An estimate was made of the sum necessary to be expended in providing ordnance and military stores, in addition to the quantity then belonging to the province, and the estimated amount was twenty thousand pounds.

They solemnly declared, that, in their opinion, nothing, except slavery, was more to be deprecated than hostilities with Great Britain; and that they had no design to attack or annoy his majesty's troops within the province. But being satisfied, that in their situation, measures of defence and safety were absolutely necessary, they proceeded to choose an executive committee, with authority to call out, assemble and put in military array any portion of the militia of the province, for the protection of the citizens; and earnestly recommended to the militia officers, as they regarded the lives and liberties of their fellow citizens, to be prompt in obedience to such requisitions.

On the first of February following, a second provincial congress met at Cambridge, to which Mr. Gerry was also a delegate. This body, as did the former, made a public appeal to the patriotism of the people. They acknowledged that the crisis was alarming; but they entreated them not to despond, nor to relax in their preparations for defence. Great firmness and resolution, they said, were necessary; and all the exertions to be made, of which the resources of the country afforded the means and the power. They expressed their abhorrence of actual hostilities; but declared their conviction, that they were bound to defend their civil rights, both as men and as christians. They referred to the claims of parliament for taxing the people in America without their consent, and without any representatives in the British legislature; and to the late acts for altering the charter of Massachusetts, and introducing arbitrary measures and a military power, which tended directly to the entire misery and slavery of the people. And they expressed a firm belief, that all America would support them in their struggles for liberty.

Much of the business of the congress, and indeed of all the legislative bodies in those days, was prepared and arranged by committees. Of these Mr. Gerry was a principal member, and we find him constantly associated in them, with the most distinguished citizens of the province. The two great committees were those of safety and supplies; and in both of them he was very active. In the spring of 1775, indeed, this activity became absolutely necessary. There was a strong apprehension that troops would be sent to places where military stores were deposited, to remove them to the capital. The committee of safety, therefore, selected several persons to give notice of any movements of the British from Boston into the country; and placed a watch at Concord and at Worcester, where provisions and military articles were chiefly collected, for the purpose of giving an alarm to the surrounding country, on the report of any such expedition. Some of the cannon were ordered from Concord to Groton, and some were removed from Worcester to Leicester. The committee for supplies, chosen some time before, was also engaged in procuring powder, fire-arms, bayonets and flints, as well as various articles of provisions, to be in readiness for a large body of the militia, should it be necessary to call them out for the defence of the province. Scarcely had these measures been adopted when the bloody scenes of Lexington and Concord occurred, and the war which had been so long dreaded, but which also had been so long inevitable, actually commenced. About this period a circumstance occurred with regard to the subject of our memoir, which, as it has been preserved by tradition, is worthy of insertion. The committees of safety and supplies had been sitting at Cambridge on the day preceding the battle of Lexington, and had adjourned before night; but Mr. Gerry with colonels Lee and Orne being at a distance from their houses, determined to remain there till the next morning. In the middle of the night, they were alarmed by the approach of the British troops, on their march to Concord. When the main body came opposite the house in which these important committees had been sitting, a file of soldiers was unexpectedly detached and ordered to surround the house, for the purpose of taking prisoners such of the committee as might be there. With great difficulty and good fortune, these gentlemen escaped with scarcely any covering but their shirts, and concealed themselves till the search was over. They afterwards returned to spread the alarm among the citizens, and impel them to the noble resistance of that memorable day. Mr. Gerry continued for some time an active and influential member of these committees, and was the intimate friend and confidant of the revered general Warren.

On the night preceding that gentleman's departure for Bunker Hill, the two patriots retired *to the same bed;* the night was passed in a restless anxiety for their country, and the last words of this martyred hero before his departure for the "awful heights" were addressed to his heart's best friend, with a melancholy presentiment of his fate.

Dulce et decorum est.
Pro patria mori——

Mr. Gerry attended his duty that day in the provincial congress, then sitting in Watertown, and general Warren followed, where his duty called him, to the memorable heights of Bunker, where he fell a martyr in the cause of liberty.

In the month of July following, the irregular form of government which had existed for some time in Massachusetts was terminated, and in place of the provincial congress a regular legislature was chosen. Civil government now assumed a more settled and regular form in the province; and the patriotism and moral principles of the people induced them to render prompt obedience to the requisitions of the general assembly. It was not until several months after this time, however, that the courts of justice were organized, and proceeded to the ordinary business of that department of government. Among the other judicial appointments, we find that of Mr. Gerry, as a judge of the court of admiralty; a post of much distinction and emolument, and certainly highly honourable when conferred on a gentleman of his years. This post, however, he declined accepting, offering as a reason, his determination to devote himself to the more active duties which the exigencies of his country then demanded, and which his age and peculiar habits well enabled him to give.

The strength of this reason was appreciated by his fellow citizens, and the course he had pursued during the two years in which he had been engaged in the public service, had merited their approbation, and received their thanks. On a new election, on the eighteenth of January, 1776, for delegates to serve in the continental congress, then in session at Philadelphia, he was chosen in company with Hancock, the Adamses and Paine, and took his seat in that venerable body, on the ninth of February following. The instructions which were given at the time by the council of Massachusetts, strongly mark the increase of decided feelings in opposition to the British government, and seem to glance even at ultimate independence. They empowered their delegates, with those of the other American colonies, to concert, direct and order such farther measures, as shall to them appear best calculated for the establishment of right and liberty to the American colonies, upon a basis permanent and secure, against the power and art of the British administration, and guarded against any future encroachments of their enemies. During the spring of this year we find Mr. Gerry on several important committees; on the standing committee for superintending the treasury, certainly at that period the most laborious and important of all the duties of congress; on that for reporting the best ways and means of supplying the army in Canada with provisions and necessaries; on those appointed to inquire and report the best ways and means of raising the necessary supplies to defray the expenses of the war for the present year, over and above the emission of bills of credit; to devise the ways and means for raising ten millions of dollars; to repair to head quarters near New York, and inquire into the state of the army and the best means of supplying their wants; to form plans for the arrangement of the treasury depart-

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ment and the better conducting the executive business of congress, by boards composed of persons not members of that body; and on several others requiring great personal attention, resource and promptness in the transaction of business. He brought very pointedly before the house, the subject of regulating and restricting the sutlers who supplied the army; a class of men who, taking advantage of the necessities of the troops and the situation of the times, preyed upon the hard earned and uncertain gains of the soldiers. These, with various other acts equally honourable, among which we are to include the signature of the Declaration of Independence, distinguished the first term of Mr. Gerry's public service in congress, which closed with the year 1776.

Before this term, however, had expired, his fellow citizens, gratified with the course he had pursued, had again elected him, and looking forward with bolder views, had given him instructions in which the latent principles of those of the preceding year were fully developed. You are empowered, they say, with the delegates from the other American states, to concert, direct and order such farther measures, as shall to them appear best calculated for the establishment of right and liberty to the American states, upon a basis permanent and secure against the power and art of the British administration; for prosecuting the present war, concluding peace, contracting alliances, establishing commerce, and guarding against any future encroachments and machinations of their enemies; with power to adjourn to such time and places, as shall appear most conducive to the public safety and advantage. With these credentials he took his seat in congress a second time, on the ninth of January, 1777, and resumed, or rather continued, the active duties of the preceding year. We find him a member of various committees; among others, those for arranging the plan of a general hospital; for introducing better discipline into the army; for regulating the commissary's department, a duty of great labour, which terminated in a long and elaborate report, yet found among the journals of congress. On the fifth of July, 1777, congress found it absolutely necessary to establish a body, with general powers in regard to the foreign commerce of the country, which had hitherto been distributed among various committees, or officers specially appointed. They resolved therefore that a new body, to be styled "the committee of commerce," should be appointed, to consist of five members; that this committee be vested with the powers granted to the secret committee, and that the members of the late secret committee be directed to settle and close their accounts, and transfer the balances to the committee of commerce. Of this body Mr. Gerry was a member; it was a post, indeed, for which his previous employments seemed peculiarly to adapt him. A few weeks after this appointment, he was suddenly called on to leave Philadelphia and repair to the main army under general Washington, where some difficulties had arisen from improper management in the department of the commissary; Mr. Livingston and Mr. Clymer were associated with him, and congress vested them with full authority to make whatever provision the exigency and importance of the case might demand.

It would, however, be vain to attempt to trace Mr. Gerry through his various public employments whilst in congress. We have but little left even to point out what they were, and we must remain content with the few and imperfect accounts with which the journals supply us. In the disastrous autumn and winter of 1777, he followed the fortunes of congress, driven as it was from Philadelphia to Lancaster, and from Lancaster to York-town. He took part in the interesting debates which so long engaged the time of the house, in settling the articles of confederation between the different states, and exerted all his political and personal influence to effect a measure which the critical situation of the country would not allow longer to be delayed. He strongly opposed the plan, which was introduced about this time, of depriving the small states of their equal representation in congress, and allowing votes in proportion to population; he was too well aware that such a step was fraught with innumerable evils on the ground of policy, if no regard even was to be paid to the fair claims of equal and undisputed sovereignty. At a subsequent period of our history, when wise statesmen met to deliberate in peace, and with all the light of experience, this was a question of no trifling difficulty and delicacy; and it was at that time only to be arranged by mutual concession and good feeling. How absurd then would it have been, at that darkest period of our revolutionary struggle; when our legislators were driven like fugitives from the capital, and sought uncertain safety in remote and dangerous places; when their numbers had dwindled, their hopes diminished, and perhaps their reliance on the ability of their country much longer to sustain itself decreased, how useless would it have been to change at once a prominent feature of that government under which they had united in resistance, and to support which they had pledged their mutual efforts. The change was chiefly supported by the delegates of Virginia, a large and populous state, who perhaps not unnaturally felt that something was due to her superior influence and resources; but it was opposed of course by those who were to suffer by the change, and they found warm coadjutors in Mr. Gerry and other distinguished gentlemen of the same state.

In October, 1777, Mr. Hancock, one of Mr. Gerry's associates in the delegation of Massachusetts, retired from the honourable office of president of congress, which he had held for nearly three years, since the death of Mr. Randolph, with great honour to himself, and satisfaction to the assembly. Deeming it but a just reward, a delegate from another state brought in a resolution of thanks "for the unremitted attention, and steady impartiality, which he had manifested in the discharge of the various duties of his office, since his election to the chair." No man more sincerely appreciated the worth and services of the president, than Mr. Gerry; connected with him by the ties of constant association, similar views, and personal friendship, he was indeed happy in all the honours he received, and disposed to unite in every testimony to his worth, which could be properly conferred. He believed, however, and his opinions were those of some of the most distinguished members of congress, that it was improper in that body formally to thank any president for the discharge of his official duties: he was aware that the utility of such votes is lessened by their frequent adoption, and that if they are to have any value, they must be reserved for extraordinary occasions, not bestowed on the performance of acts which, however meritorious and faithful, are only the ordinary and just conduct of an honourable man, who assumes or accepts the station to which they necessarily belong. The truth of these views is confirmed to us by daily experience; and we have all seen how much the worth of such rewards has been lessened, by the little hesitation with which they have been bestowed. It was under these impressions that, on the previous question being offered, Mr. Gerry voted for it; the sense of the house, however, was opposed to his own, and the resolution was ultimately adopted.

In the following month we find Mr. Gerry on a committee, reporting a plan for the operations of the northern army under general Gates, which led the way to those measures that terminated in the glorious defeat and capture of Burgoyne. General Gates was directed to use all means of keeping possession of the forts and passes of the North river; he was empowered to apply to the states of Massachusetts, Connecticut, New-York and New-Jersey. for such a number of their militia as he should judge necessary to maintain the posts which he should order to be taken on the said river, to the end that his army might be in readiness to pursue such operations as congress directed; to obtain from them such aid as might be necessary to reduce Ticonderoga and fort Independence; to erect fortresses wherever necessary, and to adopt those vigorous measures which were ultimately crowned with such signal success.

In the journals of congress of the fifteenth of November, 1777, we find the following singular resolution: "That a committee of three be appointed, to collect and digest the late useful discoveries for making molasses and spirits from the juice of cornstalks, and report a plan for communicating the said discoveries to the inhabitants of the several states." Of this committee Mr. Gerry was appointed chairman; but whether or not the resolution was proposed or the plan suggested by him, we have no means of ascertaining. If it was so, it would indicate some attention both to natural history, and to the productive resources and commerce of the country. It does not appear that the plan was ever made publicly known; at least we have not been able to obtain any evidence of such a fact.

As the winter approached, the condition of the army became a subject of great interest, and demanded immediate attention. Notwithstanding the large quantities of clothing which had seasonably been ordered from Europe for the armies of the United States, such had been the obstructions, from a variety of causes, that an adequate supply had not been imported, and it had become necessary that immediate provisions should be made to defend the troops from the inclemency of the winter, and to prevent future disappointments of the like nature. With this view a resolution was brought forward, and warmly supported by Mr. Gerry, recommending the subject to the different states; urging them to procure, in addition to the allowances of clothing heretofore made by congress, supplies of blankets, shoes, stockings, shirts, and other clothing for the comfortable subsistence of the officers and soldiers of their respective battalions. He seems, indeed, to have particularly interested himself in the situation of the army; for we find him at this period on a committee appointed to devise ways and means for providing a sufficient supply of provisions for the army; on another to inquire in what manner the department of the clothier-general had been executed, and report such regulations as appeared necessary to be adopted for the better execution of that office; and finally instructed by a unanimous resolution, with Mr. Morris and Mr. Jones, forthwith to repair to the army, and, in a private confidential consultation with general Washington, to consider of the best and most practicable means for carrying on a winter's campaign with vigour and success, an object which congress had much at heart, and on such consultation, with the concurrence of general Washington, to direct every measure which circumstances required for promoting the public service.

On the first of January, 1778, Mr. Gerry took his seat a third time in congress, having been elected by the general assembly on the fourth of December preceding. He had scarcely appeared, when we find him taking a prominent part in the affairs which arose out of the defeat and capitulation of the British army at Saratoga; a measure that had been the result of a plan of operations, in forming which, as we have already seen, he had been very zealous and efficient. The terms of the convention had been as favourable and honourable as the vanquished could expect: the conduct of the American army to the unfortunate British troops had been marked with generosity and kindness; and while awaiting the time of embarkation, every thing was done for them that could have been reasonably demanded. On some frivolous complaint, however, made by a few officers, general Burgoyne chose to accuse the American government with a violation of the convention, and in a letter to general Gates, on the fourteenth of November, went so far as to declare that the public faith was broken. This letter being laid before congress, gave an alarm. It corroborated an apprehension previously entertained, that the captured troops, on their embarkation, would make a junction with the British garrisons in America. The declaration of the general, that "the public faith was broken," while in the power of congress, was considered by them as destroying the security which they before had in his personal honour: for in every event he might adduce this previous notice to justify his future conduct. Resolutions were offered declaring these sentiments, but many of the delegates, while they were perfectly willing to regard the charge as unwarranted by the just construction of any article of the convention, and at the same time as affording ground to fear that he might, under such a pretext, attempt to disengage himself and his army from the obligations under which the treaty placed them; were yet undecided to follow up these opinions to their consequences, and consider it as a personal breach of honour. There were others, however, more resolute and manly, and among the most decided of them was Mr. Gerry. He plainly saw the consequences to which such false scruples would lead; and that much of the glory and utility of an event which had secured the hopes of America with foreign nations, would be lost for ever. He therefore warmly advocated a decisive course, and fortunately for the country it was adopted; a resolution was passed, that the embarkation of lieutenant general Burgoyne, and the troops under his command, should be suspended till a distinct and explicit ratification of the convention of Saratoga should be properly notified by the court of Great Britain. The subsequent conduct of the British government, temporising and evasive, proved at once the justice and policy of these measures.

During the year 1778, Mr. Gerry renewed his exertions to improve the state and conduct of the commissary and hospital departments of the army; two branches of the military art, of paramount importance to the common soldiers, but greatly liable to neglect and abuse. He also exerted all his efforts to obtain an allowance for the soldiers, after their term of service had expired, not only those who were citizens of the United States, but the foreigners who had united their fortunes with them. No officer, however high, escaped his vigilant inquiries into the performance of his duties; every act of oppression or misconduct which came to his knowledge was brought promptly before congress, and fairly and fully investigated. The military committees of congress found him an active member, or a ready coadjutor, and the soldiers knew him as their steady advocate and friend.

In the journals of congress of this year we find two curious resolutions offered, which indeed relate no farther to Mr. Gerry than that his name is recorded among those who voted on the question. The first was in the month of July, when a motion was made, that the sense of the house should be taken, whether it was proper that congress should appoint any person of an ecclesiastical character, to any civil office under the United States. What the sense of the house would have been on so singular a subject, we are at a loss to know, for on a motion for the previous question, it was resolved that the main one should not then be put; and it is somewhat surprising that the delegates of the New England states, without an exception, voted in favour of this mode of avoiding the discussion. There was certainly nothing in our constitution or laws, which rendered either just or advisable the exclusion of a large class of citizens, generally among the best educated and most intelligent, from the performance of many civil duties for which they seem peculiarly qualified. In New England, from the earliest times, they had been the political as well as spiritual leaders of the people; and in the mother country, the duties of the magistrate were almost generally united with the pious care and instruction of their flocks. The other resolution perhaps arose from feelings somewhat similar to those which dictated this, at least from feelings which would seek to separate, as much as possible, the offices and profession of religion from all that might be deemed peculiarly worldly, either in the performance of duties or the enjoyments of amusement. In the journal of the succeeding October is found the following entry. "A motion was made that congress pass the following resolutions: Whereas true religion and good morals are the only solid foundations of public liberty and happiness: Resolved, that it be, and it is hereby earnestly recommended to the several states, to take the most effectual measures for the encouragement thereof, and for the suppressing theatrical entertainments, horse-racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation, and a general depravity of principles and manners. Resolved, that all officers in the army of the United States be, and hereby are strictly enjoined, to see that the good and wholesome rules provided for the discountenancing of profaneness and vice, and the preservation of morals among the soldiers, are duly and punctually observed." These resolutions were carried by a considerable majority, and it might be supposed that they were sufficiently severe against an amusement, deeply fixed in the habits and inclinations of the people. The sturdy foes of the stage determined, however, to carry their vengeance still farther, and to check its fatal influence in the cabinet, as well as the field; a few days after, they therefore brought forward the following additional resolution, which also passed.

"Whereas, frequenting play-houses and theatrical entertainments, has a fatal tendency to divert the minds of the people from a due attention to the means necessary for the defence of their country, and the preservation of their liberties: Resolved, that any person holding an office under the United States, who shall act, promote, encourage, or attend such plays, shall be deemed unworthy to hold such office, and shall be accordingly dismissed."

These circumstances are perhaps unimportant, but meeting with them as we did, among the political records of the times, they seemed to be incidents worth relating, if not worthy of reflexion.

In addition to his services on military affairs, Mr. Gerry was this year much occupied with the subject of finance; one which, as the war was farther prolonged, and the resources of the country more exhausted, became of paramount importance, as well as of great labour and difficulty. In July he was appointed on a committee to which was referred a plan for the establishment of a new treasury board or department; in August we find him, with several other members, directed to examine the state of the money and finances of the country, and make report relative to them from time to time; and in September, a report of the treasury board was referred to him and two other delegates, relating to a confederal fund, and the mode of issuing and accounting for loan office certificates. In the following spring a grand committee was appointed by congress, consisting of one delegate from every state, who were directed to take into full consideration the foreign affairs of the nation, and the conduct pursued by the commissioners abroad. This they did, and, as appears by their report, with no undecided spirit. Whatever may have been the evils complained of, they seem to have probed them deeply, and advised the strongest course for their immediate remedy. They declared it to congress as their opinion, that ministers plenipotentiary were only necessary at that time at the courts of Versailles and Madrid; that in the course of their examination and inquiry, they found many complaints against the commissioners, and the political and commercial agency of Mr. Deane; which complaints, with the evidence in support thereof, they delivered up, and to which they begged leave to refer. That suspicions and animosities had arisen among the said commissioners, which might be highly prejudicial to the honour and interests of the United States. That the appointments of the said commissioners be vacated, and that new appointments be made. That there should be but one plenipotentiary minister or commissioner for these United States at a foreign court. That no plenipotentiary minister or commissioner for these United States, while he acted as such, should exercise any other public office. That no person be appointed plenipotentiary minister or commissioner for these United States who was not a citizen thereof, and who had not a fixed and permanent interest therein. This report gave rise to a long and warm debate, in which Mr. Gerry took a very leading part, anxious, as he was, to check in the outset a line of conduct which could not but embarrass us in our new relations, and might ultimately prove injurious to the honour and interests of the United States.

For two or three months succeeding this period, Mr. Gerry appears to have been absent from the house, probably called away by the situation of his private affairs, which his long and continued attention to public duties had considerably deranged. In the summer, however, he returned; and we find him almost immediately at his favourite subject, the assistance of the army. He was appointed chairman of a committee on the subject, and soon brought in a set of honourable and useful resolutions, which, being adopted, infused new spirit into the army, and were no unimportant cause of our subsequent success. "Whereas," he declared, "the army of the United States of America have by their patriotism, valour and perseverance in the defence of the rights and liberties of their country, become entitled to the gratitude as well as the approbation of their fellow citizens: Resolved, that it be, and it is hereby recommended to the several states that have not already adopted measures for that purpose, to make such further provision for the officers and for the soldiers enlisted for the war, to them respectively belonging, who shall continue in service till the establishment of peace, as shall be an adequate compensation for the many dangers, losses and hardships they have suffered and been exposed to in the course of the present contest; either by granting to their officers half pay for life, and proper rewards to their soldiers; or in such other manner as may appear most expedient to the legislatures of the several states. Resolved, that it be, and hereby is recommended to the several states, to make such provision for the widows of such of their officers and such of their soldiers enlisted for the war, as have died or may die in the service, as shall secure to them the sweets of that liberty, for the attainment of which their husbands had nobly laid down their lives."

He was also, about this time, appointed with Mr. Morris and Mr. Dickinson to prepare a letter to the several states, mentioning to them the evident intentions of the British to commence the ensuing campaign with new vigour, and urging them to strong efforts. "It is proper you should be informed," say they, "that our allies were much concerned to find, that preparations were not earlier made for a vigorous campaign. The exertions of America are necessary to obtain the great objects of the alliance, her liberty, sovereignty and independence. The barbarities already exhibited by the enemy, and their avowed determination to give a still greater scope to their ravages, are additional motives to our endeavours. Congress are fully convinced, therefore, that you will comply with their earnest wishes to prepare for the most immediate and most vigorous operations, particularly by filling up your battalions, and having the militia of your state ready to march at the shortest warning. It is highly probable that circumstances may soon call them forth to operate offensively; and it is hoped and expected with such energy and effect, as to free these states from their hostile invaders."

On the fourteenth of October, 1779, Mr. Gerry offered to congress a resolution, which was immediately adopted, relative to the late Indian wars. It may be recollected, that in the many previous expeditions which had been carried on against these savages, ample vengeance had been taken on some of them; but these partial successes produced no lasting benefit. The few who escaped, had it in their power to make thousands miserable. For the permanent security of the frontier inhabitants, it was resolved, in the year 1779, to carry a decisive expedition into the Indian country. A considerable body of continental troops was selected for this purpose, and put under the command of general Sullivan. The Indians, on hearing of the expedition projected against them, acted with firmness. They collected their strength, took possession of proper ground, and fortified it with judgment. General Sullivan, on the twenty-ninth of August, attacked them in their works; they stood a cannonade for more than two hours, but then gave way. This engagement proved decisive. After the trenches were forced, the Indians fled without making any attempt to rally. The consternation occasioned among them by this defeat was so great, that they gave up all ideas of further resistance; and from that period, being made to feel those calamities they were wont to inflict on others, they became cautious and timid. Our frontier settlements were restored to at least a comparative tranquillity, and our citizens enjoyed a safety which had been long unknown. It was under these circumstances that Mr. Gerry brought the subject before congress, and was gratified by their immediate assent to the following resolutions, which he proposed, "That the thanks of congress be given to his excellency general Washington, for directing, and to major general Sullivan, and the brave officers and soldiers under his command, for effectually executing an important expedition against such of the Indian nations as, encouraged by the counsels and conducted by the officers of his Britannic majesty, had perfidiously waged an uprovoked and cruel war against these United States, laid waste many of their defenceless towns, and with savage barbarity slaughtered the inhabitants thereof."

About this period Mr. Gerry gave a strong instance of the firm republican principles by which he was actuated, in an attempt which he made to remove from the members of congress, all liability to that indirect corruption, which, to a man of ambitious character, is more tempting than a bribe. He offered as a resolution, that "as it might be highly injurious to the interests of these United States, to permit candidates for public offices to vote in, or otherwise influence their own elections; that congress will not appoint any member thereof during the time of his sitting, or within six months after he shall have been in congress, to any office under the said states for which he, or any other for his benefit, may receive any salary, fees, or other emolument." This he twice brought before the house, and urged it with all the strength of his talents, but without success: he was not indeed fairly met, but a majority of the delegates, either confident of their uncorruptible purity, or unwilling to close any door to merited honours, passed it over by a silent vote on the previous question.

In the year 1780, Mr. Gerry retired from congress, in which he had served five years, with no small personal inconvenience, and greatly to the injury of his private affairs. What his course had been during that period, enough has been said to show. As in the state legislature, at a previous period, his assiduity, attention and extensive information made him prominent in debate, and caused him to be placed on all important committees; while his advice and opinion were respected as the cool and deliberate decision of an undeviating patriot. No difficulty deterred him, no danger dismayed him. In the most trying moments his courage and constancy remained unshaken, and his determination never for a moment wavered to protect the independence and maintain the freedom of his country at every hazard. To the amelioration and protection of its safeguard, the army, his zealous, his unwearied efforts were constantly exerted; during the whole period that he sat in the revolutionary congress, he received and deserved the emphatic title of the soldier's friend. General Washington depended on no one with more confidence for the promotion of his plans than on Mr. Gerry, and his confidence was never disappointed. His speech in favour of compensation to the army on a resolution which we have already had occasion to notice, was considered at the time a noble instance of magnanimity, as it was a splendid display of eloquence and patriotism. In almost every principal measure relative to the military affairs of the times he was conspicuous and useful; he even indeed exceeded the limits of his duty, perhaps his prudence as a statesman; for when called accidentally to the army, he went so far as to enter its ranks. When general Howe marched to Chestnut Hill, and afterwards when general Kniphausen marched to Springfield to engage the American army, Mr. Gerry was at the side of the commander in chief, acting in the civil capacity of a delegate or committee from congress. The situation however was too interesting to his feelings, and his spirit was too manly to stand quietly by, while his fellow citizens were fighting the battles of their country; he solicited employment from general Washington, and was allowed by him to exercise a command during the period he remained with the army, as a volunteer.

Another subject by which Mr. Gerry's congressional career is distinguished, at the period of which we speak, was that of the resources of the country, and this is indeed fully proved by the facts which have been already enumerated. On all subjects of finance he was able and eminent. His clear and penetrating mind could unravel the perplexities of a system, more confused and entangled than any other which has ever fallen within our knowledge, and his invention and ingenuity were in constant demand, to develop or apply the resources of the country. In a letter written several years since by Mr. Adams, the late president of the United States, he bears public testimony to the skill of Mr. Gerry in these subjects, and bestows on him the praise of originating, while a member of the committee of finance, the most valuable provisions of the present system. Some of his remarks apply indeed to a subsequent period of his life, but throwing as they do on the character and talents of Mr. Gerry new light, from a source the most authentic and pure, we take this occasion to insert them. "Mr. Gerry," observes the late President Adams, "was a financier, and had been employed for years on the committee of the treasury in the old congress, and a most indefatigable member too. That committee had laid the foundation for the present system, and had organized it almost as well, though they had not the assistance of clerks and other conveniences, as at present. Any man who will look into the journals of the old congress, may see the organization, and the daily labours and reports of that committee, and may form some judgment of the talents and services of Mr. Gerry in that department. I knew the officers of the treasury in Hamilton's time, dreaded to see him rise in the house on any question of finance, because, they said, he was a man of so much influence, that they always feared he would discover some error, or carry some point against them." Such is the testimony of a man who was himself amongst the most active of our revolutionary leaders, and who, in a long life, had the opportunities as well as the sound abilities which enabled him to form strong and correct opinions of the leading statesmen of his age.

The state of Massachusetts would not, however, long permit the absence of Mr. Gerry from the theatre of his well earned fame. On the twenty-seventh of June, 1783, by a joint ballot of both houses of assembly he was elected, and on the fourteenth of August following, again took his seat as a delegate from that state in congress, where he recommenced the active career of public usefulness, which he had pursued at a preceding period. Scarcely, however, had he resumed his duties, when the subject in which he had formerly taken so deep an interest was again brought to his attention, and in a manner not a little embarrassing. This subject was the compensation of the troops. Congress, in the year 1780, resolved, that the officers of the army, who should continue therein during the war, should be entitled to half pay for life; and at the same time resolved, that all such as should retire therefrom, in consequence of the new arrangement which was then ordered to take place, should be entitled to the same benefit: of this half pay a commutation was afterwards proposed, by which five years' whole pay was granted in lieu of the half pay. A measure of this nature, so far from being obnoxious to censure, would seem to be a sacred duty; a small return indeed to those whose services were beyond price, since no price could have induced an army to endure the fatigues, the disasters, and the neglected sufferings of the American soldiery, had they not been inspired with sentiments which raised them far above a mercenary band. By some of the states, however, the course adopted by congress was regarded as extravagant and partial; wearied perhaps, and exhausted by the prolonged expenses of the war, they were angry that peace did not bring with it the entire relaxation of their burdens; and forgetful of the ills from which they had been saved, they regarded a pension to the disbanded troops as a payment without equivalent. In these opinions the state of Massachusetts took the lead, and on the eleventh of July had addressed a letter to congress, in which they were freely expressed.

"We are not unacquainted," they say, "with the sufferings, nor forgetful of the virtue and bravery of our fellow citizens in the army; and while we are sensible that justice requires that they should be fully compensated for their services and sufferings, at the same time it is most sincerely to be wished that they may return to the bosom of their country, under such circumstances as may place them in the most agreeable light with their fellow citizens. We are sensible too that congress are vested with a discretionary power, to make provision for the support and payment of the army, and such civil officers as may be necessary for managing the general affairs of the United States: but in making such provision, due regard ever ought to be had to the welfare and happiness of the people, the rules of equity, and the spirit and general design of the confederation. We cannot on this occasion avoid saying that, with due respect, we are of opinion, those principles were not duly attended to, in the grant of half pay to the officers of the army; that being in our opinion, a grant of more than an adequate reward for their services, and inconsistent with that equality which ought to subsist among citizens of free and republican states.

The observations which have been made with regard to the officers of the army, will in general apply to the civil officers appointed by congress, who, in our opinion, have been allowed much larger salaries than are consistent with the state of our finances, the rules of equity, and a proper regard to the public good: and indeed, if the United States were in the most wealthy and prosperous circumstances, it is conceived that economy and moderation, with respect to grants and allowances, in opposition to the measures which have been adopted by monarchial and luxurious courts, would most highly conduce to our reputation, even in the eyes of foreigners, and would cause a people, who have been contending with so much ardour and expense for republican constitutions and freedom, which cannot be supported without frugality and virtue, to appear with dignity and consistency; and at the same time would, in the best manner, conduce to the public happiness.

It is thought to be essentially necessary, especially at the present time, that congress should be expressly informed, that such measures as are complained of, are extremely opposite and irritating to the principles and feelings which the people of some eastern states, and of this in particular, inherit from their ancestry."

A letter of such a tone and character may be well supposed to have demanded and received considerable attention. It was referred to a committee, who made report thereon; it was warmly and zealously debated;

and it was again referred to a committee. In the mean time Mr. Gerry had become a member of the house; his former situation, his peculiar knowledge and interest in the subject, and the section of the country whence he came, all made it desirable that his views should be known. He was accordingly placed on a committee with Mr. Huntington and Mr. Foster, and the matter was again examined anew. On the twenty-fifth of September their report was taken up by the house, and agreed to by a considerable majority. In it they replied firmly, and with much propriety, to the observations made by the state of Massachusetts. Without dwelling on the reasonableness and justice of the provision itself, they observed that it had been granted at a critical period of the war, when our finances were embarrassed, our credit impaired, our army distressed, the officers discontented, and resignation so general, as to threaten the dissolution of a corps on whose military experience the public safety, in the judgment of the commander in chief, greatly depended. No doubt could be entertained but that congress were of opinion that this was the only provision, by means of which they could establish a military force, sufficient to protect the country against the dangers that surrounded it; and although it was to be regretted that such a provision had given uneasiness to the state of Massachusetts, yet its propriety was proved by experience, and its result was that brilliant success which had hastened the blessings of an honourable peace. "Your committee," they say, "hold it to be the bounden duty of congress, to leave no effort unessayed, that may enable them to conform to the known and express sense of their constituents; but a perfect compliance with the wishes of every part will often be found, after due consideration, impracticable.

Your committee consider the measure of congress as the result of a deliberate judgment, framed on a general view of the interests of the union at large. They conclude it to be a truth, that no state in this confederacy can claim (more equitably than an individual in a society) to derive advantages from a union, without conforming to the judgment of a constitutional majority of those who compose it; still, however, they conceive it will be found no less true, that if a state, every way so important as Massachusetts, should withhold her solid support to constitutional measures of the confederacy, the result must be a dissolution of the union; and then she must hold herself as alone responsible for the anarchy and domestic confusion that may succeed, and for exposing all these confederated states (who, at the commencement of the late war, leagued to defend her violated rights) an easy prey to the machinations of their enemies, and the sport of European politics: And therefore they are of opinion, that congress should still confide, that a free, enlightened and generous people, will never hazard consequences so perilous and alarming; and in all circumstances rely on the wisdom, temper and virtue of their constituents, which (guided by an all wise Providence) have ever interposed to avert impending evils and misfortunes."

From this period during the remainder of the year, we find Mr. Gerry's attention directed to all the chief objects in which the policy of the country was involved. The arrangement of several points of foreign negotiation; the permanent residence of congress; the payment and discharge of the gallant foreigners who had joined our army during the revolution; the settlement of bounty lands on the discharged soldiery; and the formation of treaties with the Indians.

During the year 1784, Mr. Gerry continued to be a member of congress. In March he appears as chairman of a committee, on which were Mr. Jefferson, and other distinguished gentlemen, to whom were referred several points of our foreign relations. Shortly afterwards he was appointed a member of the grand committee instructed to revise the institution of the treasury department, and report whatever alterations they should think necessary. This task proved one of immense labour and intricacy, and is the subject of many long reports, which, however instructive to a financier, would afford but little interest to a general reader. More pleasure will be felt by all, in learning the efforts of Mr. Gerry to befriend a man who still lives in the most devoted and grateful recollection of our country, as one of the purest, the noblest, the most disinterested of her benefactors, baron Steuben. At the close of the war he had addressed a letter to congress, enclosing his resignation, and on his so doing, a committee had been appointed, who proposed to give him, as a compensation for his services, thirteen thousand dollars, exclusive of his pay. Mr. Gerry, however, thought that to such a man, an act of more prompt liberality was due, and he proposed, in lieu of the report of the committee, the following resolution: "Whereas major general baron Steuben, at the instance of the friends of America, and with the advice and concurrence of the ministers of the United States in France, did, in the latter end of the year 1777, come over to America, and producing the most honourable testimonials of his military rank and abilities, did proffer his services to congress, declaring, at the same time, that he would not make any previous stipulations for a reward, but would leave it to be determined by congress, after they should have proofs and experience of his merit and services. And whereas the abilities and zeal of that meritorious officer, in the department of inspector general, have been the principal cause of introducing and perfecting discipline in our army, and establishing such a system of economy as produced an extraordinary reduction of expenses: Resolved, that the superintendant of finance be directed to issue securities bearing an annual interest of six per cent. and payable as other debts due to the army, to the said major general baron Steuben, to the amount of forty-five thousand dollars, in full of all sums due to him for pay, arrearages of pay, rations, subsistence, half-pay or commutation, and of all other demands for services and sacrifices in the cause of the United States." This resolution, however, was not adopted, but a barren vote of thanks was passed some days after, leaving the payment of a debt of gratitude and honour "to be liquidated by the proper officers." Indignant at such a proceeding, Mr. Gerry renewed his efforts, supported by Mr. Jefferson, that the sum of ten thousand dollars should be presented to the noble foreigner; but this also was rejected.

On the thirtieth of April, Mr. Gerry presented a report to congress, of much importance. It related to the commercial regulations of the states, and to the power to be exercised by that body on such matters, a subject which, since the termination of the war, had become highly interesting. "The situation of commerce at this time," he observes, "claims the attention of the several states, and few objects of greater importance can present themselves to their notice. The fortune of every citizen is interested in the success thereof; for it is the constant source of wealth and incentive to industry; and the value of our produce and our land must ever rise or fall, in proportion to the prosperous or adverse state of trade. Already has Great Britain adopted regulations, destructive of our commerce with her West India Islands. There was reason to expect that measures so unequal, and so little calculated to promote mercantile intercourse, would not be persevered in by an enlightened nation. But these measures are growing into system. It would be the duty of congress, as it is their wish, to meet the attempts of Great Britain with similar restrictions on her commerce; but their powers on this head are not explicit, and the propositions made by the legislatures of the several states, render it necessary to take the general sense of the union on this subject. Unless the United States in congress assembled, shall be vested with powers competent to the protection of commerce, they can never command reciprocal advantages in trade; and without these, our foreign commerce must decline, and eventually be annihilated. Hence it is necessary that the states should be explicit, and fix on some effectual mode by which foreign commerce, not founded on principles of equality, may be restrained." To secure these advantages, and to fix these principles, he proposed that the states should vest in congress, for fifteen years, a power to prohibit imports or exports by any nation, not in alliance with us; and a resolution to that effect was adopted.

On the sixth of December, 1784, Mr. Gerry took his seat in the old congress, for the last term during which he served in that venerable body, but he held the same prominent station, and took the same active part in its proceedings, which he had done in busier times. He served on a committee for expediting the settlement of public accounts; for adjusting the claims of Virginia against the United States; for remedying the irregular representation of the states in congress; and many others of much dignity and honour. Before he left this theatre of his reputation, he had also the satisfaction to find that one measure to which he had at a former period devoted much of his attention, and which he still had very seriously at heart, had attracted the favourable notice of those whom he represented, although he had not been able to prevail on congress itself to coincide in his views. It may be recollected that five years before, he had offered a resolution whose object was to prevent the appointment of members of congress to any office under the states, from which they were to receive emoluments. He had since urged it on the house, but had been twice defeated. Since then his hopes of its passage had laid dormant, until his own state, convinced of the propriety of the measure, determined to sanction the views of her delegate by her approbation, and to aid them by her influence. She accordingly took up the subject with spirit, and addressed a series of instructions on the subject to her representatives, so full of excellent policy, and arising from and bearing so directly upon the views of Mr. Gerry, that it seems both useful and proper to insert them. "The United States," they observe, "having formed by the wisdom of their councils and established by their exertions, a federal union, which is no less necessary to the freedom of each, than important to the independence of all the states, every measure ought to be adopted and vigorously executed, which can have a tendency to perpetuate an institution that reflects so much honour upon human nature, and so strongly points the world to the true political felicity of mankind. But whatever marks of wisdom and perfection appear upon the face of this system, it cannot be expected that provison is made against every species of corruption, which ambition and avarice may attempt to introduce for the subversion of it; and therefore in the early age of our national existence, the United States in congress assembled, will doubtless form such resolutions and establish such principles, as will have a tendency to prevent designing men, in future ages, from sapping the foundation of our federal union. The world cannot but admire that prudence and wisdom, which by providing for a rotation of members in congress, fixed one important barrier against corruption; but the legislature of this commonwealth observe with concern and regret, that no provision is made to prevent the members of congress from appointing themselves to offices; and it requires no very great share of sagacity to forsee, that unless this point is more effectually guarded, the offices of the federal government may hereafter be filled with men who will not be most capable of serving the people, or the most remarkable for their integrity, and that some persons, forsaking the true interests of their country, will take corrupt measures to become members of congress, with a view to possess themselves of lucrative employments, whereby offices in themselves unnecessary may be created and multiplied, and the injured fabric of our federal government be overthrown, by the same means that have been employed in prostrating those ancient republics, which are seen no more but in the pages of history. The legislature of this commonwealth, therefore instruct you, gentlemen, to endeavour to procure a resolution of congress, enacting that no member of congress shall be appointed to any office under the states, during the term for which he shall have been elected."

Thus closed, in September, 1785, the political career of Mr. Gerry in the old revolutionary congress. In it he had served through seasons of various difficulty and suffering, maintaining in them all the same character, with which he had entered on political life—that of an active and resolute statesman. Among men who are now regarded as something above the race of ordinary politicians, he took an equal stand at the first, and preserved it at the last. He retired with the esteem and affection of those with whom he had served and by whom he had been chosen; and fatigued with the long series of unceasing exertion, he sought in the calmer occupations of rural leisure, that repose which for many years had been unknown to him. He fixed his residence at Cambridge, a village a few miles from Boston.

To a man however, of active disposition, the quiet of retirement soon looses much of its delight, unless age or illness has quenched its fires. For awhile indeed he feels happy in the change, but the human mind seeks forever something to engage or excite it, and it is in vain that we strive, while its powers are yet mature, to repress its energies. When, therefore, his country again demanded his services, Mr. Gerry was not found deaf to her call. For some time past he looked upon her situation with anxiety and interest. With the war had terminated many of those strong ties which of necessity united the states together. The distresses which were spread over the whole country by so sudden a revolution; the jealousies which were raised or increased by a thousand circumstances of interest or feeling; the poverty which in the course of a long war had been diffused through the nation; the seizure and destruction of property, the annihilation of commerce, and the entire want of national credit; all tended to impress on the public mind a general dissatisfaction with the existing government. From this apparent failure in their expectations of an immediate increase of political happiness, the lovers of liberty and independence began to be less sanguine in their hopes from the American revolution, and to fear that they had built a visionary fabric of government, on the fallacious ideas of public virtue; but that elasticity of the human mind which is nurtured by free institutions, kept them from desponding. By an exertion of those inherent principles of self-preservation, which republics possess, a recurrence was had to the good sense of the people, for the rectification of fundamental disorders. While the country, free from foreign force and domestic violence, enjoyed tranquillity, a proposition was made by Virginia to all the other states, to meet in convention for the purpose of digesting a form of government, equal to the exigencies of the Union. The first motion for this purpose was made by Mr. Madison: but the other states, convinced of the utility of the measure, gradually concurred in it; and it was at length agreed that a convention of delegates, to be appointed by the several states, should be held in the month of May, 1787, at Philadelphia, for the sole and express purpose of revising the articles of confederation, and reporting to congress, and the several legislatures, such alterations and provisions therein, as should, when agreed to in congress, and confirmed by the states, render the federal constitution adequate to the exigencies of government, and the preservation of the Union.

To this convention Mr. Gerry was appointed, as a representative of Massachusetts. Impressed with the necessity of a more energetic system than the old confederation, and governed by the republican principles in which he had been educated, he endeavoured to guard the new government from extremes which he considered equally dangerous. The propositions for introducing a system, designated by some of its opponents as aristocratical and even monarchical, but which it scarcely seems proper to consider in such a light, found in him a strenuous opponent; and it is probable that the sternness of his republicanism, contributed to the securing of many of the best features which the constitution contains. Still, however, after all the alterations which he and the friends who coincided in his views were able to obtain, there appeared to him features so objectionable and so dangerous to the rights of his constituents, that he manfully declined affixing his signature to the instrument. Lest, however, his views in so doing should be misrepresented, or not fully understood, he took an immediate opportunity to address a letter to his constituents on the subject. "It was painful for me," he observes, "on a subject of such national importance, to differ from the respectable members who signed the constitution. But, conceiving as I did, that the liberties of America were not secured by the system, it was my duty to oppose it.

My principal objections to the plan are, that there is no adequate provision for a representation of the people; that they have no security for the right of election; that some of the powers of the legislature are ambiguous, and others indefinite and dangerous; that the executive is blended with, and will have an undue influence over the legislature; that the judicial department will be oppressive; that treaties of the highest importance may be formed by the president, with the advice of two-thirds of a quorum of the senate; and that the system is without the security of a bill of rights. These are objections which are not local, but apply equally to all the states.

As the convention was called for 'the sole and express purpose of revising the articles of confederation, and reporting to congress and to the several legislatures, such alterations and provisions as shall render the federal constitution adequate to the exigencies of government, and the preservation of the union,' I did not conceive that these powers extended to the formation of the plan proposed; but the convention being of a different opinion, I acquiesced in it; being fully convinced, that, to preserve the union, an efficient government was indispensably necessary; and that it would be difficult to make proper amendments to the articles of confederation.

The constitution proposed has few, if any federal features; but is rather a system of national government: nevertheless, in many respects, I think it has great merit; and, by proper amendments, may be adapted to 'the exigencies of government,' and the preservation of liberty.

The question on this plan involves others of the highest importance—First. whether there shall be a dissolution of the federal government? Secondly, whether the several state governments shall be so altered, as, in effect, to be dissolved? And thirdly, whether, in lieu of the federal and state governments, the national constitution, now proposed, shall be substituted without amendment? Never, perhaps, were a people called on to decide a question of greater magnitude. Should the citizens of America adopt the plan as it now stands, their liberties may be lost. Or should they reject it altogether, anarchy may ensue. It is evident, therefore, that they should not be precipitate in their decisions; that the subject should be well understood, lest they should refuse to support the government, after having hastily adopted it.

If those who are in favour of the constitution, as well as those who are against it, should preserve moderation, their discussions may afford much information, and finally direct to a happy issue.

It may be urged by some, that an implicit confidence may be placed in the convention. But, however respectable the members may be who signed the constitution, it must be admitted that a free people are the proper guardians of their rights and liberties; that the greatest men may err; and that their errors are sometimes of the greatest magnitude.

Others may suppose, that the constitution may be safely adopted, because therein provision is made to amend it. But cannot this object be better obtained before a ratification, than after it? And should a free people adopt a form of government, under conviction that it wants amendment?

And some may conceive, that, if the plan is not accepted by the people, they will not unite in another. But surely, while they have power to amend, they are not under the necessity of rejecting it.

I shall only add, that, as the welfare of the union requires a better constitution than the confederation, I shall think it my duty, as a citizen of Massachusetts, to support that which shall be finally adopted; sincerely hoping it will secure the liberty and happiness of America."

The views of Mr. Gerry were not singular; they had been entertained by some of the most distinguished patriots and statesmen in other states; and in his own they were very generally approved. When the constitution was submitted to the state convention, it was ratified only by a majority of nineteen voices in an assembly of three hundred and sixty members, and to the ratification were appended various amendments, coinciding with the views of Mr. Gerry.

Although this would seem to be a sufficient justification of a manly course, which could have been dictated by no ideas of personal benefit to himself, but was rather opposed to them, it was not sufficient to save him from the attacks of party spirit. He was assailed immediately by the partisans of the day, and censured with all the illiberality and acrimony that hostile politics could suggest. An election for governor coming on at this period, many of his friends, to show their disapprobation of this unjustifiable treatment, and to express their respect for the integrity of his personal and political character, gave him their votes for the office of chief magistrate. As this was the spontaneous offering of private respect, made without any system, and entirely without his knowledge or consent, the whole number of votes in his favour was in no proportion to that of the worthy character who then filled the chair, and against whom it was not the wish or expectation of Mr. Gerry's friends to succeed.

Until this period, that is, while the states were united only by the articles of confederation, the delegates to congress from Massachusetts had been appointed by the general court. According to the federal constitution, they were now to be chosen immediately by the people. For the first congress, Massachusetts was to have only eight representatives. The state was divided into that number of districts, for the purpose of electing one representative in each. This number was determined by the new constitution; but was not perfectly agreeable to the ratio fixed by that instrument, for future years, which was one representative for thirty thousand inhabitants. The population of Massachusetts, at that time, entitled her to more than the number above mentioned; but no census had been then lately taken, and the number of inhabitants was not precisely known to the convention. The inhabitants of the district in which Mr. Gerry resided chose him as their new representative, and under a new form of government he resumed that seat, and renewed those active services, which he had for so many years faithfully discharged under the old one. Neither the character nor extent of this memoir, will permit us to enter into the minute detail of the various political movements of Mr. Gerry, during the two terms that he served in congress; brought up in the school of experience, and well acquainted from long observation with all the difficulties and intricacies which must arise in the organization and early administration of a new government, his assistance and remarks were received with respect, and often closely followed. In the financial operations he always took peculiar interest, and on such subjects was, perhaps, of all debaters in the house, the one who was listened to with the most confidence. His old friend the army, too, was not forgotten, for he never allowed an occasion to pass unused in which he could aid them in their difficulties, or redress their grievances. Fully sensible of the necessity and duty of mutual co-operation, he united cheerfully in carrying into effect that system, to which he had indeed been individually opposed, but which had received the approbation of his country; and he had not been long in congress, before he took occasion to make the manly and honourable declaration, "that the federal constitution having become the supreme law of the land, he conceived the salvation of the country depended on its being carried into effect." After serving four years in congress, he was again proposed as a delegate; but anxious to return to the enjoyments of domestic life, from which the new state of things had drawn him, he declined a re-election and retired to his farm at Cambridge.

It was during this period of Mr. Gerry's retirement, that the aggressions of the rights and commerce of the United States were commenced by France. The citizen Genet, made his singular progress through the country, and after an embassy unparalleled in the history of diplomacy, was recalled. General Pinckney was sent to France to negotiate, but was not received. American vessels were captured by French cruisers, wherever found. The French minister had endeavoured to interfere directly in the election of the chief executive magistrate. And in a word every thing had been done to drive the nation into a violation of that neutrality which it had determined to support. It was in this state of things, that Mr. Adams was called to the presidential chair. Though keenly sensible of the indignities offered to his country, he was so fully impressed with the importance of peace, to its advancement and happiness, that, in his speech to congress, in June, 1797, he informed them, "that, as he believed neither the honour, nor the interest of the United States absolutely forbade the repetition of advances, for securing peace and friendship with France, he should institute a fresh attempt at negotiation." To give all the weight and solemnity that he could to this embassy, the president determined to select men, whose long services and acknowledged talents had made them illustrious at home and abroad. His choice fell on Mr. Gerry, who was thus again drawn from retirement, General Pinckney who had already been appointed an ambassador to France, and Mr. Marshall, the present distinguished chief justice of the United States. These gentlemen were instructed to pursue peace and reconciliation by all means compatible with the honour and faith of the United States. On their arrival in Paris, the directory, under frivolous pretexts, delayed to accredit them, as the representatives of an independent nation. In this unacknowledged situation, they were addressed by persons, who, though not invested with formal authority, exhibited evidence of their being tools of government. In direct and explicit terms, they demanded a large sum of money from the United States, as the condition, which must precede any negotiation, on the subsisting differences, between the two countries. To this degrading demand, the envoys returned a decided negative. The unofficial agents, nevertheless, urged them to comply, and enlarged on the immense power of France; and particularly insisted, that to her friendship alone, America could look for safety. The envoys, after some time, refused to hold any further communication with these agents. Though not received in their public characters, they sent a letter to the French secretary of foreign relations, in which they entered into the explanations, committed to them by their government, and illustrated, by facts, the uniform friendly disposition of the United States towards France. This effort failed, and every circumstance concurred to prove, that all further attempts would be equally useless. They nevertheless continued to wait events, with a patience that demonstrated their sincere desire to avert a rupture between the two countries. At length, however, in the spring of 1798, two of the envoys, Messrs. Pinckney and Marshall, were ordered to quit the territories of France; but Mr. Gerry was invited to remain and resume the negotiation which had been interrupted, and he consented to do so.

At the time, the course thus adopted by Mr. Gerry was censured by his political opponents. Yet calmly and dispassionately examined, it seems to be one dictated by prudence, and perfectly consistent with national and individual honour. Although the instructions to him and his colleagues, had invested them with a separate as well as joint power to negotiate a treaty of peace, Mr. Gerry uniformly refused, after the departure of the other ministers to enter into such a negotiation. He declared at once and distinctly, that his object in remaining was not to pursue those plans, which could, and if intended ought to have been discussed by the whole embassy, but to promote as far as his individual powers allowed, such other objects of his government as he might do without their aid. "I was informed," says Mr. Gerry, in a letter addressed to Mr. Pickering, on the eighteenth of October, 1798, and immediately after his return to this country: "I was informed that an immediate rupture would be the result of my departure from France; and the same communication being again made, with information, that if I was determined not to negotiate separately, this government would be satisfied with my residence here, until the government of the United States could take their measures. I consented to this from public considerations solely; for every private one was opposed to it. In my embarrassed situation, not losing sight of the great object of our mission, a reconciliation with this powerful republic, I have taken a position, by which I mean to ascertain, if possible, without compromitting the government of the United States or myself, the ultimate views of France with respect to them. It would have been impossible for me under existing circumstances to have consented to a separate negotiation, had the provision been made in our powers and instructions: for two of my colleagues, one from the southern, and the other from the middle states, having been sent back, I could have had no prospect of forming a treaty, which would have given general satisfaction to my country; and I could never have undertaken any negotiation, without that prospect. It is therefore incumbent on me to declare, that should the result of my present endeavours present to our government more pleasing prospects, it is, nevertheless, my firm determination to proceed no further in this negotiation." Altogether this mission was one of the most unpleasant for the ministers though most beneficial for the country, in which our government has ever been engaged; for although it did not succeed in effecting a treaty, and was never even publicly acknowledged by the French ministry, yet it certainly opened the way for a termination of hostile feelings, and led eventually to the preservation of the peace and honour of the country. That these ends were attained in no small degree by the prudence, judgment and ability of Mr. Gerry, seems now to be generally admitted, but if it were not, it is proved by an authority so strong, that impartial history will not hesitate to award to him the merit to which he is so fairly entitled. Speaking of his nomination on this embassy, the late president, Mr. Adams, has thus remarked:—"he was nominated and approved, and finally saved the peace of the nation, for he alone discovered and furnished the evidence that X. Y. and Z. were employed by Talleyrand; and he alone brought home the direct, formal and official assurances, upon which the subsequent commission proceeded and peace was made."

On his return from France, Mr. Gerry was supported by the republican party in Massachusetts for the office of governor. Adverse politics had for many years prevailed in the state, and the division of opinion had not then subsided. The federal candidate had succeeded in the preceding year by a powerful vote, but at this trial, although the result was a small majority for Mr. Strong, it is confidently believed Mr. Gerry had a plurality of votes, and that if all which were given in had been correctly returned, he would have filled the executive chair. Mr. Gerry subsequently declined being a candidate, notwithstanding the earnest solicitations of his political friends. He consented, however, to have his name placed on the electoral ticket of 1805, when the republicans, for the first time, succeeded; and as they failed in the following election in April, the cause of the former success must, in a great measure, be attributed to his popularity, and the weight of his political character.

From that period Mr. Gerry spent his time in the cultivation of his farm, and in correspondence with the first men of this country and Europe, with whom his active public life has connected him. The flagitious attack on the Chesapeake frigate, by the British ship of war Leopard, kindled again the same feelings which the murder at Lexington, in 1775, had first warmed in his bosom; with the alacrity of youth he hastened to preside at a large meeting of his fellow citizens in Boston, collected from that and the neighbouring towns, and in the animated language of patriotism, declared to the assembly, that "at a crisis so momentous and interesting to our beloved country, he held it to be the duty of every citizen, though he might have but one day to live, to devote that day to the public good."

In 1810, Mr. Gerry was prevailed upon to permit his name to be placed on the republican ticket, as a candidate for the chief magistracy of this commonwealth. It was with extreme reluctance that he again appeared before the public; but the spirit of opposition to the national government which had been manifested by a party among us; and the attempt which it was very generally said was in contemplation, of organizing a coalition of the northern states against the Union, he considered as forming another crisis, at which he believed it again to be "the duty of every good citizen to devote himself to the public good."

The result of that election terminated in a most honourable and decisive majority for Mr. Gerry, and Massachusetts now gloried in placing at the head of her councils, this man of the people, whose talents and services had been devoted to his country through the whole continuance of the war of the revolution; who had signed the declaration of independence, with the other patriots of those days, at the hazard of their lives and property; and who had largely contributed to the welfare of his country in every department of legislation. The elevation of governor Gerry to this honourable station, was received with the greatest satisfaction by the friends of our republic throughout the United States.

During the years immediatly preceding, the violence of party rage had threatened extensive destruction, and had alarmed many of the most intelligent and sincere friends of the state. Mr. Gerry had been aloof from the storm; and although decidedly and sincerely a republican, he entered on the duties of chief magistrate, without one engagement or one feeling of a partizan. The senate in one of their addresses to him among the flattering recollections of his "eminent services" and the zeal and fidelity with which they were rendered, remark "that their confidence in him is strengthened by the reflection, that during the conflict which for many years has agitated almost every portion of the community, he had been aloof from the scene of contention, and they trusted, therefore, had advanced to the chair of government unbiased by those passions and prejudices which are in some degree common to all, who have been actively engaged in the warfare of political opinions." The majority of the senate were federal, and this address was draughted by a distinguished leader of the party.

Mr. Gerry delivered his first speech to the legislature of Massachusetts on the seventh of June, 1810. In it he commences by expressing his desire and his hopes that the political differences, which had of late agitated the state, might be forgotten, and the mantle of friendship drawn over the obnoxious measures of the past. In alluding to the situation of foreign nations, he dwells with regret on that scene and devastation and bloodshed which had been occasioned by the long wars of England and France; and declares the necessity of our internal union, to protect us from the dangers in which they may otherwise involve us. "Will not this desirable measure" he observes "if commenced by government, be supported by the constitutional sovereigns of the land, the people? will not every friend to his country recollect the sacred truth—that an house divided against itself cannot stand? will he not determine for himself to relinquish a party system, and the practice of misrepresenting, and unjustly reprobating, his political opponents? will he not magnanimously impute to his fellow citizens in opposition, a mistaken zeal and patriotism, and cordially embrace them? will he not discountenance every attempt to wound the dignity of the press, that great palladium of liberty, when not urged to prostitution and abuse? and will not internal peace and happiness, will not order at home and respectability abroad, be thus again restored to this great and respectable state?"

From these views, he proceeds to the more immediate means of defending our country against aggressions, and recommends immediate and zealous attention to the organization of our militia; aware from his experience during the revolutionary war, of the strength of a body of well organized citizens, he believed that discipline and attention would soon render American troops, superior to the veteran armies that might be opposed to them.

He next turns for a moment to our great political relations, as regards the federal administration. After a brief view of its early state, and some judicious remarks on the great men who had filled the executive chair, he calls on his constituents, honourably to support their government in its present difficulties. "Whilst we admit" he remarks "that there is no perfection in human nature, and that the greatest men do often err; let us not construe the errors of honest functionaries into crimes; let us place in the opposite scale, their meritorious acts, and at least give them full credit for the balance. When this is done, may we not with truth declare, that the federal government have done well, and are good and faithful servants of the public?" After this, briefly noticing the peculiar blessings which our country has received at the hands of providence, he concludes with the following excellent observations. "When we reflect that the United States are in possession of numerous blessings, political, civil and religious, many of which are not enjoyed by any other nation; that we are remote from those scenes of war and carnage, by which Europe is vested in sable: that we enjoy the uncontrolled right on principles of true liberty, to form, alter and carry into effect our federal and state constitutions: that founded on them and on law, there exists a spirit of toleration, securing to every one the undisturbed rights of conscience, and the free exercise of religion: that the people, at fixed periods, have the choice of their rulers, and can remove those who do wrong: that the means of education in all its branches. are liberal, general and successful: that their national strength, resources, and powers, by proper arrangements, may render these states invincible: that by our husbandry, commerce, manufactures and mechanical arts, the wealth of this country almost surpasses credibility: let us not be prompted by imprudent zealots of any description, to hazard the irretrievable loss of all, or of any of these inestimable blessings; but let us secure them forever, with the aid of divine Providence, by rallying around the standard of our national government and by encouraging and establishing a martial spirit, on the solid foundation of internal peace, order and concord."

When the legislature of Massachusetts met in January following, Mr. Gerry addressed them as usual. The only subject, however, of a general interest embraced in his communication, is that of our relations with foreign countries, which were every day drawing more nearly to that inevitable result, which the honour and policy of the nation equally demanded. Sensible of this, all Mr. Gerry's efforts were renewed to preserve that harmony between the parties of the state, and that union of feeling with the general government, which were so essential in the approaching conflict. "From the establishment of their independence to the present period," he remarks, "the government of the United States in their intercourse with foreign nations have conducted themselves with the utmost impartiality, justice and honour. They have been incapable of intentional injuries, and to casual wrong have applied immediate remedies. They have contended for their own rights, but have never derogated from the rights of others. They have not coveted foreign territory, and in recovering their own, have evinced great moderation. They have carefully avoided violent measures, and have preferred to them, amicable negotiation. They even in this, have not been hasty or urgent: but have evinced patience, whilst compatible with dignity. They have punctually discharged their just debts, and have unlimited credit, at home and abroad. Is not such a government entitled to the highest respect, and the strictest justice? How have their equitable claims on the belligerents been answered? By delays which have become denials; and which to injuries have added insults. The crisis is rapidily approaching, if not arrived, when our government must sanction this degrading conduct, or oppose to it their sovereign veto. The former would fix an indelible stain on the nation, the latter would manifest her wonted magnanimity. If war, which she still deprecates, should be the result, she has ample means under Divine Providence, to support it. One million two hundred thousand brave and determined freemen, whose necks were never yoked in bondage; whose swords would leap from their scabbards to avenge their country's cause; whose native land, abounding with the necessaries, conveniences and luxuries of life, can supply them with every requisite for war; may bid defiance to any hostile nation or coalition on earth. In this perilous state of our public concerns, let us obey the loud calls of our national interest and honour; let us support every measure of government for terminating foreign rapine and aggression; let us not foster or countenance predilections or prejudices for or against Great Britain or France; let us exterminate those germs of public dissensions, which threaten a harvest of political misery; let us drain every source of foreign influence, and multiply the streams of uncontaminated patriotism."

By the extracts we have made from the official communications of Mr. Gerry, and indeed from the whole tenor of his actions and political life, it will be perceived that he was a decided friend of those measures which characterized the party at this time in power. Of course many of his views did not meet the approbation of those who entertained different opinions. It is true that during the past year, his administration had fully justified the confidence reposed in him by his fellow citizens. It had been mild and conciliatory. It had been his design to allay as much as possible the angry feeling of his political opponents, and to bring all to the common centre of the public good. Notwithstanding this, however, as the period approached for a new election, it was to be expected that the opposite party would select a man for so distinguished an office, whose opinions coincided more directly with their own. Mr. Gore was accordingly nominated in opposition to him, but without success; Mr. Gerry was again chosen governor of the state, by a majority considerably larger than that of the preceding year.

On the seventh of June, 1811, he delivered his inaugural speech to the legislature. In this he dwells chiefly on some injudicious proceedings of meetings held in opposition to the government; and especially one which had lately occurred at Boston, where, to use his own expression, open hostility had been avowed to the government of the United States. After a long series of remarks on this subject, he concludes with the following observations; and if it should be thought that they display somewhat too much of party feeling, it should at the same time be remembered that it was on a subject and at a time calculated to arouse all our sensibilities, and when, in the opinion of the writer, the indulgence of such opinions as had been avowed, was inimical not merely to the prosperity, but the very existence of the nation. "To diminish, and if possible, to exterminate party spirit," he observes, "the executive of this commonwealth, during the last year, has confirmed in his place, or re-appointed when requisite, every state officer under its control, who has been correct in his conduct, and faithful to his trust; disregarding his politics, and requiring only his support of the federal and state constitutions, governments and laws, with a due regard to the rights of officers and individuals subject to his official discretion. But it cannot be expected of any executive, so far to disregard the sacred obligations of duty and honour, as to preserve in official stations, such individuals as would abuse the influence of their public characters, by sanctioning resistence to law, or by such other conduct as will beguile peaceable and happy citizens into a state of civil warfare.

For our metropolis, I have ever entertained an affectionate esteem and respect; and regret exceedingly, that she has not supported the salutary measures of this government of the last year. Had this been done, we might have silenced the demon of party discord, have manifested such an invincible determination to preserve our union, as would have animated our sister states to similar measures and might have destroyed the germ of every hope to sever the United States."

From these extracts, it will be seen that party spirit prevailed with no common violence, and however anxious Mr. Gerry might have been to keep without its vortex, it became impossible that he should entirely do so, in the high and difficult situation which he occupied. It is not for us in these times, and with the few opportunities which are now afforded of judging of the propriety or policy of different measures, to enter into the vindication of Mr. Gerry against every charge brought against him by his political opponents; nor would it be in any manner consistent with the character of this article, that we should indulge in a minute detail of events which, however interesting in a history of Massachusetts, would be out of place in a work of general biography. Leaving, therefore, the peculiar political tenets and views alike of him and his opponents to some other pen; we shall merely refer to an act marking the remainder of his administration, whose character is of that general interest which may make it worth notice, when others are forgotten or despised. Of this nature seems to be his recommendation made to the legislature of Massachusetts, in January, 1812, relative to the patronage and improvement of our domestic manufactures. It arose from a complaint made by the Indians that, owing to the suspension of our trade with Great Britain, they did not receive the usual supplies of goods with which they had been furnished. "In the year 1775," says Mr. Gerry, "when our war with Great Britain commenced, and when, immediately preceding it, a non-importation act had been strictly carried into effect, the state of Massachusetts apportioned on their towns, respectively, to be manufactured by them, the articles of clothing wanted for their proportion of the army which besieged Boston; fixed the price and qualities of those articles, and they were duly supplied within a short period.

Thus before we had arrived at the threshold of independence, and when we were in an exhausted state, by the antecedent, voluntary and patriotic sacrifice of our commerce, between thirteen and fourteen thousand cloth coats were manufactured, made and delivered into our magazine, within a few months from the date of the resolve which first communicated the requisition. Thirty-six years have since elapsed, during twenty-nine of which we have enjoyed peace and prosperity, and have increased in numbers, manufactures, wealth and resources, beyond the most sanguine expectations. All branches of this government have declared their opinion, and I conceive, on the most solid principle, that, as a nation, we are independent of every other, for the necessaries, conveniences, and for many of the luxuries of life.

Let us not then, at this critical period, admit any obstruction which we have power to remove, to discourage or retard the national exertions for asserting and maintaining our rights; and above all, let us convince Great Britain, that we can and will be independent of her for every article of commerce, whilst she continues to be the ostensible friend, but implacable foe of our prosperity, government, union and independence."

As the period for a new election of governor approached, the democratic party in Massachusetts a third time solicited Mr. Gerry to offer himself as a candidate; this he at first declined, but viewing the success of the principles which he had avowed as in some degree connected with his return, he consented to serve again in the executive office. During the past year, however, either his popularity had decreased or his political opponents had augmented their strength; and he lost his election by a small majority.

It seemed, however, that advanced as Mr. Gerry was in age, and wearied as he might well be with public office, (for forty years had nearly elapsed since he had entered on his political career,) he was yet destined to serve his country, and to close his active life in the full enjoyment of her honours. At a meeting of the republican members of congress, he was, in June, 1812, by a unanimous vote, recommended to the people of the United States as a proper person to fill the office of vice-president, for four years, from the fourth day of March following. This was announced to him by a committee of the meeting, in a letter, to which he immediately replied. "The question," he observed, "respecting the acceptance or non-acceptance of this proposition, involved many considerations of great weight in my mind; as they related to the nation, to this state, and to my domestic concerns. But it is neither expedient or necessary to state the points, since one was paramount to the rest, that, 'in a republic, the service of each citizen is due to the state, even in profound peace, and much more so when the nation stands on the threshold of war.' I have the honour frankly to acknowledge this distinguished testimony of confidence, on the part of my congressional friends and fellow citizens, gratefully to accept their proffer, and freely to assure them of every exertion in my power, for meriting in office the approbation of themselves and of the public." The recommendation was accepted by his countrymen, and he was elected to the second office of the republic, by a majority of forty-one votes.

His fellow citizens in Boston, anxious to show their respect for the man, and grateful for the services he had rendered them in his long and active life, met together to congratulate him on this proud termination of his honours; and, at the same time, to vindicate his character from the charges, in which party feeling had indulged, during his administration of the government of Massachusetts. "At this interesting period," they say, "we are happy to find that so large a majority of the citizens have united in the choice of a character, whose revolutionary services have long endeared him to every friend of his country. The uniformity of those principles which led to the establishment of our sovereignty and independence, being so unequivocally maintained in every situation in which you have been placed, cannot but inspire a confidence in the republicans, that our national honour (under the wisdom of your councils) will be preserved against the artifices of foreign and domestic foes.

We wish you, respected sir, every happiness, both political and domestic; and you may be assured that you commence the important duties of vice-president of the United States, with the most sincere congratulations of your republican friends in Massachusetts. They rely on your patriotism, and trust that the same spirit which carried the people of America through the arduous conflict of the revolution, will animate you to vindicate those national rights anticipated by our independence. We trust in Heaven, that the enemies of our country will not prevail, while the arm of Gerry is uplifted to oppose them."

On the fourth of March, 1813, Mr. Gerry was inaugurated vice-president of the United States, being attended at the time, by his venerable friend and revolutionary companion John Adams. At the meeting of the senate on the twenty-fifth of May following, he took his seat as constitutional president of that body, and delivered an address to them, setting forth at large his opinions and views on the great events of political interest which then occupied the attention of the nation. He concluded it in the following terms: "Your fellow citizen, with sensations which can more easily be conceived than expressed, perceives that there are in the government many of his former friends and compatriots, with whom he has often co-operated in the perilous concerns of his country; and with unfeigned pleasure he will meet the other public functionaries, whose acknowledged abilities and public services in like manner claim his high consideration and respect. With a sacred regard to the rights of every department and officer of government, and with a respectful deference to their political principles and opinions, he has frankly declared his own; for to have concealed them at a crisis like this, might have savoured too much of a want of candour.

And may that Omnipotent Being, who with infinite wisdom and justice superintends the destinies of nations, confirm the heroic patriotism which has glowed in the breasts of the national rulers, and convince the enemy, that whilst a disposition to peace, on equitable and honourable terms, will ever prevail in their public councils, one spirit animated by the love of country, will inspire every department of the national government."

From this period Mr. Gerry devoted himself, with undeviating attention, to the duties of his office. He presided constantly over the deliberations of the senate, and, by his strict impartiality and candour, gave that satisfaction in the latest, which he had done in the earliest actions of his political life. Providence, however, did not long permit him to enjoy the dignity which he had so well earned, but called him in the midst of his honours, but full of years, from the scene of his earthly labours. The date and circumstances of his death are thus recorded, on a beautiful monument, which congress caused to be erected over his remains.

The Tomb of
ELBRIDGE GERRY,
Vice-President of the United States,
Who died suddenly in this city, on his way to the
capitol, as President of the Senate,
November 23, 1814,
Aged 70.

Thus fulfilling his own memorable injunction—"It is the duty of every citizen, though he may have but one day to live, to devote that day to the service of his country."

CÆSAR RODNEY.

CÆSAR RODNEY.

THE name of Rodney is honourably recorded in the history of earlier and of later times. It has been borne by gallant and successful warriors, and by firm and patriotic statesmen. It is illustrious alike in the annals of the old world and the new. The earliest authentic memorial of its existence, introduces it to us at a period when military prowess was the only mark of reputation, and when that prowess was indiscriminately exerted for the promotion of good or bad ends. The spirit of party or the spirit of chivalry, enlisted sir Walter De Rodeney in the cause of an oppressed woman, a queen who was driven by an usurper from her throne. "It hath been a constant tradition," says an old family manuscript, written about two hundred years since, "that we came into England with Maud the empress, from foreign parts; and that for service done by Rodeney, in her wars against king Stephen, the usurper, she gave them land within this kingdom. I confess I have no evidence by me to prove this tradition, besides the pedigree; yet the want thereof will not make it false in itself, though it gain the less credit with others. There was an evidence which would have much strengthened this tradition, but it miscarried at the time of sir George De Rodeney's death; it was a piece of brass of the length and breadth of two feet, or thereabout, whereon was insclupt in antient characters, the names of those manors and lands given by the empress to sir Henry De Rodeney, the second man in the pedigree, and steward to the young king Henry, who was crowned in his father's life time."

The lands which are thus referred to, were situated in the county of Somerset, on the shores of Bristol channel. The little village of Rodney Stoke, still preserves the name which it received at that early period; and probably at this day, certainly not a great many years since, the descendants of the first proprietors were still seated on the domains of their ancestors. The successors of sir Henry De Rodeney, seem to have borne their full share in the exploits of those stormy times. Two of them were slain in a battle with Leolin, prince of Wales, at Hereford, in the year 1234; sir Richard De Rodeney accompanying the gallant Richard Cœur de Lion, in his crusade to the Holy Land, fell at the siege of Acre; and his son died at Viterbo, while on his way to Rome, as an ambassador from king John to the Holy See.

In the reign of Edward the second, the wealth and power of the family was much increased by grants made to sir Richard De Rodeney, a gentleman whose knighthood is recorded by the celebrated antiquary Mr. Selden, as one of the most ancient precedents for conferring that rank, he had been able to discover; he was knighted it seems, in the great hall of the Obie Kainsham in the county of Somerset, by "being girded with a sword by Almarquis earl of Pembrook, and having one spur put on by the lord Maurice of Berkley, and the other, by the lord Bartholomew of Badismere." He died in the early part of the reign of Edward the third, leaving a very large estate. "The names of his manors," says the old family chronicle, "were as followeth, viz. Stoke Rodeney, Backwell, Winford, Hallonko, Salford, Tiverton, Lamgate, Lovington, Dinder, Overbagworth, Congressbury Rodeney, and Tithes Court, besides rents of houses in Bristol; which manors continue to this day, at the same rent as they were let in sir Richard De Rodeney's time; but are worth now, upon the improved values, twenty times the rent, which comes to about six thousand pounds, per annum; an estate which when my great-grandfather died, (in the 20th of Henry 8,) did equal any gentleman's estate, in Somersetshire, being some years before the dissolution of the abbeys, which hoisted up other families into very great fortunes, but not mine."

The next member of the family of whom particular mention has been made, is sir John Rodeney. There was a painted monument, long existing in the church at Rodeney-Stoke bearing the arms of the family; and "it was a tradition among the old men of the neighbourhood," says the chronicle, "that this monument was erected for good sir John De Rodeney, as they called him; and that the addition of 'good' was given him, because in a jostling match with a German prince upon London bridge, he overthew him, and thereupon the king that then was, willed him to ask some reward for his valour, and he asked only an abatement of the king's silver, for his tenants of Stoke, from twenty shillings to six and eight pence, which was granted."

Many anecdotes of this kind might be collected, but it scarcely appears consistent with this brief sketch of the life of one individual, to enter largely into matters which relate to family history. It is certain that there are few names more distinguished for private virtues, or public services during a long course of years, than that of Rodney; and, in a country where noble birth is regarded with a foolish prejudice, a herald would delight in tracing its various ramifications through illustrious families. It was connected by marriage with the well known houses of Burdette, Pawlett, St. John afterwards lord Bolingbroke, Comptons earls of Northampton, and indeed with royalty itself, for sir George Rodney married Jane Seymour, a niece of Edward duke of Somerset, and of queen Jane Seymour, mother of king Edward the sixth.

Long descent and honourable connexions were not able, however, to preserve this family from calamity. By improvidence, by division among various branches, and last of all by the calamities of the civil wars about the time of the commonwealth, its numerous manors had dwindled to two or three, and its members began to seek their fortunes in new occupations and in distant countries. William Rodney had married Alice Cæsar, the daughter of Sir Thomas Cæsar, a very rich merchant;

and his son William might have indulged the expectation of a handsome estate; but to the losses which he experienced from the disturbances of the times, was added the accident of a violent tempest, in which four of his vessels were lost at once, and his grandson was fain to seek his own fortunes in an adventurous life. With this view he made a voyage to Pennsylvania, which had just been settled by William Penn, and after a short residence in Philadelphia, fixed himself in Kent, one of the lower counties upon Delaware, as they were then called. Here he appears to have rendered himself conspicuous at an early period, and to have taken a prominent part in all the leading affairs of the time. He held most of the posts of honour in the territory, and rendered himself highly popular by his exertions to effect a separation, between the legislature of the province and that of the counties. In this, aided by the wishes and strong efforts of the inhabitants, he at length succeeded, and as a reward was elected the first speaker of the new house of assembly. He died in the year 1708, leaving eight children, and a fortune very considerable for those times.

Of the children of William Rodney, nearly all died without issue, in consequence of which the greater portion of his estate descended to his youngest son Cæsar, on whom it had been settled in tail. This gentleman is said to have been a man of a remarkably amiable and benevolent disposition, and so averse to the intrigue and trouble which generally attend public station, that he refused every office which was offered to him, although they included most of the principal ones in the province. He married the daughter of Mr. Thomas Crawford, the first preacher of the gospel in those parts—a man distinguished by his piety, virtue, and successful mission, for whom we are indebted to that institution which has spread its useful lessons through so many distant regions, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. By this lady he left eight children, the eldest of whom is the subject of this notice.

Cæsar Rodney was born at Dover, about the year 1730. At his father's death he inherited all his lands, which had been entailed upon him as heir male, and succeeded also to that popularity, which his family seem always to have enjoyed. In the year 1758, he was chosen high sheriff of the county of Kent, and on the expiration of his term of service therein, was immediately made a justice of the peace and a judge of all the lower courts. At what period exactly he took his seat in the provincial legislature, we have no means of ascertaining, as the journals of that body, previous to the year 1762, have not been preserved. Of the assembly, however, which met at Newcastle on the twentieth October in that year, he was a member from the county of Kent, and as such took his seat therein.

It is probable, however, Mr. Rodney had been a member of the legislature before this period, for he at once entered with great activity into the prominent measures of the day. He was of a committee with his friend Mr. M'Kean, to draught and present to the governor an answer to his message at the opening of the assembly, and was appointed by the house to transact other business with that officer on their behalf. At the close of the session, he was authorized to have the great seal affixed to the several laws which had been passed, after which the legislature adjourned to the thirtieth of the following September.

In the mean time, however, before the period which was thus fixed for their regular meeting, the members of the assembly met together to consult upon an important subject which had arisen—the impending misfortunes of their country, occasioned by the stamp act, and other late measures of the British government. The members who were present being the full, and only representative body of the freemen of the province, proceeded to appoint a committee to meet the delegates of the other provinces at New York, in a general congress; and they chose on that honourable service, by a unanimous vote, Mr. Rodney, with Mr. M'Kean, and the speaker of the assembly, Mr. Kollock. In their instructions, they directed them to join with the committees sent by the other provinces in one united and loyal petition to his majesty, and remonstrance to the honourable house of commons of Great Britain, against the acts of parliament, and therein dutifully, yet most firmly to assert the colonies' rights of exclusion from parliamentary taxation, and pray that they might not in any instance, be stripped of the ancient and most valuable privilege of a trial by their peers, and most humbly to implore relief.

When the assembly met, pursuant to a subsequent adjournment, on the twenty-sixth of May, 1766, Mr. Rodney and Mr. M‘Kean appeared and took their seats, and on the following day reported to the house their proceedings under the instructions they had received. These proceedings, it will be recollected, consisted of memorials, remonstrances and petitions to the British government, relative to their late arbitrary measures. They received the unanimous thanks of the house for their faithful and judicious discharge of the trust reposed in them, and a liberal compensation therefor.

On the repeal of the stamp act, the joy throughout America was, as is well known, universal. Addresses of thanks and congratulation were sent from all parts of the provinces, and all endeavoured to show the kind feelings with which they were animated, towards the mother country. By the legislature of Delaware, Mr. Rodney was appointed, with his constant friend and colleague Mr. M‘Kean, and Mr. Read, to frame an address to the king, expressive of these sentiments; and its tenor is, in some respects, so remarkable, as showing the anxiety, even the tenacity, with which the colonies clung to the British nation, that we shall extract one or two of its clauses. “We cannot help glorying,” they say, “in being the subjects of a king, that has made the preservation of the civil and religious rights of his people, and the established constitution, the foundation and constant rule of his government, and the safety, ease and prosperity of his people his chiefest care; of a king, whose mild and equal administration is sensibly felt and enjoyed in the remotest parts of his dominions. The clouds which lately hung over America are dissipated. Our complaints have been heard and our grievances redressed; trade and commerce again flourish. Our hearts are animated with the warmest wishes for the prosperity of the mother country, for which our affection is unbounded, and your faithful subjects here are transported with joy and gratitude. Such are the blessings we may justly expect will ever attend the measures of your majesty, pursuing steadily the united and true interests of all your people throughout your wide extended empire, assisted with the advice and support of a British parliament, and a virtuous and wise ministry. We most humbly beseech your majesty graciously to accept the strongest assurances, that having the justest sense of the many favours we have received from your royal benevolence, during the course of your majesty's reign, and how much our present happiness is owing to your paternal love and care for your people; we will at all times most cheerfully contribute to your majesty's service, to the utmost of our abilities, when your royal requisitions, as heretofore, shall be made known; that your majesty will always find such returns of duty and gratitude from us, as the best of kings may expect from the most loyal subjects, and that we will demonstrate to all the world, that the support of your majesty's government, and the honour and interests of the British nation, are our chief care and concern, desiring nothing more than the continuance of our wise and excellent constitution in the same happy, firm, and envied situation, in which it was delivered down to us from our ancestors, and your majesty's predecessors." An address of such a nature, it may be supposed, could not but be well received; but of such being the fact we have a singular confirmation, in a letter from Mr. De Berdt, the agent through whom it was transmitted, and who thus writes to the committee in the month of September following. "I put the address into the hands of lord Shelburn, our new secretary of state, who presented it to his majesty, and was very graciously received. I told his lordship, that to me it appeared wrote with the most natural honest simplicity of any I had seen; he said it did, and the king was so well pleased with it, that he read it over twice."

During the years 1766, 1767 and 1768, Mr. Rodney continued a zealous and active member of the legislature, and we find him constantly engaged in various subjects of public interest. Among these we should not omit to mention his efforts, at so early a period, against the increase of slavery. A bill had been brought in by a committee, for the further and better regulation of slaves within the government, and for imposing certain duties on all slaves brought into and sold in the same. When this bill was submitted to the house, an amendment was brought forward and warmly supported by Mr. Rodney, to introduce a new clause totally prohibiting the importation of slaves into the province; the amendment was indeed lost, but the debate was productive of much benefit, and the majority by which the original bill passed was only two voices.

When the new aggressions of the British ministry overthrew the expectations of future safety, in which the colonies had indulged; Mr. Rodney had again assigned to him, with the same colleagues, the task of presenting the sentiments of the freemen of Delaware, to their sovereign. In so doing, the assembly did not fail to renew their protestations of loyalty, but at the same time they freely expressed their regret at the new course of oppression which had been adopted. "The sense" they say "of our deplorable condition, will, we hope, plead with your majesty in our behalf, for the freedom we take, in dutifully remonstrating against the proceedings of a British parliament, confessedly the wisest and greatest assembly upon earth. But if our fellow-subjects of Great Britain, who derive no authority from us, who cannot in our humble opinion represent us, and to whom we will not yield in loyalty and affection to your majesty, can, at their will and pleasure, of right give and grant away our property; if they can enforce an implicit obedience to every order or act of theirs for that purpose, and deprive all, or any of the assemblies on this continent of the power of legislation, for differing with them in opinion in matters which intimately affect their rights and interests, and every thing that is dear and valuable to Englishmen, we cannot imagine a case more miserable; we cannot think that we shall have even the shadow of liberty left. We conceive it to be an inherent right in your majesty's subjects, derived to them from God and nature, handed down from their ancestors, and confirmed by your royal predecessors and the constitution, in person, or by their representatives, to give and grant to their sovereign, those things which their own labours and their own cares have acquired and saved, and in such proportions, and at such times, as the national honour and interest may require. Your majesty's faithful subjects of this government, have enjoyed this inestimable privilege uninterrupted from its first existence, till of late. They have at all times cheerfully contributed, to the utmost of their abilities, for your majesty's service, as often as your royal requisitions were made known; and they cannot now, but with the greatest uneasiness and distress of mind, part with the power of demonstrating their loyalty and affection to their beloved king."

This address was immediately followed by a correspondence with the governor of Virginia, in which their views were set forth relative to the new aggressions of Great Britain, and a hasty intention declared of cooperating with the other colonies, in such prudent measures as might have a tendency to conciliate the affections of the mother country, and restore their just rights and liberties, and for that end, they earnestly desired to keep up a correspondence with them.

About this period the health of Mr. Rodney was seriously affected, and he was obliged to leave his public duties to repair to Philadelphia for medical aid. He had been for sometime subject to a cancer, which forming on his nose, ultimately spread over the whole of one side of his face, and was in the end the cause of his death. The letters of his family are very urgent, that he should cross over to England, for professional advice, if the physicians of Philadelphia proved unable to cure him. He seems indeed to have entertained some serious intentions of passing the Atlantic, but the temporary relief which he obtained, and the increasing interest of political events, deterred him from ever carrying them into effect.

When the assembly met in October, 1769, Mr. Rodney was chosen speaker, an office which he retained for several years. He was also subsequently elected chairman of the committee of correspondence and communication with the other colonies. In this situation he maintained a constant intercourse with leading men in different parts of the country; and by his influence at home, contributed to, and promoted that union of sentiment, which he perceived was becoming every day more and more necessary.

At length he was called on to make a more direct effort. On the twenty-ninth of June, he received a letter from his friend, George Read of New Castle, mentioning to him that a public meeting had been held there on the subject of British aggressions. This was succeeded in a few days by a letter from a committee of the same assembly, in which they requested him, as speaker of the legislature to call together the representatives of the people, on the first of August following. To this Mr. Rodney immediately replied; and his answer, of which the original now lies before us, is expressive at once, of his zeal in the cause, and his anxiety to keep up the strictest mutual good feeling among his fellow citizens. "I shall most cheerfully, I do assure you" he writes "comply with your request. But I cannot help thinking, it may be done with more propriety, immediately after the intended meeting of the people of this county, which is on Wednesday next; I hope and indeed expect the people here, will adopt the same mode that you have. I must, therefore, beg leave to defer writing the circular letters till the day after the meeting of the people here, lest it should give offence to some, who would wish to have a hand in every good work, and thereby injure the cause. Gentlemen, you may expect to hear from me by express, as soon, after our meeting, as letters can be written and the express get there, which I apprehend, will be time enough for the first of August; for I would by no means retard a business of so great importance. I shall send an express to Sussex, this day, and endeavour to know by him what they are about to do. In short, you may be assured I shall do every thing in my power to have a convention of the representatives, on the first day of August next, at New Castle."

Mr. Rodney succeeded in his endeavours, for on the first of August, 1774, a great number of delegates from all the three counties assembled at New-Castle, and as soon as they had organized themselves, he was elected their chairman by a unanimous vote. The convention then proceeded to read the letters which had passed, between the several committees of correspondence, on the subject of a general congress, and finally adopted a resolution declaring their opinion, that such a measure was in accordance with the desires of their constituents, and serviceable to the general cause of America. They then nominated and appointed Cæsar Rodney, Thomas M'Kean, and George Read, Esquires, or any two of them, deputies on the part and behalf of this government, at a general continental congress proposed to be held in the city of Philadelphia, on the first Monday in September next, or at any other time and place that might be generally agreed on; then and there to consult and advise with the deputies from the other colonies, and to determine upon all such prudent and lawful measures, as might be judged most expedient for the colonies immediately and unitedly to adopt, in order to obtain relief for an oppressed people, and the redress of their general grievances.

In pursuance of this appointment, Mr. Rodney took his seat in congress, at Philadelphia, on the fifth September, 1774, and on the following day was appointed a member of the grand committee who were instructed to state the rights of the colonies in general, the several instances in which those rights were violated or infringed, and the means most proper to be pursued for obtaining a restoration of them. On the meeting of the provincial assembly, in the month of March following, he and his colleagues laid before them a full statement of their appointment and all their proceedings; and the house immediately passed a vote, without a dissenting voice, approving entirely of their conduct. As a further testimony of their approbation, they proceeded on the following day to a choice of representatives for the succeeding congress; and the result was the same as in the preceding year, Mr. Rodney being returned with his former companions. While he was absent at Philadelphia, under this appointment, the office of brigadier general of the province was also conferred upon him.

Shortly after this promotion, he obtained leave of absence and returned to Delaware, in order to attend to some private business of importance. Scarcely, however, had he reached home, when he received the following letter from his friend, Mr. Read, who was at New-Castle. "I have just received letters requesting your attendance and mine at congress, as there is business of the last importance depending; particularly a motion, the general tenor of which is to declare the principles on which America has hitherto acted, and those which they are disposed still to proceed on; they are extremely pressing, and I, totally unprovided as to my business here, have determined to be at Philadelphia this evening, and should be glad you would follow me. Some extraordinary exertions are necessary; fail not to come up immediately and bring some gold with you." Such a summons was sufficient to hurry off Mr. Rodney without delay, and he returned there to take an active part in the measures which were agitated during this winter, and which led the way to the declaration of independence a few months after.

He remained in Philadelphia during the spring, but was obliged to keep up a constant and active intercourse with his own province. In the lower counties there were a great number of persons, disaffected to the congress, and being scattered through the country it was more difficult to convince them of the impropriety of their acts, or to oppose them by open and decisive, but just measures. His military command too, required his attention, and, during this period, his letters and messages on that subject are very numerous; he is constantly urging, both on the legislature and on his subordinate officers, the necessity of augmenting their corps, supplying them thoroughly, and collecting them in proper places; it was in no small degree owing to this, that the Delaware line became so distinguished for the discipline, constancy, and good order which it signally displayed during the whole war. On these various subjects his correspondence was very extensive; though but few of his own letters or those he received have been preserved. Among those which do remain, are several from the brave and noble colonel Haslet, an officer who was cut off early in his career; he fell while leading his troops to the charge, with uncommon gallantry, in the battle of Princeton. Being an officer under Mr. or rather general Rodney, as well as a most intimate and attached friend, he reported to him while at Philadelphia, the various matters worthy of notice which occurred in Delaware. In a letter written on the fifth June, 1776, he thus refers to the situation of affairs there, to which we have alluded: "I wrote by express to major M'Donough, orders to secure all the ammunition and arms at Lewes, and put himself in the best posture of defence, to call in the guard from the False Cape; and if the matter assumes a still more serious appearance, to seize the most suspected of the ringleaders, as hostages for the good behaviour of their dependants. I have recommended to the major, to conduct this whole business in a manner, as little offensive to the inhabitants as possible. I cannot help thinking, though very probably mistaken, something of vigorous exertion necessary in both counties; a word, however, to the wise, and your consummate acquaintance in both renders it needless to say more. The source of corruption and direction is at Dover; a hint from thence pervades the lower part of the county in a trice." Mr. Rodney finding, however, that much discontent existed, particularly in the county of Sussex, and anxious at so critical a period that congress should have, as much as possible, the general voice in favour of the decisive measures it was about to pursue, obtained leave of absence for a short time, and returned to Delaware to use his personal influence among the people. He went as far as Lewes, a town at the very southern extremity of the state, and succeeded to a very great extent, in preparing and reconciling the people to a change of government, as well as in organizing the troops which had been raised.

During his absence, however, the important question of independence came up; and his colleague, Mr. M'Kean, well acquainted with his views, and anxious that the declaration should be carried by a unanimous vote of the states, looked for his return with great anxiety; as the day appointed, however, approached, Mr. Rodney, who was unacquainted exactly with it, did not make his appearance, and Mr. M'Kean sent a special messenger to convey the intelligence to him. The message no sooner reached him, than, laying aside all other engagements, he hastened to Philadelphia, where he arrived just in time to give his vote, and secure the unanimity of the daring measure. He transmitted an account of it to Dover on the same day; and his friend colonel Haslet, in acknowledging his letter on the sixth of July, thus refers to it. "I congratulate you, sir, on the important day which restores to every American his birthright; a day which every freeman will record with gratitude, and the millions of posterity read with rapture. Ensign Wilson arrived here last night; a fine turtle feast at Dover, anticipated and announced the declaration of congress; even the barrister himself laid aside his airs of reserve, mighty happy." At the time Mr. Rodney's letter reached Dover, the election of officers of a new battalion was going on; the committee of safety, however, immediately met, and after receiving the intelligence proceeded in a body to the court house, where (the election being stopped) the president read the Declaration of congress, and the resolution of the house of assembly for the appointment of a convention; each of which received the highest approbation of the people, in three huzzas. The committee then went in a body back to their room, where they sent for a picture of the king of Great Britain, and made the drummer of the infantry bear it before the president; they then marched two and two, followed by the light infantry in slow time, with music, round the square, then forming a circle about a fire prepared in the middle of the square for that purpose, the president, pronouncing the following words, committed it to the flames: "Compelled by strong necessity, thus we destroy even the shadow of that king who refused to reign over a free people." Three loud huzzas were given by the surrounding crowd; and the friends of liberty gained new courage, to support the cause in which they had embarked.

Notwithstanding however Mr. Rodney's services, he was soon destined to experience the mutability of popular feeling. In the autumn of this year, the people of Delaware determined to call a convention, for the purpose of framing a new constitution, and to elect delegates for the succeeding congress. There was, as we have observed, in the lower counties, a great number of persons who were decided friends of the royal government; and even still more who were not disposed, while they adhered to the new order of things, to push the war beyond the bounds of what they considered absolutely necessary and prudent. These persons uniting together, and adding to their ranks many of firmer whig principles, who were induced to join them from personal feeling or motives of ambition, contrived to obtain a majority in the convention; and one of their earliest acts was to remove from congress Mr. Rodney and Mr. M'Kean, two delegates who had, in every instance, showed themselves the uncompromising advocates of liberty. His friend colonel Haslet, who had heard of these events, thus alludes to them in a letter written to him from camp about this time. "I did feel some uneasiness with respect to a change of the delegates at first, but on second thoughts pronounced it groundless; but find it recur on your proposing to retire and quit your station. I acknowledge the justice of your reasoning, and the ingratitude of the people, as well as the malignity of their present leaders; I know you have already sacrificed a large share of private property to the evil and unthankful; in this you resemble the Supreme Manager, who makes his sun to shine on the evil and the good; and bad as times are, you have a few friends still of the latter character. And, my dear sir, who can better afford it; Providence has blessed you with a fortune to your prudence inexhaustible, by which you are enabled to live where you please, and to keep the first company where you do live, and all this with few drawbacks upon it. How, then, can you lay out a part of it to more noble purposes than in serving your country, guarding her rights and privileges, and forcing men to be happy even against their will. In this you will act as vicegerent of the Sovereign Goodness, and co-operate with Heaven to save a wretched race; and though you may not effect the righteous purpose, the testimony of an approving conscience, the applause of conscious virtue, and the approbation of all good beings, will more than balance the sacrifice. A thousand things might be urged to the same purpose, but a word to the wise. I am not at all surprised at the tory stratagem to leave you out of the convention ticket; 'tis like the rest of their doings, dark, low, dirty, illiberal. What a wretched struggle must they have had in convention; their consciences drawing one way, and the influence of congress another. I'm told they have done as little as possible, and modelled their new government as like the old as may be." In a letter written about the same time by Mr. Rodney himself, he alludes to the same subject, and thus notices his retirement from public life. "If health and weather permit, I set out this day for Kent, and don't intend to return to congress soon again, at least not in the present reign. My domestic business will employ me all the remaining part of this fall, let matters turn out hereafter as they may."

Mr. Rodney, however, still remained a member of the council of safety, and of the committee of inspection. In these offices he continued diligently to employ himself; collecting from all quarters supplies for the army, and increasing by every means in his power its effective force. By the letters, however, which he received from head quarters, he thought, especially since the death of colonel Haslet at Princeton, that his presence there would give encouragement to the troops of the state, and induce them to bear more cheerfully the hardships to which they were exposed, by their rapid movements and the inclemency of the season. Among his papers, there remains a letter written by him to Mr. Killen, afterwards chancellor of the state, and dated on the twenty-seventh of January, 1777, soon after his arrival at camp. It will throw some light on the events of the period, and indeed seems to have been written with a view to give information to the people of the state relative to them. It is as follows.

"At a time when every sensible mind is filled with the greatest anxiety for the fate of America; when the sons of freedom have drawn their swords, and nobly stepped forth, in this inclement season, to defend their most invaluable rights and privileges; at a time of deep distress and danger, you, whose first and greatest temporary wish is for the freedom of the country, are no doubt desirous to know the state of things in this land of trial—this scene of action—this frosty warfare. Be it so—I'll endeavour to amuse, if not inform your eager ear. You have heard, sad intelligence! of your Mercer and Haslet. They fell—but nobly fell, though butchered; and so long as the inhabitants of this American world shall continue to be a free people, so long, at least, will the names of Mercer and Haslet be held in honourable remembrance. Mercer's character is excellent; and in Haslet we know we lost a brave, open, honest, sensible man; one who loved his country's, more than his private interest. But while Washington survives, the great American cause cannot die; his abilities seem to be fully equal to the public spirit that called him forth. History does not furnish you with a greater piece of generalship than he exhibited, on the day poor Haslet fell. He fought—he conquered;—and if we continue to improve the advantages then gained, we shall soon put an end to the dreadful controversy that agitates and distracts us; and in return have peace, liberty and safety. Heaven! what a glorious figure in the eyes of men and angels will this vast American world exhibit, in its free, independent state. Nothing will then be wanting but better men, and wiser measures, to make us a happy people.

There has been no capital stroke since our main army left Princeton, though there seldom a day passes but some advantages are gained, which tend to distress, and in a little time must ruin our enemy. For the particulars of these little engagements I must beg leave to refer you to my brother and others that you will hear from these parts. They are too numerous, and attended with too many circumstances, for my time and power. I have been perfectly well in health ever since I left home, and do assure you that I begin to play the general most surprisingly. I would not have you suppose I mean the fighting general; that is a part of duty I have not yet been called upon to discharge; but when called, I trust I shall not disgrace the American cause; 'tis glorious even to die in a good cause.

By lord Sterling, whom I found in Philadelphia, I was directed to take the command at this place, to forward the troops to the army as fast as they should arrive, always keeping sufficient for this post. Since my arrival, I have sent forward near two thousand; among others the Delawares, who first went to Princeton, and then were sent by general Putnam to the main army, to convoy forty or fifty wagons. Yesterday, by permission, I set out myself for camp; but on my way received orders to return to my old post, where I now am. General Mifflin is gone to Philadelphia, to forward the troops there. In short, every step is taken, by fixing the most suitable persons in these places, to strengthen our army as soon as possible. It is, I do assure you, increasing very fast. The cloud is fast gathering all around, and I trust will soon burst on the tyrants' heads. As soon as the chief of the southern troops pass this place, I shall have leave to go and join my brigade."

Mr. Rodney remained with the army for nearly two months, and during a great part of the time entered into the most active and laborious services, which his station as brigadier general required. Even after the period for which the troops under him had enlisted was expired, he offered to remain with the army, and perform the duties of a soldier, wherever the commander in chief might think he could be useful. Sensible of the patriotic spirit by which this offer was dictated, general Washington wrote him the following highly flattering letter, the original of which now lies before us, dated at Morris-Town, on the eighteenth February, 1777.

"Sir—Lord Stirling did me the favour of sending to me your letter of the eighth instant to him, mentioning your cheerfulness to continue in service, (though your brigade had returned home,) and waiting my determination on that head. The readiness with which you took the field at the period most critical to our affairs—the industry you used in bringing out the militia of the Delaware state—and the alertness observed by you in forwarding on the troops from Trenton—reflect the highest honour on your character, and place your attachment to the cause in the most distinguished point of view. They claim my sincerest thanks, and I am happy in this opportunity of giving them to you. Circumstanced as you are, I see no necessity in detaining you longer from your family and affairs, which no doubt demand your presence and attention. You have therefore my leave to return."

With this honourable testimony of his services, he returned to Delaware, and had scarcely reached home when he was appointed one of the judges of the supreme court, which had just been organized. The appointment however he declined, preferring at any rate, for the present, to retain his military situation, in which he thought he could render more service to the general cause. In so doing he met the views of congress, who, through the board of war expressed the approbation they thought him entitled to receive, for his activity and zeal. In the state, too, those who had lately been, if not his enemies, yet certainly not kindly inclined towards him, felt the necessity of retaining his services, and calling on him, when in situations of embarrassment and difficulty. An insurrection against the government having arisen in Sussex county, they immediately sought his influence to quell it, and issued orders to him to repair thither with a body of men. This duty he cheerfully accepted; and thus alludes to it in a letter to the president of the state. "The field officers will be with me this day, when I shall give orders for the meeting and marching the militia ordered to Sussex county, and hope the tents, &c. will be sent forward as fast as possible. I confess I want the abilities necessary to qualify me for the task assigned, but be assured that every thing in my power, that tends to give peace, safety and good order to the state, shall be done. If I should be able to remove impressions and practices, too predominant in that county and the lower end of this, and introduce good order and a better opinion of the glorious cause for which we are contending, even at the expense of blood and treasure, I shall be happy, not only in having rendered great service to my country, which is and always has been my chief aim, but of meeting your approbation." He succeeded in his object, and restored, at any rate, temporary harmony and good order.

But he was soon called on to exercise his military talents on a larger scale. The British army having landed in the autumn of this year, on the shore of the Chesapeake, were pursuing their march rapidly to Philadelphia, and general Washington had fixed his head quarters in the northern part of the state of Delaware, for the purpose of opposing them. General Rodney hastened immediately to his aid, with all the troops he could collect in Kent, and endeavoured, though with but partial success, to increase his force by engaging the militia of Newcastle county. By the directions of the commander in chief, he placed himself south of the main army, so as to watch the enemy's movements, and if possible get between them and their shipping. During this period a correspondence was kept up between Mr. Rodney and general Washington, who were interested in each other, not merely from their being thus thrown together in the war, but from a long friendship founded on mutual esteem. Several of their letters have been preserved, but as they relate at this time chiefly to military details, to insert much of them would be out of character with the simple nature of this sketch. Some of them, however, throw a light on the personal difficulties with which the officers of the army had to struggle during the war, and may afford some interest by their insertion. Mr. Rodney thus writes to the general on the ninth of September. "I am here in a disagreeable situation, unable to render you and the states those services I both wished and expected. A few days ago I moved from hence to Middletown, in order to induce the militia in this quarter, who had shown great backwardness, to turn out; especially as by that move most of their farms and property were covered. However, all this has answered no purpose; for though I believe most of their officers have been vigilant, but very few have come in at all, and those few who made their appearance in the morning, took the liberty of returning, contrary to orders, in the evening; thus increasing the duty of, and setting so bad an example to, the troops frem Kent, about four hundred in number, and the only troops I had with me, brought about so general discontent and uneasiness, especially as they were more immediately defending the property of those people, as caused them in great numbers to leave me, though I must say the officers did all they could to prevent it. Two battalions have never even assigned me a reason why they have not joined me. Under these circumstances I removed to Noxontown, where the camp duty on the few I have with me is less severe, until the other troops mentioned shall be ready to move forward, and have written this day to colonel Gist on that head. Yesterday evening I sent a party of my light-horse to take a view of the enemy, and gain intelligence. The officer with his men returned this morning, and reports, that he was in Atkinson's tavern-house, passed some miles through the late encampment of the enemy round about that place, and saw, and was among the fires they had left burning; that the extreme part of their right wing was at Cook's Mill, their left towards Newark. This intelligence makes me the more anxious to collect and move forward such a body, as would be able to render you signal service, by falling upon and harassing their right wing or rear. Be assured all I can do shall be done; but he that can deal with militia, may almost venture to deal with the ——. As soon as I can set forward I shall advise you. God send you a complete victory." In his reply to this letter, general Washington thus remarks: "The conduct of the militia is much to be regretted. In many instances they are not to be roused, and in others they come into the field with all possible indifference, and to all appearance entirely unimpressed with the importance of the cause in which we are engaged. Hence proceeds a total inattention to order and to discipline, and too often a disgraceful departure from the army, at the instant their aid is most wanted. I am inclined to think, the complaints and objections offered to the militia laws are but too well founded. The interest of the community has not been well consulted in their formation, and generally speaking, those I have seen are unequal.

I wish I could inform you that our affairs were in a happier train than they now are. After various manœuvres, and extending his army high up the Schuylkill, as if he meant to turn our right flank, general Howe made a sudden counter-march on Monday night, and in the course of it and yesterday morning, crossed the river, which is fordable in almost every part, several miles below us; he will possess himself of Philadelphia, in all probability, but I trust he will not be able to hold it. No exertions on my part shall be wanting to dispossess him."

On the seventeenth of December, Mr. Rodney was again called on to take his seat in congress, as a delegate from Delaware, but he determined not to repair to Yorktown until the following spring. The state of political affairs had greatly changed in Delaware, but still there were many men of influence who did not unite with as much energy as they should have done, in supporting the plans of the general government; Mr. Rodney therefore determined to remain until the legislature had closed its session, and thus writes to his friend Mr. M'Kean on the subject. "The political changes which had been made will produce, you will be apt to think with me, not only wholesome laws and regulations, but energy in the execution of them, and thereby rouse this little branch of the union from its heretofore torpid state, which God of his infinite mercy grant. I need not tell you how disagreeable is the situation of those in this peninsula, who openly profess friendship to the American cause. A narrow neck of land, liable to the incursions of the enemy by water, in small parties, and therefore their property exposed—the militia not to be brought forth to the protection of the state, though frequently called upon in the most pressing terms for that purpose. I do not doubt, my dear sir, your desire to see me in congress, or at least that I might be ready to take my seat, when you shall be necessarily called off to the discharge of your duty, in another public department. I wish to be with you, but think it highly necessary I should wait the close of this session of assembly ; you know I may be of service."

Mr. Rodney however, was not destined to appear again in congress, for a few days after the preceding letter was written, he was elected president of the state of Delaware. The office, though honourable, was exceedingly arduous, and during the whole of this year he was constantly harassed with difficulties of various kinds. The legislature of the state, though well disposed, were tardy in their movements where every thing demanded energy and promptness; the disaffected inhabitants of the state were constantly exciting petty insurrections, the British, or loyalists in league with them, made frequent descents all along the extensive shore of the state, and troops could not be collected in time to repel them. These and various other circumstances, rendered the situation of Mr. Rodney one of great difficulty and embarrassment; he thus alludes to it, in two letters addressed to Mr. M'Kean, then in congress. The first was written on the eighth of May, 1778. "We are constantly alarmed," he says, "by the enemy and refugees, and seldom a day passes, but some man in this and the neighbouring counties is taken off by these villains; so that many near the bay, whom I know to be hearty in the cause, dare neither act or speak lest they should be taken away and their houses plundered. These fears will certainly increase till some protection is afforded them; therefore I must again solicit your moving congress in the most earnest manner, for the company I mentioned in a former letter; if it is obtained our persons and property may be tolerably safe, if not I fear I must decamp. I think congress ought not to hesitate, especially when you consider, that the number of guards heretofore necessary to the defence of a people situate as we are, has exhausted our funds. The practice of landing in small parties, and taking men out of their beds is so villanous, and is so generally adopted by the enemy, as may be sufficient to call the attention of congress to a retaliation; some punishment for this offence might be adopted by this state more properly, were they in proper force for that purpose. The three hundred men ordered for the eastern shore, upon the plan you have mentioned, I have not heard of; however, sure I am, if they are not stationed on the Delaware, they will be of little or no service to us.

Lord North's speech is certainly the production of a king and ministry hard pushed, and wicked even to the last; for though their salvation depends on their acknowledging the independence of America, and entering into a commercial treaty with us; yet by their plan they are trying to divide us—However, virtue and firmness will, with the blessing of God, as well frustrate them in this, as in all their other damnable projects to cajole and enslave."

The other letter is dated on the eleventh of June, 1778, and in it he thus alludes to his situation. "You and I both have had our disagreeable moments, with respect to the complexion of the Delaware state. However, those who dare persevere in such days of trial cannot now be doubted. He that dare acknowledge himself a whig, near the waters of the Delaware, where not only his property, but his person is every hour in danger of being carried off, is more in my opinion to be depended upon than a dozen whigs in security. You have had your time of trial here, you know how precarious their situation, and you also know their firmness; they did not bear that proportion to the disaffected that I could have wished, yet while they dared contend, I hoped congress would not have supposed the state lost. I thank God! affairs now wear a different complexion, and can I but have the countenance and support of congress, which no doubt I shall, civil government I am convinced will soon be in such force, as to cause those who have offended to tremble."

Mr. Rodney retained his office of president of the state of Delaware for about four years; and during that time his chief attention was called to the affairs of the confederation. As the war increased and the resources of the country diminished, the demands on the separate states became more frequent, and were urged with all the zeal which the dreadful necessities of the time required. At this period we can scarcely believe the state of distress, and almost desperation, to which the continental army was reduced; but as it cannot be uninteresting to their descendants, to know what were the sufferings of their ancestors in the cause of freedom, we shall introduce an extract from two letters of general Washington to Mr. Rodney, in the winter of 1779. "The situation of the army," he says, "with respect to supplies, is beyond description alarming. It has been five or six weeks past on half allowance, and we have not more than three days' bread, at a third allowance, on hand, nor any where within reach. When this is exhausted, we must depend on the precarious gleanings of the neighbouring country. Our magazines are absolutely empty every where, and our commissaries entirely destitute of money or credit to replenish them. We have never experienced a like extremity at any period of the war. We have often felt temporary want from accidental delay in forwarding supplies, but we always had something in our magazines, and the means of procuring more. Neither one nor the other is at present the case. This representation is the result of a minute examination of our resources. Unless some extraordinary and immediate exertions be made, by the states from which we draw our supplies, there is every appearance that the army will infallibly disband in a fortnight. I think it my duty to lay this candid view of our situation before your excellency, and to intreat the vigorous interposition of the state to rescue us from the danger of an event, which if it did not prove the total ruin of our affairs, would at least give them a shock they would not easily recover, and plunge us into a train of new and still more perplexing embarrassments, than any we have hitherto felt."

In the following spring general Washington wrote another letter to Mr. Rodney, of a tenor equally painful. "I am under the disagreeable necessity of informing you," he says, "that the army is again reduced to an extremity of distress, for want of provision. The greater part of it has been without meat from the twenty-first to the twenty-sixth. To endeavour to obtain some relief, I moved down to this place with a view of stripping the lower part of the country of the remainder of its cattle, which after a most rigorous exaction, is found to afford between two and three days' supply only, and those consisting of milch cows, and calves of one or two years old. When this scanty pittance is consumed, I know not what will be our next resource, as the commissary can give me no certain information of more than one hundred and twenty head of cattle expected from Pennsylvania, and about one hundred and fifty from Massachusetts. I mean in time to supply our immediate wants. Military coercion is no longer of any avail, as nothing further can possibly be collected from the country in which we are obliged to take a position, without depriving the inhabitants of the last morsel. This mode of subsisting, supposing the desired end could be answered by it, besides being in the highest degree distressing to individuals, is attended with ruin to the morals and discipline of the army. During the few days which we have been obliged to send out small parties to procure provision for themselves, the most enormous excesses have been committed.

It has been no inconsiderable support of our cause, to have had it in our power to contrast the conduct of our army with that of the enemy, and to convince the inhabitants that while their rights were wantonly violated by the British troops, by ours they were respected. This distinction must unhappily now cease, and we must assume the odious character of the plunderers, instead of the protectors of the people; the direct consequence of which must be, to alienate their minds from the army, and insensibly from the cause. We have not, indeed, yet been absolutely without flour, but we have *this* day but *one* day's supply in camp, and I am not certain that there is a single barrel between this place and Trenton. I shall be obliged, therefore, to draw down one or two hundred barrels from a small magazine which I had endeavoured to establish at West Point, for the security of the garrison in case of a sudden investiture.

From the above state of facts it may be foreseen, that this army cannot possibly remain much longer together, unless very vigorous and immediate measures are taken by the states, to comply with the requisitions made upon them. The commissary general has neither the means nor the power of procuring supplies; he is only to receive them from the several agents. Without a speedy change of circumstances, this dilemma will be involved: either the army must disband, or what is, if possible, worse, subsist upon the plunder of the people. I would fain flatter myself that a knowledge of our situation will produce the desired relief; not a relief of a few days, as has generally heretofore been the case, but a supply equal to the establishment of magazines for the winter. If these are not formed before the roads are broken up by the weather, we shall certainly experience the same difficulties and distresses the ensuing winter, which we did the last. Although the troops have, upon every occasion hitherto, borne their wants with unparalleled patience, it will be dangerous to trust too often to a repetition of the causes of discontent."

It may well be supposed that Mr. Rodney did not receive these letters without feelings of the deepest distress. Having for years, taken so active a part in all the struggles for independence, whatever various forms they had assumed, how could he look calmly on, and see that independence endangered, at the very moment when it seemed secure? Having served as a soldier himself in the armies of the revolution, how could he bear that those who had been the partners of his toils, should now be sinking. neglected and forsaken, without a friendly hand being extended to relieve them?

He therefore adopted every expedient he could devise, to increase and assist the army. He brought the subject repeatedly before the legislature; urged the persons entrusted with the levying and transmission of supplies; kept up a constant correspondence; and succeeded in affording immense benefit. "You may assure the committee appointed to procure flour," he says in a letter to Mr. Dickinson, "that I shall do every thing in my power to forward the business, but expect the flour will come high; as those termed speculators are as thick, and as industrious as bees, and as active and wicked as the devil himself. I doubt much whether any of the taxes mentioned by the committee, are as yet paid into the treasury, however, I have written to the treasurer, expect to hear from him in few days, and will immediately let them know." And in a letter addressed to the persons appointed to receive the supplies, he uses this strong language; "being convinced of the necessity, I do most earnestly require an immediate discharge of the duty enjoined you by the act of the general assembly of this state, for procuring an immediate supply of provisions for the army &c., especially as to the article of beef-cattle. You will see by the letters enclosed, the pressing necessity, and the bad consequence, if we fail to comply with the requisition. I therefore expect you will immediately use your utmost exertion to comply with the requisition of congress, as far as the act of assembly above mentioned, has enabled the gentlemen in your department to do it, and I do require, as absolutely necessary, that you inform the commissary general from time to time of your success in this business, so that he may have proper persons at Wilmington to take them off your hands, as he has engaged.

Such was the zealous and honourable course pursued by Mr. Rodney, as long as he held the office of president of the state of Delaware. By his firm and liberal conduct he secured the universal esteem of every portion of the people; and by the decided tone of his measures he increased the strength and augmented the resources of the general government. At length, however, fatigued with the arduousness of his duties, he determined to retire from office, and in the year 1782, declined a re-election. His constituents however would not permit him to retire from public life, for he was immediately chosen a delegate to congress, as he also was in the succeeding year.

It does not appear that Mr. Rodney ever took his seat by virtue of these elections. Though not very far advanced in years, his health had become exceedingly infirm. He had been afflicted from his youth with a cancer, which, as we have mentioned, gradually spread over one side of his face, until it was so disfigured as to oblige him to wear a green silk screen over it; and he did so for many years before his death. The exact period of that melancholy event, we have no means of accurately ascertaining; it would appear, however, to have been in the early part of the year 1783, and was certainly occasioned by the complaint of which we have spoken.

Of the personal character of Mr. Rodney, we have few opportunities of obtaining information, beyond the materials which have formed the subject of this notice. As a politician, he displayed at all times great integrity and high mindedness, never yielding his deliberate opinions to the prevailing sentiments of the day, and sacrificing his present interest to his sense of honour and justice. This course in a few instances, was for a time injurious to his political aims, but it eventually gained for him, what an honourable course always gains for a statesman in the end, the unbounded confidence and esteem of his countrymen. Though he was, as the tenor of his life has shown, a firm whig in all his principles and conduct, warmly devoted to the liberties of the states, and opposing alike the open warfare and secret attacks of their enemies, he blended with all his actions, the feelings of an amiable man. The number of loyalists or refugees was, as we have observed, very numerous in that part of the state where he resided, and the friends of freedom were kept constantly on the alert, to oppose and overthrow secret insurrections which were springing up, every day and in every direction. As is always the case in this species of unnatural warfare, the feelings of the contending parties assumed a personal ferociousness of character, which is not often seen in the conflicts of general enemies. The ties of vicinage, often of consanguinity, increased rather than allayed the bitterness of their hatred; and the successful party triumphed over the conquered foe, with more than the satisfaction of ordinary war.

To appease these feelings, and to obviate their consequences, was the continued and often the successful effort of Mr. Rodney. The advantages of his popularity, his well known patriotism and his public station, gave him an influence which he never failed to exert in so generous a cause. Many anecdotes of this kind are remembered, and yet related among those who lived where he lived; and they might be preserved as honourable instances of the union of firm patriotism, with kindly feeling. While he was governor of the state, a gentleman of Dover, of high personal character, and before the revolution of considerable popularity, had by several acts so strongly displayed his partiality to the royal cause, that the citizens exasperated and indignant, determined to arrest him for high treason; the issue of such a proceeding at such a time, was scarcely doubtful, and the rash gentleman would probably have forfeited his life, for the useless display of his equally useless predilections. The evening before the arrest was to be made, and when an attempt to escape was too late, Mr. Rodney was informed of it; he sent immediately to the gentleman, and had him brought to his own residence. In the morning the mob, disappointed of their prey, and informed of the place of his concealment, rushed tumultuously to the governor's house and demanded their victim, as one notoriously guilty of crimes which merited at least the decision of the law. Mr. Rodney stepped out calmly before them, acknowledged that his guest had been indeed extremely imprudent, but that as he had surrendered himself to him, the chief magistrate of the state, he had become answerable for his appearance, and would see that justice was done to all. The knowledge of the governor's character and views, was a sufficient guaranty to the crowd, and in a short time they dispersed. The imprudent loyalist remained until the political heat of the times had in some degree subsided, and pursuing for the future a wiser course, escaped the dangerous rock on which he had been so nearly destroyed.

The private character of Mr. Rodney is chiefly remarkable for its good humour and vivacity. He was fond of society, and not averse to the pleasures of the table, never exceeding, however, the boundaries of propriety and good manners. He was particularly fond of associating with persons younger than himself, to whom his easy manners, long knowledge of the world, and fund of wit and anecdote, afforded a never failing pleasure. From constitutional feelings, he always avoided scenes of sorrow; and never approached the death bed, even of his most intimate friends. The vivacity of his domestic manners, was carried into his public life, and those whose memory is stored with reminiscences of the old congress and the revolutionary war, have many a tale, to illustrate the gaiety and humour of Cæsar Rodney. Among others the following one may be recorded, from an authentic source. The delegates from the southern states, but especially from Virginia, were remarkable, during the early periods of the revolution, for indulging a sectional prepossession, not indeed maliciously, but often sarcastically. When it broke out in high wrought eulogies and preferences to Virginia, over all the other members of the confederacy, it was termed *dominionism*. Among the representatives of that ancient and really noble state, there was no one who more delighted or oftener indulged in this complacent but somewhat mortifying species of gratulation, than Mr. Harrison; he was however, completely cured of it by an incident which occurred, when his state was threatened with an invasion by the enemy. He had frequently displayed the "abundant and powerful resources of that meritorious member of our Union;" and although he had painted them in colours brighter than was correct, he no doubt believed them to be just. When, however, the danger was approaching, the picture was found too glaring. He introduced a demand for supplies of arms, munitions of war of every species, troops, and assistance of every kind; and declared the state destitute in every point and circumstance. When he sat down there was a momentary silence, all being surprised that such a development should come from him. Cæsar Rodney rose from his seat; in a style peculiar to him. He was, at that time, an animated skeleton; decorated with a bandage, from which was suspended the green silk covering over one eye, to hide the ravages of his cancer—he was indeed all spirit, without corporeal tegument. He was thin, emaciated, and every way the antithesis of his friend Harrison; who was portly, inclining to corpulency, and of a mien, commanding though without fiertè. Both of the members were really representatives of their respective states. Rodney, who was endowed, as we have mentioned, with a natural and highly amusing vein of humour, began, with a crocodile sympathy, to deplore the melancholy and prostrate condition of his neighbouring, extensive, and heretofore "powerful" state of Virginia! But, said he, in a voice elevated an octave higher than concert pitch; "let her be of good cheer; she has a friend in need; DELAWARE will take her under its protection, and insure her safety." Harrison was astounded; but joined (for he relished a good hit, for or against him) in the laugh; and the subject lay over to another day.

BENJAMIN HARRISON.

BENJAMIN HARRISON.

It is not often in recording the lives of those who have been distinguished in the history of the revolution, that we can refer to them as the descendants of ancestors long prominent in the annals of the colonies, either for wealth or political reputation. It has rather been our fortune, and it ought, perhaps, to be our pride, that when the exigencies of the nation have demanded it, patriots have arisen from every class of society, who have displayed the energy, integrity and talents which were necessary to fill all the stations, military and civil, which the interests of their country required.

The family of Harrison forms, in some degree, an exception to this rule. At a period extremely early in the history of Virginia, we find it among the foremost names of the province, and the honourable standing which it then held, has descended unsullied to our own times.

Somewhere about the year 1640, a gentleman of this name is found settled in the county of Surrey, in the province of Virginia. A tradition has long prevailed in the family, and appears from many circumstances to be correctly founded, that this gentleman was nearly related to general Harrison, the distinguished revolutionary leader during the English commonwealth. To such an ancestor, an American may look back with becoming pride. The strong prejudices, if we may not use a harsher expression, of a powerful party, long induced them, by every art, to calumniate his character; but the testimony of impartial history has survived the feelings of the times, and that justice which Burnet refused and Clarendon reluctantly yielded, has been at length universally accorded. In point of family he was respectable; in his early profession, that of the law, he had been instructed by an eminent attorney, who had employment under the king; and as a soldier, he displayed skill, courage, and unblemished honour. Although, according to the fashion of his times, he was ardent to enthusiasm, in religion, he was yet open and generous in all his conduct. He sincerely and warmly opposed the ambitious designs of those, who used the revolution for the advancement of their private ends. And when, at last, the return of the triumphant royalists hurried him to the scaffold, he mildly but firmly adhered to those principles which the motives of fear on the one hand, and hope on the other, had induced so many to disavow.

The next of the family in Virginia, of whom any trace remains, is Benjamin Harrison, the son of the preceding inhabitant of Surrey. In that county he was born in the year 1645, and lived there until the thirtieth of January, 1712-13. Of that early period of course few records remain, and though from his bearing on his tomb the title of "honourable," then not promiscuously bestowed, he held some office in the government of the province, it is now impossible exactly to determine what it was. It is said of him that during his life he did justice, loved mercy, and walked humbly with his God; was loyal to his prince, and a great benefactor to his country.

This gentleman was the father of two sons; of these the eldest, who also bore the name of Benjamin, is said to have been a man of distinguished talents, and great political reputation during his short life, for he expired at the age of thirty-seven. He increased the estate of the family by the addition of extensive tracts of land, and settled himself at Berkeley, in the county of Charles City, and opposite to Surrey on James river. This seat, which has been ever since the mansion of the head branch of the family, and where Mr. Benjamin Harrison the seventh lineal descendant of the first settler, still resides, is beautifully situated on the banks of the river, in full view of City Point, the well known seaport of Petersburg and Richmond. Here he introduced that system of generous hospitality which has long characterized his native state, and it will be readily believed that in his hands that character did not degenerate. His monument, which is constructed of white marble, with unusual taste, is yet to be seen in the church-yard of Westover parish, and is inscribed with a very long account in Latin, not always perfectly pure, of his descent, rank and virtues. He was speaker of the house of burgesses of the colony, and held that office at the time of his death. He was by profession a lawyer, remarkable for his disinterestedness, learning, eloquence, and correctness; ever ready to protect the destitute and helpless; bold in asserting and defending the rights of his country; and always foremost in promoting the public good. His epitaph is closed by the following elegiac stanza; the merit of which perhaps will not be thought to lie in the beauty either of the poetry, or the latinity.

Hunc meritò proprium Virginia jactat alumnum.
 Tam properè abreptum, sed querebunda dolet;
Publicus hic dolor, et nunquam reparabile damnum,
 Det Deus ut vitæ sint documenta novæ.

Of his brother Henry Harrison, the founder of that branch of the family which settled at Brandon, a beautiful seat about twelve miles below Berkeley, on James river, a character yet more interesting is recorded. He was a judge of one of the courts, and in all his official duties, was strictly honourable. In private life he was said to be a tender husband, a merciful master, a fair dealer and a generous friend, pious to his God, and beneficent to his fellow creatures. "So kind was he to his relations," says the interesting inscription on his tomb, "that his grateful heir, though he gained a large fortune, yet thought himself a loser by his death."

Benjamin Harrison of Berkeley, had married at an early age Elizabeth, the daughter of Lewis Burwell, of the county of Glocester, a gentleman of much distinction in the province. By her he left at his death a son, Benjamin, who succeeded him at Berkeley, and a daughter, who bore her mother's name. Of his son but little is recorded. It is not known that he held any other political situation, than that of a member of the colonial legislature. In the management of his private property, he was remarkably successful, having added during his life very largely to the family estate. He married the oldest daughter of Mr. Carter, the king's surveyor general, who from his official situation was enabled to select lands of great value, and by this means greatly enriched his family connexions, which were very extensive. Mr. Harrison was killed with two of his daughters, by lightning, in the mansion-house at Berkeley; and left at the time of his death, six sons and two daughters. Of these daughters, one married Peyton Randolph, the first president of congress, and the other, his brother, William Randolph. Of his sons, the subject of this memoir was the oldest.

Benjamin Harrison was born in the family mansion at Berkeley, but on what day we have been unable precisely to ascertain. At the time of his father's death, he was a student in the college of William and Mary, but owing to a quarrel with one of the professors in which he was engaged, he left that institution before the usual period. Although still very young, he had already displayed so much firmness and decision of character, that the management of his estate, which was very extensive, was committed entirely to his charge soon after he returned from college. As the head also of a family, which had always been among the conspicuous political leaders of the colony, he was soon called on to represent his district in the provincial legislature, and took his seat in the house of burgesses, before he had arrived at the age strictly required by law. To this station during his whole life, whenever his other political employments did not interfere with it, he was always elected, except in one solitary instance which we shall have occasion hereafter to notice.

He had not been long a member of the legislature, before he became one of the principal leaders in it. A great deal of plain good sense, united with a ready sprightly manner, and much promptness and decision of character, rendered him highly useful. And in addition to this, his large fortune and his connexions by marriage, which were extended through almost every leading family in Virginia, gave him great personal influence. These circumstances soon pointed him out, to the royal government, as one on whom their highest favours could be justly and advantageously conferred. The office of governor was always reserved for a native of Great Britain, or at least for a person sent directly from that country; but there remained many lucrative and honourable appointments for favoured colonists. Among these that of a member of the executive council, which answered to the English privy council, was the chief in point of rank, and considerable in regard to influence; into that body the government proposed, notwithstanding his youth, to introduce Mr. Harrison.

But this plan, however desirable it might seem to be to the colonial government, and indeed however just and proper in itself, was frustrated by the occurrences of the times. Mr. Harrison was not a man to be led away from conduct which he deemed correct, by any personal advantage. The measures which had been already adopted by the British ministers, although they were far from having reached that excess to which they were subsequently carried, were yet such as met with strong reprobation from all the patriotic burgesses of Virginia. With these he therefore united, heart and hand, in opposing those measures of the mother country, and soon became obnoxious to the royal party, in proportion to the zeal with which they had previously courted him.

On the fourteenth of November, 1764, he was appointed, with several distinguished members of the house, to prepare an address to the king, a memorial to the lords, and a remonstrance to the house of commons, on the subject of the resolutions which had been passed preparatory to the stamp act. To which of the gentlemen of the committee the authorship of these papers should be severally assigned, we are at this time of day unable to ascertain; it does not, however, seem probable, from the character of Mr. Harrison, that either was the production of his pen; it is said, by those who knew him, that he wrote with facility and correctness when it became necessary, but that it was an office he never sought, either from a natural indolence in that respect, or from his preference to employments of more activity and energy. On the eighteenth of December, the report of the committee was presented, but such was the temper of the times, that the more prudent, at least the more timid, altered much which seemed to indicate too strongly a feeling of resistance, and left it little more than a protestation of injured rights, and a picture of anticipated suffering.

We have no means of tracing the particular opinions of Mr. Harrison, or the incidents of his private and political life, through the next ten years; and it would be exceeding the simple office of biography to enter into the history of Virginia during that period, although his official station closely connected him with all the important transactions of the times. We know, however, and it is sufficient, that in his opinion and his conduct, he was closely connected with Randolph, Wythe, Jefferson and Henry, and the other distinguished patriots of the day, who so carefully nourished in Virginia those sparks of freedom, which were gradually extended throughout the continent.

On the first of August, 1774, the first convention of delegates from the several counties and corporations of Virginia, assembled at Williamsburg. They there passed a series of resolutions, which prove the spirit by which they were animated; and set forth the determination to which they had come, of supporting to the last their American brethren, and opposing the designs of the mother country. With these objects they entered warmly into the plan which had been generally recommended, of assembling a congress of delegates from all the colonies, and appointed seven deputies to represent Virginia. Of these Mr. Harrison was one.

On the fifth of September, 1774, the first continental congress met at Carpenters' Hall, in the city of Philadelphia, and Mr. Harrison, who was present on that day, had the satisfaction of seeing a delegate from his own state, raised by the unanimous approbation of the assembly, to the presidential chair.

In the journals of this assembly, which at best present but a meagre outline of the proceedings of a legislative body, we find but few notices of Mr. Harrison during the short session of 1774. Indeed its character greatly varied from those which succeeded it. We look in vain for that untiring activity, that constant resource, that attention to every object of government, which are features so strongly marked in the subsequent assemblies. The delegates felt themselves placed in a difficult situation, in which, while they firmly maintained their own rights, they had yet to avoid every act whose violence might palliate or excuse the arbitrary proceedings of the mother country. With a manly dignity and forbearance, while every day was bringing intelligence of fresh insult and injustice, they determined that every appeal to right, to reason, and to affection, should be tried before they resorted to the sword. At this day, when we read the addresses of this venerable body, we are at a loss to conceive the infatuation which was deaf to their reasoning, as well as the feeling which was untouched by their eloquence. After a session of less than two months, they determined to await the effect of their proceedings, and returned quietly among the body of their countrymen, who regarded the simple expression of their wishes with as much zeal, as if it had been strengthened by the firmest sanctions of religion and law.

On the twentieth of March, 1775, the second convention of delegates from the several counties and corporations of Virgina, met in the city of Richmond. Of this body also Mr. Harrison was a member. He had the satisfaction of seeing, in their first act, his country's approval of the measures in which he had assisted. A resolution was passed, in which the convention expressed their unqualified approbation of the measures of congress, and declared that they considered the whole continent as under the highest obligations to that respectable body, for the wisdom of their counsels, and their unremitted endeavours to maintain and preserve inviolate, the just rights and liberties of their countrymen. To this they especially added their warmest thanks to the worthy representatives of the colony, for their cheerful undertaking and faithful discharge of the very important trust reposed in them.

These resolutions were shortly followed by a proposition to create in the province a military force, and to put it in a state of defence. Mr. Harrison was opposed to this measure as premature, and in his opposition he was supported by most of those who had sat with him in congress, and by Wythe, Nicholas and others, the leading patriots of the province. It need scarcely be said that this opposition arose from no personal fears, and from no unmanly spirit in regard to the liberties of the country. It sprung from those views and motives which had actuated the congress itself; it arose from a wish to await the issue of their peaceful efforts, before they plunged into the unknown ocean of civil warfare; and it arose, above all, from the desire to enforce the justness and holiness of their cause, by displaying on the one hand their own forbearance, and on the other the infatuated tyranny of their rulers. To this may have been added those considerations to which, when necessity or honour did not forbid it, prudence might fairly look—a country unprepared in every thing for war—a people already suffering from the measures which they had been forced to adopt—an enemy powerful in every resource, and ready for the conflict. On these considerations they were opposed to a premature haste, which they thought could bring with it no advantages, that would not equally exist when the measures they had already adopted should have failed, but might defeat them before they had been fairly tried.

The spirit of the times, however, was full of ardour, and the dictates of manly feeling were listened to, rather than the lessons of prudence. The resolutions were adopted, and a committee of twelve gentlemen appointed to carry them into effect. The constitution of this committee affords a noble instance of the disinterested patriotism which pervaded the whole assembly; on it were placed most of the leading gentlemen who had opposed the resolutions, and among them Mr. Harrison. When the sense of the house was ascertained, all private views were discarded, and every one united, heart and hand, in promoting what had now become the approved policy of the province.

Before the convention adjourned, they adopted the measure, which perhaps was the most important in the posture of affairs, the election of delegates to the second general congress. Among these Mr. Harrison was again appointed. An effort had been made by lord Dunmore to prevent the measure. He had issued a proclamation in which he spoke of congress, as an assembly of certain persons styling themselves delegates, to obtain redress of certain pretended grievances; and, in his majesty's name, required all magistrates and officers to prevent any such appointment, and to exhort all the citizens to desist from such an unjustifiable proceeding, so highly displeasing to his majesty. But the age of proclamations had passed by. The delegates were elected without hesitation.

Early in May, 1775, Mr. Harrison again repaired to Philadelphia, to take his seat in congress. During his residence in this city, he lived in a house which may yet be seen in the northern part of the town, with two of his colleagues from Virginia, general Washington and Peyton Randolph, the distinguished president of congress. There Mr. Randolph died in the autumn of the same year; and general Washington having taken the command of the army in Massachusetts, Mr. Harrison remained alone. Within a few past years, there were several old and respectable inhabitants of Philadelphia, and a few yet survive, who could recollect at the period of which we are speaking, the cheerfulness and vivacity of his manners, and the liberality of his disposition. In a confined mansion then on the outskirts of the town, though now far within its limits, he gave to his northern friends some idea of that generous hospitality which had long distinguished the more extensive establishments at Berkeley. He, indeed, exceeded, in some degree, the limits of prudence; and as in those days supplies of money from distant landed estates were uncertain, and procured with difficulty, he was several times induced to borrow it from his friend and associate in congress, Mr. Willing. This loan at one time amounted to a large sum, but was punctually repaid by Mr. Harrison before his death.

Congress had scarcely met, when the duties of the president, as speaker of the house of burgesses of Virginia, obliged him to relinquish his honourable post and return to that state. Mr. Hancock had just arrived in Philadelphia; he brought with him all the fame, which ministerial oppression had conferred, in excluding him by name from the general pardon extended to the rebellious colonists; and he brought with him too, a better claim to distinction in the generosity of his character, and the perfect disinterestedness of his patriotism. The eye of congress was immediately fixed on him as the successor of Mr. Randolph, and he was unanimously elected president. With a modesty not unnatural at his years, and a consciousness of the difficulty he might experience, in filling a station of such high importance and responsibility, he hesitated to take the seat to which he had been elected. Mr. Harrison was standing beside him, and with the ready good humour that loved a joke even in the senate house, he seized the modest candidate in his athletic arms and placed him in the presidential chair, then, turning to some of the members around, he exclaimed, " we will show mother Britain how little we care for her, by making a Massachusetts man our president, whom she has excluded from pardon by a public proclamation."

On the twenty-fourth of June, we find Mr. Harrison a member of a committee, appointed to devise ways and means to put the militia in a proper state for the defence of America; a measure leading at once, to the general organization of an army throughout the colonies. After deliberating on it for nearly a month, a plan was presented to, and with some alterations, adopted by congress, which formed the basis of the militia system throughout the war.

On the first of August, congress adjourned, and on the eleventh of the same month, a convention was held at Richmond, when Mr. Harrison was elected a third time to congress. On the thirteenth of September, he took his seat. His name soon appears among the most prominent and active members of the house; and perhaps there was no one in it, who enjoyed more general confidence and esteem. His attention from the first, was strongly turned towards the military affairs of the colonies; in their organization, and in facilitating all the legislative details of the war, he was particularly active. In September, he was elected a member of a committee of three, who repaired immediately to the camp at Cambridge, where they had a long and full conference not only with the commander in chief, but with some of the governors of the neighbouring states, and arranged with them a system of vital importance; that of continuing, supporting and regulating the continental army. He had scarcely returned to Philadelphia, before he was called on to make similar arrangements, with regard to the troops which were required for the defence of South Carolina and New York. He settled the details of both these plans, which were peculiarly difficult from the loose mode of enlisting, and the entire ignorance of discipline which universally prevailed.

Towards the close of this year congress, which had hitherto confined its views to internal government, began cautiously to extend the circle of its relations, in anticipation no doubt of subsequent events. They were well aware that if, as every experience seemed to indicate, the quarrel with the mother country should be terminated by a resort to arms, they ought to look for aid to her powerful rivals in the old world. To prepare the way for this, it was necessary to establish with them a species of diplomatic intercourse, though not avowedly with those objects, nor in the manner usually adopted between foreign nations. On the twenty-ninth of November, Mr. Harrison was placed, if we may use the expression, at the head of the department of foreign affairs, that is to say, he was appointed the chairman of a committee organized under the following cautious resolutions. "That a committee of five be appointed for the sole purpose of corresponding with our friends in Great Britain, Ireland and other parts of the world, and that they lay their correspondence before congress when directed. That congress will make provision to defray all such expenses as may arise, by carrying on such a correspondence, and for the payment of such agents as they may send on this service." By this committee, and in this manner, was all the foreign intercourse of the country conducted until the spring of 1777. At that time its objects had become more definite, and its negotiations more extensive; its style was therefore altered to that of the "committee of foreign affairs," and a secretary was appointed with a permanent salary; this organization continued until the close of the war.

Three days after Mr. Harrison had been raised to this situation, he was suddenly appointed by congress on a mission to Maryland. Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, had been driven from that province in the preceding summer. Sacrificing or forgetting every principle of honourable warfare, he had collected from the shores a body of renegadoes, fugitive slaves and vagabonds, with whom he manned a number of small vessels, and plundered and laid waste the coast of the Chesapeake. The defenceless inhabitants applied to congress for protection against this barbarous invasion. That body were at a loss what course to adopt, for they were without a naval force fitted for such an enterprise. They resolved, however, without delay, to send Mr. Harrison to Maryland. He was empowered, with any one or more of the delegates of that colony, to take such measures as appeared most effectual, to prevent these aggressions of the enemy. This duty he performed with the utmost promptness; he caused a number of small vessels to be fitted out, and succeeded, to a great degree, in the object of his mission.

The year 1776 opened with prospects, daily more and more unfavourable to the rights of the colonies. Every arrival from England served more and more, to convince the discerning and reflecting that a resort to force would be inevitable. Congress saw this, and gradually adopted those measures which seemed most calculated to unite together the different colonies, to augment the armed force of the country, and to arrange and distribute them in such a manner as best to meet the impending dangers. In all these measures Mr. Harrison was a prominent actor. On the seventeenth of January, he brought up a report for regulating the recruiting service; on the twenty-fourth he was placed on a committee to establish a general war department; on the twenty-sixth we find him sent, with Messrs. Lynch and Allen, to New York, to arrange with general Lee a plan for its defence, and for the erection of important fortifications on the North and East river; and, immediately after his return, he was named on a committee for the purpose of arranging the proper military departments of the middle and southern colonies, so that the future operations of the war might be carried on in a manner more regular and systematic. To the naval resources of the colonies he also turned his atten tion, and on the sixth of March became a regular member of the standing committee of marine.

On the twenty-third of March, 1776, congress passed a declaration which may be considered the forerunner of independence, as the issuing of letters of marque precedes the formal declaration of a war. After setting forth their grievances, the infringement of their rights, the rejection of their petitions, the ravages upon their coasts and the seizure of their property, they declare their right to make reprisals upon their enemies, and annoy them according to the laws and usages of nations; they therefore authorize the colonists to fit out armed vessels and cruise against the enemy; declare all property taken by them on the high seas lawful prize, and conclude by appointing a committee to consider of the fortifying one or more ports on the American coast in the strongest manner, for the protection of our cruisers and the reception of their prizes. Of this committee Mr. Harrison was the chairman.

In May we find Mr. Harrison chairman of a committee on the Canada expedition, and making every effort to retain the footing which the provincials had already gained there. For this purpose he had a conference with general Washington, general Gates and general Mifflin, and afterwards brought the subject immediately before congress. His views were sanctioned and confirmed. The commanding officer in Canada was instructed to use every effort in keeping possession of the country, and to contest with the British every foot of ground. With the view of cutting off all communication, between the upper country and the enemy, particular exertions were directed to be made on the St. Lawrence below the mouth of the Sorel. The troops destined for Canada were ordered to repair thither immediately; and those already there were assured of the resolution of congress to afford them every support.

On the twenty-fifth of May, Mr. Harrison was appointed chairman of a committee of fourteen, who were chosen for the important purpose of conferring with the general officers, and arranging with them a plan for the ensuing campaign. This, as it involved in a great degree the future results of the war, was one of extreme delicacy and difficulty. A plan, however, was adopted and submitted to congress. It was by them referred to a committee of the whole, of which also Mr. Harrison was chairman, and after long and numerous deliberations, measures were decided on, founded on the plan which had been framed by the first committee.

It was found, however, at length, that the military affairs of the government were now become too extensive and too important, thus to be submitted in detached portions, as exigency required, to the consideration of temporary committees; and that it was much more advantageous to form a permanent body, to whom they should be generally entrusted. On the thirteenth of June, therefore, a Board of War and Ordnance was appointed, consisting of five members of congress and a secretary, who had the general superintendence and regulation of the army; to their care were committed all the military stores, the distribution of money, the raising and equipping of troops, the destination of prisoners, and the transaction of all business relating thereto. In the subsequent affairs of the country, this Board became the most important, and required from those who composed it the most arduous exertions. The previous duties of Mr. Harrison, of course made him a member, and shortly afterwards he became chairman of the board, an office which he retained until he left congress. "He was," says the venerable judge Peters, "a member of the committee of congress composing the first board of war, in June, 1776, when I entered on the duties assigned to me in the war department. This gave me the opportunity of observing his firmness, good sense and usefulness in deliberative and critical situations; and much use, indeed, was required of these qualities, when every thing around us was lowering and terrific. But when the Rubicon was passed, the march of all who were engaged in the conflict, was steady, cheerful and undaunted."

It was not however in military matters alone, that the talents of Mr. Harrison were exercised, the same firm, steady, deliberate mind was applied with equal vigour and utility to the various other subjects which occupied congress. As chairman of committees of the whole house, he appears to have been very popular; during this session he seems invariably, when present, to have held that station. We find him in this situation, presiding over their deliberations on the despatches of the commander in chief, the settlement of commercial restrictions, the regulation of trade, the general state of the colonies, and finally the great question of national independence. During all the various and protracted debates on this important subject, he was in the chair and gained the esteem and approbation of the house, by the uniform correctness and impartiality of his conduct. The records of this interesting discussion are, it is to be feared, lost forever, and we have little left us but the occasional anecdotes which tradition has preserved, of an event whose minutest incidents would now be eagerly listened to and carefully recorded. On the tenth of June, he brought up the resolution of the committee, which declared the independence of the colonies, and authorized the preparation of the final, and more formal instrument; and on the fourth of July he reported that instrument itself, as having received the approbation of congress. He afterwards affixed his name to it, with the other delegates from Virginia. An anecdote has been preserved of Mr. Harrison, which if it appears somewhat inconsistent with the solemnity of the scene, yet serves, in no slight degree, to exemplify the bold and lively character of the man. Mr. Gerry, a delegate from Massachusetts, as slender and spare as Mr. Harrison was vigorous and portly, stood beside him at the table, while signing the declaration. He turned round to him, with a smile as he raised his hand from the paper, and said, "When the hanging scene comes to be exhibited, I shall have all the advantage over you. It will be over with me in a minute, but you will be kicking in the air, half an hour after I am gone."

The declaration of independence brought with it, as a consequence, another measure scarcely less important, the confederation of the states. It held out to the world a united sovereignty, and a united course of action, neither of which had as yet been organized. This therefore became a subject of immediate deliberation, and Mr. Harrison was called to preside over these debates, as he had been over the former ones. It is rather the duty of history than of biography to trace the various measures, and the difficult questions which arose in this protracted discussion. It involved all those rights, and elicited those views which were afterwards more fully developed, in the formation of the federal constitution, and which must ever arise in settling the various powers of a government so singularly constituted as that of the United States.

On the eleventh of August, the period for which Mr. Harrison had been elected, expired, and he returned to Virginia. During his absence his native state had not been unmindful of his services. The general convention had met as usual, in the preceding June, and together with many other acts of importance, had framed a new constitution. Among the officers of the new government, were eight counsellors of state, one of whom, Mr. Harrison had been unanimously chosen. In electing the delegates to congress for the succeeding year, however, the number was reduced to five and the name of Mr. Harrison omitted. It has been asserted that this omission arose from a feeling against him, which had gained considerable ground among his constituents. This feeling was caused by the appointment, it was said through his influence in congress, of a doctor Bickman as physician to the continental hospital in the colony, in opposition to a more popular candidate. Slight causes often operate strongly on political measures, and this may have been the reason of his omission, yet it appears extraordinary if it were so, that the same convention should have raised him unanimously, to a high office in the state; that the legislature should have passed a vote of thanks to him, as they did for his diligence, ability and integrity in congress; and that he should have been elected to his old place, as soon as the resignation of Mr. Jefferson left a vacancy. May we not fairly attribute the reduction of the number, and the retention of Mr. Harrison, to the causes which were assigned at the time, a prudent economy, and a wish to obtain the aid of a useful and experienced statesman, in the arduous business of the new government at home?

But, whatever was the cause, or whatever feeling may have existed, like most political prejudices, founded rather on the excitement of the moment, than from the deliberate suggestions of reason and patriotism, it passed quickly away; an active and intelligent man, with wealth and family to place him beyond every temptation, was not to be rudely discarded at such a period. The resignation of Mr. Jefferson rendered a new election necessary, and Mr. Harrison was chosen on the tenth of October, with only five dissenting voices. On the fifth of November, after an absence of less than three months, he was again seated in congress. He was received by his old associates with pleasure and approbation. He was restored on the day of his arrival, to his appropriate station in the board of war, and a resolution was immediately passed, by which he was continued in all the standing committees of which he was formerly a member. In addition to this, he was placed on a committee to examine into and superintend the situation and movements of the northern army, at that time one of the very sinews of the war. In this duty he was for some time constantly and arduously engaged. Indeed during the whole of the dreadful winter of 1776, and the spring of 1777, when many deserted their posts, he was always on the ground, and always active: he accompanied his companions in their hasty flight to Baltimore, and returned with them again to Philadelphia; he laboured with untiring zeal on that most intricate of all subjects, which claimed the attention of congress, the means of preserving the continental credit, and supplying the exhausted treasury; and he renewed his exertions in his favourite department, the support and increase of the army.

Whatever may have been his temporary unpopularity in Virginia, during the preceding year, it had now entirely passed away. On the twenty-second of May, 1777, by a joint ballot of both houses, the legislature of Virginia returned him first among the delegates to congress, and he took his seat for the fourth time in that venerable body. We find him during the summer, acting on many committees and presiding over the deliberations of the house, on questions of delicacy and importance. He was, indeed, the universal chairman of committees of the whole house. He was in the chair during the delicate discussions, relative to the admission of the state of Vermont into the Union, on the contracts made by the commissioners in France, on the articles of confederation, the subject of difficult and protracted debates, on the ways and means for continuing the war at that gloomiest period of the revolutionary history, and various other measures of paramount importance. Let it not be supposed that this was no more than guiding the deliberations of an assembly, as in ordinary times. Far from it. The questions that constantly arose, were strongly and intimately connected with personal and local views and opinions. Patriotism, it is true, was not diminished, and disunion was not threatened or feared. On great matters all could unite, and all could sacrifice every thing. But driven as they were from one place to another, annoyed by invasion, by disaffection, by decreasing resources, and by gloomy prospects, the boldest were almost disheartened, and the timid were inclined to flinch or to desert their posts. The delegates from districts which were suffering the severest calamities of the war, could not hear the complaints of their constituents, without calling loudly for aid, which it was, perhaps, impossible to grant. The small states looked with jealousy on plans which might compromise their individual sovereignty. There were, indeed, a thousand circumstances which caused and excused a momentary irritation, which Mr. Harrison himself sometimes could not but feel, and which rendered it more difficult but more honourable, to soothe the feelings, and preserve the dignity of debate.

Quos ego—sed motos præstat componere fluctus.

Not in congress only did he thus exert himself. It is well known that the religious principles of the quakers forbade any participation in the war, and there is little doubt that there were among them many excellent and amiable men, who would have preferred the surrender of some rights, rather than resort to the sword for their protection. But in times of revolution the bold and vehement are the rulers of the day, and such look with disdain on the scruples of submissive conscience. Contempt is followed, perhaps, by unkindness; but contempt and unkindness bind the oppressed more firmly to his prejudices. By the one these prejudices are swelled into a crime, by the other, restraint is heightened into persecution, and he glories in becoming a martyr. Aware of this, Mr. Harrison came forward as a mediator for those gentlemen who were arrested just before congress left Philadelphia, and it is within our own recollection, that an excellent and respectable man who was one of their number, used to speak of him as having saved them from "persecution." As he recounted his benevolent exertions, the old gentleman spoke of him with grateful feelings unchilled by age, and closed his story by saying, that "Benjamin Harrison had talents to perceive the right, and firmness enough to pursue it, however violently opposed."

On the eighteenth of September, congress were again driven from Philadelphia, and after remaining a day at Lancaster, established themselves at York Town. Thither Mr. Harrison accompanied them, and continued his active exertions on various committees. This had now become the more necessary; for alarmed at the increasing difficulties of the times, or oppressed with accumulated and increasing labour, many of the delegates had returned to their homes; and the union was represented by eighteen or twenty gentlemen. Yet the spirit which had animated the whole remained with the few, and as their numbers lessened, their zeal and industry increased. In the inconvenient, but well disposed place of retirement they had chosen, they acted with all the boldness which might have arisen from success, while smarting from defeat—with all the energy of unbounded resource when the last means of resistance seemed to be destroyed. This desertion of the delegates, was eagerly seized upon by the enemies of liberty, as the sure sign of disunion, or at least the forerunner of despair. They proclaimed it as their triumph, they prophesied that those who yet remained, would soon follow, and they hailed somewhat too early, the flattering phantom of unconditional submission. To Mr. Harrison, who had for some time expressed his intention of returning to Virginia, these views were especially directed, and they rejoiced in the hope of separating from the rebel cause, one whose activity and steady patriotism rendered him peculiarly valuable in such times. To give strength and currency to this opinion, advantage was taken of the well known intimacy subsisting between general Washington and Mr. Harrison, and the correspondence which had existed between them, ever since the former had left congress. Rivingston, the British printer in New York, forged a number of letters which were said to have passed between them, containing the most desponding sentiments and disaffected views. Nor was this all. Mr. Duché, the celebrated chaplain of congress, with the same object, in a public letter asserted Mr. Harrison's disgust at the measures of his countrymen. This gentleman, who was distinguished for his eloquence and piety, had, at an early period, taken part decidedly with the colonists; he had preached several sermons, in which he maintained both their temporal and spiritual rights, and he had long acted as the chaplain of congress. A few months, however, after the declaration of independence, he changed his political views, and deserting the cause of America, went over to the British at New York. Anxious to extend the same opinions among his countrymen, he published, in November of this year, a long letter to general Washington. In this he urged him to cease hostilities, and listen to the overtures of the mother country. He paints in the gloomiest colours, the situation of the colonies, and in the bitterest language abuses the existing congress. With a view, as it would seem, of exciting dissension, he compares it with those which had preceded it, and asserts that almost all that was excellent is gone. "Take an impartial view," he exclaims, "of the present congress, and what can you expect from them? Your feelings must be greatly hurt by the representation of your natural province. You have no longer a

Randolph, a Bland or a Braxton, men whose names will ever be revered. Your Harrison alone remains, and he is disgusted with his unworthy associates." This letter, thus proceeding from a churchman and a scholar, may give us some idea of the insidious arts which were resorted to, to spread disunion and disaffection; but their utter failure serves too to show the firmness and unwavering patriotism that existed in every bosom.

Towards the close of the year 1777, Mr. Harrison expressed his wish to retire from congress, and on his doing so he was succeeded by Mr. Harvie, a truly excellent man. We need not say that this retirement was utterly unfounded on any views, such as the enemies of America expressed. His reasons were strong and sufficient. He had now been a member of congress more than three years; during all that time his employment and exertions had been excessive; his estates had been ravaged in his absence; his fortune had been impaired: his services were eagerly demanded in his native state; he was the only one of the first delegates from Virginia, who yet served; and there were men whom his modesty acknowledged as his superiors, ready at once to succeed him. Under these circumstances he tendered his resignation, and returned to Virginia; leaving behind him the highest character as a man eminently calculated for public office, ardent, persevering, honourable and prudent.

His arrival in Virginia, was hailed by his fellow citizens with the utmost warmth. He was immediately returned from his county to the house of burgesses, and as immediately, elected speaker of that body. This office he held uninterruptedly until the year 1782. Nor was this his only public station. The royal colonies had been in many respects, organized after the forms and institutions of the mother country; and no one more so than Virginia. Among these the governor as representative of the sovereign, appointed a king's lieutenant as he was called, in every county. He was the chief magistrate, civil as well as military, he presided over the county courts of justice, taking precedence when present of all other officers. He was commander of the militia, and as such bore the title of colonel. Although the office was not one of emolument, it was one of much honour, and eagerly sought by men of family and wealth; and from this circumstance perhaps, has arisen that ridicule which has been thrown on Virginia, from the great number of her "colonels." To this office, which after the revolution merged its royal title in the more republican one of county lieutenant, Mr. Harrison was also appointed. In the journals of congress, and the legislature, he is generally spoken of by his military title, and his name frequently appears on the records of the courts as the superior magistrate.

He was called to preside over the councils of Virginia, during the gloomiest period of her history. As yet she had never been the theatre of war, if we except the occasional incursions on her coasts. The year 1781, however brought with it deeper perils. The traitor Arnold invaded and laid waste the country as far as Richmond; and immediately after him came Cornwallis, sweeping from the south with his victorious army. The small body of continental troops retreated before him unable to strike a blow, and he roamed at pleasure through every quarter of the state. At this awful period, Virginia had no hope but in the aid of Washington. To him the governor applied; and the legislature hoping perhaps that private friendship, united with a formal representation from one not easily alarmed, might strengthen official application, prevailed on their speaker to repair to the head quarters of the commander in chief; and in his absence chose a presiding officer pro tempore. In this duty as in every other, Mr. Harrison acted with his usual promptness; but he did not succeed in the object of his mission. General Washington felt himself the defender of all America, and however painful to his feelings it might be, thus to see his native state unprotected and ravaged, he knew it to be his duty to pursue those plans which promised most speedily to secure, not momentary safety, but permanent triumph. On Mr. Harrison's return, he resumed his seat, and was driven about from place to place, as he had formerly been in congress, scarcely able to keep together the delegates over whom he presided. Richmond, Charlottesville, Staunton and the Warm Springs, were in little more than a month the successive places of adjournment; and it was only by hastening their deliberations, and urging them to promptness and exertion, that the speaker could obtain the passage of those measures, which the state of the country imperiously demanded. Of this, one of his addresses to the house of delegates at the time, affords a striking instance. "The critical and dangerous situation of our country," he says, "leads me to hope, that my recommending it to you to despatch the weighty matters that will be under your consideration, with all convenient speed, will not be taken amiss: the people expect that effectual and decisive measures will be taken to rid them of an implacable enemy, that are now roaming at large in the very bowels of our country, and I have no doubt of your answering their expectations; the mode of doing this may indeed be difficult; but it not being my province to point it out, I shall leave it to your wisdom, in full confidence that every thing that is necessary for quieting the minds and dispelling the fears of our constituents, will be done."

It will scarcely be believed, that almost fifty years after these events had taken place, in a work assuming the character of impartial history, this very paragraph is quoted, and attributed to unmanly fears. If by fear, be meant the compulsory retreat of an unprotected legislature before the bands of the ferocious Tarleton, then, indeed, were Mr. Harrison and all the delegates cowards; but if by fear, be meant a request "to despatch with all convenient speed those measures, which the people expected, to rid them from an implacable enemy," then is it, as it appears to us, a perversion of language and of motives which cannot be excused. The descendants indeed of the patriots of Virginia have just reason to complain that their merits have been depreciated, and their conduct misrepresented with a view to bring more strongly into the light, a man, certainly inferior to many of them in useful talents, and in active duty, and by no means superior in patriotism or disinterestedness.

In the year 1782, on the resignation of Mr. Nelson, Mr. Harrison was elected governor of Virginia, and became one of the most popular officers that ever filled the executive chair. His services during the period, were many and great; the fluctuations of public opinion, the situation of the continental army, the state of public currency, the efforts of intriguing men, and the natural revulsion of affairs, which accompanied the return of peace, called forth all the vigour and steadiness of his character. To enter, however, upon the detail of his measures, would be to write the history of Virginia during his administration, a task inconsistent equally with the character and limits of this sketch. Every personal anecdote however is interesting of such a man, and we shall conclude this period of his life, by an extract from the writings of an intelligent traveller, who thus describes a visit which he paid to him in the year 1782.

"After dinner I went to pay a visit to Mr. Harrison, then governor of the state. I found him in a homely, but spacious enough house, which was fitted up for him. As the assembly was then sitting, there was nothing to distinguish him from other citizens. One of his brothers, who is colonel of Artillery, and one of his sons, who acts as his secretary, were with him. The conversation was free and agreeable, which he was even desirous of prolonging; for on my rising in half an hour, lest I might interrupt him, he assured me that the business of the day was at an end, and desired me to resume my seat. We talked much of the first congress in America, in which he sat for two years, and which, as I have already said, was composed of every person distinguished for virtue and capacity on the continent. This subject led us naturally to that which is the most favourite topic, amongst the Americans, the origin and commencement of the present revolution. It is a circumstance peculiar to Virginia, that the inhabitants of that country were certainly in the best situation of all the colonists under the English government. The Virginians were planters, rather than merchants, and the objects of their culture were rather valuable than the result of industry. They possessed, almost exclusively, the privileged article of tobacco, which the English came in quest of, into the very heart of the country, bringing in exchange every article of utility, and even of luxury. They had a particular regard and predilection for Virginia, and favoured accordingly the peculiar disposition of that country, where cupidity and indolence go hand in hand, and serve only as the boundaries to each other. It was undoubtedly no easy matter therefore, to persuade this people to take up arms, because the town of Boston did not choose to pay a duty upon tea, and was in open rupture with England. To produce this effect, it was necessary to substitute activity for indolence, and foresight for indifference. That idea was to be awakened at which every man, educated in the principles of the English constitution, shudders, the idea of a servile submission to a tax to which he has not himself consented. The precise case however relative to them, had not yet occurred, though every enlightened mind foresaw that such was the object, and would be the inevitable consequence of the early measures of the government: but how were the people to be convinced of this? By what other motive could they be brought to adopt decisive measures, if not by the confidence they reposed in their leaders? Mr. Harrison informed me, that when he was on the point of setting out with Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Lee, to attend the first congress at Philadelphia, a number of respectable but uninformed inhabitants, waited upon, and addressed them as follows: 'You assert that there is a fixed intention to invade our rights and privileges; we own that we do not see this clearly, but since you assure us that it is so, we believe the fact. We are about to take a very dangerous step, but we confide in you, and are ready to support you in every measure you shall think proper to adopt.' Mr. Harrison added, that he found himself greatly relieved by a speech made by Lord North soon after, in which he could not refrain from avowing, in the clearest manner, the plan of the British Government. This speech was printed in the public papers, and all America rang with its contents. Returning afterwards to Virginia, he saw the same persons who had thus addressed him on his departure, who now confessed that he had not deceived them, and that henceforward they were resolutely determined upon war. These particular details cannot but be useful to such

Europeans as are desirous of forming a just idea of those great events, in which they took so deep an interest; for they would be much deceived in imagining that all the thirteen states of America were invariably animated by the same spirit, and affected by the same sentiments. But they would commit a still greater error, did they imagine, that these people resemble each other in their forms of government, their manners and opinions. One must be in the country itself; one must be acquainted with the language, and take a pleasure in conversing, and in listening, to be qualified to form, and that slowly, a proper opinion and a decisive judgment. After this reflection, the reader will not be surprised at the pleasure I took in conversing with Mr. Harrison. Besides that, I was particularly happy to form an acquaintance with a man of so estimable character in every respect, and whose best eulogium it is to say, that he is the intimate friend of Dr. Franklin. He pressed me to dine with him next day, and to pass another day at Richmond; but as there was nothing to excite curiosity in that town, and I was desirous of stopping at Westover before I returned to Williamsburg, where I was anxious to arrive, we set out the twenty-seventh, at eight in the morning, under the escort of Colonel Harrison, who accompanied us to a road from which it was impossible to go astray."

After having been twice reelected governor, Mr. Harrison became ineligible by the provisions of the constitution, and in 1785 returned to private life. He was immediately announced as a candidate for his own county without solicitation, and without his knowledge; but in this instance, and in this only, he failed of success. A political rival artfully made use of a measure which he had adopted while governor, that of obliging the county militia to level the embankments raised at the siege of Yorktown; and by working upon the feelings of the populace, succeeded in exciting against him a momentary unpopularity. He did not hesitate as to the course he should pursue. The election in the neighbouring county of Surrey, occurred a fortnight after that of Charles city, where he had been rejected. He left Berkeley, crossed over into Surrey, and after residing there a few days, was returned with his son Carter, by an almost unanimous vote, to the same legislature. This completely frustrated the plans of his opponent, whose opposition had arisen from a wish to be placed in the speaker's chair, a situation which he knew there was little chance of obtaining when Mr. Harrison was a member of the house. The unfairness of the scheme induced Mr. Harrison to exert an influence he would otherwise have willingly omitted, and being nominated as presiding officer, he was immediately elected. The people of his own county, convinced of their hasty error, and mortified at the result, before the succeeding annual election solicited his return, and from that period he represented them without an interval until his death.

Mr. Harrison was now considerably advanced in years, and his constitution was beginning to suffer under the effects of age and of a very active life; he was not himself willing to attribute it to these causes, but used to say that it arose from his having pursued the foolish fashions of the time, and abandoned good old Madeira for light French wines. The high veneration for his character however still remained, and when the new constitution of the United States was submitted to Virginia, he was chosen a member of the convention. In this venerable body we find him seated, on the second of June 1788, among all the brilliant and distinguished politicians, of whom Virginia could then boast so many. He was appointed chairman of the first committee, that of privileges and elections, and brought forward the resolution intended to introduce the general discussion. Ill health, however, prevented his taking any very active part in the ensuing debates; he appears only to have risen, in order to defend the measures of an early legislature, which had been introduced and censured by some of the warm advocates of the constitution. As to this instrument, his opinions were firmly fixed; he was strongly convinced of the propriety and necessity of a union, but he was equally anxious that all the powers of the government should be carefully defined; he therefore opposed the ratification, before the amendments, which he believed necessary for this end, had been incorporated with the original instrument. In these views he was supported by nearly half the convention, the majority by which the unconditional ratification was passed only amounting to ten votes. The effect of a minority so large and respectable, was nearly equal to a majority; and although it was agreed to ratify the constitution unaltered, a committee was immediately appointed to prepare and report such amendments as they should think necessary. On this committee Mr. Harrison was placed, and they brought in a declaration of rights, and a series of amendments, which embraced and provided for the omissions and objectionable clauses of the new constitution, and which, after passing the convention, became the basis of those alterations that were subsequently made. So great, however, was the excitement which this question occasioned, and so nearly were parties balanced, that the minority submitted to their defeat with reluctance, many of them with a wish that some plan of resistance might yet be thought of. After the business of the day was over, a few of the leaders requested their party, by private notice, to assemble after night in the capitol. Whether or not the invitation was extended to Mr. Harrison, is now unknown, though it seems most probable that it was. If not, he had heard of their design, and hastened to the meeting. They were already engaged in their violent plans. Resolutions were on the point of passing, urged with all the energy of a distinguished popular leader, whose object was to carry resistance to the new government, to an extent which would seriously embarrass its operation. Mr. Harrison at once perceived the fatal consequences of these measures; he boldly appealed to their feelings of patriotism and honour, and at last succeeded in prevailing on them to submit to the decision of the majority, and pursue the legitimate mode which had been reserved for obtaining amendments. This disinterested, manly and honourable action is the last public act of Mr. Harrison which has fallen within our knowledge, and it is a brilliant termination to his political career—it is better, far better than long speeches, and violent debates, and probably saved his country from events which might have been attended with consequences injurious to her peace and liberties.

In the year 1790, he was, contrary to his wishes, brought forward as a candidate for the executive chair. In Virginia, the governor is elected annually by a joint ballot of both houses, and may serve three years; he is then ineligible for four more. Mr. Beverly Randolph was at this time the governor; he was a very amiable man, and on terms of the most friendly intimacy with Mr. Harrison; he had served two years, when, by some means, he became unpopular with a part of the legislature, and they determined not to re-elect him for the succeeding year. They kept their plan secret until a day or two before the election, and then fixed on Mr. Harrison as their candidate, relying on his well known popularity. As soon as he discovered it, he refused to serve, and opposed the scheme by every means in his power; his own son voted against him, and in favour of Mr. Randolph, and that gentleman was by these means continued in office, though only by a majority of two or three votes. Mr. Harrison would have been a candidate, and no doubt elected, the following year, had he lived.

His health at this time was visibly and rapidly declining. In the spring of 1791, he was attacked with a very severe fit of the gout, which produced a debility of the intestines. From this, however, he partially recovered; his friends were again collected around him, and his usual vivacity returned. The day after his unanimous election to the legislature, in April 1791, he had assembled a party to dinner, and he passed the day merrily with them, receiving their congratulations on his undiminished popularity, and on the certainty of his being the next governor of the state. Their congratulations, however, were in vain. The same night a relapse took place, and he speedily exhibited every symptom of approaching dissolution. Before the family physician arrived, he directed some medicine to be prepared for him; as an old and faithful domestic brought it to his bed side, she said, "here, sir, is the medicine you asked for:" "and here, Molly," he calmly replied, "will soon be a dead man." On the following day he died, with perfect resignation and composure.

We have been unable to ascertain the date of Mr. Harrison's birth. Of that of his marriage too we are ignorant, although it was at an early age. His wife's name was Elizabeth Bassett; she was the daughter of colonel William Bassett, of Eltham, in the county of New Kent, and a niece of the sister of Mrs. Washington. In her youth she was considered extremely beautiful; and those who yet live to remember her, speak of her in later years, as a woman of great piety, benevolence and goodness. She only survived her husband a single year.

Those who recollect Mr. Harrison, speak of him as a man above the ordinary height, and very muscular; in his carriage he was remarkably dignified; and in his latter years he became corpulent. This arose from his mode of living, which was highly convivial; he enjoyed and indulged in the pleasures of the table, though never beyond the limits of propriety. This habit, however, tended much to impair the vigour of his constitution; and his features, which in early life were handsome, became at last coarse and red.

His talents seem to have been rather useful than brilliant. He in public life never took a very prominent part in debating or writing, yet when called on by circumstances, he acquitted himself in both, with facility and credit. His sentiments were generally liberal; though he sometimes indulged that strong prepossession in favour of his own state, which has always so remarkably characterized the representatives of Virginia. He never suffered it, however, to interfere with his ardour for the public good of the whole confederacy, and the united efforts common danger constantly required. His judgment was sound, grave and solid; yet he had a pleasantry, when he chose to indulge it, which lightened labour, and banished uneasy apprehensions. Some instances of this in his public career, we have already recorded; and many more are related among the incidents of his private life. In the early part of the revolution he was passing through Baltimore, at a time when a number of young gentlemen were assembled in a convivial meeting. They invited him to join them, to which he readily agreed; and seized the opportunity to warm their young blood with the principles of the revolution.

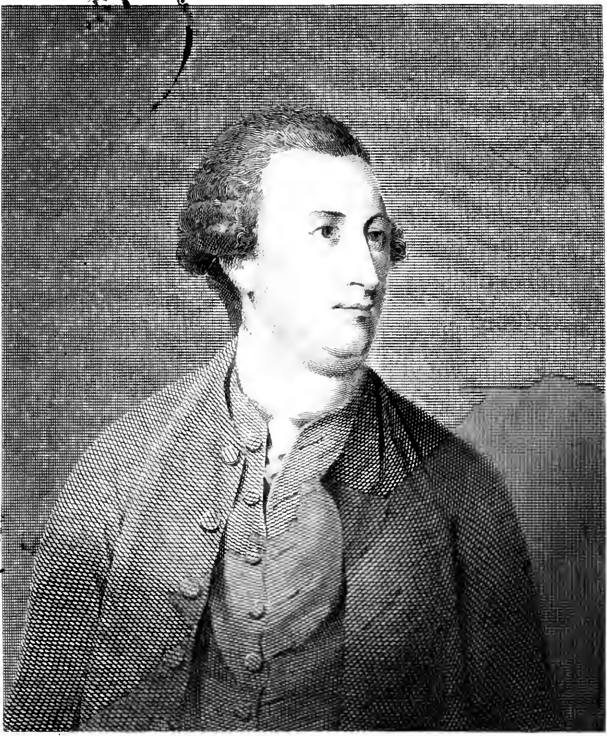
This he did with so much good humour, vivacity and wit, that as one of them afterwards expressed it, they all agreed at once to take up the cross, though some had been previously by no means hearty in the cause. One evening he was sitting at Berkeley with a neighbouring gentleman and some of his family, when a servant maid came in to inquire what clothes she should put up for a journey he was to commence the next day. "Why," said he, with the utmost gravity, "you may put up my black velvet suit, my green trimmed with gold, and the blue and silver." The poor girl, and all around, looked astonished. At length he said, "Now, she knows well enough, except what I have on, but one decent suit in the world belongs to me, and yet she comes for a list, as if I had the wardrobe of a king." Between the captains of the vessels passing up James river and the gentlemen residing on the shores, a reciprocity of good offices was kept up. The former sent presents to the latter of foreign rarities, and received in return the fresh produce of their plantations. A sailor once brought him a remarkably thin cheese; "Please your honour," said the sailor, using his nautical terms, "the captain has sent you a loaf of cheese." "I am much obliged to the captain, but really, my good fellow, it looks more like a *pancake* of cheese than a *loaf*." The sailor returned to the vessel, and shortly after came back with a cheese of a very different shape, and observed, "The captain's determined to suit your honour's taste, so he has sent you a real loaf." When alone and fatigued with reading, he was very fond of amusing himself with a small spaniel and a very large cat, with which he would often play for a long while, and succeeded in teaching them a variety of amusing tricks.

Mr. Harrison inherited a very large fortune from his father, and twice succeeded to considerable property under the old English law of primogeniture. It was, however, somewhat impaired, by disastrous times and imprudent speculations. Before the revolution, and indeed in some instances subsequently, the Virginia gentlemen were their own merchants, exporting themselves the produce of their estates. In this system Mr. Harrison largely engaged; he not only erected extensive merchant mills, but established a large ship-yard and built his own vessels. In all this, as might be supposed, he was very unsuccessful; and believing that his misfortunes proceeded from a want of mercantile skill, he determined that his eldest son should have such an education, as might retrieve the fortunes of his family, and he placed him in the counting-house of his friends Willing and Morris.

Mr. Harrison had many children, but seven only survived their birth or very early infancy. Three of these were sons and four daughters; the latter of whom married into respectable and wealthy families of Virginia. Benjamin, the eldest son, was, as we have mentioned, sent when young to Philadelphia, and there obtained an excellent mercantile education. After he had completed that he visited Europe, and formed extensive commercial connexions. During the revolutionary war he was paymaster general of the southern department.

When peace was restored, he established himself as a merchant in Richmond, and there acquired a large fortune. This he afterwards impaired by an act of honourable generosity; as soon as he heard of the distresses of his early friend, Mr. Morris, he came forward immediately to his support, and sacrificed in his behalf the greater part of the fortune he had acquired. He was twice married, and died of apoplexy in 1799, leaving an only son, the present Benjamin Harrison of Berkeley. The second son, Carter Bassett Harrison, after receiving a classical education at the college of William and Mary, was bred to the law. He was not a man of brilliant talents, but he was a good lawyer, a fluent speaker, and a very upright man. In public life he was very popular, and served many years in the legislature, in congress, and as a presidential elector. He died in 1804, leaving two sons. The third son, William Henry Harrison, was educated at Hampden Sydney College in Virginia, and was intended for the medical profession; this, however, he soon abandoned for an ensigncy in the army, and marched to the new country of the west. He distinguished himself, while yet young, in the battle with the Indians at the rapids of Miami; was afterwards raised to the office of governor of the Indiana territory, which he filled with singular merit; and in the late war, by his perfect knowledge of the western country, his acquaintance with military tactics, and above all the confidence and respect which he universally inspired, was at an early period raised to a high military post on the north-western frontier, and became one of the most popular and successful commanders the republic had employed. On the return of peace, he received from his applauding countrymen the fair reward of his exertions, in being elected to several high political stations by the people of Ohio; and, as a representative of that state in congress, he still maintains in honour and respect the name of Harrison.

WILLIAM PACA.



WILLIAM PACA.

Eng^{d} by P. Maverick from a drawing by J.B. Longacre from Copley.

PACA.

The family of Paca has been eminent in Maryland, through several generations; distinguished for making a good use of wealth and influence, and for supporting a prominent and honourable part in public affairs.

William Paca, the subject of our present notice, was born at Wye Hall, the paternal mansion, on the Eastern Shore, in the year 1740, and was carefully educated in the customary branches of classical instruction, and in the principles of morality and honour, which belonged to him as a birthright.

After completing his academic course at the Philadelphia college, he was sent, in 1758, to commence the study of the law at Annapolis. Here he prosecuted his reading, preparatory to the exercise of his intended profession, under the superintendence of a gentleman of legal acquirements, who was well qualified to direct the researches of a student, although not at that time an actual practitioner.

Samuel Chase, afterwards so distinguished in the revolution, was studying at Annapolis during the same period; and although differing widely in temperament and some points of character, these two young men contracted an intimate friendship, which endured, most honourably to both, until they were separated by death.

In the year 1761, both these youths began to appear before the public eye, and stepped at once into reputation and importance.

They both became members of the provincial legislature, where many opportunities were afforded for the display of their abilities, and their minds were trained in the exercise of such controversial powers as they had occasion frequently and beneficially to use, in after life.

Mr. Paca appeared, in the year 1771, as the representative, jointly with Mr. Matthews Hammond, of the citizens of Annapolis, in a public letter of thanks to Mr. Charles Carroll, for his exertions "as an advocate for liberty," in a paper war that had been carried on with great spirit, on the question of the right of the governor to regulate the fees of civil officers by proclamation.

The citizens having chosen those two young men to be their members of the legislature, at the same time appointed them to convey their approbation to the able advocate of the rights of the people, in opposition to the prerogative of the crown; and their letter to Mr. Carroll asserts the doctrine, which was still to be established through years of bloodshed and privation, that the imposition or regulation of a tax, by executive authority, was an act of tyranny not to be endured.

At about the same period Mr. Paca was selected as one of the commissioners to whose taste and supervision, the plan and erection of the new state-house was to be entrusted. And he assisted in the design of that structure, the most elegant edifice, of the kind, for a long time attempted in America, and even now, bearing a comparison with the most stately that have since been erected.

When the act of parliament which closed the port of Boston was first heard of, a convention of deputies from the patriotic portion of the community in each county of Maryland, assembled for the purpose of consultation. The sentiment of indignation against this act of vindictive tyranny was universal, as was the feeling of sympathy for the injured Bostonians; no definite course could, however, yet be pointed out as the most likely to lead to a redress of the grievance; but a congress of the several colonies having preceded, if not occasioned, the repeal of the stamp act, a few years before, a similar measure at once suggested itself to the minds of all. The committee of correspondence of Massachusetts had written letters, proposing such an assembly to be held at Philadelphia; and the Maryland convention, acceding to the plan, appointed Mr. Paca, along with Mr. Chase and three others, to attend the congress, "to effect one general plan of conduct, operating on the commercial connexion of the colonies with the mother country, for the relief of Boston and the preservation of American liberty."

The proceedings of that illustrious congress are too well known, to require that they should be detailed here. The object in view was conciliation, and a chief part of the business transacted during the session, was the preparation of the eloquent addresses or memorials to the king, the people of Great Britain, and the people of the colonies. Besides issuing these immortal state papers, the congress adopted the non-importation association, and all the members signed it in the vain hope, that such an evidence of the seriousness of their feelings, and sincerity of their belief that injury had been done to them, would have some effect on the determinations of the ministry, or the disposition of the British nation.

The most remarkable clause in this agreement, or that which now strikes the mind of the reader most forcibly, as illustrative of the honourable feelings which prevailed here, contrasted with the narrow prejudices of the British government, is the one by which the slave trade is to be renounced and discouraged. Thus early did the American people bear emphatic testimony against that inhuman traffic, which the British government not only continued to permit, but in an unaccountable spirit of double cruelty, strenuously endeavoured to force upon the unwilling colonies.

In December of the same year, the same delegates, with the addition of Mr. John Hall and Mr. Thomas Stone, were elected to represent the province of Maryland in the next continental congress, with ample power to agree to all measures which might there be deemed necessary to obtain a redress of American grievances. And the same appointment was renewed in the following summer.

Mr. Paca's talents for business were appreciated, and he was called upon to serve on several laborious committees in the year 1775, when he was a constant attendant in his place. Among these were the committees charged with the consideration of the critical condition of North Carolina and Virginia; and that selected for the purpose of devising means to raise a naval armament.

Scarcely had he liberty to withdraw his close attention from the peculiar difficulties of the south, before he was appointed to attend to an alarm from the colony of New York. And while he was devoting his mind to these duties, his purse was open to the use of his public spirited countrymen; a volunteer corps of whom he and his friend Chase supplied with rifles, at an expense of nearly a thousand dollars.

Mr. Paca was, during the year 1775, and part of 1776, restrained from openly advocating that national independence to which he was looking forward with such anxious hope, and for the attainment of which he was labouring so zealously in all the affairs appertaining to a state of actual war, that were agitated in congress.

The people of Maryland were not yet ready for a step so decisive as a total renunciation of the royal authority; and it having been rumoured that such a plan was advocated by some rash persons, the convention early in the year 1776, in great alarm least the young men that represented that province in congress should join in such a measure, tied them up by instructions which strictly enjoined upon them not to consent to any proposition for declaring the colonies independent; a resolution was at the same time adopted, that Maryland "would not be bound by the vote of a majority of congress to declare independency," accompanied with strong professions of loyalty and affection towards the king and mother country, and an assertion that Maryland did not entertain any views or desire of independency.

Under this galling bondage were Mr. Paca and his colleagues obliged to rest. They did not indignantly resign, because they hoped for a change in the wishes of their constituents, and they feared to leave vacant those places which might be filled, under the influence of the unhappy spirit then prevalent, with men of opposite principles to their own.

Mr. Paca continued therefore in the assiduous discharge of his duties, contributing his efforts to produce such a state of affairs as he hoped would render a separation from Great Britain, less repugnant to the inclinations of Maryland.

He accordingly assisted in planning a naval armament, which according to his instructions could carry no independent flag; in the procuring of saltpetre and other munitions, for a war to be waged against the forces of a king, to whom the Maryland convention were offering vows of loyal attachment; and in the organization of an army to be employed in resisting the orders of that government, from which his constituents declared they had no wish to separate.

In the middle of May, at the very time when congress were declaring that the royal authority had ceased, and recommending to the respective colonies to organize governments founded on the authority of the people, the Maryland convention repeated their restrictions.

This state of affairs, however, could not last long. The exertions of the leading gentlemen on the patriotic side were indefatigable, and the convention were induced, on the twenty-eighth of May, to dispense with prayers for the king and royal family. This first step being taken, the rest became more easy, and finally, on the twenty-eighth of June, the convention recalled their instructions and left the delegates free to vote according to their inclinations, upon the question then under discussion before congress, of issuing immediately a declaration of independence. Thus being released from the trammels that had confined him, Mr. Paca gave his cordial vote in favour of the proposition, and inscribed his name upon the Declaration, which is destined to be read by the remotest posterity.

On the day when the Declaration was dated, Mr. Paca was reelected a delegate, and within a few weeks he had the satisfaction to see a resolution of the Maryland convention, approving of the decisive step, and pledging the lives and fortunes of the members in support of it. He was again chosen, on the fifteenth of November of the same year, and on the fifteenth of February, 1777, and continued to be an active and efficient member of congress, during that season of severe trial and anxiety.

Early in the year 1778, he accepted the appointment of chief judge of the superior court of his state, a station for which he was perfectly well qualified by his legal acquirements and elevated character; and the functions of which he continued to perform, with honour to himself and advantage to the state, until the year 1782, when he was called to the performance of still more elevated duties, as governor of the state of Maryland.

Mr. Paca was a man of remarkably graceful address, fine appearance, and polished manners, he had mixed long in the best society, and had improved his social powers to a very high degree of refinement. In the office of governor his superiority in these respects was very strikingly displayed, and the courtesies of the executive mansion have never been more elegantly sustained than during his tour of office.

Mr. Paca retired after one year's tenure, from the chief magistracy, and remained in private life until 1786, when, upon the death of general Smallwood, he again received and accepted the office of governor, which he filled, as before, but for one year.

He subsequently served in the state convention which ratified the federal constitution, and after the organization of the new form of government, he received from president Washington the appointment of district judge for the Maryland district, which he held for the residue of his life.

In the year 1790, he held the first circuit court, with judge Blair of the supreme court, and continued in the regular and able discharge of his judicial duties from that time until the year 1799, when, in the sixtieth year of his age, and with faculties unimpaired and a character untarnished, he fell a victim to disease, leaving to his family the inheritance of a name illustrious for the virtues of public and private life, and to his country the example of a superior mind, devoted with pure disinterestedness to the establishment of her liberties.

GEORGE ROSS.

ROSS.

George Ross of Lancaster in Pennsylvania, one of the delegates from that province in the revolutionary congress, was the son of the reverend George Ross, pastor of the episcopal church at New-Castle in the state of Delaware, and was born in that town in the year 1730. In his early youth he displayed a cheerful and affable disposition, and gave proof of promising talents; these his father attentively cultivated, and made him especially a good scholar in the ancient languages. At the age of eighteen he commenced the study of the law, and prosecuted it under the instructions of his elder brother John, a lawyer of good standing in the city of Philadelphia; when he had finished the regular course of reading, he was called to the bar. Finding the ranks of the profession well filled in the city, he determined to try his fortunes in the interior country, and settled at Lancaster, then near the western limits of civilization, about the year 1751. He had not been long a resident of that place before he married Miss Ann Lawler, a lady of a respectable family; and devoting himself zealously to his profession, obtained a lucrative and increasing practice, with the honourable office of prosecutor for the king.

Actively engaged in his profession, he does not appear to have taken any part in politics for some years, so that the first public notice we obtain of him, is his election as a representative in the assembly of Pennsylvania, in which he took his seat in the month of October, 1768. He remained a member of the same body until he was called to higher offices at a subsequent period, and during the whole time merited and obtained the utmost confidence, both from his colleagues and his constituents. Whilst in the legislature, he seems to have paid particular attention to the situation of our intercourse with the various Indian tribes settled within the state, or wandering near its borders. This had always been a subject of constant anxiety to the people of the province, and very frequently of difference between the assembly and several of the governors; the latter were indeed too fond of interfering in Indian affairs, and often excited feelings, by so doing, which it was rather their intention to prevent and allay. In one instance Mr. Ross was called on to display his sentiments, by being appointed to draught a reply to a message from the governor, which urged on the assembly an increase of the garrison at Fort Pitt, as a protection against the neighbouring savages. "When we considered your message," says the reply of the assembly to the governor, "recommending the support of a garrison at Fort Pitt, we thought it our duty to inquire into the reason and grounds, if any, for those apprehensions. We were therefore induced to apply to government for information; whether there appeared a disposition in the natives to violate those treaties, and from your last message we cannot find there is the least cause for such a suspicion, otherwise we have no doubt you would, on our request, have communicated it. From whence we are led to conclude, that the uneasiness of the back settlers is without foundation, and by no means a sufficient reason for a measure, which we fear may be productive of the very mischiefs it is intended to avert.

We well know, that from the first settlement of the province down to the late French and Indian war, the most perfect good understanding and friendship were preserved between this government and those people, by a conduct uniformly just and kind towards them, that since the late Indian war, the like happy effects have been produced by the like policy, and that, on the contrary, the maintaining of garrisons in or near their country, has been frequently an object of their jealousy and complaints. To this we may add, that it appears by intelligence now before us, from the deputy superintendent of Indian affairs in that quarter, that having, in pursuance of his majesty's orders, communicated to the western Indians the evacuation of Fort Pitt, that measure is so entirely agreeable to them, that it is likely to effect a removal of their jealousies, and a conciliation of their affections, to this province.

We might offer other reasons for not concurring in sentiment with your honour, on the propriety of supporting a garrison at Fort Pitt, but being of opinion that any warlike preparations, even within our own frontiers, at a time of prevailing harmony between us and the natives, may be attended with more ill than good consequences, we shall wave them as unnecessary, and content ourselves with assuring you, that we shall, and we have no doubt but all future assemblies will, be very ready, when there shall be real occasion, to afford every kind of protection to the back inhabitants the circumstances of the province will allow."

But Mr. Ross was soon destined to act as the organ of the assembly, in more important affairs than the quarrels about the maintenance of a petty garrison, or the aggressions of a few Indian tribes. He had looked with all the indignation natural to a freeman, on the arbitrary proceedings of the British government, and had been for sometime convinced, that a general co-operation among the several provinces was necessary to secure their liberties. He hailed therefore with delight, the resolutions of Virginia and the other states, proposing the assembly of a general congress. They were not received in the assembly of Pennsylvania until it was on the eve of dissolution, and it was therefore thought more respectful to the people, that whatever measures might be adopted, should proceed from a future assembly, who would meet well aware of the sentiments of their constituents. Mr. Ross was however, appointed on a committee to draught a reply to the speaker of the house of delegates in Virginia, and in so doing took care to express the cordial feelings he entertained. "The assembly of Pennsylvania," he says, "assure your honourable house, that they esteem it a matter of the greatest importance to co-operate with the representatives of the other colonies, in every wise and prudent measure which may be proposed, for the preservation and security of their general rights and liberties; and that it is highly expedient and necessary, a correspondence should be maintained between the assemblies of the several colonies. But as the present assembly must, in a few days be dissolved, by virtue of the charter of the province, and any measures they might adopt at this time, rendered by the dissolution ineffectual, they have earnestly recommended the subject matter of the letter and resolves of the house of burgesses of Virginia, to the consideration of the succeeding assembly."

In the month of July following, it was unanimously resolved, to appoint a committee of seven members on the part of the province, to meet the delegates of the other colonies at such time and place as might be generally agreed on; and Mr. Ross was elected one of the members of this committee. He was also by a singular coincidence, at the same time appointed to draw up the instructions under which they, and himself as one of them, were to act; these however are very properly, simple and general in their terms; leaving in a great degree the course to be adopted, such as future circumstances might require. "The trust reposed in you," they state, "is of such a nature, and the modes of executing it may be so diversified in the course of your deliberations, that it is scarcely possible to give you particular instructions respecting it. We shall therefore only in general direct, that you are to meet in congress the committees of the several British colonies, at such time and place as shall be generally agreed on, to consult together on the present critical and alarming situation and state of the colonies, and that you, with them, exert your utmost endeavours to form and adopt a plan, which shall afford the best prospect of obtaining a redress of American grievances, ascertaining American rights, and establishing that union and harmony which is most essential to the welfare and happiness of both countries. And in doing this, you are strictly charged to avoid every thing indecent or disrespectful to the mother state." Under these instructions Mr. Ross took his seat in congress, on the fifth of September, 1774, and remained a member of that body until January, 1777, when he obtained leave of absence, on account of indisposition, and retired.

His conduct met with the warm thanks and approbation of his constituents; and of this an honourable evidence has been preserved, in a resolution passed by the county of Lancaster, which is as follows; "Resolved that the sum of one hundred and fifty pounds out of the county stock, be forthwith transmitted to George Ross, one of the members of assembly for this county, and one of the delegates for this colony in the continental congress; and that he be requested to accept the same, as a testimony from this county of their sense of his attendance on the public business, to his great private loss, and of their approbation of his conduct.

Resolved, that if it be more agreeable, Mr. Ross purchase with part of the said money a genteel piece of plate, ornamented as he thinks proper, to remain with him as a testimony of the esteem this county has for him, by reason of his patriotic conduct in the great struggle for American liberty." Mr. Ross however declined accepting this liberal and honourable present; stating to the committee in so doing, that his services were overrated by his fellow citizens; that in bestowing them he had been impelled solely by his sense of duty, and that every man should contribute all his energy to promote at such a period the public welfare, without expecting pecuniary rewards.

The occupations of congress did not however prevent Mr. Ross, from continuing his duties as a member of the provincial legislature, where we constantly find his name recorded among the zealous political leaders of the time. Early in the year 1775, Mr. Penn, the governor and proprietary of the province, sent a message to the assembly referring to the peculiar situation of the colony; and though couched in mild and conciliatory language, evidently meant to repress if possible the mode of proceeding which had been pursued, by the union and co-operation of all the colonies. "You will agree with me gentlemen," he says, "that in all cases wisdom dictates the use of such means as are most likely to attain the end proposed. On the present occasion it is conceived, that any grievances which his majesty's subjects in America apprehend they have reason to complain of, should be humbly represented to his majesty by the several assemblies, as the only proper and constitutional mode of obtaining redress; and I have the best reason to believe, that a proper attention will be paid to such representations, and to any propositions that may be made through that channel, on the present state of American affairs. "This mode therefore I earnestly recommend to you to adopt; and I most ardently wish that the proceedings of this as well as the other colonies, may be of such a temperate and dutiful nature as to afford a foundation for a re-establishment of that harmony with the mother country, which is so essential to both."

It was the universal custom, at this period, for the assembly to reply at once to the messages of the governor, and on the present occasion, it of course obliged the members of the house to express their opinions, and to decide at once, whether the plan hitherto pursued should be retracted, or whether they should firmly stand by congress and support its measures. The talents of the political leaders of the day were called out, and they exerted themselves, in several long debates, in favour of their several opinions. Mr. Ross was an able speaker, and urged the continuance of decisive measures with all the weight of his talents, character and influence; and he and his friends so far succeeded, as to obtain the appointment of a committee coinciding in their views, and of which he was a member. This committee presented, as their report, an answer to the governor's address, in the following terms; "We are sincerely obliged to your honour for your attention to the true interests of the people over whom you preside. at a time when the disputes between Great Britain and the American colonies are drawing towards an alarming crisis; and we agree with you, 'that in all cases wisdom dictates the use of such means as are most likely to obtain the end proposed.' We have, with deep concern, beheld a system of colony administration, pursued since the year 1763, destructive to the rights and liberties of his majesty's most faithful subjects in America, and have heretofore adopted such measures, as we thought were most likely to restore that affection and harmony between the parent state and the colonies, which it is the true interest of both countries to cultivate and maintain, and which we most sincerely wish to see restored. We must inform your honour, that a most humble, dutiful and affectionate petition from the delegates of all the colonies, from Nova Scotia to Georgia, is now at the foot of the throne, and we trust in the paternal affection and justice of our most gracious sovereign, that he will interpose for the relief of his greatly distressed and ever faithful subjects in America. We assure your honour, that this house will always pursue such measures, as shall appear to them necessary, for securing the liberties of America, and establishing peace, confidence and harmony between Great Britain and her colonies." On the presentation of the report, another violent debate arose, which lasted for two days, when it was carried by a majority of twenty-two to fifteen voices.

In the summer of 1775, the legislature found that measures more vigorous than resolutions were necessary, and they determined at any rate to make preparation to meet the consequences of their previous measures, whatever they might be. To this end they appointed Mr. Ross, and several of the leading members of assembly, a committee to consider of and report such measures as might be expedient to put the city and province in a state of defence. This committee, after deliberating a few days, brought in a series of resolutions, approving of the association of the people for the defence of their lives, liberty and property, providing for the pay of such of them as should be engaged in repelling any hostile invasion of the British troops, and recommending the several counties of the province to collect stores of ammunition and arms. To carry their plans better into effect, they appointed a general committee of public safety, for calling forth such of the associators into actual service, when necessity requires, as the said committee should judge proper, for paying and supplying them with necessaries, while in actual service, for providing for the defence of the province against invasion and insurrection, and for encouraging and promoting the manufacture of saltpetre; which said committee were thereby authorized and empowered to draw orders on the treasurer therein after appointed for the several purposes above mentioned. Of this committee, which became for some time, as it were, the executive organ of the government, Mr. Ross was a leading member, as he was also of another important committee, that of grievances. Besides these duties relative to the war, he was appointed, with two other gentlemen, to prepare rules and regulations for the government of the forces of the province which might be raised.

When the proprietary government was dissolved, and the general convention substituted for the previous legislature, Mr. Ross took his seat in it also, as a representative of Lancaster county. He was, within a few days after its organization, appointed on a committee to prepare a declaration of rights on behalf of the state, and chairman of two others of much importance, that for forming regulations for the government of the convention, and that for preparing an ordinance declaratory of what should be high treason and misprision of treason against the state, and what punishment should be inflicted for those offences.

Indeed, in all legal matters, Mr. Ross at this period stood deservedly high. Before the revolution he was among the first of his profession, and in the change which that event had produced in its component parts, as well as its forensic character, he still maintained the same rank. These changes were indeed very considerable; subjects of higher importance than those which commonly fall to the lot of provincial judicatures were brought forward; motives sufficient to rouse all the latent energies of the mind were constantly presenting themselves. The bar was chiefly composed of gentlemen of aspiring minds and industrious habits; and Mr. Ross found himself engaged among men, with whom it was honourable to contend and pleasant to associate. Mr. Wilson, who had practised with great reputation at Carlisle; Mr. Biddle, from Reading; Gouverneur Morris, occasionally, and occasionally Mr. Read, till he was chosen a member of the chief executive council; Mr. Sergeant, who, in 1777, was appointed attorney general; and Mr. Lewis, of Philadelphia, in conjunction with Mr. Ross, formed an assemblage of powerful and splendid talents, which might have coped with an equal number of any forum in America. The whole faculties of this bar were soon put in requisition, by the prosecutions which were commenced against some of those accused of being adherents to the British cause. The popular excitement against them was high. and their defence appeared to many a service of danger: but the intrepidity of the bar did not allow them to shrink from the conflict, and Mr. Ross and Mr. Wilson especially embarked all their talents, zeal and professional reputation in the cause of those who were thus accused.

The last public employment in which Mr. Ross was engaged, was that of a judge of the court of admiralty for the state of Pennsylvania, to which he was appointed on the fourteenth of April, 1779; and while on the bench he was esteemed a learned and impartial judge. displaying sound legal knowledge and abilities, and great promptness in his decisions. He did not, however, long occupy the station he was so well calculated to fill, as he died suddenly in the month of July following, from a violent attack of the gout.

Of his character little remains to be said, beyond that which may be collected from the preceding pages: in his domestic habits he was kind, generous, and much beloved; in his professional career zealous and honourable; as a politician always active and patriotic; and he seems to have well deserved the praise which was bestowed on him by one who knew him, as "an honest man and upright judge."

JOHN ADAMS.

JOHN ADAMS.

To have been one of those who subscribed their names to such a document as the Declaration of Independence, is of itself a rare felicity; to have been a powerful agent in producing the event which that declaration proclaimed and signalized, is a glory still more distinguished; but to have lived besides to see, at the expiration of half a century, the prosperous condition of the nation thus brought into existence, seems a consummation almost beyond the possibility of nature.

John Adams, to whom this remarkable favour of Providence has been allowed, was engaged, during the greater part of his life, so actively in public affairs, that the incidents of his career are inseparably blended with the history of the colony which claimed him for her son, and of the nation which honoured him as a father. It is impossible, therefore, to view his course of life, except in connexion with those arduous struggles of freedom against oppression, to which he lent a conspicuous energy, and gave up his whole heart and undivided zeal. He was fourth in descent from Henry Adams, who, according to the quaint inscription on his tomb at Quincy, "took his flight from the dragon Persecution in Devonshire, England, and alighted with eight sons near Mount Wollaston;" and he was also descended from John Alden, one of that pilgrim-band who first landed on Plymouth Rock, seeking an asylum for religious and civil freedom among the forests of the new world.

This is truly an illustrious ancestry. The memorable enterprise of those true-hearted adventurers requires no effort of artificial rhetoric to recommend it to our admiration. Were it a circumstance in foreign or in ancient history, we should fix on this achievement as one of the noblest deeds in the annals of the world. It gains in the comparison with whatever history or tradition has preserved of the wanderings and settlements of the tribes of man. Here was a wild continent for the first time effectually explored, a stormy ocean navigated in the winter by men, with their families, who relinquished the scenes endeared to them by all the sacred associations of home; the voluntary exiles of liberty and conscience, for whose sake they endured the severest hardships, in order that their posterity might enjoy the most exalted happiness.

The first settlers of New England were a peculiar race of people. They came with charters from the king, for even in removing to another hemisphere, they did not cast off all fondness for their native land, but anxiously sought to retain the tie of connexion which, by the solemn compact of a charter, and the mutual links of allegiance and protection, they hoped to perpetuate. And as their numbers increased, questions of political right arose between them and the government, from the abuse of whose authority they had intended to withdraw themselves. It seemed a desperate undertaking to subdue the forests of that inhospitable climate, repel the incursions of the neighbouring savages, and contend at the same time with the power of Great Britain on points of constitutional privilege. But their minds and bodies gathered strength from the fearful elements around them; the courageous and active character of the fathers descended upon their children, and with it also were inherited the same invigorating contests.

Violations of their charters, restraints upon their trade, and frequent collisions with the royal governors sent over to bend them to submission, converted the province of Massachusetts into the scene of an obstinate struggle of intellectual force contending for liberty on one side, and upon the other for arbitrary power.

From the severe discipline of this well fought field of argument, there came forth such men as only a controversy like this could have produced; acute, logical and pertinacious, fitted for the sturdy business of life, and peculiarly capable of waging successfully this controversial warfare against the most accomplished champions of unlimited authority.

This bloodless quarrel had been maintained for a long series of years before the birth of John Adams, which occurred at Quincy, near Boston, on the nineteenth of October, (O. S)., 1735. His first impressions were therefore received from minds trained in this school, and his own was early imbued with those noble principles of freedom which actuated his whole course, and have secured to him an immortal name.

His worthy father very soon perceiving a strong love of reading, and of knowledge, and marks of great strength and activity of intellect, took proper care to give him every attainable advantage of education.

His boyish studies were prosecuted in Braintree, under Mr. Marsh, a teacher whose fortune it was to assist in forming the minds of several children, destined in manhood to bear an important part in the movements of the revolution. In 1751, he was admitted a member of Harvard college at Cambridge, where he was graduated, in course, four years afterwards. Of his collegiate reputation little is known at present, most of his classmates having preceded him to the grave; but one of them, the pious and learned Dr. Hemmenway, often spoke of the honesty, openness and decision of character that distinguished him, of which he told many characteristic anecdotes.

After completing his academic course, he repaired to Worcester for the purpose of studying the law, and according to the established usage of New England, began at once to support himself by his own exertions. He taught in the grammar school of that town, and pursued his lucubrations at the same time under the direction of Mr. Putnam, a barrister of eminence. By him he was introduced to the acquaintance of the celebrated Jeremy Gridley, then attorney general of the province, and at the first interview they became friends. Gridley took him into special favour, assisted him with his advice, and proposed him for admission to the bar of Suffolk county.

It is said that Mr. Gridley once led him into a private room, with an air of secrecy, and pointing to a book-case containing treatises on the civil law, said, "there is the secret of my eminence, of which you may avail yourself if you please." The young pleader saw at once the advantage of being well at home in a field of science, then little known to the judges or practitioners, and did not intermit his application to these books till he had made himself master of the principles of the code.

By an expedient very similar to this, Lord Mansfield is known to have added greatly to his reputation; and nothing could have been better calculated to make Mr. Adams appear to advantage at the outset of his professional career, than being thus possessed of a store of legal maxims and illustrations, entirely unrevealed to his competitors.

It was certainly as early in his life as this residence at Worcester, when his thoughts began to turn on general politics, and the prospects of his country occupied his attention. A letter that he wrote very soon after leaving college has been preserved; and evinces so remarkable a forecast, and such a comprehensive range of speculation, that it deserves an attentive perusal. It was dated at Worcester, on the twelfth of October, 1755, and is in these words. "Soon after the reformation, a few people came over into this new world for conscience' sake. Perhaps this apparently trivial incident may transfer the great seat of empire into America. It looks likely to me if we can remove the turbulent Gallicks; our people according to the exactest computations, will in another century become more numerous than England herself. Should this be the case, since we have, I may say, all the naval stores of the nation in our hands, it will be easy to obtain the mastery of the seas; and then the united force of all Europe will not be able to subdue us. The only way to keep us from setting up for ourselves, is to disunite us. *Divide et impera.*—Keep us in distinct colonies, and then some great men in each colony desiring the monarchy of the whole, they will destroy each others influence, and keep the country in equilibrio. Be not surprised that I am turned politician; the whole town is immersed in politics. The interest of nations, and all the *dira* of war, make the subject of every conversation. I sit and hear, and after having been led through a maze of sage observations I sometimes retire, and by laying things together, form some reflections pleasing to myself. The produce of one of these reveries you have read above."

In 1758 he was admitted to the bar, and commenced practice in Braintree; but his first considerable effort, which was encouraging and successful, was made at Plymouth, in a jury trial and a criminal cause.

The contentions between the colonists and the royal government were at this period carried on, at Boston, with great bitterness; the pressure of the war with the French had been in a great degree removed, and they had leisure to dispute on questions of law and constitutional right. A rooted aversion subsisted between the officers of the customs in the port of Boston, and the people concerned in the foreign trade of the province. The duty of those officers was odious in itself; and a zeal to merit the approbation of the ministry, and to accumulate wealth, induced them to exercise a rigour in enforcing the commercial laws, which added much to the hatred necessarily connected with their business. The antipathy became personal, and the execution of the laws appeared like the triumph of private revenge.

Out of this state of feeling arose the memorable dispute respecting "writs of assistance," which had important consequences to the future history of the colony. The custom-house officers petitioned the superior court, stating that they could not fully exercise their offices in such manner as his majesty's service required, and therefore requesting that the court would grant them writs of assistance to aid them in the execution of their duty, according to the usage of the court of exchequer in England.

Mr. Gridley, the friend of Mr. Adams, as king's attorney general, maintained the legality of this writ both on English precedents and the example of a former court of the province. It was admitted that such writs, giving unlimited power to search the houses of all persons suspected of having goods liable to duty, took away the common privileges of Englishmen; but it was said the necessity of the case, and the benefit of the revenue, justified their use; and this although the writs were not returnable, and no jurisdiction existed to punish the wanton exercise of the power to be entrusted in very unsafe hands.

Mr. James Otis, then a very leading and distinguished patriot and lawyer, appeared for the town of Boston, who presented a counter-petition. He contended that these writs were the "worst instruments of arbitrary power, the most destructive of English liberty, and the fundamental principles of law, that ever was found in an English law book."

The speech of Mr. Otis, on this occasion, was so eloquent and impressive, and affected Mr. Adams, who was present, so deeply, that he never seemed to have lost the feeling it produced, and to have entertained constantly the fullest conviction of its important effects. "I do say," he declared long afterwards, "that Mr. Otis's oration against writs of assistance breathed into this nation the breath of life." On another occasion he said of this same harangue, "Otis was a flame of fire! with a promptitude of classical allusion, a depth of research, a rapid summary of historical events and dates, a profusion of legal authorities, a prophetic glance of his eyes into futurity, and a rapid torrent of impetuous eloquence, he hurried all before him. American independence was then and there born. The seeds of patriots and heroes to defend the *non sine diis animosus infans*, were then and there sown. Every man of an immense crowded audience appeared to me to go away, as I did, ready to take arms against writs of assistance. Then and there was the first scene of the first act of opposition to the arbitrary claims of Great Britain."

The court could find no justification for such writs; but issued them, as it was believed, clandestinely; and the facility which they afforded for stirring up hostility between the police and the citizens, may be exemplified by a circumstance which was related by Mr. Otis. "Mr. Justice Wally had called Mr. Ware, one of the persons in possession of such a writ, before him, by a constable, to answer for a breach of the sabbath-day acts, or for profane swearing. As soon as he had finished, Mr. Ware asked him if he had done. He replied, yes. Well then, said Mr. Ware, I will show you a little of my power. I command you to permit me to search your house for uncustomed goods; and went on to search his house from the garret to the cellar; and then served the constable in the same manner."

In 1761, Mr. Adams was admitted to the rank of a barrister, and continued to advance in professional reputation. In Boston and its vicinity, the attention of all men possessed of public spirit and enlarged views was, however, now very much engrossed by the contentions between the provincial assembly and the royal governor, which assumed a shape and importance more alarming than before.

In the year 1762, the general assembly prepared a bill to restrain the issuing of the odious writs of assistance, except to custom-house officers, and then upon special information on oath. But the governor refused his assent to this bill; and the assembly took their revenge by lowering the salaries of the judges.

Soon after this, another difference arose, on the occasion of the governor's fitting out a sloop for a cruise in protection of the fishing vessels, and making arrangements for the expenses, during the recess of the assembly. This was resented as a very great impropriety, because it was an appropriation of the public funds without the previous consent of the people; and the positive utility of the measure, as well as the diminutiveness of the sum, were urged equally in vain to excuse the fault. The assembly told the governor that if such things might be done, "it would be of little consequence to the people whether they were subject to George or Louis, the king of Great Britain or the French king, if both were arbitrary, as both would be, if both could levy taxes without parliament."

At this time the British parliament had not begun any of those aggressions, which subsequently became the causes of war and separation. It was the executive power that now excited the jealousy of the colonists; and governor Barnard being disposed towards conciliation, there was for a time a pause in the opposition to his measures, which gave an appearance of a better understanding; and there was also some softening of the spirit that had existed among the leaders, of whom the elder Mr. Otis was appointed a judge, and the younger wrote a pamphlet on the rights of the colonies, in which he acknowledged the sovereignty of parliament, and put the question of taxing America on the footing of the common good. Lieutenant governor Hutchinson was chosen agent for the colony, to be sent to England, chiefly for the purpose of obtaining a modification of some commercial regulations which were thought objectionable. Mr. Hutchinson, however, did not accept the appointment, and the calm did not continue very long.

The year 1763 brought a victorious peace to Great Britain; but, like all glorious victories, was followed by a period of pecuniary distress. The national debt was immensely increased, the excitement of the war was over, and taxes were no less odious to the people than if no successes were to be paid for.

The British minister went through a very summary process of calculation on the subject; money was wanted, the colonies were prosperous, therefore they must be made to furnish it. Accordingly he procured the act to be passed early in 1764, imposing various duties of import and export, including one upon molasses and sugars, and intimated his intention to charge certain stamp duties in the colonies, which he postponed until the next year. But, though the British ministry were heedless of the question of right, and uninformed upon the question of practicability, the people of this country had studied the one, and were well aware of the extent of the other. In Massachusetts, where the late commercial regulations had been felt particularly injurious, the inhabitants were well instructed in the nature of their rights. The nation from which they sprung was distinguished, in Europe, for an exemption from many restraints which others continued to endure. Its laws had been, in a great degree, freed from the fetters of feudal tenures; commerce had ameliorated the pride of the military spirit; and industrious enterprise had arisen by the side of national glory. Emanating from such enlightened policy, and partaking of all its rapid subsequent improvements, the British colonists may be said to have been instructed in the wisest age, and in the most perfect political principles which the world had known. Their emigration was without precedent; it consequently produced new cases, founded on unsettled principles, at every stage of its advancement. In the beginning they were considered as no part of the realm, in the view of the constitution; and held their charter of the king as his liege subjects. When the parliament participated of the sovereignty, the colonies, becoming the dominions of the realm, were made liable to its laws. These were acknowledged, until they were grounded on the violation of that great maxim of British freedom, that taxation and representation were correlative. To their information upon constitutional points, and acuteness in controversy, their local situation compelled them to add the strictest frugality in the expenditure of public money. Rich in freedom and strong by industry, they were compelled by a reluctant soil to the unremitting exercise of the one, in order to preserve the other. From wealth they could receive little assistance: trade, which regulates the current of money, was carried on at the will of the parent country; and she restricted the extent of it by the supplies of her manufactures, which her accommodation might dictate to be sent to the colonies. In the chances of a war, invitations arose for greater commercial enterprise; but the gains were dearly purchased with the introduction of luxury, which by increasing the artificial wants of the inhabitants, left the balance against the country on the whole. To a people thus situated, a tax was instantly and universally felt. It was a demand for the food and the raimant of the poor; it pervaded the recesses of frugal contentment; it awakened the jealousy of inquisitive speculation; it roused the anger of liberty.

Nor was this a sordid nor avaricous spirit in the colonists, which became so much excited by the ministerial project of a tax. Edmund Burke, in his speech on "Conciliation with America," placed that question in its true light, when he said of the colonists, "they are not only devoted to liberty, but to liberty according to English ideas, and on English principles. Abstract liberty, like other mere abstractions, is not to be found. Liberty inheres in some sensible object; and every nation has formed to itself some favourite point, which, by way of eminence, becomes the criterion of their happiness. It happened that the great contests for freedom in this country were from the earliest times chiefly upon the question of taxing. Most of the contests in the ancient commonwealths turned primarily on the right of election of magistrates; or on the balance among the several orders of the state. The question of money was not with them so immediate. But in England it was otherwise. On this point of taxes the ablest pens, and most eloquent tongues, have been exercised; the greatest spirits have acted and suffered. In order to give the fullest satisfaction concerning the importance of this point, it was not only necessary for those who in argument defended the excellence of the English constitution, to insist on this privilege of granting money as a dry point of fact, and to prove, that the right had been acknowledged in ancient parchments, and blind usages, to reside in a certain body called a house of commons. They went much further; they attempted to prove, and they succeeded, that in theory it ought to be so, from the particular nature of a house of commons, as an immediate representative of the people; whether the old records had delivered this oracle or not. They took infinite pains to inculcate, as a fundamental principle, that, in all monarchies, the people must in effect themselves, mediately or immediately, possess the power of granting their own money, or no shadow of liberty could subsist. The colonies draw from you, as with their life-blood, these ideas and principles. Their love of liberty, as with you, fixed and attached on this specific point of taxing. Liberty might be safe or might be endangered in twenty other particulars, without their being much pleased or alarmed. Here they felt its pulse; and, as they found that beat, they thought themselves sick or sound."

Mr. Adams was occupied, during a part of this year of alarm and ferment, in gentler cares than political controversy, for it was at this period that he was united to Abigail, the daughter of the Rev.. William Smith, his faithful and most amiable partner during fifty-four years of conjugal union. To this accomplished and excellent lady he owed much of the felicity of his life; with true sympathy in his feelings she unrepiningly submitted to the frequent separations which his devotion to the general cause occasioned; and he fully appreciated her worth, and could never, in the heaviest trials of his life, speak of her without emotions of tenderness and gratitude, that would suffuse his eyes and impede his utterance. There has been preserved a letter written by her to a friend, at one of the most gloomy periods of the war, in which she thus expresses the noble patriotism which she cherished in common with her husband. "Heaven is our witness, that we do not rejoice in the effusion of blood or the carnage of the human species; but having been forced to draw the sword, we are determined never to sheathe it slaves of Britain. Our cause, sir, is I trust the cause of truth and justice, and will finally prevail, though the combined force of earth and hell shall rise against it. To this cause I have sacrificed much of my own personal happiness, by giving up to the councils of America one of my nearest connexions, and living for more than three years in a state of widowhood."

The domestic happiness which he had secured by this marriage, in rendering his home more attractive, did not withdraw him from a participation, subordinate of course to those older worthies who took the lead, in the efforts to promote an intelligent and hearty understanding of the rights of the colony, and a general determination to maintain them.

In 1764, a town meeting at Boston suggested the plan of a convention of the colonies, but nothing more was at that time done towards such a measure. Petitions and remonstrances were sent to England, and great confidence was entertained that the parliament would be convinced, as the colonists were, that the power of taxing resided constitutionally in the colonial assembly, and no where else.

But these fond hopes were destined to be disappointed. In February, 1765, the stamp act, proposed at a former session of parliament, was passed, requiring stamped paper to be used for all legal instruments, at the custom house, in all courts, bonds, deeds, and diplomas for collegiate degrees; and imposing a tax thereon, by which a large amount was to be raised in the colonies. And all forfeitures were to be recovered in the courts of admiralty without the intervention of a jury.

Mr. Adams now appeared before the public by publishing his "Essay on the Canon and Feudal Law," a performance of very remarkable power and eloquence, in which he made a bold and undisguised appeal to the spirit of the people, against the attempt to establish the unlimited control of the parliament.

This composition, written in a style of uncommon nervousness and vivacity, is an argument founded on the assertion that monarchy, in the earliest and most ignorant ages was the universal form of government, but as the people became more enlightened, they in the same proportion became more free; the love of power has been often the cause of slavery, but sometimes the cause of freedom. "If it is this principle, that has always prompted the princes and nobles of the earth, by every species of fraud and violence, to shake off all the limitations of their power; it is the same that has always stimulated the common people to aspire at independency, and to endeavour at confining the power of the great, within the limits of equity and reason."

The character of this production will perhaps be understood if we extract merely the leading points, omitting the illustrations and particulars which would occupy too much space.

"Since the promulgation of christianity, the two greatest systems of tyranny, that have sprung from this original, namely the love of power, are the canon and feudal law.

"By the former of these, the most refined, sublime, extensive and astonishing constitution of policy, that ever was conceived by the mind of man, was framed by the Romish clergy for the aggrandizement of their own order.

"In the latter we find another system similar in many respects to the former.

"But, another event still more calamitous to human liberty, was a wicked confederacy, between the two systems of tyranny above described."

These points are enforced by very animated remarks on the debasing consequences of this mental subjection, and of the absurdity of the systems which he is reprobating.

"Thus," he continues, "as long as this confederacy lasted and the people were held in ignorance—liberty, and with her, knowledge, and virtue too, seem to have deserted the earth; and one age of darkness succeeded another, till God, in his benign providence, raised up the champions who began and conducted the reformation. From the time of the reformation, to the first settlement of America, knowledge gradually spread in Europe but especially in England; and in proportion as that increased and spread among the people, ecclesiastical and civil tyranny, which I use as synonymous expressions for the canon and feudal laws, seem to have lost their strength and weight."

He then traces the consequences of this improved intelligence through the civil wars, to the settlement of America; and gives to the puritans the credit of great learning, wisdom and virtue.

"It may be thought polite and fashionable by many modern fine gentlemen, perhaps, to deride the characters of these persons as enthusiastical, superstitious and republican: But such ridicule is founded in nothing but foppery and affectation, and is grossly injurious and false. Religious to some degree of enthusiasm, it may be admitted they were; but this can be no peculiar derogation from their character, because it was at that time almost the universal character, not only of England but of Christendom. Had this however been otherwise, their enthusiasm, considering the principles in which it was founded and the end to which it was directed, far from being a reproach to them, was greatly to their honour; for I believe it will be found universally true, that no great enterprise, for the honour or happiness of mankind, was ever achieved without a large mixture of that noble infirmity."

He then describes the system established by these first settlers, as a mild limited monarchy, with a total rejection of all the principles of the feudal and the canon law, in which he includes "the whole system of diocesan episcopacy," and the "ridiculous fancies of sanctified effluvia from episcopal fingers."

He asserts that they equally laid aside all the "base services and servile dependencies of the feudal system." "They knew that government was a plain, simple intelligible thing, founded in nature and reason, and quite comprehensible by common sense."

"They were convinced by their knowledge of human nature, derived from history and their own experience, that nothing could preserve their posterity from the encroachments of the two systems of tyranny, in opposition to which, as has been observed already, they erected their government in church and state, but knowledge diffused generally through the whole body of the people. Their civil and religious principles, therefore, conspired to prompt them to use every measure, and take every precaution in their power to propagate and perpetuate knowledge. For this purpose they laid very early the foundations of colleges, and invested them with ample privileges and emoluments; and it is remarkable, that they have left among their posterity, so universal an affection and veneration for those seminaries, and for liberal education, that the meanest of the people contribute cheearfully to the support and maintenance of them every year, and that nothing is more generally popular than productions for the honour, reputation and advantage of those seats of learning. But the wisdom and benevolence of our fathers rested not here. They made an early provision by law, that every town, consisting of so many families, should be always furnished with a grammar school. They made it a crime for such a town to be destitute of a grammar school-master for a few months, and subjected it to a heavy penalty. So that the education of all ranks of people was made the care and expense of the public in a manner, that I believe has been unknown to any other people ancient or modern.

"The consequences of these establishments we see and feel every day. A native of America who cannot read and write, is as rare an appearance as a jacobite, or a roman catholic, i. e. as rare as a comet or an earthquake."

He dwells subsequently on the importance of the liberty of the press, and contrasts the decency and mildness of the press on this side of the Atlantic, with its intemperance and coarseness in England.

And adroitly turning this compliment into a reproach, he charges the organs of public sentiment with being too timid, and not sufficiently open and emphatic in their complaints.

"We have been told, that 'the word rights is an offensive expression.' That 'the king, his ministry, and parliament, will not endure to hear Americans talk of their rights.' That 'Britain is the mother and we the children, that a filial duty and submission is due from us to her,' and that 'we ought to doubt our own judgment, and presume that she is right, even when she seems to us to shake the foundations of government.' That 'Britain is immensely rich, and great and powerful; has fleets and armies at her command, which have been the dread and terror of the universe, and that she will force her own judgment into execution, right or wrong.' But let me entreat you, sir, to pause, do you consider yourself as a missionary of loyalty or of rebellion? Are you not representing your king, his ministry and parliament, as tyrants, imperious, unrelenting tyrants, by such reasoning as this? Is not this representing your most gracious sovereign, as endeavouring to destroy the foundations of his own throne?"

"Is there not something extremely fallacious, in the common place images of mother country and children colonies? Are we children of Great Britain, any more than the cities of London, Exeter and Bath? Are we not brethern and fellow-subjects, with those in Britain, only under a somewhat different method of legislation, and a totally different method of taxation? But admitting we are children, have not children a right to complain when their parents are attempting to break their limbs, to administer poison, or to sell them to enemies for slaves?"

The peroration of this excellent discourse is in so fine a strain of eloquence, that it ought not to be disjointed like the preceding extracts. After the energetic argument on the rights and duties of the colonies, he exclaims, in conclusion:

"Let the pulpit resound with the doctrines and sentiments of religious liberty. Let us hear the danger of thraldom to our consciences, from ignorance, extreme poverty and dependence, in short from civil and political slavery. Let us see delineated before us the true map of man. Let us hear the dignity of his nature, and the noble rank he holds among the works of God! that consenting to slavery is a sacrilegious breach of trust, as offensive in the sight of God as it is derogatory from our own honour, or interest or happiness; and that God Almighty has promulgated from heaven, liberty, peace, and good will to man.

"Let the bar proclaim 'the laws, the rights, the generous plan of power' delivered down from remote antiquity; inform the world of the mighty struggles, and numberless sacrifices, made by our ancestors, in the defence of freedom. Let it be known, that British liberties are not the grants of princes or parliaments, but original rights, conditions of original contracts, co-equal with prerogative, and coeval with government. That many of our rights are inherent and essential, agreed on as maxims and established as preliminaries, even before a parliament existed. Let them search for the foundation of British laws and government in the frame of human nature, in the constitution of the intellectual and moral world. There let us see that truth, liberty, justice, and benevolence, are its everlasting basis: and if these could be removed, the superstructure is overthrown of course.

"Let the colleges join their harmony in the same delightful concert. Let every declamation turn upon the beauty of liberty and virtue, and the deformity, turpitude and malignity of slavery and vice. Let the public disputations become researches into the grounds, nature, and ends of government, and the means of preserving the good and demolishing the evil. Let the dialogues and all the exercises become the instruments of impressing on the tender mind, and of spreading and distributing far and wide, the ideas of right, and the sensations of freedom.

"In a word, let every sluice of knowledge be opened and set a flowing. The encroachments upon liberty, in the reigns of the first James and the first Charles, by turning the general attention of learned men to government, are said to have produced the greatest number of consummate statesmen, which has ever been seen in any age, or nation. The Brookses, Hamdens, Falklands, Vanes, Miltons, Nedhams, Harringtons, Nevilles, Sydneys, Lockes, are all said to have owed their eminence in political knowledge, to the tyrannies of those reigns. The prospect now before us in America, ought in the same manner, to engage the attention of every man of learning to matters of power and right, that we may be neither led nor driven blindfolded to irretrievable destruction. Nothing less than this seems to have been meditated for us, by somebody or other in Great Britain. There seems to be a direct and formal design on foot, to enslave all America. This however must be done by degrees. The first step that is intended seems to be an entire subversion of the whole system of our fathers, by the introduction of the canon and feudal law into America. The canon and feudal systems though greatly mutilated in England, are not yet destroyed. Like the temples and palaces, in which the great contrivers of them were once worshipped and inhabited, they exist in ruins; and much of the domineering spirit of them still remains. The designs and labours of a certain society to introduce the former of them into America, have been well exposed to the public, by a writer of great abilities; and the further attempts to the same purpose that may be made by that society, or by the ministry or parliament, I leave to the conjectures of the thoughtful. But it seems very manifest from the stamp act itself, that a design is formed to strip us in a great measure of the means of knowledge, by loading the press, the colleges, and even an almanac and a newspaper, with restraints and duties; and to introduce the inequalities and dependencies of the feudal system, by taking from the poorer sort of people all their little subsistance, and conferring it on a set of stamp officers, distributors and their deputies. But I must proceed no farther at present. The sequel whenever I shall find health and leisure to pursue it, will be a 'disquisition of the policy of the stamp act.' In the mean time however, let me add, these are not the vapours of a melancholy mind, nor the effusions of envy, disappointed ambition, nor of a spirit of opposition to government; but the emanations of an heart that burns for its country's welfare. No one of any feeling, born and educated in this once happy country, can consider the numerous distresses, the gross indignities, the barbarous ignorance, the haughty usurpations, that we have reason to fear are meditating for ourselves, our children, our neighbours, in short for all our countrymen, and all their posterity, without the utmost agonies of heart, and many tears."

The publication of this admirable work brought him rapidly forward into general notice, and in the same year he was associated with Otis and other master spirits in appearing before the governor and council, and arguing there that the courts should administer justice without stamped paper.

He was not a member of the congress which met at New York, in October, 1765, to consult and prepare new petitions, and adjourn. But he had now become a public man, and was associated with Robert Treat Paine, Otis, Quincy, Samuel Adams and other distinguished patriots, all older than himself; in every endeavour to counteract the schemes of the ministry.

Under the influence of such men, the general assembly would probably have been impelled into very bold and perhaps very rash measures; if the news of George

Grenville's dismissal, and the repeal of the stamp act had not for the time, removed the necessity of immediate decision.

In 1766, he removed his residence to the town of Boston, still continuing his attendance on the neighbouring circuits, and not unfrequently called to remote parts of the province.

The repeal of the stamp act, and the accession of Lord Chatham to the ministry, would perhaps have quieted the discontents in Massachusetts; had it not been for the declaratory act that parliament had been induced by a false pride to attach to the repeal, claiming the right to tax the colonies, although for the present they chose to postpone its exercise.

There were however abundant sources of controversy between governor Barnard and the people, among which the introduction of two regiments of king's troops into the town of Boston, was not the least irritating.

Mr. Adams persevered along with his friends Warren, Otis, Thacher and others, as well as his distinguished namesake Samuel Adams, in their labours, such as he had proposed in his essay on the canon and feudal law; and in the year 1768 the importance of his services, and the influence of his writings were so well known and appreciated, as to induce governor Barnard to think him worth buying over; for which purpose his intimate personal friend Sewall, the recently appointed attorney general, was commissioned by the governor to offer him the appointment of advocate general in the court of admiralty, a very lucrative office at that period. He was then but in his thirty-third year, with an increasing family to support; the office tendered to his acceptance would have been a promotion in the line of his profession, would have ensured him a considerable income, and required no direct abandonment of his friends or his principles; but he could not bear to be put in any sort of trammels, he considered the offer as merely insidious, and peremptorily declined it.

He was chosen by the citizens of Boston, in 1769, one of a committee to prepare instructions to their representatives, and the instructions drawn up accordingly, were full of opposition to the measures of the governor, and particularly were aimed against allowing the soldiers to remain in the town.

The soldiers were not removed, however, and a series of squabbles between them and the town's people led finally to a bloody affray, on the fifth of March, 1770, in which five citizens were killed, and several others wounded. This tragical affair, commonly designated as "the massacre," has been differently represented by those who have related it; and even immediately after it took place, the opinions of impartial men did not coincide in reference to all the circumstances connected with it. Many believed that the conduct of the soldiers was excusable on the principle of self-defence, and that great blame attached to the disorderly collection of people that offered the insult and violence.

However this may have been, it is certain that the event produced a most fearful excitement throughout the town, and it required all the exertions of the influential and orderly citizens, to guard against the heated passions of the soldiers, and also to prevent a general attack upon them by the populace.

The proceedings on this occasion have been vividly, though slightly sketched by Mr. Adams himself, who was an actor as well as a spectator, and at the distance of more than forty years could take pleasure in looking back on scenes that, at the moment of their occurrence, must have been of very painful interest.

"The people assembled," he said, "first at Faneuil Hall, and adjourned to the old South Church, to the number, as was conjectured, of ten or twelve hundred men, among whom were the most virtuous, substantial, independent, disinterested and intelligent citizens.—They formed themselves into a regular deliberative body, chose their moderator and secretary, entered into discussions, deliberations and debates, adopted resolutions, appointed committees. Their resolutions in public were conformable to those of every man in private, who dared to express his thoughts or his feelings, 'that the regular soldiers should be banished from the town, at all hazards.' Jonathan Williams, a very pious, inoffensive and conscientious gentleman, was their moderator. A remonstrance to the governor, or the governor and council, was ordained, and a demand that the regular troops should be removed from the town. A committee was appointed to present this remonstrance, of which *Samuel Adams* was chairman.

"This was a delicate and a dangerous crisis. The question in the last resort was, whether the town of

Boston should become a scene of carnage and desolation or not? Humanity to the soldiers conspired with a regard for the safety of the town, in suggesting the wise measure of calling the town together to deliberate. For nothing short of the most solemn promises to the people, that the soldiers should, at all hazards, be driven from the town, had preserved its peace. Not only the immense assemblies of the people, from day to day, but military arrangements from night to night were necessary to keep the people and the soldiers from getting together by the ears. The life of a red coat would not have been safe in any street or corner of the town. Nor would the lives of the inhabitants have been much more secure. The whole militia of the city was in requisition, and military watches and guards were every where placed. We were all upon a level; no man was exempted; our military officers were our only superiors. I had the honour to be summoned in my turn, and attended at the state-house with my musket and bayonet, my broad sword and cartridge box, under the command of the famous Paddock. I know you will laugh at my military figure; but I believe there was not a more obedient soldier in the regiment, nor one more impartial between the people and the regulars. In this character I was upon duty all night in my turn. No man appeared more anxious, or more deeply impressed with a sense of danger on all sides, than our commander Paddock. He called me, common soldier as I was, frequently to his councils. I had a great deal of conversation with him, and no man appeared more apprehensive of a fatal calamity to the town, or more zealous by every prudent measure to prevent it."

The presentation of the remonstrance to the governor, is an incident which Mr. Adams himself has described with admirable graphic effect, in sportively proposing it to his friend Mr. Tudor as the subject for a picture. "The scene," he says, "is the council chamber of the old town house in Boston. That council chamber was as respectable an apartment, and more so too, in proportion, than the house of lords or house of commons in Great Britain, or that in Philadelphia in which the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. Two portraits, at more than full length, of king Charles the second and king James the second, in splendid golden frames, were hung up in the most conspicuous side of the apartment. If my young eyes or old memory have not deceived me, these were the finest pictures I have seen. The colours of their long flowing robes and their royal ermines were the most glowing, the figures the most noble and graceful, the features the most distinct and characteristic; far superior to those of the king and queen of France in the senate chamber of congress. I believe they were Vandyke's. Sure I am there was no painter in England capable of them at that time. They had been sent over without frames, in governor Pownal's time. But as he was no admirer of Charleses or Jameses, they were stowed away in a garret among rubbish, till governor Barnard came, had them cleaned, superbly framed, and placed in council for the admiration and imitation of all men. To which might be added, and should be added, little miserable likenesses of governor Winthrop, governor Bradstreet, governor Endicott and governor Belcher, hung up in obscure corners of the room. Lieutenant governor Hutchinson, commander in chief in the absence of the governor, must be placed at the head of the council table. Lieutenant colonel Dalrymple, commander in chief of his majesty's military forces, taking rank of all his majesty's counsellors, must be seated by the side of the lieutenant governor and commander in chief of the province. Eight and twenty counsellors must be painted, all seated at the council board. Let me see, what costume? What was the fashion of that day, in the month of March? Large white wigs, English scarlet cloth cloaks, some of them with gold laced hats, not on their heads, indeed, in so august a presence, but on a table before them. Before these illustrious personages appeared Samuel Adams, a member of the house of representatives and their clerk, now at the head of the committee of the great assembly at the old South Church. Thucydides, Livy or Sallust, would make a speech for him, or, perhaps, the Italian Botta, if he had known any thing of this transaction, one of the most important of the revolution; but I am wholly incapable of it; and, if I had vanity enough to think myself capable of it, should not dare to attempt it. He represented the state of the town and the country; the dangerous, ruinous and fatal effects of standing armies in populous cities in time of peace, and the determined resolution of the public, that the regular troops, at all events, should be removed from the town. Lieutenant governor Hutchinson, then commander in chief, at the head of a trembling council, said 'he had no authority over the king's troops, that they had their separate commander and separate orders and instructions, and that he could not interfere with them.' Mr. Adams instantly appealed to the charter of the province, by which the governor, and in his absence the lieutenant governor, was constituted 'commander in chief of all the military and naval power within its jurisdiction.' So obviously true and irrefragable was the reply, that it is astonishing that Mr. Hutchinson should have so grossly betrayed the constitution, and so atrociously have violated the duties of his office by asserting the contrary. But either the fears or the ambition of this gentleman, upon this and many other occasions, especially in his controversy with the two houses, three years afterwards, on the supremacy of parliament, appear to have totally disarranged his understanding. He certainly asserted in public, in the most solemn manner, a multitude of the roundest falsehoods, which he must have known to be such, and which he must have known could be easily and would certainly be detected, if he had not wholly lost his memory, even of his own public writing.

"The heads of Hutchinson and Dalrymple were laid together in whispers for a long time; when the whispering ceased, a long and solemn pause ensued, extremely painful to an impatient and expecting audience. Hutchinson, in time, broke silence; he had consulted with colonel Dalrymple, and the colonel had authorized him to say that he might order one regiment down to the castle, if that would satisfy the people. With a self-recollection, a self-possession, a self-command, a presence of mind that was admired by every man present, Samuel Adams arose with an air of dignity and majesty, of which he was sometimes capable, stretched forth his arm, though even then quivering with palsy, and with an harmonious voice and decisive tone, said, 'if the lieutenant governor, or colonel Dalrymple, or both together, have authority to remove one regiment, they have authority to remove two; and nothing short of the total evacuation of the town by all the regular troops, will satisfy the public mind, or preserve the peace of the province.' These few words thrilled through the veins of every man in the audience, and produced the great result. After a little awkward hesitation, it was agreed that the town should be evacuated, and both regiments sent to the castle."

Not only were the soldiers removed from the town, but the supremacy of the civil power was maintained by the arrest, indictment and trial of the actual offenders. Mr. Adams was applied to on behalf of captain Preston, the officer who was charged with giving the fatal order to fire upon the people, and the private soldiers who were indicted with him, to undertake their defence. It was a touchstone applied to his firmness and his professional pride. The people were still clamorous against the soldiers, and he was a man of the people, living for them and among them. The governor's party anxiously desired to skreen the offenders from punishment; would not a lawyer appearing for such a defence, be suspected of deserting the popular cause? Such considerations might have deterred a man of less moral courage, but Mr. Adams was above their influence. He could afford to perform a professional duty without endangering his political standing. Two years only had elapsed since he rejected the offer of a lucrative and distinguished governmental appointment; he could not be suspected, after that, of wishing to truckle to the men in power. The main point being gained by the removal of the troops out of the town, men of liberal feelings could have no desire to visit the sins of the commanders upon the ignorant soldiers, by any vindictive exercise of the civil power. The great offence had been the presence of the military in the town, for which the authorities alone were answerable; that soldiers, being there, should be dissolute, insolent and quarrelsome, was to be expected. Mr. Adams, therefore, thwarted no secret wishes of his own, in contributing to the defence of the accused. He conducted it with the zeal and vigour that marked all his actions, and with an ability and eloquence that elicited universal applause.

Yet it was a courageous stand for a popular leader to take, in the existing excitement among the citizens. A town meeting was kept alive, according to the statement of governor Hutchinson, by short adjournments, to observe how the business of the court went on. And it is mentioned by the same officer, that when the court had determined to put off the trials to the first week in June, a committee, viz. S. Adams, W. Cooper, Dr. Warren, and divers others, came from Mr. Jones's, where they had been dining that day, and a vast concourse of people after them, into the superior court, and harangued the judges until they altered their determination."

But, notwithstanding this exasperation of feeling among the towns-people, from whom the jury was to be taken, captain Preston was acquitted, on account of a want of positive evidence to criminate him as the author of the mischief; and two only of the soldiers, upon whom the act of firing after much provocation, was proved, were convicted of manslaughter, and praying the benefit of clergy, were branded with a hot iron and dismissed.

That Mr. Adams lost no favour with his fellow townsmen by engaging in this trial, is proved by the circumstance of his being, in the same year, elected one of the representatives in the general assembly, in place of Mr. Bowdoin, who went into the council.

The session of the assembly which ensued was marked by a pertinacious contest between the house and the acting governor, Hutchinson, on the subject of holding the "General Court," as it was called, in Cambridge instead of Boston. The assembly insisted on returning to Boston, from which the sessions had been removed by governor Barnard; and refused to proceed in any business until their return to the ancient place of meeting should be agreed to. The lieutenant governor pleaded his instructions; but was attacked irresistibly on that ground, with the argument that no instructions from England could countervail the charter. He hinted at his power as commander in chief, but then laid himself open to the whole odium of an arbitrary act. Finally, he refused to adjourn to Boston, "without permission of his majesty's ministers." A committee of leading men, the elder and younger Adams, Hancock and Hawley, were appointed to prepare a reply to this undisguised avowal of subserviency to ministerial views. The reply is elaborate and eloquent, and seems to bear the impress of the same mind from which the "Essay on the Canon and Feudal Law" had proceeded. The conclusion is a very intelligible warning of what the ministry had to expect if they should persevere in their oppressive conduct.

"We are obliged, at this time, to struggle, with all the powers the constitution has furnished us, in defence of our rights; to prevent the most valuable of our liberties from being wrested from us, by the subtle machinations and daring encroachments of wicked ministers. We have seen, of late, innumerable encroachments on our charter; courts of admiralty, extended from the high seas, where, by the compact in the charter, they are confined, to numberless important causes upon land; multitudes of civil officers, the appointment of whom is, by charter, confined to the governor and council, sent here from abroad by the ministry; a revenue, not granted by us, but torn from us; armies stationed here without our consent; and the streets of our metropolis crimsoned with the blood of our fellow subjects. These, and other grievances and cruelties, too many to be here enumerated, and too melancholy to *be much longer borne* by this injured people, we have seen brought upon us, by the devices of ministers of state. And we have, of late, seen and heard of *instructions* to governors, which threaten to destroy all the remaining privileges of our charter. Should these struggles of the house prove unfortunate and ineffectual, this province will submit, with pious resignation, to the will of Providence; but it would be a kind of suicide, of which we have the utmost horror, to be instrumental in our own servitude."

But the lieutenant governor was resolutely determined, or strictly ordered, not to consent to the return to Boston, of which place he had imbibed an immeasurable dread. "Salem would have been better than Cambridge," he wrote to his government, in the private letters afterwards discovered and published, "the further from Boston the better. The house will be sour and troublesome enough, but all they can do will be a perfect trifle compared with the trouble that town gives me." "I have tried," he added, "the council, and represented to the judges the illegality of the town act; they say there is no possibility of helping it; the body of the people are all of a mind, and there is no stemming the torrent. It is the common language of Adams and the rest, that they are not to be intimidated by acts of parliament," &c.

The lieutenant governor's office was certainly no bed of roses at this time; he and his coadjutors were overmatched in talent, resolution and management, by "Adams and the rest;" and the perturbation of his mind was excessive.

At times he advised the use of force, then recommended a course of cunning expedients, which he designated as "Machiavelian policy;" imputed to the colonists a determination to have a lord lieutenant and an American parliament; and suggested a variety of projects for curbing their spirit.

When the general court met again in September of the same year, the house was induced, by the urgency of the public concerns of the province, to suspend their resolution against transacting any business while the session was held at Cambridge; protesting, however, against the restraint they were put under. Thirty of the members, among whom was Mr. Adams, voted against proceeding to business even with such a protest.

A new grievance now appeared in the dismissal of the troops at "the castle," who were under the control and pay of the province, and the transfer of that fortress to the custody of the king's forces. This was an evil that admitted of no present remedy, but it stimulated to more active preparations for resistance, and mainly induced the appointment of a committee, of which Mr. Adams was a member, to correspond with the agents in England, with the speakers of assemblies in other colonies, and with committees chosen for a similar purpose.

In the following year, 1771, Mr. Hutchinson received the appointment of governor of Massachusetts, and made some efforts towards conciliation; the duke of Grafton had resigned, and lord North had rescinded all the obnoxious duties except that on tea. A comparative calm ensued for a short season, and the letters from Franklin and other Americans in England, held out encouragement to hope for the removal of all causes of complaint. The same obstinate dispute as to the place of holding the sessions of the assembly continued, and little public business was transacted in consequence. But in 1772, the governor gave up this point, and ordered the long desired return to the town house at Boston. But he failed to gain any popularity by this measure, after showing so unaccommodating a temper, and a subserviency so entire to the British administration.

He had accepted a provision for the payment of his salary by the crown, instead of the province, and nothing could have given greater offence. There was also a project, afterwards executed, of providing in the same way for the salaries of the judges; and upon these two grievances a large town meeting was held, early in 1772, at Boston, and very spirited resolutions adopted.

This ministerial regulation for paying the salaries of the judges, which rendered them wholly dependent on the crown, was the occasion of a discussion in the public papers, between William Brattle, senior member of the council, on the one side, and Mr. John Adams on the other; written, on the part of Mr. Adams, according to the history of the period, "with great learning and ability;" and had a happy effect in enlightening the public mind on a question of very great importance.

When the general court met in January, 1773, the new governor made an elaborate speech to them in support of the supremacy of parliament, and threw out, as the two houses thought, a challenge to answer him. This they did forthwith, but he replied in the same strain, and put forth so ingenious an argument, that their committee thought it necessary to invoke the aid of Mr. John Adams, who was not then a member, in preparing a rejoinder. A very eloquent and argumentative disquisition was immediately drawn up by him for their use, which they adopted at once without alteration; and so powerful was it considered by Dr. Franklin, as an exposition of the claims and wrongs of the colonies, that he caused it to be republished in England, and distributed there.

Very shortly after this circumstance he was elected a member of the assembly, and being placed by their vote on the list of councillors, the governor erased his name, by a vindictive exercise of a right incident to his office, but never exercised unless as an expression of strong dislike and hostility.

The year 1773 was signalized by the destruction of the tea, which in pursuance of a very insidious plan, had been brought to Boston; the first overt act of rebellion, except the associations previously entered into, and kept with remarkable fidelity, against importing the articles made subject to the obnoxious duties; which were looked upon as little short of treason, by the officers of government.

Early in 1774, governor Hutchinson, who had fallen into such general odium as to be very uncomfortably situated, resigned his office and departed for England. And at the same time his successor, and the intelligence of the act of parliament closing the port of Boston, were received, the one with outward civility but universal distrust, the other with unbounded indignation and alarm.

The inhabitants of Boston were called together, to consider this new and unexampled aggression. It was there voted to make application to the other colonies to refuse all importations from Great Britain, and withhold all commercial intercourse, as the most probable and effectual mode to procure the repeal of this oppressive law. One of the citizens was dispatched to New-York and Philadelphia, for the purpose of ascertaining the views of the people at those places, and in the colonies further south. A committee comprising Samuel Adams, Dr. Warren, afterwards general Warrren, the hero and martyr of Bunker's hill, with John Adams and others of the same high character, was appointed to consider what further measures ought to be adopted.

Mr. Adams being again a member of assembly was put on the list for the council but governor Gage knew his character well from the report of his past conduct, and erased his name, as Hutchinson had done before.

The governor obliged the general court to meet at Salem, instead of Boston, where they proceeded after a very civil address to him, to ask for a day of general fast and prayer. This his excellency refused, so difficult was it for the legislative and executive authorities of this province to agree upon measures that seemed even the least likely to be offensive. But although he would not let them pray he could not prevent them from adopting a most important measure, namely that of choosing five delegates to a general and continental congress; and of giving immediate information thereof to all the other colonies, with a request, that they would appoint deputies for the same purpose. A measure of this kind had been already suggested both in Massachusetts and in several of the other colonies; but nothing definite or decisive had been done; nor had any committees or deputies been elected with this design. The patriots in this province were convinced, that the time had arrived for a more efficient and united stand, in defence of their rights. They did not even now, meditate an independency of Great Britain; much less did they generally suppose, that a resort to arms would be necessary to maintain their liberties. Yet they were resolved to show the British ministry, that a determination prevailed through all the colonies, to oppose their arbitrary and oppressive plans of governing America; hoping, no doubt, for a new administration whose views would be more conciliating and just. The preamble to the resolutions for choosing delegates to meet in a general congress states, concisely, the reasons which induced the house to adopt this important measure. It is as follows; "This house, having duly considered, and being deeply affected with the unhappy differences, which have long subsisted, and are increasing between Great Britain and the American colonies, are of opinion, that a meeting of committees from the several colonies on this continent, is highly expedient and necessary, to consult upon the present state of the country, and the miseries to which we are and must be reduced by the operation of certain acts of parliament; and to deliberate and determine upon wise and proper measures, to be by them recommended to all the colonies, for the recovery and establishment of our just rights and liberties, civil and religious; and the restoration of union and harmony between Great Britain and America, which is most ardently desired by all good men.' "

"While the house were engaged in considering this measure, the governor received notice of their design from one of the members, politically attached to him, and immediately directed they should be dissolved. But the door-keeper was ordered to admit no person into the house. Soon after, however, the secretary proceeded, by his excellency's command, to the door of the room in which the representatives were sitting, and read a proclamation for dissolving the assembly. And when the resolves were adopted respecting the delegates to congress, and an order was passed for their compensation, the house separated.

"In this measure, it was easy to perceive the commencement of a general and open opposition to the parent government; which, without a great change in the policy of the English cabinet, or servile submission on the part of the colonies, through an apprehension of a more wretched condition under a powerful military force, would produce a struggle, to be determined only by superior physical power."

The delegates appointed were the two Adamses. Paine, Cushing and Bowdoin.

It was a noble trust, and one of awful responsibility; so much so, that Mr. Sewall an old and respectable friend of Mr. Adams, to whose advice he had been accustomed to listen with great deference, was alarmed on his account, and seeking an interview, endeavoured to persuade him to relinquish the appointment. Great Britain he represented, was evidently determined to enforce her system; her power was irresistible, and would bring destruction on him and all who should persevere in opposition to her designs. Mr. Adam's reply, was that he was well convinced of such a determination on the part of the British government, and that his course was fixed by that very belief, that he had been uniform and constant in opposition; as to his fate the die was cast, the Rubicon was passed—and sink or swim. live or die, to survive or perish with his country, was his unalterable resolution.

This was not idle vapouring, nor vain pretension to a magnanimity that he did not possess: it was but a confession of the principles that carried him though perils and labours, and discouragements, from the commencement to the close of the revolutionary contest.

He had now to act on quite a different stage, hitherto he had been among friends and neighbours, whose sentiments were familiarly known to him, and whose firmness he could estimate justly. But in meeting with delegates from other and distant colonies, not only new acquaintances were to be made, but the extent of their public spirit was yet to be ascertained. Boston having been the focus of opposition, the politicians of that place were generally supposed to be more disposed towards extreme and violent measures, than those whose situation had been more remote. It was rumoured concerning Mr. Adams, as a suspicion unfavourable to his character for discretion and judgment, that he sought to produce a separation of the colonies from England, and the establishment of an independent government; a plan that seemed in the eyes of most of his co-patriots excessively rash and inexpedient. He received various hints on this subject, and was warned during his journey to Philadelphia in September, by several friendly advisers, that he and his colleagues should be careful not to utter a word in favour of independence, and being already seriously suspected of such designs, they should in prudence avoid all appearance of taking a lead in the proceedings of the congress; but ought rather to yield precedence to the Virginia gentlemen who represented the largest colony, and were not infected with any such wild notions.

Mr. Adams found the inhabitants of Philadelphia generally prepared to look upon him as an over zealous enthusiast, rather to be admired for his generous ardour, than trusted for political wisdom. If such was the light in which he appeared to most of the delegates to whom he was yet personally a stranger, he found at least in Patrick Henry, and Thomas M'Kean, if in no others, a congeniality of feelings as complete as had existed between him and any one of his colleagues, or the exasperated patriots that he had left in Boston.

The proceedings of this congress are well known, and their character has been the theme of well deserved eulogy from many eloquent writers on both sides of the Atlantic. The public papers that were issued by them, drew from Lord Chatham the compliment, "that he had studied and admired the free states of antiquity, the master spirits of the world; but that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, no body of men could stand in preference to this congress."

Mr. Adams had the satisfaction to see the principle, for which he had been contending unremittingly and publicly for nine years, namely that parliament possessed no right to tax the colonies, fully adopted as the fundamental article of political faith of all the colonies; and the most earnest attention paid by the whole congress, to the distressful situation of disfranchised Boston.

The association which was formed by the congress and signed first by the members, comprising a non-importation, non-exportation, and non-consumption agreement was, Mr. Adams thought, the best measure that could then be adopted, in conjunction with the able and eloquent addresses to the king and the British people; but he did not very confidently hope, that these expedients would have the desired effect on the obduracy of the royal government.

"When congress had finished their business, as they thought," said Mr. Adams on this subject in a letter written a few years since, "in the autumn of 1774, I had with Mr. Henry, before we took leave of each other, some familiar conversation, in which I expressed a full conviction that our resolves, declarations of rights, enumeration of wrongs, petitions, remonstrances, and addresses, associations, and non-importation agreements, however they might be expected in America, and however necessary to cement the union of the colonies, would be but waste water in England. Mr. Henry said, they might make some impression among the people of England, but agreed with me that they would be totally lost upon the government. I had but just received a short and hasty letter, written to me by major Joseph Hawley of Northampton, containing 'a few broken hints,' as he called them, of what he thought was proper to be done and concluding with these words, 'after all we must fight.' This letter I read to Mr. Henry, who listened with great attention; and as soon as I had pronounced the words, 'after all we must fight,' he raised his head, and with an energy and vehemence that I can never forget, broke out with 'By G—d, I am of that man's mind.' I put the letter into his hand, and when he had read it he returned it to me, with an equally solemn asseveration, that he agreed entirely in opinion with the writer."

"The other delegates from Virginia returned to their state in full confidence, that all our grievances would be redressed. The last words that Mr. Richard Henry Lee said to me, when we parted, were 'we shall infallibly carry all our points. You will be completely relieved; all the offensive acts will be repealed; the army and fleet will be recalled, and Britain will give up her foolish project.'

"Washington only was in doubt. He never spoke in public. In private he joined with those who advocated a non-exportation, as well as a non-importation agreement. With both he thought we should prevail; without either he thought it doubtful. Henry was clear in one opinion, Richard Henry Lee in an opposite opinion, and Washington doubted between the two."

These were doubtless generous anticipations, founded on a mistaken confidence in the magnanimity and wisdom of the British rulers, but they did not deserve the compliment. The ministry were at that time more than commonly deficient in both these qualities. They and the people of England were equally ignorant of the condition, the history, the feelings of America. The Americans were known to the British people only by the transactions of commerce.

They were known to the government only through governor Barnard and a few more returned officers, who had come to exercise power in a country of which they had scarcely heard the names of the chief towns, and had gone back not much wiser than they came. The prime minister talked of the "island" of Virginia, and the eloquent Burke declared that he had not an acquaintance among the colonists.

A short time dissipated the illusion and showed the necessity of another session of congress, and of more vigorous measures.

The people of Massachusetts had at this period, the proud satisfaction of being the most immediate objects of ministerial vengeance. The former government was by this time dissolved, and a provincial congress had assembled, and in December of the same year said, very truly, to the inhabitants, "you are placed by Providence in a post of honour, because it is a post of danger; and while struggling for the noblest objects, the liberties of our country, the happiness of posterity and the rights of human nature; the eyes not only of North America and the whole British empire, but of all Europe are upon you."

This was no exaggerated picture. Such a contest was commenced, and upon it depended the fate of popular government. The issue was however already ascertained; scenes of bloodshed, seasons of privation, long trials of fortitude, much suffering, anxiety and embarrassment were yet to be gone through. But the result was ensured when two thirds of the American people, and that was the proportion, according to the estimate of John Adams and Thomas M'Kean, had learned to understand their rights, and made up their resolution to maintain them.

Perhaps it would be adopting too early a date for this revolution, in the minds of the Americans, to place it so soon as the close of the year 1774; the ensuing season produced great events which materially advanced the cause of freedom.

The situation of Massachusetts was, at this period. very remarkable: without government, and deprived of trade, the spirit which the leading patriots had infused into the people, sustained their firmness, and kept them within the bounds of regularity and order better than the most rigid police could have done. A letter written by an intelligent gentleman of Boston, at this date, to a friend in England, contains the following picture. "The state of this province is a great curiosity; I wish the pen of some able historian may transmit it to posterity. Four hundred thousand people are in a state of nature, and yet as still and peaceable at present as ever they where when government was in full vigour. We have neither legislators nor magistrates, nor executive officers. We have no officers but military ones. Of these we have a multitude chosen by the people, and exercising them with more authority and spirit than ever any did who had commissions from a governor.

"The town of Boston is a spectacle worthy of the attention of a deity, suffering amazing distress, yet determined to endure as much as human nature can, rather than betray America and posterity. General Gage's army is sickly, and extremely addicted to desertion. What would they be if things were brought to extremities? Do you think such an army would march through our woods, and thickets, and country villages, to cut the throats of honest people contending for liberty?"

It was this magnanimous fortitude of the people of Massachusetts that drew soon after from Washington, the compliment to the "virtue and public spirit of the whole province," which he declared had, "with a firmness and patriotism without example in modern history, sacrificed all the comforts of social and political life in support of the rights of mankind, and the welfare of our common country."

After an active and busy session, during which Mr. Adams, (as he wrote to his friend Quincy, who was about to visit Europe,) was fully occupied with public affairs, and cultivating friendship with the distinguished men whom he became now first acquainted with, the first congress adjourned in November, and he returned to his home and family.

The provincial congress, on the fifth of December, reappointed him with his colleagues, except Bowdoin, in whose place they substituted John Hancock, to represent them at the ensuing session, to be held in the next May; and accompanied the vote with "grateful acknowledgments" for the measures adopted by the continental congress, on behalf of American liberty.

Mr. Adams found there was now a new occasion for the exercise of his talents as a controversial writer, which had been so signally displayed before; his friend Sewall, who, being attorney general, naturally took the ministerial side in the disputes, had been publishing a series of very able essays under the name of Massachusitensis, arguing for the supreme authority of the parliament, and against the present revolutionary proceedings.

He at once and willingly took up the gauntlet, and maintained the justice and wisdom of the whig proceedings and doctrine, in a series of answers, under the title of "Novanglus." These papers are written with so much animation, and with such a display of minute knowledge of the colonial history and of general erudition, that even now they are attractive and interesting; the powerful influence which they must have had when the topics were fresh, and the readers had so much stake in the questions discussed in them, cannot be estimated too highly.

There is nothing in a perusal of these admirable letters that strikes the attention more forcibly, than the variety of illustration drawn from historical, legal and ethical authorities. His opponent was obliged to admit the extent of erudition brought to bear upon the dispute. "Novanglus," he said, "strives to hide the inconsistencies of his hypothesis under a huge pile of learning." Not only did he go regularly and particularly through the legal annals of the colony, and all the complicated dissensions of the assemblies and governors, but he passed in minute review the statutory history of Wales, Ireland, Jersey and Guernsey, and all the decisions in the British courts which could throw light upon the nature and extent of the authority exercised in all those dependencies by the English government, and the mode in which that authority had been submitted to or resisted.

This was, of course, besides a great deal of pointed argument upon the actual questions before the public at that juncture, the probability of success in their resistance, and the shame of a submission.

The whole were adorned with frequent classical and scriptural allusions and citations, and enlivened with numerous happy sallies of sarcasm and repartee.

It is not easy to read, with patient attention, one of the arguments in favour of the ministerial pretensions to tax America. The question has been long since settled, and reasoning which may have been ingenious and elaborate then, seems a dull tissue of absurdity now. We are accustomed also to hurry over the most logical demonstrations of the rights of the colonies with some impatience, because we cannot help looking to the peace of 1783 as the most conclusive of all arguments, and superceding a necessity of any others. In estimating the merit of one of these productions, however, such as the essays of "Novanglus," it is requisite that we should remember that faith had not then "been lost in certainty;" but needed to be excited or confirmed by every appeal to judgment as well as passion. The peculiar difficulty which Mr. Adams, and other writers on the same side, had to encounter previously to the declaration of independence, was, that they were obliged to trammel themselves with an admission of the rightful authority of the king, but to deny the supremacy of parliament. Drawing many of their best deductions from the inherent rights of man, the innate love of liberty, and natural equality of all the race, they were obliged, at the same time, to profess the utmost attachment to royalty; and while directing the shafts of their invective against the ministry, their archery had to be cautious as that of William Tell, lest they should hit the king.

As examples of the manner in which Mr. Adams treated this difficult subject, a few extracts are taken.

"This writer is equally mistaken, when he says, the people are sure to be losers in the end. They can hardly be losers, if unsuccessful; because if they live, they can but be slaves, after an unfortunate effort, and slaves they would have been, if they had not resisted. So that nothing is lost. If they die, they cannot be said to lose, for death is better than slavery. If they succeed, their gains are immense. They preserve their liberties. The instances in antiquity, which this writer alludes to, are not mentioned, and therefore cannot be answered, but that in the country from whence we are derived, is the most unfortunate for his purpose, that could have been chosen. The resistance to Charles the first and the case of Cromwell, no doubt he means. But the people of England, and the cause of liberty, truth, virtue and humanity, gained infinite advantages by that resistance. In all human probability, liberty civil and religious, not only in England but in all Europe, would have been lost. Did not the people gain by the resistance to James the second? Did not the Romans gain by the resistance to Tarquin? Throughout that resistance and the liberty that was restored by it, would the great Roman orators, poets and historians, the great teachers of humanity and politeness, the pride of human nature, and the delight and glory of mankind, for seventeen hundred years, ever have existed? Did not the Romans gain by the resistance to the Decemvirs? Did not the English gain by resistance to John, when Magna Charta was obtained? Did not the seven United Provinces gain by resistance to Philip, Alva, and Granvell? Did not the Swiss Cantons, the Genevans and Grissons, gain by resistance to Albert and Gessler?"

In one of the letters he holds up the governors Barnard and Hutchinson to ridicule, goes through the whole of Barnard's course of conduct, and exposes him with a masterly hand.

The following paragraph owes its power to its truth, and in very simple language lays open the secret of the whole scheme of taxation.

"The intention of the junto was, to procure a revenue to be raised in America by act of parliament. Nothing was further from their designs and wishes, than the drawing or sending this revenue into the exchequer in England, to be spent there in discharging the national debt, and lessening the burdens of the poor people there. They were more selfish. They chose to have the fingering of the money themselves. Their design was, that the money should be applied, first in a large salary to the governor. This would gratify Barnard's avarice, and then it would render him and all other governors not only independent of the people, but still more absolutely a slave to the will of the minister. They intended likewise a salary for the lieutenant governor. This would appease in some degree the gnawings of Hutchinson's avidity, in which he was not a whit behind Barnard himself. In the next place, they intended a salary to the judges of the common law, as well as admiralty. And thus the whole government, executive and judicial, was to be rendered wholly independent of the people, (and their representatives rendered useless, insignificant and even burdensome,) and absolutely dependent upon, and under the direction of, the will of the minister of state.

"But, as ill luck would have it, the British financier was as selfish as themselves, and instead of raising money for them chose to raise it for himself. He put the cart before the horse. He chose to get the revenue into the exchequer, because he had hungry cormorants enough about him in England, whose *cooings* were more troublesome to his ears, than the croaking of the ravens in America. And he thought if America could afford any revenue at all, and he could get it by authority of parliament, he might have it himself, to give to his friends, as well as raise it for the junto here, to spend themselves, or give to theirs. This unfortunate preposterous improvement of Mr. Grenville, upon the plan of the junto, had well nigh ruined the whole."

To the taunt which his antagonist had thrown out of the paltriness of the subject in dispute, that is, the three pence duty on a pound of tea, this is the animated reply.

"Is the three pence upon tea our only grievance? Are we not in this province deprived of the privilege of paying our governors, judges, &c.? Are not trials by jury taken from us? Are we not sent to England for trial? Is not a military government put over us? Is not our constitution demolished to the foundation? Have not the ministry shown, by the Quebec bill, that we have no security against them for our religion any more than our property, if we once submit to the unlimited claims of parliament? This is so gross an attempt to impose on the most ignorant of the people, that it is a shame to answer it.

"*Obsta principiis*—Nip the shoots of arbitrary power in the bud, is the only maxim which can ever preserve the liberties of any people. When the people give way, their deceivers, betrayers and destroyers press upon them so fast that there is no resisting afterwards. The nature of the encroachment upon American constitution is such, as to grow every day more and more encroaching. Like a cancer, it eats faster and faster every hour. The revenue creates pensioners, and the pensioners urge for more revenue. The people grow less steady, spirited and virtuous, the seekers more numerous and more corrupt, and every day increases the circles of their dependents and expectants, until virtue, integrity, public spirit, simplicity and frugality, become the objects of ridicule and scorn, and vanity, luxury, foppery, selfishness, meanness, and downright venality, swallow up the whole society."

It is curious also to observe, that even such a writer, at such a time, was obliged to disavow all desire for independence.

" 'The scheme of the whigs flattered the people with the desire for independence; the tories' plan supposed a degree of subordination.' This is artful enough, as usual, not to say jesuitical. The word independence is one of those, which this writer uses, as he does treason and rebellion, to impose upon the undistinguishing on both sides of the Atlantic. But let us take him to pieces.

What does he mean by independence? Does he mean independent of the crown of Great Britain, and an independent republic in America, or a confederation of independent republics? No doubt he intended the undistinguishing should understand him so. If he did, nothing can be more wicked, or a greater slander on the whigs; because he knows there is not a man in the province, among the whigs, nor ever was, who harbours a wish of that sort."

But although he was thus cautious not to injure the cause of freedom by too precipitately urging that scheme of independence which must have been in his own contemplation, yet he did not fear to remind the people of the "massacre" committed by those soldiers whom he had defended in 1770, notwithstanding it might have been thought a subject dangerous to his own personal popularity.

Of all these essays the most ingenious and characteristic, is one which comprises a grave, elaborate and learned justification of the destruction of the tea in the year 1773. This famous occurrence had been generally allowed to be merely excusable as an effervescence of honest and patriotic feelings, exhibiting themselves in a manner chargeable with some irregularity. The gentlemen who personated the Indians and made the "oblation to Neptune," as it is sometimes called, retained their disguise after all danger from the vengeance of the royal government had passed away. But Mr. Adams in the paper referred to, far from admitting the necessity of any concealment, contended with great eloquence, minute historical detail, and a display of considerable research in favour of the absolute propriety and legality of the transaction.

In support of the general position, that tumultuous and violent proceedings were sometimes lawful expedients in times of peace, he cited the authority of Grotius, Puffendorf, Locke, Barbeyrac and other philosophers, and argued from their opinions and the peculiar circumstances of the case, that the tea was thrown into the water in strict conformity with the most punctilious rules of propriety.

The publication of "Novanglus" was interrupted by the unexpected skirmish at Lexington, in which the first blood was drawn in the revolutionary contest. There was after this day little opportunity to write, and still less composure of spirits to read elaborate disquisitions upon historical or legal questions. Still, however, the deep rooted attachment to the English constitution and the royal government, was not overcome; independence was yet a "word unmusical to *American* ears;" and it is remarkable that so generally did the people discriminate between the ministry whose designs they intended to oppose, and the king to whom they still desired to be faithful, that at Concord and Lexington, the militia that had been engaged in an actual battle with the royal forces, were called "king's troops" and the regular soldiers were termed "Bute's men;" in allusion to lord Bute, who was then supposed to exercise a controlling and pernicious influence over the mind of the monarch.

Notwithstanding the prohibition contained in a proclamation from lord Dartmouth, the secretary of state for American affairs, the new congress assembled at Philadelphia, on the tenth of May, and Mr. Adams had the pleasure of again meeting his southern friends, and of forming some valuable acquaintances among the members that had not been there before.

The most important step taken at this session; at least the measure that will appear the most memorable in the eyes of posterity, was the appointment of George Washington as commander in chief of the armies to be raised in defence of American liberty. This most felicitous choice of a leader was suggested, advocated and produced by Mr. Adams; and if he had no other claim to national gratitude that alone should be sufficient.

If this appointment was the consequence of a "providential inspiration," as the great and good Fayette has eloquently declared, it was through Mr. Adams the inspiration was received, to which this nation owes the blessing of having had, so early, such a leader and of still possessing the benefit of his example for us and our posterity.

In placing a high estimate on the importance of this appointment and the magnitude of its consequences, it is by no means necessary to believe that without Washington, the independence of our country could not have been achieved.

The course of hostilities might have been somewhat varied, the conflict might have been protracted and its attendant sufferings aggravated, but it does not seem possible that the people of America could have been so entirely overcome, their spirit so utterly broken down, their fortitude so totally exhausted, as to oblige them to receive the fetters prepared for them by the English ministry. Mr. Adams has himself expressed the sentiment, that the contest was decided, as to its eventual result, when the minds of the Americans became imbued with the principles of freedom and republicanism, and awoke from the dream of undistinguishing attachment to the crown and government of England. This change in the public mind and feeling, was the real "American Revolution."

But there are other reasons for rejoicing that this choice was suggested, and that the suggestion was adopted. The tone and the character of the revolutionary struggle, on the part of the Americans, were elevated and dignified by the exalted virtues that Washington brought into association with it. The world looked then upon the conduct of the rebels with more respect, as they became acquainted with his character; and we as well as those who shall come after us cannot but regard that æra with a more intense interest, because it is connected, besides its other glorious associations, with the name of him who must continue to be " first in the hearts of his countrymen."

And well may Americans cherish the glory of that name, for the whole range of history, does not present to our view a character upon which we can dwell with such entire and unmixed admiration. The long life of Washington is not stained by a single blot. He was indeed a man of such rare endowments, and such fortunate temperament, that every action he performed was stamped with a striking and peculiar propriety. His qualities were so happily blended, and so nicely harmonized, that the result was a great and perfect whole. The powers of his mind, and the dispositions of his heart were admirably suited to each other. It was the union of the most consummate prudence with the most perfect moderation. His views, though large and liberal were never extravagant; his virtues, though comprehensive and beneficent, were discriminating, judicious and practical.

His conduct was on all occasions, guided by the most pure disinterestedness. Far superior to low and groveling motives, he seemed to be uninfluenced by that ambition, which has justly been called the instinct of great souls. He acted ever as if his country's welfare, and that alone, was the moving spring. His excellent mind needed not even the stimulus of ambition, or the prospect of fame. Glory was but a secondary consideration. He performed great actions, he persevered in a course of laborious utility, with an equanimity that neither sought distinction, nor was flattered by it. His reward was in the consciousness of his own rectitude, and in the success of his patriotic efforts.

It is a fact extremely characteristic of the purity and dignity that marked the proceedings of this congress, that although the selection of Washington for the chief command was preconcerted. at the suggestion of Mr. Adams, the object of their choice knew nothing of it until he was actually nominated in formal session, and elected by an unanimous ballot.

The motive and the manner of this election, the suggestion, the preconcert, the nomination, the unanimous ballot and the modest acceptance of it, were all consistant with the virtuous aim and elevated character of the public body that conferred, and the individual that received this high, sacred and unexampled trust.

The only army that the united colonies had at this time, was the collection of New England militia hastily drawn together near Boston, in consequence of the aggressions committed by the British troops in Concord and Lexington. These raw and yet unorganized levies were commanded by the militia general officers of Massachusetts, and the neighbouring colonies. The southern colonies bore no part in the expense of this half armed crowd, which scarcely deserved to be called an army. It was a question of serious moment, whether a continental army should be raised for the general defence, while a reconciliation was still looked to as not merely desirable, but extremely probable. The project of establishing such a force was a favourite object with the New England delegates, and general Artemus Ward of Massachusetts, was in their contemplation as the most suitable person to be entrusted with the chief command.

Mr. Adams suggested to his colleagues the expediency and propriety of setting aside local partialities, and appointing colonel George Washington. The proposition was not at first at all relished; it was received indeed with extreme disapprobation. To elevate an entire stranger, a man not then in military life, and who never had held a military rank higher than that of colonel, over the heads of meritorious officers of the highest rank in the militia, and those actually in the field at the head of brigades and divisions, seemed to be so irregular, so disrespectful to their own officers and so likely to give offence to the people at large, that the eastern delegates could not at first give their assent to the proposition.

Mr. Adams had a clear perception of the advantages that would be derived from the services of Washington, whose character and peculiar fitness for the chief command, he justly appreciated. He was above all local jealousy, and did not deprecate the possibility of the chief honours of victory being gained by a Virginian.

But it was not without great efforts made by him, and Samuel Adams his distinguished colleague whom he first won over to his views on this subject, that a sufficient number of the members were prepared to assent to the appointment.

When he thought the majority was secured, he rose in congress and moved for the appointment of a commander in chief of the armies raised and to be raised, in defence of American liberty. A few only of the members knew whom he was going to propose, when he sketched a description of the qualities that ought to be combined in the individual selected for this elevated office; and when at length he concluded by nominating 'George Washington of Virginia', the surprise of a large portion of those present, was extreme, and by no one was it less anticipated than by Washington himself.

The proposal was seconded by Samuel Adams, but no vote was taken until the next day, when the unanimous choice was made in conformity with this nomination.

Such is the true history of this memorable event, and the important agency of Mr. Adams in this most happy selection, is a striking proof of his liberal and truly national feelings, his excellent discernment, and his unbounded influence not only with the delegates from the eastern states, but with the whole congress in obtaining the unanimous vote, but also with the militia officers, the legislative authorities, and the people of New England whose cheerful acquiescence immediately followed.

The expulsion of the British army from Boston by the militia force under general Washington in the ensuing autumn, spread new confidence through the land; and early in 1776, it became evident that petitions and remonstrances however able, argumentative or eloquent, were not the best means of deterring the ministry and parliament from prosecuting their oppressive schemes. The act declaring the province of Massachusetts out of the king's protection, cut the tie which had held the colonies to the mother country; and the intelligence of treaties with German princes for subsidiary troops to be employed in America, spoke a warning that could not be misunderstood.

Mr. Adams had in deference to the prudential advice that he received at the time of the first meeting of congress, restrained himself from urging measures which might seem premature in the eyes of his southern friends; but the posture of affairs had now materially changed, and he came forward in congress with a resolution that was almost equivalent to an assertion of independence.

On the sixth of May, he offered in committee of the whole, a resolve that the colonies should form governments independent of the crown. The shape in which this proposition was adopted on the tenth, was a recommendation to the respective assemblies and conventions of the united colonies, where no government sufficient to the exigencies of their affairs had been yet established, to adopt such government as might in their opinion best conduce to the safety and happiness of their constituents in particular, and America in general.

On the same day the Massachusetts house of representatives voted a resolution that if the congress should think proper to declare independence, they were ready to support it to the utmost of their lives and fortunes.

How far this bold avowal of their feelings was prompted by letters from their delegates in congress, is not known, but the dates seem to correspond as if there had been a mutual understanding. Mr. Adams made his first movement in congress only a few days before this step was taken by the state, and five days subsequently to the Massachusetts declaration he reported and advocated a preamble for the resolution already passed, in which it was declared that: "whereas his Britannic majesty in conjunction with the lords and commons of Great Britain has, by a late act of parliament, excluded the inhabitants of these united colonies from the protection of his crown; and whereas no answer whatever, to the humble petitions of the colonies, for redress of grievances and reconciliation with Great Britain has been or is likely to be given, but the whole force of that kingdom aided by foreign mercenaries is to be exerted for the destruction of the good people of these colonies; and whereas it appears absolutely irreconcilable to reason and good conscience, for the people of these colonies now to take the oaths and affirmations necessary for the support of any government under the crown of Great Britain, and it is necessary that the exercise of every kind of authority under the said crown should be totally suppressed, and all the powers of government exerted under the authority of the people of the colonies, for the preservation of internal peace, virtue and good order, as well as for the defence of their lives, liberties and properties, against the hostile invasions and cruel depredations of their enemies."

This preamble was adopted, after an animated debate, and not without vehement opposition. It was published, and served as an appeal to the people of all the colonies. North Carolina alone had yet come out with an explicit desire for independence; but soon after this preamble was promulgated, the others followed successively, Virginia first, and Pennsylvania the latest.

The only question that seemed now to be left open related to the time to be chosen for issuing a declaration of independence, and thus enabling the united colonies to take their station among the powers of the earth.

The Virginia convention having directed their delegates to bring forward the proposal, Mr. Adams very willingly ceded to them the leading position, which the success of his recent propositions had given him, and Mr. Lee was chosen by the gentlemen from Virginia to be their organ in obeying the instructions from their constituents. The motion was made, as is well known, on the seventh of June, and debated with great warmth until the second of July.

The discussion did not consist of formal prepared orations, nor flights of rhetoric. The late governor M'Kean, who was himself an active and efficient supporter of independence, said, "I do not recollect any formal speeches, such as are made in the British parliament and our late congresses, to have been made in the revolutionary congress. We had no time to hear such speeches, little for deliberation, action was the order of the day."

The harangues ascribed by Botta, in imitation of the ancient historians, as having been delivered on this occasion, are merely inventions. Much better oratory than that was witnessed in this debate, the oratory of intense feeling, fine sense, and exalted virtue.

"Oratory, as it consists in expressions of the countenance, graces of attitude and motion, and intonation of voice," as Mr. Adams himself has remarked, "although it is altogether superficial and ornamental, will always command admiration, yet it deserves little veneration. Flashes of wit, coruscations of imagination and gay pictures, what are they? Strict truth, rapid reason and pure integrity are the only essential ingredients in sound oratory. I flatter myself that Demosthenes, by his 'action! action! action!' meant to express the same opinion."

Of the preeminent importance of Mr. Adams's exertions, we have the most direct and unequivocal testimony. Mr. Jefferson uniformly and emphatically declared that he had no equal. "John Adams," said he, on one occasion, "was our Colossus on the floor; not graceful, not elegant, not always fluent in his public addresses, he yet came out with a power both of thought and of expression, that moved us from our seats." At another time, speaking of the Declaration of Independence, the same great man observed, that "John Adams was the pillar of its support on the floor of congress; its ablest advocate and defender against the multifarious assaults it encountered."

What, then, was the character of the eloquence that was thus distinguished in an assembly where Jefferson and Lee, M'Kean and Wilson, Chase and Samuel Adams, and many others, of extraordinary abilities, were convened? "The eloquence of Mr. Adams, says an illustrious citizen of the same state, "resembled his general character. It was bold, manly and energetic, but such as the crisis required. When public bodies are to be addressed on momentous occasions, when great interests are at stake and strong passions excited, nothing is valuable, in speech, farther than it is connected with high intellectual and moral endowments. Clearness, force, and earnestness, are the qualities which produce conviction. True eloquence, indeed, does not consist in speech. It cannot be brought from far. Labour and learning may toil for it, but they will toil in vain. Words and phrases may be marshalled in every way, but they cannot compass it. It must exist in the man, in the subject, and in the occasion. Affected passion, intense expression, the pomp of declamation, all may aspire after it, but they cannot reach it. It comes, if it come at all, like the outbreaking of a fountain from the earth, or the bursting forth of volcanic fires, with spontaneous, original, native force. The graces taught in schools the costly ornaments, and studied contrivances of speech, shock and disgust men, when their own lives, and the fate of their wives, their children, and their country, hang on the decision of the hour. Then words have lost their power, rhetoric is vain, and all elaborate oratory contemptible. Even genius itself then feels rebuked and subdued, as in the presence of higher qualities. Then patriotism is eloquent, then self-devotion is eloquent. The clear conception, outrunning the deductions of logic, the high purpose, the firm resolve, the dauntless spirit, speaking on the tongue, beaming from the eye, informing every feature, and urging the whole man onward, right onward to his object—this, this is eloquence, or rather it is something greater and higher than eloquence, it is action, noble sublime, godlike action."

While Mr. Adams was thus lending his whole soul to the advancement of the measure, he was also a member of the committee which had been appointed, in anticipation, to prepare a suitable manifesto or declaration to be issued whenever the question should be decided. The proposition having come from the Virginia delegates, in conformity with instructions from the convention of the people at Williamsburgh, and thus wearing the appearance of a popular rather than a congressional movement, the policy had been carefully observed of placing a Virginia member at the head of this committee. Mr. Lee, who was at that time the most prominent delegate from that colony, had been called home by illness in his family; Mr. Jefferson, then a young member, but high in reputation as a writer and a patriot, was chosen in his stead, and Mr. Adams was named the next in order, and above the venerable Franklin on the list.

Mr. Adams very willingly relinquished to his junior colleague of the committee the honour of composing the paper, while he gave his own undivided attention to the arguments on the floor, and the management out of doors, that he knew were requisite to secure the success of the proposition; being more anxious for the establishment of independence, than solicitous to distinguish his name by connecting it particularly with a document that he well knew would be read by remote posterity.

It was not only within the walls of the state-house of Philadelphia that his influence was felt on this momentous occasion. Pennsylvania and Maryland still withheld their assent from the proposed separation from Great Britain; and it was necessary to procure from those colonies some expression of public will, in accord with those demonstrations which had been made in most of the others.

Among his most intimate personal friends were Dr. Rush and Mr. Samuel Chase, with both of whom he had contracted an attachment that endured throughout his life, and caused him always to speak of them in the highest terms of praise. At this juncture these friends moved in concert, though in different scenes. Mr. Chase, whose zeal was not surpassed, left his seat in congress and hastened to Maryland, where, in conjunction with Mr. Charles Carroll and other patriots, he stirred up such a number of county meetings in favour of the cause, that the convention were overpowered, and, on the twenty-eighth of June, Mr. Chase wrote to Mr. Adams from Anapolis—"Friday evening, nine o'clock. I am this moment from the house, to procure an express to follow the post, with an unanimous vote of our convention for independence. See the glorious effect of county instructions. The people have fire, it is not smothered."

In the mean time Dr. Rush, in pursuance of the same pre-concert, moved in the Pennsylvania conference for an expression of a similar sentiment. The Pennsylvania vote in favour of independence preceded that of Maryland only four days, and the feelings of all the colonies had now been authentically expressed.

On the second day of July Mr. Adams had the satisfaction to see the triumph of his exertions, and the fulfilment of his ardent wishes, in the vote for independence, which, on the fourth was unanimously confirmed, in the adoption and promulgation of the immortal manifesto which announced the establishment of a new and independent republic.

The transport of his feelings, the exuberance of his joy, on this occasion, may be seen most vividly portrayed in the letter which he wrote to Mrs. Adams on the succeeding day—a letter that is memorable, and now embalmed in American history, simply because it is so true and unartificial an effusion of ardent, enlightened and disinterested patriotism. "Yesterday," he says, "the greatest question was decided that was ever debated in America; and greater, perhaps, never was or will be decided among men. A resolution was passed, without one dissenting colony, 'that these United States are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states.' The day is passed. The fourth of July, 1776, will be a memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe it will be celebrated, by succeeding generations, as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomps, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward for ever. You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure, that it will cost to maintain this declaration, and support and defend these states; yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of light and glory. I can see that the end is worth more than all the means; and that posterity will triumph, although you and I may rue, which I hope we shall not."

Mr. Adams gained no respite from his congressional labours by the decision of the great question of independence, on the contrary his occupations were unremitting and to men of less than his extraordinary activity would have been overwhelming. In addition to these avocations, the legislature of Massachusetts, now no longer a colony, but a "free, sovereign and independent state," elected him, during a visit that he made to his freinds and family at home, to be a member of the Council which in their new constitution occupied the place in the frame of government, formerly held by the governor's council, in the days of Hutchinson, Barnard and Shirley.

He took his seat in the council and assisted in their deliberations, but declined the office of chief justice, which they pressed upon him, because such duties would interfere with his attendance in congress, and he did not choose to abandon the national government which he had so mainly contributed to establish.

A memorable instance of the great activity of Mr. Adams during the critical period which preceded the declaration of independence, is to be found in his plan of a constitution for a state or colony drawn up by him and published early in 1776, comprising a code of republican principles so full and satisfactory and recommended by a style so pleasing and familiar that it cannot be perused without admiration; and when we consider how much has since been learned on those subjects since the time of its production it appears very remarkable that he should have been able so soon to delineate all the leading features of government as they have been adopted successively, in most of the state constitutions.

The occasion that gave existence to this "slight sketch," as he himself chose to call it, which he thought worth preserving only as being the first printed essay towards a frame of civil government, on republican principles in this country, has been described by Mr. Adams in the following manner.

"In the winter of 1776," he said, "there was much discussion in congress concerning the necessity of independence, and advising the several states to institute governments for themselves under the immediate authority and original power of the people. Great difficulties occurred to many gentlemen, in making a transition from the old governments to the new, i. e. from the royal to republican governments. In January, 1776, Mr. George Wythe, of Virginia, passing an evening with me, asked what plan I would advise a colony to pursue, in order to get out of the old government and into a new one. I sketched in words a scheme, which he requested me to give him in writing. Accordingly, the next day I delivered him the following letter. He lent it to his colleague, Richard Henry Lee, who asked me to let him print it; to which I consented provided he would suppress my name; for if that should appear, it would excite a continental clamour among the tories, that I was erecting a battering ram, to demolish the royal government, and render independence indispensable."

Doubtless a paper thus put together, on the spur of the occasion, struck off at a heat, with no elaborate correction, could not be perfectly prepared against captious criticism; but it serves on that account the more effectually to show the unforced train of thought and real bias of political principles that were peculiar to his mind.*

Just at the time of the declaration of independence, lord Howe arrived with a large British and Hessian army at Long Island; and in a few weeks afterwards the disastrous battle of Flatbush occurred. Supposing this to be a favourable moment for proposing an accommodation, the British general opened a negotiation with congress and requested an interview with some of the members.

This proposition was debated for several days. Mr. Adams opposed it as not likely to produce any good result, but was overruled, and a committee was appointed consisting of himself, Dr. Franklin and Mr. Rutledge to visit the British camp. Lord Howe sent as a hostage, one of his principal officers, but the three commissioners, to show their confidence in themselves and their cause, waved the security to be derived from such a pledge, and took him with them. They repaired to the British head quarters on Staten Island, opposite Amboy, and were conducted to the commander through an army of twenty thousand men, arranged on purpose to make the most imposing show, so as to impress the minds of the commissioners with a great idea of the immense power of the nation with which they were waging war. They were, however, too well aware of the design with which this display was made, to indulge their enemies by showing any sign of amazement or uneasiness.

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* See the Appendix to this Volume.

Lord Howe received them with great courtesy, and after compliments of civility, he told them that though he could not treat with them as a committee of congress, yet, as his powers enabled him to confer and consult with any private gentlemen of influence in the colonies on the means of restoring peace, he was glad of this opportunity of conferring with them on this subject, if they thought themselves at liberty to confer with him in that character. The committee observed that as they came to hear, he might consider them in what light he pleased and communicate any propositions he might be authorized to make, but that they could consider themselves in no other character except that in which they were placed by order of congress. "You may view me in any light you please," said Mr. Adams, "except in that of a British subject."

Lord Howe then entered into a discourse of considerable length, in which the commissioners could perceive no explicit proposition of peace except one, namely, that the colonies should return to their allegiance and obedience to the government of Great Britain.

The committee gave it as their opinion that a return to the domination of Great Britain was not now to be expected, and added their reasons, at large; on which lord Howe put an end to the conference, and this fruitless negotiation resulted as unprofitably as Mr. Adams had predicted it would, when he opposed the appointment of a committee. Throughout the remainder of the year 1776, and all 1777, Mr. Adams continued in the closest attention to the affairs of congress. His labours were incessant. He was a member of ninety different committees, a greater number than any other delegate, and twice as many as any but Samuel Adams and Richard Henry Lee. He was chairman of twenty-five committees. He was also chairman of the board of war and of the board of appeals, he was on the committees to give instructions to foreign ministers, to give instructions and commissions to military officers, to prepare various addresses, on the medical department, the post office, and others of the highest responsibility, and requiring the closest attention. Certainly his duties must have been more multifarious and severe than those of any officer under any government in the world. From these overwhelming labours Mr. Adams was relieved in December, 1777, by the appointment which he received and accepted, of commissioner to France. This mission was founded on the anxiety generally felt to obtain open and efficient succours from the French government, in the war against their ancient and perpetual enemy or rival, Great Britain. The physical weakness of the United States was felt by all, the want of arms and equipments, but above all of money, was known to all those who had been concerned in public affairs, and it had become greatly important to arrange an explicit understanding with the king of France, as the marquis La Fayette and other chivalrous Frenchmen that had come over for the purpose of serving in the American armies, represented to be altogether practicable. He was appointed to take the place of Silas Deane, who with Dr. Franklin and Arthur Lee, had been appointed commissioner the preceding year, and was recalled by congress on account of some disapprobation of his conduct.

Mr. Adams felt the importance of this service, and reluctantly agreed to a long separation from his family, and the perils of a winter voyage across an ocean covered with hostile cruisers, when capture would most certainly subject him to close imprisonment in the tower of London.

He embarked on board of the frigate Boston, in the month of February, 1778, from the shore of his native town, at the foot of Mount Wollaston, and had, in the course of the voyage, an opportunity, for the first time, of participating in the personal peril of the contest, and of firing a gun at the enemy. Discovering an enemy's ship, captain Tucker, the commander of the Boston, could not resist the temptation to give chase and engage her, although his immediate duty was to sail direct for France and land his passenger. The consent of Mr. Adams was first asked, and willingly given to this deviation. The captain, however, stipulated that he should stay in the lower part of the ship, as a place of safety; but, as soon as the fight commenced, he was found with a musket in his hand, and serving as a marine on the forecastle, having volunteered himself in that station. The captain not approving of this exposure of his life, told him, "I am commanded by the continental congress to carry you in safety to Europe, and I will do it," and accordingly picked him up in his arms, and with good humoured force lifted him from the scene of danger.

The efforts of Franklin and his colleagues in the commission had been fruitless, until the news reached France of the surrender of Burgoyne. After this there was a change in the policy of the French government, and a treaty was signed in February, 1778, just at the time when Mr. Adams was taking his departure from America.

On his arrival in France, he found a treaty of amity and commerce, and also a treaty of alliance, had been signed the month preceding, and he had little business of a public nature to transact.

And after Dr. Franklin received the appointment of minister plenipotentiary, to which he was entitled for his advanced age, his great public services, and high standing with the French people, Mr. Adams asked permission to come home, and accordingly returned in the summer of 1779.

His fellow citizens of Massachusetts immediately put his talents in requisition, to assist in forming the new state constitution, for which a convention was about to be elected. He accepted a seat in this body, and was a member of the committee appointed to prepare a plan for their consideration; his draught was accepted and reported, and he had again the satisfaction of seeing his principles of equal rights and republican institutions made the basis of a practical government.

During the time of his attention to the business of the Massachusetts convention, and before the labours of that assembly were terminated, congress came to the resolution that they would appoint a minister plenipotentiary for negotiating a treaty of peace with Great Britain. Mr. Adams, at that period, stood on particularly elevated ground as a negotiator, and representative of the United States abroad, because having served in that capacity during the greater part of the year 1778, and some part of 1779, he had been excepted from the reproach cast upon all the other diplomatic agents, by the vote of congress, passed on the twentieth of April, declaring that "suspicions and animosities had arisen among the late and present commissioners injurious to the interests of the United States," and the recall of Mr. Arthur Lee, Mr. Izard, Mr. William Lee, and Mr. Deane, leaving only Dr. Franklin and Mr. Adams, and not exempting even Franklin from a share of censure.

He was, of course, in contemplation for this high and honourable employment; but Mr. Jay, the president of congress, was put in nomination, and his elevated character and known abilities, as well as his actual presence and station as presiding officer of the house, obtained for him a number of votes equal to those given to Mr. Adams, who was absent. There being no choice made at the first ballot, the subject was postponed; and, as a minister was to be sent to Spain, congress proceeded the next day to make a selection for that office, when Mr. Jay was almost unanimously elected, and immediately afterwards Mr. Adams received the appointment of "minister plenipotentiary for negotiating a treaty of peace and a treaty of commerce with Great Britain."

It is somewhat remarkable, that the designation that ought to be given to Mr. Adams in his commission, was the topic of very grave and serious debate. The committee that prepared the draught entitled him "late commissioner of the United States at the court of Versailles, late delegate in congress from the state of Massachusetts Bay, and chief justice of the said state."

A motion was made, with very reasonable foundation it would seem, for striking out all this description of a man, whose name alone was quite sufficient title; but, after much discussion, the whole addition was retained.

The instructions under which the plenipotentiary was to act, varied subsequently according to circumstances, from time to time; but those with which he left his country were:

1. To make it a preliminary article to any negotiation, that Great Britain should agree to treat with the United States as sovereign, free and independent. And to agree to no treaty without a recognition of such independence.

2. To insist on certain boundaries, the same in all important particulars as those agreed upon subsequently in the definitive treaty.

3. The cession of Canada and Nova Scotia was not to be insisted on, nor their common right to the fisheries.

4. A cessation of hostilities during the negotiation might be stipulated. And,

5. In other matters he was to be governed by the principles of the alliance with France, the advice of our allies, his knowledge of our interests and his own discretion, in which was reposed "the fullest confidence."

He was also instructed as to the treaty of commerce which he was to conclude:

1. To govern himself principally by the treaty of commerce already existing with the French king, and to grant no privilege to Great Britain which that convention did not accede to France.

2. To insist on the right to the fisheries.

Under these explicit instructions Mr. Adams accepted the appointment, and prepared for his departure. A liberal salary of twenty-five hundred pounds sterling was provided him, and the French minister offered to detain the frigate La Sensible for his convenience, and to give him a passage in her to Europe.

In that vessel he embarked accordingly, with Mr. Dana the secretary of legation, at Boston, in the month of October, 1779, and after a long voyage, was landed at Ferrol in Spain, and was obliged to make a very uncomfortable journey, still more fatiguing than the voyage, from that port to Paris.

The British government were not, at this time, disposed to make peace; they were well aware of the financial embarrassments of America, and confidently expected to be able to bring back their colonies to dependence.

He very soon began to despair of being able to fulfil the objects of his mission, and thought the time far removed when a negotiation could be entered into with any hope of success; and in the partial depression of spirits which this belief occasioned, he seems to have sighed for the moment of his return to a tranquil home. Soon after his arrival at Paris, he wrote to Mr. Richard H. Lee, in answer to a letter that he had received at the moment of his embarkation:

"You recommend to me to continue in public life, but you practise the reverse yourself. How is this? Are not the same obligations upon you that you think lie upon me? You and I have had experience enough of public life, to be very well convinced that there are great trials of our patience, very little pleasure, and no satisfaction at all, to be found it. I was never very fond of public life myself, but, on the contrary, I avoided it, with the utmost care, for many years. But stepping into the midst of civil dissensions, when I first entered on the stage of life, it was impossible for me to avoid having an opinion of my own, and principles like those of the majority of my countrymen; these principles I frankly professed at all times, and in all circumstances, however critical and dangerous, which involved me in an unavoidable necessity, when the times grew more tempestuous, to step on board the ship and take my fortune with the crew; it is, and will ever be, the sweetest reflection of my life, that I did so. But I have ever been thoroughly sensible of the instability of a public course, and have ever endeavoured to preserve my mind prepared to return to my rocks and forests, with tranquillity, which, I am perfectly sure, at present, that I could do, and with pleasure too. Yet, I assure you, I begin to fear that habits will steal upon me, by length of time, which I shall find it hard to break, when the time shall come that I must retire. This time will certainly arrive with the first moment that I cannot serve the public with honour, and some prospect of advantage; and I have many reasons to suspect that the time is not very distant. The chevalier de la Luzerne, I have reason to think, from an agreeable acquaintance with him, in the course of a passage to America of forty-seven days, from some knowledge of him that I had before and after, is a candid and impartial man, possessed of no principles or views inconsistent with his public character, and very able to do service to his country and ours. The same of Mr. Marbois. I lament, most sincerely, the unhappy contests that preceded his arrival, and wish that they may be extinguished; but I know too well the circumstances to expect that they will. As to my negotiations, our sons, or grandsons, have a better chance of completing them than I have; there is, or at least there was, a system of policy and of military operations, that, if it had been pursued, might have given me something to do. It is not my fault, nor the fault of America, that it was not. The fishery and the navigation of the Mississippi, are points of such importance, that your grandson, when he makes the peace, I hope will secure them. I am sure, he will omit nothing in his power to do, for that purpose. You will hear, before you read this, of a series of good fortune, which has happened to Rodney and his fleet; but the allies will be superior by sea, in America and the West Indies, so that we may hope, that the tide will turn. England will remain without allies, although Denmark has done a foolish thing by restoring to the English some prizes sent into Norway by the Alliance; she seems to be sorry that she did it. It was upon the principle, that they had not acknowledged our independence; and that all powers were their enemies with whom they had no treaty, a principle long since exploded, and of which they are at present ashamed. Ireland and England are following our example; and if France and Spain act with sufficient vigour in America and in the West Indies, all is ours, with an ordinary success; otherwise all will be aback. But we must persevere; the more success Great Britain has, the more reason we have to dread her, and we ought to be the more determined to hold out for ever."

Mr. Adams had reached Paris in February, and communicated the objects of his mission to Dr. Franklin, the sole envoy of the United States to the court of France, and to the count de Vergennes, the French prime minister.

This minister, who appears to have purposed the employment of some degree of diplomatic artifice towards the Americans, was very pressing to know Mr. Adams's instructions, but they were not communicated to him.

He advised also, or requested, that the commission to make a treaty of commerce should be kept secret.

Though he studiously avoided any interference with affairs that did not relate to the ends of his mission, except when his opinion was expressly called for by the count de Vergennes, yet he found opportunities of being useful, and received a vote of thanks from congress in the latter part of this year, "for his industrious attention to the interest and honour of these United States abroad." The immediate occasion of Mr. Adams's appointment had been an informal communication from a member of the British government to Dr. Franklin, importing that the ministry were disposed to put an end to the war; but, during the year 1780, the cause of peace made no progress in the parliament. And the French government, after the appointment of Mr. Adams, declared that the situation of the affairs of the alliance in Europe, announced the necessity of another campaign as indispensable, to bring England to an acknowledgment of the independence of the United States.

Mr. Adams hearing of the misfortune that had befallen Mr. Laurens, who had been taken prisoner while on his passage to Holland, where he was to have negotiated a loan for the United States; and not being limited by his instructions to a residence in any particular country, determined to repair immediately to Holland, and see if something could not be done there to render his country less dependent on France, both for political consideration and for loans of money. He accordingly applied for his passports, without which he could not travel in France; but the French minister did not wish any success to the object of this change of residence, and under various pretexts detained him in Paris until midsummer.

In June of the same year, congress being informed of the captivity of Mr. Laurens, appointed Mr. Adams to negotiate for a loan in Holland in his stead.

He received this commission in August, and by it an abundance of untried business was devolved upon him, of a nature exceedingly embarrassing and difficult, among capitalists, brokers and usurers, many of whom could speak as little of the French or English languages, as he could of Dutch.

Very soon afterwards he received the new appointment of commissioner to conclude a treaty of amity and commerce with the States General of Holland; and at the same time congress sent to him their resolutions adopting the principles of the "armed neutrality" proposed by the Russian government, and acceded to by other powers, with instructions to agree in any treaty that he might conclude, to regulations on the subject of neutral rights, such as might be established at a congress of the European states, then in contemplation.

He communicated this resolution to the Russian, Swedish and Danish envoys in Holland, and received civil answers from each of them; but the policy of their courts was not rendered more favourable to American rights by this attempt to conciliate them.

He subsequently received letters of credence from congress, as their minister plenipotentiary to their "high mightinesses," and another to his serene highness the prince of Orange, as stadtholder of the United Provinces. By this accumulation of trusts, he was minister plenipotentiary for making peace; minister plenipotentiary for making a treaty of commerce with Great Britain; minister plenipotentiary to their high mightinesses the States General; minister plenipotentiary to his serene highness the prince of Orange and stadtholder; minister plenipotentiary for pledging the faith of the United States to the armed neutrality; and, what perhaps at that critical moment was of as much importance to the United States as any of those powers, he was commissioner for negotiating a loan of money to the amount of ten millions of dollars, upon which depended the support of our army at home and our ambassadors abroad.

He had no instructions to make any proposition to the British government; the offer of peace was to come from them. But he thought, at one time, of making known his powers, in order that the people of England might see that the continuance of the war, which had become the subject of loud complaint among them, was not the fault of the Americans.

The count de Vergennes disapproved of this course, as indeed he did of every thing that could possibly lead to a pacification not under the immediate influence and control of his government.

The question was referred to congress, and they adopted the views of the French minister, and informed him accordingly, that they "had no expectations from the influence which the people of England may have on the British council, whatever may be the dispositions of that nation or their magistrates towards these United States; nor are they of opinion that a change of ministers would produce a change of measures;" they therefore hoped that he would "be very cautious of admitting his measures to be influenced by presumptions of such events, or their probable consequences."

While he was indefatigably occupied in efforts to discharge all his multifarious duties, he was suddenly summoned to Versailles to consult with the count de Vergennes relative to peace. The call was embarrassing, because he knew that he was doing good service where he was. But the world would consider his commission to make peace as the most important of all his employments; he therefore left his family, and repaired in the middle of July, 1781, to France.

He found the occasion for his being there, arose from a proposal of the two imperial courts of St. Petersburg and Vienna, that had previously offered their mediation to the belligerent powers of Europe, containing the project of a pacification, in which however the rights of the United States, were but inadequately recognized. This was a difficult and anxious period of Mr. Adams' life. He knew the earnest desire for peace that prevailed among his countrymen, but he was not willing to compromit their rights by agreeing to terms that he knew ought not to be imposed on them.

It had been the constant effort of de Vergennes to make him act as a subordinate agent in this important matter, and govern himself by the wishes of the French cabinet. He on the contrary considered himself, as his commission styled him, a plenipotentiary; and subject to no directions but those of congress. This opposition of views between him and the government of France, occasioned an effort on the part of the count de Vergennes to obtain from congress a modification of his powers and instructions, so as to place him completely under the directions of that minister.

The chief motive for this design, seems to have arisen from an apprehension that Mr. Adams would refuse to relinquish the fisheries and on some other points, would insist on terms which the policy of France did not seek to secure to the Americans. The independence of America indeed France had bound herself to insist on, and she was faithful to her contract, but further than that point the ministers of the king did not intend to go.

And it was not desirable for France, that the powers of Mr. Adams respecting a treaty of commerce should be known to the British parliament, because it was intended that France should at the time of a general pacification, have a voice in regulating the trade between the late belligerents, and receive a large share of whatever advantages of a commercial nature, the new republic should have it in her power to grant.

Mr. Adams had been difficult to manage, and showed a disposition to transact his own business without waiting for the permission or dictation of the count, in consequence of which the French minister at Philadelphia, was instructed early in 1781, to enter a complaint of his refractoriness to the congress, and to demand that he should be placed under the immediate control of the French government.

Accordingly in May of that year, the congress were told by the chevalier de la Luzerne, that "the empress of Russia having invited the king and the court of London to take her for mediatrix, the latter court considered this as a formal offer of mediation, and accepted it. It appeared at the same time to desire the emperor to take part therein; and this monarch has in fact proposed his co-mediation to the belligerent powers in Europe."

That the king wished to have the consent of his allies, the American States, but might possibly accept the mediation before their answer could be received by him, and that it was of great "importance that this assembly should give their plenipotentiary instructions proper to announce their disposition to peace, and their moderation, and to convince the powers of Europe that the independence of the thirteen United States, and the engagements they have contracted with the king, are the sole motives which determine them to continue the war; and that whenever they shall have full and satisfactory assurances on these two capital points, they will be ready to conclude a peace."

Congress were also told by the same minister, that "if they put any confidence in the king's friendship and benevolence; if they were persuaded of his inviolable attachment to the principle of the alliance, and of his firm resolution constantly to support the cause of the United States, they would be impressed with the necessity of prescribing to their plenipotentiary a perfect and open confidence in the French ministers, and a thorough reliance on the king; and would direct him to take no step without the approbation of his majesty; and after giving him, in his instructions, the principal and most important outlines for his conduct, they would order him, with respect to the manner of carrying them into execution, to receive his directions from the count de Vergennes, or from the person who might be charged with the negotiation in the name of the king."

Congress were further informed, that it was necessary that the king should know the intentions of the United States with regard to the proposed mediation; and that his majesty should be authorized by congress to give notice of their dispositions to all the powers who would take part in the negotiation for a pacification. The minister delivered his own opinion, that he saw no inconveniency arising from the congress imitating the example of the king, by showing themselves disposed to accept peace from the hands of the emperor of Germany and the empress of Russia. He added, that congress should rely on the justice and wisdom of those two sovereigns; and at the same time, he renewed the assurance that his majesty would defend the cause of the

United States as zealously as the interest of his own crown.

This communication made a strong impression on congress, and a proposition was made to concur in the whole of the suggestions of the French envoy, but this was resisted, and after considerable debate and difficulty the instructions to Mr. Adams were modified so as only to direct the acceptance of the mediation offered by the empress and emperor, insisting however on independence and the maintenance of the treaties with France; to give a little more latitude of discretion and prudence as to other points; and to require the most candid and confidential communications with the ministers of the king of France; and to "undertake nothing in the negotiation for peace or truce without their knowledge and concurrence."

An additional article of instructions was agreed to, in which he was authorized to accede to the proposal of a truce, provided Great Britain should not retain possession of any part of the territory of the United States.

The obligation to undertake nothing in the negotiation without the knowledge and concurrence of the count de Vergennes, merely implied the inconvenience of consulting with a disagreeable colleague, but was very different from the orders which the French envoy had demanded should be sent to Mr. Adams, "to receive his instructions from" the French minister. Still it could not but be seen by Mr. Adams, that the influence of the French government almost amounted to dictation, and the eagerness for peace had too much increased.

It is remarkable that notwithstanding these complaints against him as a negotiator, from so prevailing an authority, the congress voted, when they sent the new instructions, that it was not expedient to join any other person with Mr. Adams in negotiating the treaty. Such was the actual state of the negotiation when Mr. Adams left Amsterdam and came to Versailles to meet a proposal of the imperial mediators. The most objectionable feature of this proposition was that it stipulated an armistice without requiring the evacuation of the American territory by the hostile army. This Mr. Adams was resolute against; the mediation he did not otherwise object to, but nothing further was done in the matter at that time. He wrote several letters to the count de Vergennes explaining his views; but though that minister had through his envoy in America obtained a direction to Mr. Adams to communicate freely and confidentially with him, he took care to be especially reserved and incommunicative towards Mr. Adams.

The view which Mr. Adams took of this situation of affairs appears to have been not very encouraging, he had little or no expectation of peace by means of diplomacy, so little did he value the powers of the pen, in such a contest, compared with the sword.

He wrote to congress in the middle of July 1781, "The British court proposed to the imperial courts, a congress upon two preliminary conditions, the rupture of the treaty with France, and the return of America to their obedience. The two imperial courts have since proposed the enclosed articles. Spain and France have prepared their answers. England has not answered yet. And no ministers are yet commissioned or appointed by that power. If she accepts the terms, I should not scruple to accept them too, excepting the armistice and statu quo. But I mean I should not insist upon a previous explicit acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the United states before I went to Vienna. I see nothing inconsistent with the character or dignity of the United States, in their minister going to Vienna, at the same time when ministers from the other powers are there, and entering into treaty with a Britsh minister, without any acknowledgment explicitly of our independence, before the conclusion of the treaty. The very existence of such a congress would be of use to our reputation. But I cannot yet believe that Britain will wave her preliminaries. She will still insist upon the dissolution of the treaty, and upon the return of the Americans under her government. This, however, will do no honour to her moderation and pacific sentiments, in the opinion of the powers of Europe.

"Something may grow out of these negotiations, in time, but it will probably be several years before any thing can be done.

"Americans only can quicken these negotiations by decisive strokes. No depredations upon their trade; no conquests of their possessions in the East or West Indies will have any effect upon the English to induce them to make peace, while they see they have an army in the United States, and can flatter themselves with the hope of conquering or regaining America. Because they think, that with America under their government, they can easily regain whatever they may lose now in any part of the world. Whereas the total expulsion or captivity of their forces in the United States, would extinguish their hopes and persuade them to peace, sooner than the loss of every thing else. The belligerent powers and the neutral powers may flatter themselves with the hopes of a restoration of peace, but they will all be disappointed, while the English have a soldier in America. It is amazing to me that France and Spain do not see it, and direct their forces accordingly."

It is certain that the United States were, at this period, in as much danger from the insincere friendship of the count de Vergennes, as from the open hostility of lord Cornwallis. The French government assumed a very patronising and dictatorial tone towards the congress, and was gradually appropriating to itself a power over the concerns of America, almost as exceptionable as that which the British ministry had vainly endeavoured to establish. It was not the intention of the French minister to allow the United States to have the fisheries without admitting France to a share in the advantage, nor did he mean to suffer the boundary line in the west to be placed where the Americans expected. The interests of Spain were preferred, in his plans of pacification, before those of America; and except a bare independence, nothing was to be secured to us.

In the extremely diplomatic compliments of congratulation and condolence addressed by the republican congress to the monarch of France, on occasion of the birth of a child and the death of an aunt, a slight indication of this new pupillage may be perceived; but when the representatives of a free and independent nation were required to instruct their plenipotentiary to "take no step without the approbation of his majesty," and to "receive his directions" from the king's minister, it was time to recall the recollection of the principles that led into the war, and to repel so arrogant a pretension of superiority with the same manly scorn that before had rejected the claim of parliamentary supremacy.

Mr. Adams after signifying to the count de Vergennes his willingness to any thing for the sake of peace, that might be compatible with the honour and interests of his country, and having satisfied himself that the British ministry had no real design of making peace on terms that could be acceptable to America, determined no longer to be detained from the important objects of his mission to Holland. After a few weeks only passed at Versailles and Paris, therefore, he went again to Amsterdam.

In the mean time congress again became more alarmed, and reconsidering their resolution as to the number of commissioners, they joined Dr. Franklin, then plenipotentiary at Paris, Mr. Jay, the minister at Madrid, Mr. Henry Laurens, who had recently been appointed special minister to France, and Mr. Jefferson, in the commission with Mr. Adams, and added to the instructions given to the whole of them jointly, "that they should govern themselves by the advice and opinion of the ministers of the king of France." This was an extraordinary and unjustifiable submission to the views of the French envoy, and was not originally any part of the instructions recently prepared for Mr. Adams alone, but had been inserted at the special instance of the French envoy at Philadelphia, who was, in a strange spirit of subserviency, consulted on the subject; and the same unaccountable and disgraceful concession was now incorporated in the new commission, a concession that made, in effect, the count de Vergennes sole plenipotentiary for the United States, and left their independence and interests entirely at his control.

When the new commission arrived Mr. Adams was at Amsterdam, and being actively engaged there in persuading the cautious Hollanders to lend money to the United States, and convinced in his own mind that until a change of ministry should take place in England, it would be useless to expect a peace, he did not quarrel with instructions which however he felt too derogatory to his own character, and the honour of his country, to obey.

Few men in so trying a situation, would have evinced so salutary a firmness as Mr. Adams had shown, in rejecting the proposal of an armistice, and maintaining his own independence of the French minister. His resolution could gain no support or encouragement from the people with whom he was obliged to associate; he had to withstand the allurements of imperial condescension and royal friendship. the experience of practised diplomatists and the opinions of able statesmen were all brought to bear on him, and worst of all, congress did not sustain him. But knowing the selfish policy of France, and feeling the same confidence in the final triumph of his country that had actuated him through the whole contest, he remained immoveably fixed in a determination to obtain not a temporary, precarious or degraded independence, but the fisheries, and the boundaries, and every stipulation that was necessary to make independence secure and honourable.

To this firmness the eventual success of this negotiation may be ascribed, and the glorious result exceeding the hopes of congress, by which the Mississippi was made the boundary line, the fisheries secured, and the nation saved from the obligation to indemnify the tories for opposing the freedom of their country.

But, before the termination of this part of his duties, Mr. Adams had a heavy task to perform in Holland.

Notwithstanding that country was under a republican government, and ought on that account to have felt a sympathy for America, and was also at war with England, the States General were not anxious to recognize the independence of the United States.

For a treaty of amity and commerce Mr. Adams was only to wait without soliciting it, but his principal business was to obtain money, by means of which the war was to be prosecuted; and the most effectual negotiation for peace, he well knew, was to be looked for in the defeat of the British armies in the United States.

Money was the crying want of America; she had all the other resources of war, but her finances were in a deplorable condition. Holland was rich, but cautious, and made nice calculations of the probability of such success on the part of the Americans as would enable them to repay a loan.

Mr. Adams saw that the disposition of the Dutch capitalists was good, but their judgment had yet to be enlightened. His business, therefore, was to develop the resources and capacities of the United States, the nature of the soil and its productions, the hardihood, enterprise and industry of the people, their frugal habits, purity of manners, and rapid increase. All these points were to be made clear before the money chests could be opened. That the United States were poor was not a decisive objection, for the Hollanders had learned that a nation could pay its debts if the people had industrious habits, ready ways of business, and liberty to pursue them without interruption.

Mr. Adams spared no pains to give them information; he did finally convince them, and succeeded in his object. This was a new modification of diplomacy; to leave a country almost unknown to the great mass of Europeans as to its character and resources, but known to be in a state of revolutionary war, and under such circumstances to ask for money, the worst of all matters of negotiation, and to obtain it by the force of intelligence and truth, was an exploit reserved for him alone.

A series of papers published by him, under the form of letters to an inquiring friend, Mr. Kalkoen, argued these points ably and fully, with a history of the rise and progress of the war, and the prospect of its successful issue.

These papers were translated, and were read with great avidity all over Holland, and at length, backed by the powerful corroboration which came to their aid in the intelligence of the surrender of Cornwallis, produced the desired effect.

In September, 1782, a loan was effected for eight millions of guilders, at five and four per cent., a rate of interest not extravagantly high, considering the situation of the United States, and the doubts whether the confederacy could keep the states together after the pressure of war should be entirely removed.

This was followed in the next month by the conclusion of a treaty of amity and commerce, placing trade on the footing of the most favoured nation, and of course recognizing the United States as free, sovereign and independent.

In the spring of 1782, an informal overture for peace had come from England, but it proved abortive, and in the summer of that year Mr. Adams considered the war as by no means near its termination.

It is impossible to know how much the disposition towards peace, which made slow progress among the British statesmen previously, was quickened by the knowledge of the loan effected by Mr. Adams from the Dutch. It is certain, that immediately after this occurrence the first real and effectual steps were taken by the English government for putting an end to the war, by the unconditional acknowledgment of our independence.

This policy being adopted by lord Shelburne's administration, and announced to the American commissioners, the only questions that remained related to the fisheries, and other advantages that France did not desire to secure for her Trans-Atlantic allies.

Mr. Adams hastened to Paris, for the purpose of assisting in the arrangement of the articles of peace. A difficulty now existed arising out of the apparent obligations to act in concert with "our great and generous ally" the king of France, and out of the express instructions of congress to the commissioners to govern themselves in this matter by the directions of the king's ministers.

It was well known, or strongly suspected by the commissioners, that the "great and generous ally" of the United States intended to cut them off from the fisheries, to insist on an arrangement of the boundary line which would surrender a part of the American territory to Spain, and to favour the claim of England for an indemnity to the loyalists. "The count de Vergennes," Mr. Adams afterwards said, "was an accomplished gentleman and scholar, and a statesman of great experience in various diplomatic and other ministerial stations. In treating with other nations he considered the interest of his own country, and left others to take care of theirs. His refinements were not invisible."

Mr. Adams had been of the same opinion from the first on this subject, and the other commissioners now joined with him in a determination to secure for their country much better terms than the French minister was willing they should obtain, and to disregard the inconsiderate orders of congress, which would have placed them in a state of subserviency to France. They accordingly met the British commissioner, and signed the provisional treaty on the thirtieth of November, 1782.

By this treaty they secured an honourable and advantageous peace, without any violation of the engagements imposed by the alliance with France, and without deserting their ally; because it was a condition of the arrangement that no definitive treaty should be signed, unless peace was at the same time made with France.

The French minister finding himself baffled in his scheme of finesse, addressed sharp reproaches to the American commissioners for having taken this step without his interference. To a complaint such as this, of having aimed solely at securing the honour and interests of their country, none of the commissioners, except Dr. Franklin, condescended to make any reply. France had never avowed her designs; all that she had openly stipulated for had been punctually observed; her wishes had been discovered only by her advice to consent to less favourable terms, or betrayed by the insincerity of M. de Vergennes. The provisional articles were signed by Messrs. Adams, Franklin, Jay, and Laurens; the definitive treaty which followed, was signed on the third of September following, by the same commissioners, except Mr. Laurens.

There was one other deviation from the instructions of congress in making these treaties, in respect to the provision for restoring confiscated estates to the loyalists. This condition the British commissioner insisted upon as necessary to the honour of his government; those persons in the colonies who had faithfully adhered to the royal cause could not be abandoned; on the other hand, Mr. Adams and his colleagues were instructed, and refused to stipulate any thing in their favour. This question delayed the treaty, but finally the British commissioner gave way, on being allowed to insert an article which was not authorized by the instructions from congress, providing that congress should recommend to the legislatures of the respective states to provide for the restitution of such confiscated property.

This condition was manifestly nugatory, and otherwise the treaty was all that had been at any time hoped for. It was an extremely favourable and honourable arrangement, and was negotiated with acknowledged ability on the part of the Americans, but was extremely unpopular in England.

Mr. Adams remained, during part of the year 1784, in Holland, and returned to France on being appointed in that year, by congress, at the head of a commission, in which Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jefferson were joined with him, with powers to negotiate commercial treaties with any foreign nations that might be disposed to meet them for the purpose. It was resolved, at the same time, that it would be advantageous to conclude such treaties with Russia, the court of Vienna, Prussia, Denmark, Saxony, Hamburg, Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Genoa, Tuscany, Rome, Naples, Venice, Sardinia, the Ottoman Porte, and Morocco. He resided at Auteuil.

near Paris, in order to be at hand for the purpose of executing this multifarious commission; but the outline of this extensive plan of commercial conventions was never filled up.

In January, 1785, congress resolved to appoint a minister plenipotentiary to represent the United States at the court of Great Britain, and a few weeks afterwards Mr. Adams was chosen for this important, and, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, delicate office.

The appearance at that court, of an accredited minister of the late colonies, now, by the reluctant and enforced consent of Great Britain, an independent nation, was an event to attract the particular attention of all Europe. The temper in which he might be received was a doubtful anticipation, involving not only personal considerations, but national concerns. The embarrassment of this business was felt on both sides; Mr. Jay, now the secretary for foreign affairs, prepared a letter of credence, which congress prudentially ordered to be altered so as to have "no reference to former disputes." And when Mr. Adams went over to England, Mr. Jay wrote to him: "The manner of your reception at that court, and its temper, views and disposition respecting American objects, are matters concerning which particular information might be no less useful than interesting. Your letter will, I am persuaded, remove all suspense on those points."

Mr. Adams being thus enjoined to report particularly the circumstances of his public reception, addressed the following letter to Mr. Jay, giving an account of his presentation to the king.

"During my interview with the marquis of Carmarthen, he told me it was customary for every foreign minister at his first presentation to the king, to make his majesty some compliments conformable to the spirit of his credentials; and when sir Clement Cottrel Dormer, the master of the ceremonies, came to inform me that he should accompany me to the secretary of state, and to court, he said that every foreign minister whom he had attended to the queen, had always made an harangue to her majesty, and he understood, though he had not been present, that they always harangued the king. On Tuesday evening the baron de Lynden (Dutch ambassador) called upon me, and said he came from the baron de Nolkin, (Swedish envoy,) and had been conversing upon the singular situation I was in, and they agreed in opinion that it was indispensable that I should make a speech, and that it should be as complimentary as possible. All this was parallel to the advice lately given by the count de Vergennes to Mr. Jefferson. So that finding it was a custom established at both these great courts, that this court and the foreign ministers expected it, I thought I could not avoid it, although my first thought and inclination had been to deliver my credentials silently and retire. At one on Wednesday, the first of June, the master of ceremonies called at my house, and went with me to the secretary of state's office, in Cleveland Row, where the marquis of Carmarthen received me, and introduced me to Mr. Frazier, his under secretary, who had been, as his lordship said, uninterruptedly in that office, through all the changes in administration, for thirty years, having first been appointed by the earl of Holderness. After a short conversation upon the subject of importing my effects from Holland and France free of duty, which Mr. Frazier himself introduced, lord Carmarthen invited me to go with him in his coach to court. When we arrived in the antichamber, the Œil de Bœuf of St. James, the master of the ceremonies met me, and attended me, while the secretary of state went to take the commands of the king. While I stood in this place, where it seems all ministers stand upon such occasions, always attended by the master of ceremonies, the room very full of ministers of state, bishops and all other sorts of courtiers, as well as the next room, which is the king's bed chamber, you may well suppose that I was the focus of all eyes.

"I was relieved, however, from the embarrassment of it, by the Swedish and Dutch ministers, who came to me and entertained me in a very agreeable conversation during the whole time. Some other gentlemen whom I had seen before, came to make their compliments too; until the marquis of Carmarthen returned, and desired me to go with him to his majesty! I went with his lordship through the levee room into the king's closet; the door was shut, and I was left with his majesty and the secretary of state alone. I made the three reverences; one at the door, another about half way, and the third before the presence, according to the usage established at this and all the northern courts of Europe, and then addressed myself to his majesty in the following words:

"Sir—The United States of America have appointed me their minister plenipotentiary to your majesty, and have directed me to deliver to your majesty this letter, which contains the evidence of it. It is in obedience to their express commands, that I have the honour to assure your majesty of their unanimous disposition and desire to cultivate the most friendly and liberal intercourse between your majesty's subjects and their citizens, and of their best wishes for your majesty's health and happiness, and for that of your royal family.

"The appointment of a minister from the United States to your majesty's court, will form an epoch in the history of England and America. I think myself more fortunate than all my fellow citizens, in having the distinguished honour to be the first to stand in your majesty's royal presence in a diplomatic character; and I shall esteem myself the happiest of men, if I can be instrumental in recommending my country more and more to your majesty's royal benevolence, and of restoring an entire esteem, confidence and affection, or in better words, 'the old good nature, and the old good humor,' between people, who though separated by an ocean, and under different governments, have the same language, a similar religion, and kindred blood. I beg your majesty's permission to add, that although I have sometimes before been entrusted by my country, it was never in my whole life in a manner so agreeable to myself.

The king listened to every word I said, with dignity it is true, but with an apparent emotion. Whether it was the nature of the interview, or whether it was my visible agitation, for I felt more than I did or could express, that touched him, I cannot say, but he was much affected, and answered me with more tremor than I had spoken with, and said,

" 'Sir—The circumstances of this audience are so extraordinary, the language you have now held is so extremely proper, and the feelings you have discovered so justly adapted to the occasion, that I must say, that I not only receive with pleasure the assurances of the friendly disposition of the people of the United States, but that I am very glad the choice has fallen upon you to be their minister. I wish you, sir, to believe, and that it may be understood in America, that I have done nothing in the late contest but what I thought myself indispensably bound to do, by the duty which I owed to my people. I will be very frank with you. I was the last to conform to the separation: but the separation having been made, and having become inevitable, I have always said as I say now, that I would be the first to meet the friendship of the United States as an independent power. The moment I see such sentiments and language as yours prevail, and a disposition to give this country the preference, that moment I shall say, let the circumstances of language, religion, and blood, have their natural and full effect.'

" I dare not say that these were the king's precise words, and it is even possible that I may have in some particular mistaken his meaning; for although his pronunciation is as distinct as I ever heard, he hesitated sometimes between his periods, and between the members of the same period. He was indeed much affected, and I was not less so, and therefore I cannot be certain that I was so attentive, heard so clearly, and understood so perfectly, as to be confident of all his words or sense; this I do say, that the foregoing is his majesty's meaning, as I then understood it, and his own words as nearly as I can recollect them.

"The king then asked me, whether I came last from France? and upon my answering in the affirmative, he put on an air of familiarity, and smiling, or rather laughing, said 'there is an opinion among some people that you are not the most attached of all your countrymen to the manners of France.' I was surprised at this, because I thought it an indiscretion, and a descent from his dignity, I was a little embarrassed, but determined not to deny the truth on one hand, nor leave him to infer from it any attachment to England on the other, I threw off as much gravity as I could, and assumed an air of gaiety, and a tone of decision, as far as it was decent, and said, —'that opinion, sir, is not mistaken; I must avow to your majesty I have no attachment but to my own country.' The king replied as quick as lightning, 'an honest man will never have any other.'

"The king then said a word or two to the secretary of state, which being between them, I did not hear, and then turned round and bowed to me, as is customary with all kings and princes, when they give the signal to retire. I retreated, stepping backwards, as is the etiquette, and making my last reverence at the door of the chamber, I went my way; the master of the ceremonies joined me at the moment of my coming out of the king's closet, and accompanied me through all the apartments, down to my carriage, several stages of servants, gentlemen porters, and under porters, roared out like thunder, as I went along, 'Mr. Adams' servants, Mr. Adams' carriage,' &c.

"I have been thus minute in these details, because they may be useful to others hereafter to know. The conversation with the king I should not dare to withhold from congress, who will form their own judgment of it. I may possibly experience from it a residence here less painful than I once expected, because so marked an attention from the king will silence many grumblers; but we can infer nothing from all this concerning the success of my mission. There is a train of other ceremonies to go through in presentations to the queen, and visits to and from ministers and ambassadors, which will take up much time, and interrupt me in my endeavours to obtain all that I have at heart, the objects of my instructions. Thus it is that the essence of things is lost in ceremony in every country of Europe; we must submit to what we cannot alter. Patience is the only remedy."

Notwithstanding the courtesy of his reception, Mr. Adams found the temper of the government of England extremely sour, and unfriendly towards the United States. It seemed as if the ministry were determined to make the peace only a truce, and hardly considered the war as finally closed. The posts on the frontier were retained so manifestly against the faith of the treaty, that congress thought it prudent not to insist on a categorical answer to the remonstrances which Mr. Adams had made upon the subject; and a commercial treaty the British government would not consent, by any means, to form.

Mr. Adams however could not be idle, and besides joining in the arrangement of treaties with the emperor of Morocco and the king of Prussia; he occupied himself in the intervals of his diplomatic intercourse with the government of England, in writing an elaborate and eloquent defence of the forms of government established in America.

Mr. Turgot, the Abbe de Mably and Dr. Price, with other European writers, had advanced unfavourable opinions of the systems of government formed by the several states of the union, and Dr. Franklin had been cited as having disapproved some features in several of them. To counteract the effect of these strictures and keep the American people enlightened on the subject of republican institutions, the Defence of the American constitutions was attempted. At this time the want of an efficient federal government was universally felt, but great diversity of opinion prevailed as to the plan of it. Steps had been taken to obtain a convention for the purpose of making a constitution, and there was great danger that the wild theories of Turgot and others would be urged upon the people, and recommended by sophistry and declamation. Under these circumstances Mr. Adams published his learned disquisition on republican constitutions, in which a comprehensive view of the subject is taken, and the system which he had already advocated in the case of Massachusetts, was recommended by a profusion of argument and illustration drawn from the history of all democratic governments, ancient and modern. The book was published at London, in 1787, in three volumes, and was reprinted in this country; it is a work of acknowledged merit and ability, and was well calculated at the time, to prevent his fellow citizens from being misled by theoretic philosophers or their own passions and prejudices; to inculcate the true principles of freedom and laws, and to give to the American character and the republican system, that respectability in the eyes of Europe of which they were then somewhat deficient.

Mr. Adams was much in the most intelligent society of England; and numbered among his most intimate acquaintances the marquis of Lansdown, Dr. Price and Dr. Priestley. He was watchful for every thing in the literary and charitable institutions of London, that he could with advantage recommend to the imitation of his fellow citizens at home; and learning there to appreciate the value of such establishments, there is scarcely an institution in his native state for the encouragement of arts, sciences and letters to which he did not, after his return from Europe largely contribute.

Immediately after the publication of his Defence of the Constitutions, he asked permission to relinquish his office and return, and in the year 1788, he had the happiness after an absence of between eight and nine years, to find himself again at home.

At this period the new constitution was to be carried into effect, and two persons were to be voted for of whom the one having the highest number should be president, and the other should be the vice president. Washington had been mainly instrumental in originating the plan of the convention and in causing the constitution to be ratified; he was besides, pre-eminent in favour and renown. To be thought worthiest of being joined with him in this vote, and being placed in the highest station except that which he consented to fill, was an honour reserved to Mr. Adams. In the autumn of 1788, he was elected vice president, and on the fourth of the next March, he took his seat as president of the new senate, at New York, where the first congress was convened.

He presided with acknowledged dignity, and was consulted by Washington on all occasions of difficulty, and passed through his whole term in that office in uninterrupted harmony with the president, and without the smallest misunderstanding with any of the senate.

An example of the confidence reposed in his opinions respecting public affairs, is to be seen in the correspondence that occurred in 1790, between Washington and himself, on the subject of a probable attack by the English upon the Spanish possessions near the Mississippi, and the measures that the United States should adopt, in case the British forces should be marched from Canada through a part of the North Western territory.

The advice of Mr. Adams was marked by a just regard to the national honour and dignity, and a preference of peace, if war could be avoided without compromiting either; but he recommended that no violation of our territory should be on any account permitted.

He was re-elected as vice president with entire unanimity in 1792, and the period during which he held this office, was the most tranquil and perhaps, except the few last years of his life, the happiest that he ever knew.

In 1796, general Washington took leave of public life, and the nation was obliged to look for a successor. Mr. Adams was of course in their view for this promotion, and was elected, not without opposition and a close contest.

The French revolution had engrossed the attention of the world. In this country republican sympathies were awakened, the errors of the reformers were overlooked and the sanguinary excesses which disgraced France, were forgiven by a large portion of our citizens. Two parties became formed in the United States, each disclaiming for a time the name of party, but indulging hostile feelings towards each other. Foreigners wielding a portion of the power of the press for their own selfish purposes, fomented these unhappy discords. Mr. Jefferson was the candidate of the party that opposed Mr. Adams, but between them, personally, there was no unkindness, as politically there was really but little difference.

Of the electoral votes Mr. Adams received seventy-one and Mr. Jefferson sixty-eight, and in March, 1797, they entered upon their offices as president and vice president of the United States.

During the excitement of the contest, Mr. Adams had been charged with a preference for monarchical institutions, and this absurd accusation growing out of his defence of the frame of government which provided for a single executive and two houses of the legislature in opposition to the argument in favour of the system which had been tried in Pennsylvania, comprising a plural executive and single house of legislators, was repeated with great perseverance, along with a thousand other electioneering calumnies.

The licentiousness of the press on such occasions is now well understood, but this was the first occasion of its prostitution in America to such purposes. Mr. Jefferson therefore thought it was necessary for him to disown most pointedly and publicly any share in this attack on the character of his competitor; and when he first met the senate as their president, he took occasion to tell that respectable body of men, that the duties of the chief magistracy had been "justly confided to the eminent character who preceded him, whose talents and integrity" he added "have been known and revered by me through a long course of years; have been the foundation of a cordial and uninterrupted friendship between us; and I devoutly pray that he may be long preserved for the government, the happiness and prosperity of our country."

Besides this compliment, Mr. Adams received from the senate over which he had presided for eight years, an address taking leave of him with the strongest expressions of respect and attachment.

In his inaugural address the new president also took the opportunity of declaring his attachment to the constitution, as it was, without desiring any change. It was not, he said, when he first saw the constitution, nor had it been since any objection to it, in his mind, that the executive and senate were not more permanent. Nor had he entertained a thought of promoting any alteration in it, but such as the people themselves, in the course of their experience, should see and feel to be necessary or expedient, and by their representatives in congress and the state legislatures, according to the constitution itself, adopt and ordain.

On the same occasion he gave a summary of the principles by which he should govern himself in the performance of his functions as president; and it is believed that he did not in any instance depart from them.

After a just tribute to the virtues and wisdom of his great predecessor, and an intimation of a doubt of his own abilities to follow so exalted a model, he added, however, that "if a preference, upon principle, of a free republican government, formed upon long and serious reflection, after a diligent and impartial inquiry after truth; if an attachment to the constitution of the United States, and a conscientious determination to support it, until it shall be altered by the judgments and wishes of the people, expressed in the mode prescribed in it; if a respectful attention to the constitutions of the individual states, and a constant caution and delicacy towards the state governments; if an equal and impartial regard to the rights, interests, honour and happiness of all the states in the Union, without preference or regard to a northern or southern, eastern or western position, their various political opinions on essential points, or their personal attachments; if a love of virtuous men of all parties and denominations; if a love of science and letters, and a wish to patronise every rational effort to encourage schools, colleges, universities, academies, and every institution for propagating knowledge, virtue, and religion among all classes of the people; not only for their benign influence on the happiness of life, in all its stages and classes, and of society in all its forms, but as the only means of preserving our constitution from its natural enemies, the spirit of sophistry, the spirit of party, the spirit of intrigue, profligacy and corruption, and the pestilence of foreign influence, which is the angel of destruction to elective governments; if a love of equal laws, of justice and humanity, in the interior administration; if an inclination to improve agriculture, commerce and manufactures, for necessity, convenience and defence; if a spirit of equity and humanity towards the aboriginal nations of America, and a disposition to meliorate their condition, by inclining them to be more friendly to us, and our citizens be more friendly to them: if an inflexible determination to maintain peace and inviolable faith with all nations, and that system of neutrality and impartiality among the belligerent powers of Europe, which has been adopted by the government, and so solemnly sanctioned by both houses of congress, and applauded by the legislatures of the states and the public opinion, until it shall be otherwise ordained by congress; if a personal esteem for the French nation, formed in a residence of seven years, chiefly among them, and a sincere desire to preserve the friendship which has been so much for the honour and interest of both nations; if, while the conscious honour and integrity of the people of America, and the internal sentiment of their own power and energies must be preserved, an earnest endeavour to investigate every just cause, and remove every colourable pretence of complaint; if an intention to pursue, by amicable negotiation, a reparation for the injuries that have been committed on the commerce of our fellow citizens by whatever nation, and if success cannot be obtained, to lay the facts before the legislature, that they may consider what further measures the honour and interest of the government and its constituents demand; if a resolution to do justice, as far as may depend upon me, at all times, and to all nations, and maintain peace, friendship and benevolence with all the world; if an unshaken confidence in the honour, spirit and resources of the American people, on which I have so often hazarded my all, and never been deceived; if elevated ideas of the high destinies of this country, and of my own duties towards it, founded on a knowledge of the moral principles and intellectual improvements of the people, deeply engraven on my mind in early life, and not obscured but exalted by experience and age; and, with humble reverence, I feel it my duty to add, if a veneration for the religion of a people, who profess and call themselves christians, and a fixed resolution to consider a decent respect for christianity, among the best recommendations for the public service—can enable me, in any degree, to comply with your wishes, it shall be my strenuous endeavour," &c.

The administration of Mr. Adams should be left to the historian, within whose province, rather than that of biography, it is properly confined. A very slight notice of some of the prominent circumstances will be permitted, however, to this imperfect sketch of his eventful life.

His public measures as president have been often compared with those of his predecessor and his successor; and because he was not re-elected as they were, the comparison has been supposed to show his fitness for that high office to a disadvantage. But the circumstances were widely different; he fell on evil days, and it is not conceivable that any possible course of conduct, on his part, could have prevented the overthrow of the party with which his name was connected. Without disparaging the character of Mr. Jefferson, it is nevertheless true, that his defects were concealed in the glare of his success, while the virtues of Mr. Adams were obscured in the gloom of his fall, or rather in the fall of the federal party.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary popularity of Washington, scarcely any important act of his administration had escaped the most bitter invective. Mr. Adams, of course, was not exempted from the same hostility. He found a cabinet composed of able men, but not of his choosing, therefore not bound to him by any tie of gratitude, and not, without exceptions, personally attached to him. He continued them in their offices from the best motives, but the policy was unfortunate. He found, too, the government embroiled in a dispute with France, and one of his earliest communications to congress had to comprise the information of an outrageous insult offered to the minister of the United States by the government of that country. The speech of the president on this occasion was dignified and eloquent; it was calculated to rouse those indignant feelings which a high spirited people, insulted and injured by a foreign power, can never fail to display, if their sensibility to external wrongs is not blunted by invincible prejudices. On the manifestation of such feelings he relied for the success of any further negotiation, and on their real existence he depended for the defence of the national honour, if further negotiation should be fruitless.

An enthusiastic admiration of France, however, prevailed among a very large portion of the American people, an admiration which all are now willing to allow was excessive, though generous. By this part of the community it was insisted that the provocation had been given by the preceding administration, and that the United States owed the first apology. After the hearty approbation of Washington's public conduct, manifested at the time by a large majority of the people, it would have been impossible to undo what he had done. To yield to the wishes of this party was therefore out of the question. Mr. Adams was compelled by the force of circumstances, as well as by the dictates of his own judgment, to persist in a manly and dignified deportment towards the French rulers, who had been endeavouring to excite among the American people a dissatisfaction with their chosen legislators and magistrates.

He was encouraged by addresses from all quarters, and among the rest by the approving voice of Washington. He did not abandon hope, however, of a pacification. Congress and the people, excepting the party opposed to him, went much further than he did in their view of the extent to which the national honour required the United States to go towards actual war. He offended many of the zealous federalists by appointing a new commission, consisting of three envoys, to France, in consequence of an informal intimation from the French government that they would give a respectful reception to such an embassy.

The gentlemen selected for this mission, Messrs. Pinckney, Marshall and Gerry, were treated with insult by the French Directory. History hardly furnishes an example of such open contumely suffered by one nation from another, as the United States now received, in the persons of their ministers, from France. Yet it is certain that the popularity of Mr. Adams was affected by the measures, moderate as they were, that he recommended for upholding the national character.

He was unfortunate, if not being re-elected was a misfortune, in other particulars than the prevailing sympathy for republican France. In his enlarged views of policy, a naval establishment was considered necessary to protect our commerce and defend our territory. The nation has since done justice to his wisdom in this particular, by adopting the same policy; but during his administration, and for some years afterwards, the navy was not regarded with general good will. The intemperate abusiveness of the press was looked upon, at that time, with a degree of uneasiness that has disappeared since the true corrective has been better understood; and laws were made to restrain the publication of falsehoods calculated to injure the government. Other measures were adopted, with a view to strengthen the executive power in a season of national peril and difficulty. The people had been unaccustomed to see these restraints imposed even upon the evil-minded; and laid the blame, which belonged to the leaders in congress, indiscriminately upon the president: and the opposition gained strength accordingly.

He proceeded, mean while, in the honest discharge of his duties, without courting popularity by any sacrifices; he dismissed the secretary of state, when he thought the national interests required a change, without fearing the effect of a division among his friends His manners and address were as unbending as his public principles; he was neither possessed of the grand and imposing presence of Washington, nor the fascinating vivacity of conversation that distinguished Mr. Jefferson. His figure was low and ungraceful, his address often abrupt and repulsive. Nor did he always know how to conceal his sentiments when concealment would have been prudent. Of this failing he was himself well aware, and once when in the room of Stewart the painter, he looked at the portraits of Washington and himself standing side by side, and good humouredly observed the tightly closed mouth in the picture of Washington, and the severed lips in his own. "Ah," said he, "that fellow," pointing to his own likeness, "never could keep his mouth shut."

Of the particulars in public policy to which he lent his influence or concurrence, some have been since adopted as the permanent politics of the nation; the wisdom of others is still a subject of dispute among men of sense and patriotism, but the perfect purity of his intentions has been admitted even by Mr. Jefferson, when he was the active leader, as well as the candidate of the opposing party. During the heats of the political contest which resulted in the elevation of that distinguished person to the presidency, he rebuked the violence of some young politicians, who were imputing to Mr. Adams designs injurious to the republican institutions of his country. "Gentlemen," said Mr. Jefferson, "you do not know that man; there is not upon this earth, a more perfectly honest man than John Adams. Concealment is no part of his character; of that he is utterly incapable. It is not in his nature to meditate any thing that he would not publish to the world. The measures of the general government are a fair subject for difference of opinion, but do not found your opinions on the notion that there is the smallest spice of dishonesty, moral or political, in the character of John Adams, for I know him well, and I repeat that a man more perfectly honest never issued from the hands of his Creator."

With integrity thus vouched for and not disputed, talents of a high order, great experience in public affairs, and unbounded patriotism, he was a candidate for re-election, and was not re-elected. It is probable that nothing in his power to do, nor the possession of an hundred times the talents, experience and virtue, if that were possible, could have prevented the defeat of the party with which he was unfortunately connected, and whose rashness in the use of power soon consigned them, as a party, to a final overthrow, and caused some of the wisest maxims in national policy to be, for a time, discarded.

After completing his presidential term of four years, he retired in March, 1801, to his quiet home at Quincy, where he lived in happy retirement, an attentive spectator of public events, but not pining with any desires to mingle in them again. If the loss of his election brought with it some degree of mortification to his pride, the buoyancy of his spirits and strength of his understanding soon restored his cheerfulness and complacency, and although sometimes provoked by the repetition of ill-natured remarks formerly made upon his conduct, he seldom showed any embittered feelings towards those who had opposed or deserted him.

Letters were written to him under the seeming of the most devoted friendship, insidiously to draw from him some obloquy against his successful competitor; but although the contest had been violent, and great latitude of invective had been indulged on each side, yet in his answers, confided to the "honour" and "discretion" of his correspondent, and afterwards published in despite of honour and discretion, he spoke more kindly of his late rival than was usual with any of the leaders of the defeated party.

He was offered a nomination as governor of Massachusetts, but he wished for nothing but retirement. Zealous as ever for the honour of his country, he supported the policy of Mr. Jefferson's administration in the disputes with England, on the subject of impressment and neutral rights, and not only in conversation, but in letters that were published and extensively read, contended ably and earnestly for the maintenance of our rights. And when these disputes eventuated in war, he avowed his approbation of that measure, notwithstanding the prevailing sentiment against it in his own state and immediate neighbourhood. Writing to a friend on this subject, in July, 1812, he thus expressed himself:

"I think with you, that it is the duty of every considerate man to support the national authorities, in whose hands, soever they may be: though I will not say whatever their measures may be.

"To your allusion to the war, I have nothing to say, but that it is with surprise that I hear it pronounced, not only by newspapers, but by persons in authority, ecclesiastical and civil, and political and military, that it is an unjust and unnecessary war; that the declaration of it was altogether unexpected, &c.

"How is it possible that a rational, a social, or a mortal creature can say that the war is unjust, is to me utterly incomprehensible.

"How it can be said to be unnecessary is very mysterious. I have thought it both just and necessary for five or six years.

"How it can be said to be unexpected is another wonder. I have expected it more than five and twenty years, and have had great reason to be thankful that it has been postponed so long. I saw such a spirit in the British Islands, when I resided in France, in Holland, and in England itself, that I expected another war much sooner than it has happened. I was so impressed with the idea, that I expressed to lord Lansdown, (formerly lord Shelburne,) an apprehension that his lordship would live long enough to be obliged to make, and that I should live long enough to see another peace made between Great Britain and the United States of America. His lordship did not live long enough to make the peace, and I shall not probably live to see it; but I have lived to see the war that must be followed by a peace, if the war is not eternal."

When a loan was opened for the purposes of a war expenditure, and some efforts were made to deter capitalists from entrusting their money to the government, he went forward to give an example of confidence, and the first certificate of stock was issued on his investment.

The reluctance shown by some of the eastern states to co-operate in a strenuous prosecution of the war, was regarded by him with regret, but with no conviction of any deficiency on their part in patriotic feeling. He had known them long and well, and could not doubt the soundness of their principles, although he lamented the error of their political views. In a letter to a friend in Philadelphia at this period, he ascribed their backwardness to dissatisfaction at not being allowed to cherish a navy, and likened their conduct to that of Achilles offended by being deprived of his Briseis, and provoked to withdraw his aid from the Grecian confederacy. The illustration was apt and pleasing, if not altogether just, and evinced the generous construction that he was willing to put on the conduct of his neighbours, and the pertinacity with which his mind still dwelt upon a naval establishment as a cardinal point of national policy.

He was now an old man, but age had overtaken him in this happy retirement, and had brought the venerable dignity of years without destroying the cheerfulness of youth. His mind was perpetually active, and he continued to take the most lively interest in the development of the happy consequences of the revolution, in the established prosperity of his country, and the extension of the principle of civil freedom to other regions of the globe

The centre of an interesting circle of friendship and affection, with an unabated love of reading and conversation, his declining years seemed to be surrounded with all the sources of felicity that the condition of man allows.

His friendship with Mr. Jefferson, now also in a similar retirement, was renewed, and their intercourse revived in an interchange of letters, that occasionally were allowed to find their way into the public prints, and were universally read with the deepest interest. No two men were ever more fitted to give pleasure to each other by a correspondence of this kind. They had passed through anxious scenes together, and had since been so widely separated in their associations, that different views of life, in many particulars, had been engrafted on their early community of feeling. They were both masters in letter writing, though not resembling each other in style. Mr. Adams was more plain, concise and emphatic; Mr. Jefferson more felicitous in the arrangement of words.

All that the world has seen of the writings of Mr. Adams, his numerous political documents, his revolutionary addresses, letters and essays, his official correspondence, reports, speeches and messages, his Defence of the American Constitution, and the supplement to that work called Discourses on Davila, published in 1790, exhibit indisputable marks of genius, accomplished by classical and historical learning; and his occasional letters, written in the later period of his life, are distinguished by acuteness, ingenuity, and a striking force of imagination.

A very small portion of his correspondence with Mr. Jefferson has been seen by the public; the nation hopes to be indulged by the disclosure of the rest.

The few incidents that diversified the even tenor of his old age were, with some exceptions, of a most gratifying nature. In 1815, he saw the second treaty of peace concluded with Great Britain, by a plenipotentiary commission of which his son was at the head, as he had been himself in that commission which formed the treaty of 1783. Two years after this event the political party in Massachusetts, which had once most vehemently opposed him, paid him the compliment of placing his name at the top of their list of presidential electors; and in 1820, the convention assembled for the purpose of amending the state constitution, and composed of the most enlightened men of all parties, unanimously solicited him to act as their president. This he declined on account of his age, but the spontaneous compliment paid to his virtues and services by the vote of this assembly of his fellow citizens, was a delightful solace for those infirmities which obliged him to absent himself from their deliberations.*

He had lost, in the autumn of 1818, his amiable and faithful consort, who had shared his anxieties and his felicity for more than half a century. This was a severe affliction amid his multiplied blessings, but he considered himself but a lingerer in this world and soon to follow; and his heart responded to the sentiment expressed by Mr. Jefferson in an affectionate letter of condolence, that it was a comfort to think the term was not very distant, when they were to deposite, in the same cerement, their sorrows and suffering bodies, and to ascend in essence to an ecstatic meeting with the friends they had loved and lost, and whom they should still love and never lose again.

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* See Appendix, No. 2.

The piety of Mr. Adams did not need this chastening stroke; it had been always fervent and sincere, and the regular attention to the duties of public worship in the church of which he was a member, for sixty years, and to which he afterwards bequeathed property worth ten thousand dollars, was one of the habits of his life that endured to the last.

In the exercise of unostentatious hospitality, partaken by visitors from every quarter, who resorted to his house to gratify their curiosity with the sight of so illustrious a man, and to share the pleasures of his conversation always rich in anecdote of times past, and full of political and moral instruction; surrounded by an amiable family of descendants, and occasionally enlivened by a visit from his distinguished son, whose public avocations had kept him during many years chiefly at a distance from the paternal roof, the last years of his protracted life glided tranquilly away.

But he was reserved for an unexampled instance of human felicity, and for a death so remarkable in its circumstances as to strike the mind of a whole people with the impression of divine interposition.

He had seen his eldest son pass through various gradations of public service, with advantage to his country and honour to himself. He had watched with parental solicitude and pride the manifestations of his superior virtues and abilities, and he lived to see that beloved son the object of his pride and affection, elevated to the chief magistracy of this great and prosperous republic.

There is no earthly joy like parental joy, as there is no sorrow like parental sorrow. History presents no parallel for such an event; no such reward was ever allowed on earth to crown a long life of public usefulness and virtue.

Mr. Adams had lived too long to regard power and official elevation as in themselves desirable, and knew from experience, that his son could not escape the anxieties and cares that render the possession of exalted stations often much less happy than the anticipation.

But as the palm of virtue and high talents, honourably gained in a fair competition, he regarded his son's election to the presidency with a just and pious exultation.

When the fiftieth anniversary of the declaration of independence approached, two only of the committee that prepared that document, and of the congress that voted its adoption and promulgation, and one more besides of those who inscribed their names upon it, yet survived.

That such an anniversary should be the day appointed for the departure of the two co-labourers, is a circumstance that will be looked upon with a degree of wonder proportioned to the sensibility of the various minds by which it is considered. The universal burst of feeling in all parts of this country, showed that the nation recognized something in the dispensation beyond the ordinary laws of human existence.

Mr. Adams had not until a very few days previous, shown any indications of a more rapid failure of strength. The fourth of July, 1826, found him unable to rise from his bed, on account of an unusual degree of debility that had come upon him two days before. He was not however, aware of so near an approach of death. On being asked to suggest a toast for the customary celebration of the day, he exclaimed, 'INDEPENDENCE FOREVER!' and those were the last words that he was known coherently to utter. The different members of his family seemed to engross his attention after this, and at about four o'clock in the afternoon, without pain or suffering, he expired.

It is known that the illustrious Jefferson departed a few hours before him; and we cannot close this imperfect sketch more appropriately, than by borrowing the language of one who most deeply felt the impressiveness of this solemn and memorable event.

"They departed cheered by the benedictions of their country, to whom they left the inheritance of their fame, and the memory of their bright example. If we turn our thoughts to the condition of their country, in the contrast of the first and last day of that half century, how resplendent and sublime is the transition from gloom to glory! then, glancing through the same lapse of time, in the condition of the individuals, we see the first day marked with the fulness and vigour of youth in the pledge of their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honour, to the cause of freedom and of mankind. And on the last extended on the bed of death, with but sense and sensibility left to breathe a last aspiration to heaven of blessing upon their country; may we not humbly hope that to them, too, it was a pledge of transition, from gloom to glory; and that while their mortal vestments were sinking into the clod of the valley, their emancipated spirits were ascending to the bosom of their God!"

APPENDIX,

No. I.

THOUGHTS ON GOVERNMENT:

Applicable to the present state of the American colonies; in a letter from a Gentleman to his friend, [*i. e. from John Adams to George Wythe.*]

[REFERRED TO IN THE LIFE OF JOHN ADAMS.]

My dear sir—If I was equal to the task of forming a plan for the government of a colony, I should be flattered with your request, and very happy to comply with it; because as the divine science of politics is the science of social happiness, and the blessings of society depend entirely on the constitutions of government, which are generally institutions that last for many generations, there can be no employment more agreeable to a benevolent mind, than a research after the best.

Pope flattered tyrants too much when he said,

> " For forms of government let fools contest,
> " That which is best administered is best."

Nothing can be more fallacious than this: But poets read history to collect flowers not fruits—they attend to fanciful images, not the effects of social institutions. Nothing is more certain from the history of nations, and nature of man, than that some forms of government are better fitted for being well administered than others.

We ought to consider, what is the end of government, before we determine which is the best form.—Upon this point all speculative politicians will agree, that the happiness of society is the end of government, as all divines and moral philosophers will agree that the happiness of the individual is the end of man. From this principle it will follow, that the form of government, which communicates ease, comfort, security, or in one word happiness to the greatest number of persons, and in the greatest degree, is the best.

All sober inquirers after truth, ancient and modern, pagan and Christian, have declared that the happiness of man, as well as his dignity consists in virtue. Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates, Mahomet, not to mention authorities really sacred, have agreed in this.

If there is a form of government then, whose principle and foundation is virtue, will not every sober man acknowledge it better calculated to promote the general happiness than any other form?

Fear is the foundation of most governments; but is so sordid and brutal a passion, and renders men, in whose breasts it predominates, so stupid and miserable, that Americans will not be likely to approve of any political institution which is founded on it.

Honour is truely sacred, but holds a lower rank in the scale of moral excellence than virtue.—Indeed the former is but a part of the latter, and consequently has not equal pretentions to support a frame of government productive to human happiness.

The foundation of every government is some principle or passion in the minds of the people.—The noblest principles and most generous affections in our nature then, have the fairest chance to support the noblest and most generous models of government.

A man must be indifferent to the sneers of modern Englishmen, to mention in their company, the names of Sidney, Harrington, Locke, Milton, Nedham, Neville, Burnet and Hoadley. —No small fortitude is necessary to confess that one has read them. The wretched condition of this country, however, for ten or fifteen years past, has frequently reminded me of their principles and reasonings.—They will convince any candid mind, that there is no good government but what is republican. That the only valuable part of the British constitution is so; because the very definition of a republic, is "an empire of laws, and not of men." That, as a republic is the best of governments, so that particular arrangement of the powers of society, or in other words that form of government, which is best contrived to secure an impartial and exact execution of the laws, is the best of republics.

Of republics, there is an inexhaustible variety, because the possible combinations of the powers of society, are capable of innumerable variations.

As good government, is an empire of laws, how shall your laws be made? In a large society, inhabiting an extensive country, it is impossible that the whole should assemble, to make laws. The first necessary step then, is, to depute power from the many, to a few of the most wise and good.—But by what rules shall you choose your representatives? Agree upon the number and qualifications of persons, who shall have the benefit of choosing or annex this privilege to the inhabitants of a certain extent of ground.

The principal difficulty lies, and the greatest care should be employed in constituting this representative assembly. It should be in miniature an exact portrait of the people at large. It should think, feel, reason, and act like them. That it may be the interest of this assembly to do strict justice at all times, it should be an equal representation, or in other words equal interest among the people should have equal interest in it.—Great care should be taken to effect this, and to prevent unfair, partial, and corrupt elections. Such regulations, however, may be better made in times of greater tranquillity than the present, and they will spring up of themselves naturally, when all the powers of government come to be in the hands of the people's friends. At present it will be safest to proceed in all established modes to which the people have been familiarised by habit.

A representation of the people in one assembly being obtained, a question arises whether all the powers of government, legislatve, executive, and judicial, shall be left in this body? I think a people cannot be long free, nor ever happy, whose government is in one assembly. My reasons for this opinion are as follow:

1. A single assembly is liable to all the vices, follies and frailties of an individual.—Subject to fits of humour, starts of passion, flights of enthusiasm, partialities or prejudice, and consequently productive of hasty results and absurd judgments: And all these errors ought to be corrected and defects supplied by some controlling power.

2. A single assembly is apt to be avaricious, and in time will not scruple to exempt itself from burthens which it will lay, without compunction, on its constituents.

3. A single assembly is apt to grow ambitious, and after a time will not hesitate to vote itself perpetual. This was one fault of the long parliament, but more remarkly of Holland, whose assem-

bly first voted themselves from annual to septennial, then for life, and after a course of years, that all vacancies happening by death or otherwise should be filled by themselves, without any application to constituents at all.

4. A representative assembly, although extremely well qualified, and absolutely necessary as a branch of the legislative, is unfit to exercise the executive power, for want of two essential properties, secrecy and despatch.

5. A representative assembly is still less qualified for the judicial power; because it is too numerous, too slow, and too little skilled in the laws.

6. Because a single assembly possessed of all the powers of government, would make arbitrary laws for their own interest, execute all laws arbitrarily for their own interest, and adjudge all controversies in their own favour.

But shall the whole power of legislation rest in one assembly? Most of the foregoing reasons apply equally to prove that the legislative power ought to be more complex—to which we may add, that if the legislative power is wholly in one assembly, and the executive in another, or in a single person, these two powers will oppose and encroach upon each other, until the contest shall end in war, and the whole power, legislative and executive, be usurped by the strongest.

The judicial power, in such case, could not mediate, or hold the balance between the two contending powers, because the legislative would undermine it.—And this shows the necessity too, of giving the executive power a negative upon the legislative, otherwise this will be continually encroaching upon that.

To avoid these dangers let a distinct assembly be constituted, as a mediator between the two extreme branches of the legislature, that which represents the people and that which is vested with the executive power.

Let the representative assembly then elect by ballot, from among themselves or their constituents, or both, a distinct assembly, which for the sake of perspicuity we will call a council. It may consist of any number you please, say twenty or thirty, and should have a free and independent exercise of its judgment, and consequently a negative voice in the legislature.

These two bodies thus constituted, and made integral parts of the legislature, let them unite, and by joint ballot choose a governor, who, after being stript of most of those badges of domination called prerogatives, should have a free and independent exercise of his judgment, and be made also an integral part of the legislature. This I know is liable to objections, and if you please you may make him only president of the council, as in Connecticut: But as the govenor is to be invested with the executive power, with consent of council, I think he ought to have a negative upon the legislative. If he is annually elective, as he ought to be, he will always have so much reverence and affection for the people, their representatives and councillors, that although you give him an independent exercise of his judgment, he will seldom use it in opposition to the two houses, except in cases the public utility of which would be conspicuous, and some such cases would happen.

In the present exigency of American affairs, when, by an act of parliament we are put out of the royal protection, and consequently discharged from our allegiance; and it has become necessary to assume government for our immediate security, the governor, lieutenant governor, secretary, treasurer, commissary, attorney-general, should be chosen by joint ballot, of both houses. And these and all other elections, especially of representatives and councillors, should be annual, there not being in the whole circle of the sciences, a maxim more infallible than this, "where annual elections end, there slavery begins."

These great men, in this respect should be, once a year

"Like bubbles on the sea of matter borne,
"They rise, they break, and to that sea return."

This will teach them the great political virtues of humility, patience, and moderation, without which every man in power becomes a ravenous beast of prey.

This mode of constituting the great offices of state will answer very well for the present, but if, by experiment, it should be found inconvenient, the legislature may at its leisure devise other methods of creating them, by elections of the people at large, as in Connecticut, or it may enlarge the term for which they shall be chosen to seven years, or three years, or for life, or make any other alterations which the society shall find productive of its ease, its safety, its freedom, or in one word its happiness.

A rotation of all offices, as well as of representatives and councillors, has many advocates, and is contended for with many plausible arguments. It would be attended no doubt with many advantages, and if the society has a sufficient number of suitable characters to supply the great number of vacancies which would be made by such a rotation, I can see no objection to it. These persons may be allowed to serve for three years, and then be excluded three years, or for any longer or shorter term.

Any seven or nine of the legislative council may be made a quorum, for doing business as a privy council, to advise the governor in the exercise of the executive branch of power, and in all acts of state.

The governor should have the command of the militia, and of all your armies. The power of pardons should be with the governor and council.

Judges, justices and all other officers, civil and military, should be nominated and appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of council, unless you choose to have a government more popular; if you do, all officers, civil and military, may be chosen by joint ballot, of both houses, or in order to preserve the independence and importance of each house, by ballot of one house, concurred by the other. Sheriffs should be chosen by the freeholders of counties—so should registers of deeds and clerks of counties.

All officers should have commissions, under the hand of the governor and seal of the colony.

The dignity and stability of government in all its branches, the morals of the people and every blessing of society, depends so much upon an upright and skilful administration of justice, that the judicial power ought to be distinct from both the legislative and executive, and independent upon both, that so it may be a check upon both, as both should be checks upon that. The judges therefore should always be men of learning and experience in the laws, of exemplary morals, great patience, calmness, coolness and attention. Their minds should not be distracted with jarring interests; they should not be dependent upon any man, or body of men. To these ends they should hold estates for life in their offices, or in other words their commissions should be during good behaviour, and their salariers ascertained and established by law. For misbehaviour the grand inquest of the colony, the house of representatives, should impeach them before the govenor and council, where they should have time and opportunity to make their defence, but if convicted should be removed from their offices, and subjected to such other punishment as shall be thought proper.

A militia law requiring all men, or with very few exceptions, besides cases of conscience, to be provided with arms and ammunition, to be trained at certain seasons, and requiring counties, towns, or other small districts to be provided with public stocks of ammunition and entrenching utensils, and with some settled plans for transporting provisions after the militia, when marched to defend their country against sudden invasions, and requiring certain districts to be provided with field-pieces, companies of matrosses, and perhaps some regiments of light horse is always a wise institution, and in the present circumstances of our country indispensable.

Laws for the liberal education of youth, especially of the lower class of people, are so extremely wise and useful, that to a humane and generous mind, no expense for this purpose would be thought extravagant.

The very mention of sumptuary laws will excite a smile. Whether our countrymen have wisdom and virtue enough to submit to them I know not. But the happiness of the people might be greatly promoted by them, and a revenue saved sufficient to carry on this war forever. Frugality is a great revenue, besides curing us of vanities, levities and fopperies which are real antidotes to all great, manly and warlike virtues.

But must not all commissions run in the name of a king? No. Why may they not as well run thus, "The colony of   to A. B. greeting," and be tested by the governor?

Why may not writs, instead of running in the name of the king, run thus, "the colony of   to the sheriff," &c. and to be tested by the chief justice.

Why may not indictments conclude "against the peace of the colony of   and the dignity of the same?"

A constitution, founded on these principles, introduces knowledge among the people, and inspires them with a conscious dignity, becoming freemen. A general emulation takes place, which causes good humour, sociability, good manners, and good morals to be general. That elevation of sentiment, inspired by such a government, makes the common people brave and enterprising. That ambition which is inspired by it makes them sober, industrious and frugal. You will find among them some elegance, perhaps, but more solidity; a little pleasure, but a great deal of business—some politeness, but more civility. If you compare such a country with the regions of domination, whether monarchical or aristocratical, you will fancy yourself in Arcadia or Elisium.

If the colonies should assume governments separately, they should be left entirely to their own choice of the forms, and if a continental constitution should be formed, it should be a congress, containing a fair and adequate representation of the colonies, and its authority should sacredly be confined to these cases, viz. war, trade disputes between colony and colony, the post-office and the unappropriated lands of the crown, as they used to be called.

These colonies, under such forms of government, and in such a union would be unconquerable by all the monarchies of Europe.

You and I, my dear friend, have been sent into life, at a time when the greatest lawgivers of antiquity would have wished to live.—How few of the human race have ever enjoyed an opportunity of making an election of government more than of air, soil or climate, for themselves or their children.—When before the present epocha, had three millions of people full power and a fair opportunity to form and establish the wisest and happiest government that human wisdom can contrive? I hope you will avail yourself and your country of that extensive learning and indefatigable industry which you possess, to assist her in the formations of the happiest governments, and the best character of a great people.—For myself, I must beg you to keep my name out of sight, for this feeble attempt, if it should be known to be mine, would oblige me to apply to myself those lines of the immortal John Milton, in one of his sonnets,

> "I did but teach the age to quit their cloggs,
> "By the plain rules of ancient liberty,
> "When lo! a barbarous noise surrounded me,
> "Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes and dogs."

APPENDIX,

No. II.

IN CONVENTION—*Nov.* 15, 1820.

Whereas the honourable John Adams, a member of this convention, and elected the president thereof, has, for more than half a century, devoted the great powers of his mind and his profound wisdom and learning, to the service of his country and mankind:

In fearlessly vindicating the rights of the North American provinces against the usurpations and encroachments of the superintendant government:

In diffusing a knowledge of the principles of civil liberty among his fellow subjects, and exciting them to a firm and resolute defence of the privileges of freemen:

In early conceiving, asserting and maintaining the justice and practicability of establishing the independence of the United States of America:

In giving the powerful aid of his political knowledge in the formation of the constitution of this his native state, which constitution became in a great measure the model of those which were subsequently formed:

In conciliating the favour of foreign powers, and obtaining their countenance and support in the arduous struggle for independence:

In negotiating the treaty of peace, which secured for ever the sovereignty of the United States, and in defeating all attempts to prevent it, and especially in preserving in that treaty the vital interest of the New England states:

In demonstrating to the world in his defence of the constitutions of the several United States, the contested principle, since admitted as an axiom, that checks and balances, in legislative power, are essential to true liberty:

In devoting his time and talents to the service of the nation, in the high and important trusts of vice-president and president of the United States:

And lastly, in passing an honourable old age in dignified retirement, in the practice of all the domestic virtues, thus exhibiting to his countrymen and to posterity an example of true greatness of mind and of genuine patriotism:

Therefore, Resolved, That the members of this convention, representing the people of the commonwealth of Massachusetts, do joyfully avail themselves of this opportunity to testify their respect and gratitude to this eminent patriot and statesman, for the great services rendered by him to his country, and their high gratification that at this late period of life he is permitted, by Divine Providence, to assist them with his counsel in revising the constitution which, forty years ago, his wisdom and prudence assisted to form.

Resolved, That a committee of twelve be appointed by the chair to communicate this proceeding to the honourable John Adams, to inform him of his election to preside in this body, and to introduce him to the chair of this convention.

END OF VOL. VIII.