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 Mercy Otis Warren, History of the American Revolution, 1805
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 8 January 1805
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 20 January 1805
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 27 February 1805
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 23 December 1805
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 23 July 1806
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 21 May 1807
 Thomas Jefferson to William Short, Washington, 12 June 1807
 John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Quincy, Mass., 19 August 1807
 John Adams to Skelton Jones, Quincy, Mass., 9 March 1809
 John Adams to Skelton Jones, Quincy, Mass., 11 March 1809
 John Adams to William Sumner, Quincy, Mass., 28 March 1809
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 12 April 1809
 John Adams to William Cunningham, Quincy, Mass., 7 June 1809
 John Adams to François Adriaan Van der Kemp, Quincy, Mass., 15 December 1809
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 16 March 1810
 Abigail Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, Quincy, Mass., 10 April 1810
 Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, Monticello, 16 January 1811
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 21 June 1811
 Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 20 August 1811
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 28 August 1811
 Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 4 September 1811
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 2 November 1811
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 21 November 1811
 Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 17 February 1812
 Benjamin Rush to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 3 March 1812
 John Adams to Thomas McKean, Quincy, Mass., 21 June 1812
 John Adams to Ebenezer Seaver, Quincy, Mass., 14 August 1812
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 17 August 1812
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 14 November 1812
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 4 January 1813
 John Adams to William Plumer, Quincy, Mass., 10 January 1813
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 15 January 1813
 John Adams to François Adriaan Van der Kemp, Quincy, Mass., 9 August 1813
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 14 September 1813
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 November 1813
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 24 December 1813
 John Adams to Henry Colman, Quincy, Mass., 14 January 1814
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 16 May 1815
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 24 December 1815
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 February 1816
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 22 March 1816
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 29 June 1816

Josephus B. Stuart's Account of a Visit to Monticello, 24 December 1816
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 October 1817
 Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 20 May 1818
 John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Washington, 22 November 1818
 John Adams to Susanna Boylston Treadway, Quincy, Mass., 25 January 1819
 Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Adams Wells, Monticello, 12 May 1819
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 23 November 1819
 John Adams to Caroline De Windt, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 24 January 1820
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 12 May 1820
 Francis Adrian Van der Kemp to Thomas Jefferson, Oldenbarneveld, 25 June 1820
 Francis Adrian Van der Kemp to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 28 August 1820
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 3 February 1821
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 11 June 1822
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 12 July, 1822
 Thomas Jefferson: Conversation with Daniel Webster, 1824
 Martin Van Buren's Account of Visit to Monticello, c. 23 May 1824
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 14 January 1826
 George Washington Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 5 July 1826
 Boston *Columbian Centinel*, 8 July 1826
 Timothy Pickering to Daniel Webster, Boston, 19 July 1826
 Timothy Pickering to John Marshall, Salem, Mass., 26 December 1828
 James Madison Conversation with Jared Sparks, April 1830
 James Madison to James K. Paulding, April 1831

John Quincy Adams

John Adams to Abigail Adams, L'Orient, 14 May 1779
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, L'Orient, 14 June 1779
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Amsterdam, 25 September 1780
 C.W.F. Dumas to John Adams, The Hague, 9 May 1783
 John Adams to Abigail Adams (Nabby), Paris, 13 August 1783
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 14 August 1783
 John Adams to Abigail Adams (Nabby), Paris, 14 August 1783
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 7 September 1783
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 25 January 1784
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 26 January 1784
 John Adams to Abigail Adams (Nabby), The Hague, 26 July 1784
 John Adams to Francis Dana, Auteuil near Paris, 4 November 1784
 Francis Dana to John Adams, Cambridge, Mass., 30 January 1785
 Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, Paris, 18 March 1785
 John Adams to President of Harvard, Joseph Willard, Auteuil near Paris, 22 April 1785
 John Adams to Cotton Tufts, Auteuil near Paris, 24 April 1785
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 26 April 1785
 Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, Paris, 11 May 1785
 John Thaxter to Abigail Adams, Haverhill, N.H., 4 June 1785
 Elbridge Gerry to John Adams, New York, 3 August 1785
 Mary Smith Cranch to Abigail Adams, Braintree, Mass., 14 August 1785
 Mary Cranch to Abigail Adams, Braintree, Mass., post-27 August 1785
 Mary Smith Cranch to Abigail Adams, Lincoln, 14 September 1785

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 4 October 1785
 John Quincy Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, Haverhill, N.H., 8 October 1785
 Royall Tyler to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 15 October 1785
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 3 November 1785
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 28 November 1785
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 21 December 1785
 Elizabeth Smith Shaw to Abigail Adams, Haverhill, N.H., 2 January 1786
 Charles Storer to Abigail Adams, Boston, 12 February 1786
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 8 May 1786
 Lucy Cranch to Abigail Adams, Braintree, Mass., 24 June 1786
 Abigail Adams Smith to Elizabeth Cranch, London, 18 July 1786
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 29 September 1786
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 19 October 1786
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 20 June 1787
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 11 July 1787
 Joseph Willard to John Adams, Cambridge, Mass., 1 September 1787
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 2 October 1787
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 13 December 1787
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 10 February 1788
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 12 May 1788
 Elizabeth Shaw to Abigail Adams, Haverhill, N.H., 21 September 1788
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 14 October 1788
 Abigail Adams Smith to John Quincy Adams, Richmond, N.Y., 18 April 1790
 John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 21 September 1790
 Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Bush Hill, Pa., 12 March 1791
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 21 January 1794
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., February 1794
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 4 February 1794
 John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Boston, 13 February 1794
 John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 12 April 1794
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 23 April 1794
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 19 May 1794
 John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 26 May 1794
 Elizabeth Smith Shaw to John Quincy Adams, Haverhill, N.H., 9 June 1794
 Abigail Adams to Martha Washington, Quincy, Mass., [20 June 1794]
 Martha Washington to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 19 July 1794
 John Jay to John Adams, London, 27 July 1794
 John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 27 July 1794
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 February 1795
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 23 June 1795
 John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Helvoetsluys, 31 October 1795
 John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, London, 26 December 1795
 John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 6 January 1796
 Gouverneur Morris: Diary, London, 18 January 1796
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 9 March 1796
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 20 March 1796
 John Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 9 June 1796
 John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 30 June 1796

John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Johnson, The Hague, 9 July 1796
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 11 July 1796
 John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 25 July 1796
 John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 14 November 1796
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 November 1796
 John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 18 January 1797
 George Washington to John Adams, Philadelphia, 20 February 1797
 John Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, Philadelphia, 21 February 1797
 John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Johnson, The Hague, 14 March 1797
 John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 21 May 1797
 John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 26 June 1797
 Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 3 March 1798
 Thomas Boylston Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 20 September 1801
 John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 27 September 1801
 Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 27 December 1801
 John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Boston, 2 January 1802
 John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 13 June 1802
 Thomas Boylston Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 20 October 1802
 Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 27 January 1803
 Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 21 May 1804
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 7 February 1805
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 9 January 1806
 John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Washington, 11 February 1806
 William Plumer Memorandum, 5 March 1807
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 8 January 1808
 John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Washington, 5 March 1809
 John Quincy Adams to Skelton Jones, Boston, 17 April 1809
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 7 August 1809
 John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, St. Petersburg, Russia, 8 February 1810
 Abigail Adams to Catherine Nuth Johnson, Quincy, Mass., 29 December 1810
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 15 January 1811
 John Adams to Richard Rush, Quincy, Mass., 15 January 1811
 John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, St. Petersburg, Russia, 10 April 1811
 Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, 2 August 1813
 Louisa Catherine Adams to Abigail Adams, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2 September 1813
 Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, 13 December 1813
 Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, 31 December 1813
 Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 31 March 1814
 Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, 23 October 1814
 Josephus B. Stuart's Account of a Visit to Monticello, 24 December 1816
 Richard Rush to Abigail Adams, Washington, 2 April 1817
 Louisa Catherine Adams to Abigail Adams, Washington, 2 March 1818
 Joseph Story to Ezekiel Bacon, Washington, 12 March 1818
 Charles Willson Peale to Rembrandt Peale, Washington, 15–19 January 1819
 John Quincy Adams: Diary, 4 June 1819
 James Buchanan to Hugh Hamilton, 22 March 1822
 Timothy Pickering to John Marshall, Salem, Mass., 7 June 1824
 Joseph Story to Mrs. Joseph Story, Washington, 4 March 1825

Louisa Catherine Adams

Louisa Catherine Adams to Abigail Adams, Washington, 22 February–2 March 1818
 Louisa Catherine Adams to Her Son John Adams, Washington, 11 March 1819
 Louisa Catherine Adams to Her Son John Adams, Washington, 4 August 1819

Samuel Adams

John Adams: Diary, 22 December 1765
 John Adams: Diary, 30 December 1772
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 September 1774
 John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 30 July 1775
 John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 17 September 1775
 James Warren to Samuel Adams, Watertown, Mass., 28 September 1775
 John Adams: Autobiography, March 1776
 John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 27 July 1776
 Ambrose Searle: American Journal, 2 January 1777
 Elbridge Gerry to James Warren, York, Pa., 13 November 1777
 Samuel Adams to Samuel P. Savage, Philadelphia, 3 July 1778
 Samuel Adams to Samuel Phillips Savage, Philadelphia, 6 October 1778
 Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 20 October 1778
 Samuel Adams to Samuel P. Savage, Philadelphia, 1 November 1778
 Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 13 December 1778
 Samuel Adams to Samuel Cooper, Philadelphia, 25 December 1778
 James Lovell to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 9 August 1779
 Joseph Galloway: Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion*
 John Adams to Thomas Digges, 14 March 1780
 Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 20 November 1780
 Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 24 November 1780
 Peter Oliver: The Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion, 1781
 Thomas Rodney's Characters of Some Members of Congress, post-8 March 1781
 François Barbé de Marbois to Comte de Vergennes, Philadelphia, 13 March 1782
 Marquis de Chastellux: Travels in North-America, in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 28 March 1783
 John Adams to William Lee, Paris, 10 April 1783
 Francisco Rendón to Don José de Gálvez, Philadelphia, 12 April 1783
 William Lee to John Adams, Brussels, 24 April 1783
 John Adams to John Quincy Adams, The Hague, 11 June 1784
 James Sullivan to John Adams, Boston, 22 November 1784
 Charles Storer to John Adams, New York, 23 November 1785
 Luigi Castiglioni: Sketches of American Statesmen, 1787
 James Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 18 May 1787
New York Journal, 7 January 1788
 James Madison to Edmund Randolph, New York, 10 January 1788
 John Armstrong to George Washington, Carlisle, Pa., 20 February 1788
Boston Independent Chronicle, 18 December 1788
 John Jay: Circuit Court Diary, 14 November 1790
 James Iredell to Hannah Iredell, Boston, 1 November 1792
 Stephen Higginson to Alexander Hamilton, Boston, 24 August 1793
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 18 January 1794

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 26 January 1794
 Henry Marchant to John Adams, Newport, R.I., 10 February 1794
 John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 24 March 1794
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 April 1794
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Philadelphia, 11 April 1794
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 11 April 1794
 John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 12 April 1794
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 April 1794
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 12 May 1794
 John Adams to Thomas Welsh, Philadelphia, 19 November 1794
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 27 January 1795
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 2 February 1795
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 June 1795
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 21 January 1796
 Thomas Welsh to John Adams, Boston, 25 January 1796
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 29 January 1796
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 2 February 1796
 John Adams to Thomas Welsh, Philadelphia, 2 February 1796
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 5 March 1796
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Philadelphia, 4 April 1796
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 April 1796
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 April 1796
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 April 1796
 Oliver Wolcott, Sr., to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Litchfield, Conn., 25 April 1796
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 November 1796
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 3 January 1797
 Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 29 January 1797
 Thomas Jefferson to James Sullivan, Monticello, 9 February 1797
 Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 21 February 1797
 John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 21 May 1797
 Benjamin Rush: Travels Through Life, c. 1800
 Benjamin Rush: Sketches, c. 1800
 Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Adams, Philadelphia, 26 February 1800
 Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Adams, Washington, 29 March 1801
 Mercy Otis Warren, History of the American Revolution, 1805
 John Quincy Adams to Skelton Jones, Boston, 17 April 1809
 John Adams to William Tudor, Sr., Quincy, Mass., 5 June 1813
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 16 July 1814
 John Adams to Dr. J. Morse, Quincy, Mass., 1 January 1816
 John Adams to William Tudor, Quincy, Mass., 5 June 1817
 Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Delaplaine, Monticello, 1 April 1818
 Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Waterhouse, Monticello, 31 January 1819
 John Adams to William Tudor, Quincy, Mass., 9 February 1819
 Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Adams Wells, Monticello, 12 May 1819
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 27 May 1819
 Thomas Jefferson: Conversation with Daniel Webster, 1824

Thomas Boylston Adams

Thomas Boylston Adams to John Adams, The Hague, 17 March 1797
Thomas Boylston Adams to William Shaw, Philadelphia, 20 September 1801
John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 November 1801
Thomas Boylston Adams to William Smith Shaw, Philadelphia, 13 June 1802

Jacob Adgate

Alexander Hamilton to Robert Livingston, 25 April 1785

Robert Aitken

Thomas Paine to Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, 4 March 1775
Mathew Carey: Memoirs, June 1829

William Alexander (Lord Stirling)

John Adams to James Warren, 18 February 1776
John Adams to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 4 August 1776
Benjamin Rush: Sketches
Marquis de Lafayette: Memoir of 1776
Aaron Burr to Joseph Alston, 15 November 1815

Ethan Allen

John Thaxter to Abigail Adams, York, Pa., 22 May 1778
Ethan Allen, A Narrative of Col. Ethan Allen's Captivity, 1779
Luigi Castiglioni: Sketches of American Soldiers, 1787

Paul Allen

Jabez Bowen to George Washington, Providence, R.I., 14 February 1791

William Allen

John Adams to Charles Lee, Philadelphia, 17 February 1776
Samuel Chase to Horatio Gates, Philadelphia, 13 June 1776

Fisher Ames

Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Boston, 2 December 1788
"Jeroboam," Boston *Herald of Freedom*, 18 December 1788
Boston *Independent Chronicle*, 18 December 1788
Benjamin Lincoln to George Washington, Boston, 20 December 1788
Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Boston, 21 December 1788
Tristram Lowther to James Iredell, New York, 9 May 1789
Fisher Ames to George R. Minot, New York, 27 May 1789
Fisher Ames to George R. Minot, New York, 29 May 1789
William Tudor to John Adams, Boston, 9 July 1789
Letter from New York to Alexandria, Va., Boston *Herald of Freedom*, 28 July 1789
Thomas B. Wait to George Thatcher, Biddeford, Maine, 9 August 1789
Abigail Adams to Cotton Tufts, New York, 1 September 1789
John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 5 June 1790
Bossinger Foster, Jr., to Andrew Craigie, Boston, 29 August 1790
Fisher Ames to Thomas Dwight, 12 December 1790
Walter Jones to James Madison, Kinsdale, Va., 10 January 1794
John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 9 November 1794

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 January 1795
 Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 30 November 1795
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 30 April 1796*
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 20 May 1796
 Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 June 1796
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 17 December 1805
 Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 9 January 1806
 John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Washington, 20 January 1806
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, September 1807
 John Adams: To the *Boston Patriot*, Quincy, Mass., 29 May 1809
 John Adams to Joseph Ward, Quincy, Mass., 14 November 1809
 Joseph Ward to John Adams, Boston, 27 November 1809
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 27 December 1810
 Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 10 January 1811
 John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., April 1812
 John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 3 September 1816
 James Kent: Journal to His Son, 30 April 1833

Nathaniel Ames

Fisher Ames to Timothy Dwight, 12 November 1798

John Armstrong, Jr.

John Armstrong to Horatio Gates, New York, 7 April 1789
 Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 19 August 1798
 Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 9 August 1800
 William Plumer Memorandum, 15 March 1806
 William Plumer Memorandum, 17 March 1806
 John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Quincy, Mass., 16 January 1813
 Thomas Jefferson to John Wayles Eppes, Monticello, 9 September 1814

John Armstrong, Sr.

John Adams to Samuel Osgood, 15 November 1775

Benedict Arnold

Charles Carroll of Carrollton to Charles Carroll of Annapolis, Montreal, 30 April 1776
 Richard Henry Lee to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 3 November 1776
 John Adams to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 9 May 1777
 John Adams to Abigail Adams, 22 May 1777
 De Lisle (William Livingston), *New Jersey Gazette*, 31 December 1777
 Nathanael Greene to John Cadwalader, Fredericksburg, N.Y., 10 November 1778
 John Cadwalader to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 5 December 1778
 Benjamin Rush: Sketches
 Robert R. Livingston to George Washington, Trenton, N.J., 22 June 1780
 Benedict Arnold to George Washington, On Board the *Vulture*, 25 September 1780
 Thomas Paine, "The Crisis Extraordinary," 4 October 1780
 Virginia Delegates to Congress to Governor Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 5 October 1780
 Benedict Arnold to the Inhabitants of America, New York, 7 October 1780
 James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, Philadelphia, 10 October 1780
 Charles Thomson to John Jay, Philadelphia, 12 October 1780

Nathanael Greene to Joseph Webb, West Point, N.Y., 15 October 1780
John Adams to Edmund Jenings, Amsterdam, 1 December 1780
John Sullivan to John Langdon, Philadelphia, 4 December 1780
Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, Passy, France, 4 March 1782
John Jay to Silas Deane, Chaillot near Paris, 23 February 1784

Peleg Arnold

Hugh Williamson to James Iredell, New York, 23 August 1788

Joshua Atherton

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 22 February 1788
Samuel Tenney to Nicholas Gilman, Exeter, N.H., 12 March 1788

Benjamin Austin

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 11 April 1794
John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 April 1794
Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 April 1796

John Avery

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 20 November 1780

William Aylet

Roger Sherman to Joseph Trumbull, Philadelphia, 2 April 1777

Abigail Adams

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 July 1775

It gives me more Pleasure than I can express to learn that you sustain with so much Fortitude, the Shocks and Terrors of the Times. You are really brave, my dear, you are an Heroine. And you have Reason to be. For the worst that can happen, can do you no Harm. A soul, as pure, as benevolent, as virtuous and pious as yours has nothing to fear, but every Thing to hope and expect from the last of human Evils.

John Adams: Diary, 24 September 1775

. . . called upon Stephen Collins who has just returned. . . One Thing he told me, for my Wife, who will be peeping here, sometime or other, and come across it. He says when he called at my House, an English Gentleman was with him, a Man of Penetration, though of few Words. And this silent, penetrating Gentleman was pleased with Mrs. Adams, and thought her, the most accomplished Lady he had seen since he came out of England—Down Vanity, for you don't know who this Englishman is.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 26 September 1775

I have seen the Utility of Geometry, Geography, and the Art of drawing so much of late, that I must entreat you, my dear, to teach the Elements of those Sciences to my little Girl and Boys. It is as pretty an Amusement, as Dancing or Skating, or Fencing, after they have once acquired a taste for them. No doubt you are well qualified for a school Mistress in these Studies, for Stephen Collins tells me the English Gentleman, in Company with him, when he visited Braintree, pronounced you the most accomplished Lady, he had seen since he left England, You see a Quaker can flatter, but don't you be proud.

Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Watertown, Mass., 12 October 1775

Within a few days after your agreeable Discription of Domestic Happiness, and the temporary Felicity you tasted under your own quiet Roof, the Good Portia was Involved in a Variety of Afflictions. But I called on Her yesterday and found the Little Flock Restored to Health. Their Mamah perfectly Recovered and Bearing up under A stroke of Adversity with that Fortitude and Equanimity which Can only Result from the Noblest principles. But when we take a Rational survey of the Condition of Humanity and the Narrow Limits within which our Advances both to perfection and Happiness are Circumscribed, at the same time that the Hope of the Christian smooths the passage to a More Exalted state, why should the shocks of private Misfortune, the Allarms of War, or the Convulsions of states, Ruffle the soul Conscious of Its own Integrity.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 7 April 1776

I hope in time to have the Reputation of being as good a Farmeress as my partner has of being a good Statesman.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 May 1776

Your Sentiments of the Duties We owe to our Country, are such as become the best of Women, and the best of Men. Among all the Disappointments, and Perplexities, which have fallen to my share in Life, nothing has contributed so much to support my Mind, as the choice Blessing of a Wife, whose Capacity enabled her to comprehend, and whose pure Virtue obliged her to approve the Views of her Husband. This has been the cheering Consolation of my Heart, in my most solitary, gloomy and disconsolate Hours. In this remote Situation, I am deprived in a great Measure of this Comfort. Yet I read, and read again your charming Letters, and they serve me, in some faint degree as a substitute for the Company and Conversation of the Writer.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 27 May 1776

I have three of your Favours, before me—one of May 7, another of May 9 and a third of May 14th. The last has given me Relief from many Anxieties. It relates wholly to private Affairs, and contains such an Account of wise and prudent Management, as makes me very happy. I begin to be jealous, that our Neighbours will think Affairs more discreetly conducted in my Absence than at any other Time. . . . I think you shine as a Stateswoman, of late as well as a Farmeress. Pray where do you get your Maxims of State, they are very apropos.

John Adams to Mary Palmer, Philadelphia, 5 July 1776

In Times as turbulent as these, commend me to the Ladies for Historiographers. The Gentlemen are too much engaged in Action. The Ladies are cooler Spectators. . . . There is a Lady at the Foot of Penn's Hill, who obliges me, from Time to Time with clearer and fuller Intelligence, than I can get from a whole Committee of Gentlemen.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 20 September 1776

The Best accounts we can collect from New York assure us that our Men fought valiantly. We are no ways dispirited here, we possess a Spirit that will not be conquered. If our Men are all drawn off and we should be attacked, you would find a Race of Amazons in America.

Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, 15 October 1776

When do You Expect to see Mr. Adams. I Really think it a Great trial of patience and philosophy to be so Long separated from the Companion of Your Heart and from the Father of your Little Flock. But the High Enthusiasm of a truly patriotic Lady will Carry Her through Every Difficulty, and Lead Her to Every Exertion. Patience, Fortitude, Public Spirit, Magnanimity and self Denial are the Virtues she Boasts. I wish I Could put in my Claim to those sublime qualities.

James Warren to John Adams, 27 April 1777

. . . after all our Study, I don't know but Mrs. Adams' Native Genius will Excel us all in Husbandry. She was much Engaged when I came along, and the Farm at Braintree Appeared to be Under Excellent Management.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 15 May 1777

Gen. Warren writes me, that my Farm never looked better, than when he last saw it, and that Mrs. ——— was like to outshine all the Farmers.—I wish I could see it.—But I can make Allowances. He knows the Weakness of his Friend's Heart and that nothing flatters it more than praises bestowed upon a certain Lady.

Abigail Adams to John Lowell, Braintree, Mass., 29 November 1779

It has been my Lot in Life to be called repeatedly to the painful task of separating from the dearest connection in Life, Honour and Fame of which the world talk, weigh but lightly against the Domestic happiness I resign, and the pain and anxiety I suffer.—One only consideration preponderates the scale, the hope of rendering Essential service to a distressed and Bleeding Country.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Braintree, Mass., 2 March 1780

You have great reason for thankfulness to your kind perservor, who hath again carried you through many dangers, preserved your Life and given you an opportunity of making further improvements in virtue and knowledge. You must consider that every Moment of your time is precious, if trifled away never to be recalled. Do not spend too much of it in recreation, it will never afford you that permanent satisfaction which the acquisition of one Art or Science will give you, and whatever you undertake aim to make yourself perfect in it, for if it is worth doing at all, it is worth doing well.

James Lovell to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 4 September 1781

I want only my Spectacles which are left at the State House to make me quite happy by enabling me to prosecute the pleasing Task of Correspondence with one of the ———est and ———est & ———est Women. I am sure Madam there is nothing of Flattery or improper Affection in those half written Epithets though they partake of the superlative Degree.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, 10 April 1782

Adieu my dear Friend. How gladly would I visit you and partake of your Labours and cares, soothe you to rest, and alleviate your anxieties were it given me to visit you even by moon Light, as the fairies are fabled to do.

I cheer my Heart with the distant prospect. All that I can hope for at present, is to hear of your welfare which of all things lies nearest the Heart of your ever affectionate Portia

John Adams to C.W.F. Dumas, Paris, 16 May 1783

I wish Mr. Van Berckel Joy with all my Heart [on his recent marriage], and with the more lively Sympathy, as I hope to be married once more, myself in a few Months, to a very amiable Lady whom I have inhumanly left a Widow in America for Nine Years, with the Exception of a few Weeks, only.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 30 June 1783

But I never shall take a journey which will be truly pleasant to me, unaccompanied by my Friend. And yet how few in the course of 19 years that we have been connected, have we taken together? Though your life has been one continued Scene of journeying, in the early part of my Life, Maternal duties prevented my accompanying you, and in the Later the Stormy Scenes of war. Few persons who so well Love domestick Life as my Friend; have been called, for so long a period, to relinquish the enjoyment of it; yet like the needle to the pole, you invariably turn towards it; as the only point where you have fixed your happiness. It is this belief which has supported me thus far through the voyage, but alas how often have I felt the want of my pilot, obliged “to act my little part alone.”

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 24 August 1783

I know not how to realize that I shall see you soon. Hope and Fear have been the two ruling passions of a large portion of my Life, and I have been banded from one to the other like a tennis Ball.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 20 November 1783

Of this I am sure, that I do not wish it. I should have liked very well, to have gone to France, and resided there a year, but to think of going to England in a publick Character, and residing there; engaging at my time of life in Scenes quite New, attended with dissipation, parade and Nonsense; I am sure I should make an awkward figure. The retired Domestick circle “the feast of reason and the flow of soul”^{*} are my Ideas of happiness, and my most ardent wish is, to have you return and become Master of the Feast.

My Health is infirm, I am frequently distressed with a nervous pain in my Head, and a fatigue of any kind will produce it. Neither of us appear to be built for duration. Would to Heaven the few remaining days allotted Us, might be enjoyed together. I have considered it as my misfortune, that I could not attend to your Health, watch for your repose, alleviate your Hours of anxiety, and make you a home where ever you resided. More says a very skillful Dr. depends upon the Nurse than the physician.

My present determination is to tarry at home this winter; lonely as it is without my children; and if I cannot prevail upon you to return to Me in the Spring—you well know that I may be drawn to you.

^{*}Alexander Pope, *Satires . . . of Horace*, “The First Satire of the Second Book,” line 128.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 15 December 1783

I have already written to you in answer to your Letters which were dated September 10th and reached me a month before those by Mr. Thaxter. I related to you all my fears respecting a winter’s voyage. My Friends are all against it, and Mr. Gerry as you will see, by the Copy of his Letter enclosed, has given his opinion upon well grounded reasons. If I should leave my affairs in the Hands of my Friends, there would be much to think of, and much to do, to place them in that method and order I would wish to leave them in.

Theory and practice are two very different things; and the object magnifies, as I approach nearer to it. I think if you were abroad in a private Character, and necessitated to continue there; I should

not hesitate so much at coming to you. But a mere American as I am, unacquainted with the Etiquette of courts, taught to say the thing I mean, and to wear my Heart in my countenance, I am sure I should make an awkward figure. And then it would mortify my pride if I should be thought to disgrace you. Yet strip Royalty of its pomp, and power, and what are its votaries more than their fellow worms? I have so little of the Ape about me; that I have refused every publick invitation to figure in the Gay World, and sequestered myself in this Humble cottage, content with rural Life and my domestick employments in the midst of which; I have sometimes Smiled, upon recollecting that I had the Honour of being allied to an Ambassador. Yet I have for an example the chaste Lucretia who was found spinning in the midst of her maidens, when the Brutal Tarquin plotted her destruction.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 3 January 1784

Why with a Heart Susceptible of every tender impression, and feelingly alive, have I So often been called to Stand alone and support myself through Scenes which have almost torn it assunder, not I fear, because I have more resolution or fortitude than others, for my resolution often fails me; and my fortitude wavers.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 11 February 1784

You invite me to you, you call me to follow you, the most earnest wish of my soul is to be with you—but you can scarcely form an Idea of the conflict of my mind. It appears to me such an enterprise, the ocean so formidable, the quitting my habitation and my Country, leaving my Children, my Friends, with the Idea that perhaps I may never see them again, without my Husband to console and comfort me under these apprehensions—indeed my dear Friend there are hours when I feel unequal to the trial. But on the other hand, I console myself with the Idea of being joyfully and tenderly received by the best of Husbands and Friends, and of meeting a dear and long absent Son. But the difference is; my fears, and anxieties, are present; my hopes, and expectations, distant.

But avaunt ye Idle Specters, the desires and requests of my Friend are a Law to me. I will sacrifice my present feelings and hope for a blessing in pursuit of my duty.

Philip Mazzei to John Adams, Paris, 27 September 1785

I would take it as a particular favour, if you would with the whole power of your eloquence express to your most worthy Lady the high esteem, respect, & veneration, which from your knowledge of me you can easily conceive I must entertain of her, after having been informed by our noble friend Mr. Jefferson of her charming, wonderful, & truly uncommon merit. I do not wonder now, that you could not be happy so far apart from so sensible & so amiable Companion.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, London, 11 February 1786

In Europe every being is estimated, and every country valued, in proportion to their show and splendor. In a private station I have not a wish for expensive living, but, whatever my fair countrywomen may think, and I hear they envy my situation, I will most joyfully exchange Europe for America, and my public for a private life. I am really surfeited with Europe, and most heartily long for the rural cottage, the purer and honester manners of my native land, where domestic happiness reigns unrivalled, and virtue and honor go hand in hand. I hope one season more will give us an opportunity of making our escape. At present we are in the situation of Sterne's starling.*

*In Laurance Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, a starling in a cage cries out to each passerby "I can't get out. The hero, Yorick cannot release the bird and reflects on the condition of slavery and the blessings of liberty."

David Humphreys to George Washington, London, 11 February 1786

[Does not want to describe the birth night ball.] I will only say in honor of America that Mrs. Adams appeared to very good advantage, being an extremely decent Lady.

Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Smith Shaw, London, 4 March 1786

I hope my youngest son has out grown the Rheumatism. This cold weather has stirred up mine, but I am better now than I have been.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, London, 24 April 1786

[She wishes she could shed some pounds.] . . . and having bestowed some pounds I should move nimbler and fell lighter. Tis true I enjoy good Health, but am larger than both my sisters compounded. Mr. Adams too keeps pace with me, and if one Horse had to carry us, I should pity the poor Beast, but your Niece is moulded into a shape as Slender as a *Grey hound*, and is not be sure more than half as large as she was when she first left America. The Spring is advancing and I begin to walk so that I hope exercise will be of service to me.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, London, 25 May 1786

What a tasteless insipid life do I lead here in comparison with what I used to in Braintree, looking after my children and family—seeing my Friends in a Social way, loving and being beloved by them. Believe me I am not in the least altered, except that I wear my Hair dressed and powdered, and am two years older, and somewhat fatter which you may be sure is no addition to my looks. But the Heart and the mind are the Same.

Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Cranch, London, 18 July 1786

Could I, you ask, return to my (Rustick) cottage, and view it with the same pleasure and Satisfaction I once enjoy'd in it? I answer I think I could, provided I have the same kind Friends and dear Relatives to enhance its value to me. It is not the superb and magnificent House nor the rich and Costly furniture that can ensure either pleasure or happiness to the possessor. A convenient abode Suitable to the station of the possessor, is no doubt desirable, and to those who can afford them, Parks, Gardens, or what in this Country is called an ornamented Farm, appears to me an Innocent and desirable object. They are Beautiful to the Eye, pleasing to the fancy, and improving to the Imagination, but then as Pope observes,

“ 'Tis use alone that sanctifies Expençe,
And Splendor borrows all her rays from Sense.”*

*Alexander Pope, *Moral Essays*, Epistle IV, lines 179–80.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, London, 23 July 1786

I suppose you must have heard the report respecting Col. Smith—that he has taken my daughter from me, a contrivance between him and the Bishop of St. Asaph. It is true he tendered me a Son as an equivalent and it was no bad offer, but I had three Sons before, and but one Daughter. Now I have been thinking of an exchange with you sir, suppose you give me Miss Jefferson, and in some future day take a Son in lieu of her. I am for Strengthening the federal Union.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, London, 20 January 1787

I . . . give you some account of my late Tour to Bath, that Seat of fashionable Resort, where like the rest of the World I spent a fortnight in Amusement and dissipation, but returned I assure you, with double pleasure to my own fire side, where only thank heaven, my substantial happiness subsists. Here I find these satisfaction which neither Satiates by enjoyment nor pall upon reflection, for tho I like some times to mix in the Gay World, and view the manners as they rise, I have much reason to be grateful to my Parents that my early Education gave me not an habitual taste for what is termed fashionable Life.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, London, 25 February 1787

I shall quit Europe with more pleasure than I came to it, uncontaminated I hope with its Manners and vices. I have learnt to know the World, and its value. I have seen high Life, I have Witnessed the Luxury and pomp of State, the Power of riches and the influence of titles, and have beheld all Ranks bow before them, as the only shrine worthy of worship. Notwithstanding this, I fell that I can return to my little cottage and be happier than here, and if we have not wealth, we have what is better, Integrity.

John Adams to Cotton Tufts, Grosvenor Square, London, 1 July 1787

And now for Retirement among the Rocks and Hills of Old Braintree. The Plough, the Spade, the Ax and the Hoe. stone wall and fresh Meadow Ditches. a Præceptor to my own Boys, and a Writer Perhaps of History, Memoirs and Biography to be printed, twenty Years after my death.—What Say you to this? Shall I feel, the Stings of Ambition, and the frosts of Neglect? Shall I desire to go to Congress, or the General Court, and be a Fish out of Water? I Suppose so, because, other People have been so. but I dont believe So.—I am proud enough to think that I can be a Philosopher, if I never have been. I cannot remain longer in Europe with honour, without a Change in Affairs, of which there is no Appearance of Probability, and my dear Boys have claims upon me, that I will fulfill as well as I can.—if I can do it, no other Way, it shall be by returning again to the Bar, at least so far as may be necessary, to introduce my Sons to Practice. To be the Slave and Drudge, that I have been for thirty Years Strength nor Spirits for it. To be the Football of Faction, I never was, and never will be. I will neither be Rebel nor Despot: Aristocrate nor Democrate: and if the Brains of my Countrymen are So far turned, as to insist upon one or the other: I will be a private Man, and a Brewer of Compost for my Farm.

John Adams to John Jay, Grosvenor Square, London, 22 September 1787

I Shudder when I think of your next Volume of my Dispatches. I Shall appear before Posterity, in a very negligent Dress and disordered Air. in Truth I write too much to write well, and have

never time to correct any Thing.—Your Plan however of recording all the Dispatches of the foreign Ministers is indispensible. Future Negotiations will often make it necessary to look back to the past, besides the Importance of publick History.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 25 May 1788

When he [i.e., John Adams] established himself [as a diplomat in Europe], his pecuniary affairs were under the direction of Mrs. Adams, on of the most estimable characters on earth, and the most attentive and honorable economists.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Braintree, Mass., 2 December 1788

You tell me, my Labours are only beginning.—Seven and twenty years have I laboured in this rugged Vineyard, and am now arrived at an Age when Man sighs for Repose.

John Adams to Thomas Brand Hollis, Braintree, Mass., 3 December 1788

The Elections for the new Government, have been determined very well, hitherto, in general— You may have the Curiosity to ask what share, your Friend is to have? I really am at a loss to guess. The probability at present seems to be that I shall have no Lot in it. I am in the habit of *balancing* every Thing. In one scale is Vanity; in the other Comfort; can you doubt which will preponderate? in publick Life, I have found nothing but the former in private Life I have enjoyed much of the latter.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 7 January 1789

I have received a Letter every week since you left me, and by this Day's post two, one of the 28th and one of the 29th December for which receive my thanks particularly that part in which you say you are not less anxious to see me than when Separated 20 years ago. Years Subdue the ardour of passion but in lieu thereof a Friendship and affection Deep Rooted Subsists which defies the Ravages of Time, and will Survive whilst the vital Flame exists. Our attachment to Character, Reputation and Fame increase I believe with our Years. . . . my Health. It is better than the last winter tho very few days pass in which I can say that I feel really well.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 22 January 1789

You will perceive by the Philada papers that your friends *here* have not been idle in preparing an honourable Seat for you in the federal Senate. You will I believe have every Vote from this State, & pains have been taken to secure the same Unanimity in your favor in several of the adjoining states. I assure you Sir—that friendship for you, has had much less to do in this business, as far as I have embarked in it, than a sincere desire to place a Gentleman in the vice president's chair, upon whose long tried integrity,—just principles in Government—and firm opposition to popular arts and demagogues, such a dependance could be placed, as shall secure us both from a Convention, & from constitutional Alterations, falsely & impudently called by some of our State Governors *Amendments*.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Braintree, Mass., 2 March 1789

I have indeed enjoyed a delightful Rest, tho my Mind has been constantly employed with my private and domestic affairs, which by a negligence of fifteen years were in such disorder, as would require Several years to rectify.—The Period from the 17 June 1788 to this 2d of March 1789 has been the Sweetest Morsel of my Life, and I despair of ever tasting Such another. This delightful Retreat, humble as it is, I shall quit with great regret. There never was and never will be found for me, an office in public Life, that will furnish the Entertainment and Refreshment of the Mountain the Meadow and the Stream.

John Adams to William Tudor, New York, 3 May 1789

It is now a Fortnight that I have presided in the Senate, and I have not as yet found the Service very fatiguing.—The greatest Inconvenience I shall find, will be the difficulty of taking my daily Exercises, and breathing a fresh and Sweet Air, on which my Health, altogether depends.

The consciousness of contributing Somewhat at present, and the hope of assisting yet more, to the formation of a national Government, which may bind Us together on one hand, and Secure our Liberties equally from a single Tyrant, a Junto of Barons, and a Mob of Madmen on the other will Support me for a time in the public service. Still much to the Injury of my Family.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Richmond Hill, N.Y., 9 August 1789

I have been fully employed in entertaining company, in the first place all the Senators who had Ladies & families, then the remaining Senators, and this week we have begun with the House, and tho we have a room in which we dine 24 persons at a Time, I shall not get through them all, together with the publick Ministers for a month to come. The help I find here is so very indifferent to what I had in England, the weather so warm that we can give only one dinner a week. I cannot find a cook in the whole city but what will get drunk, and as to the Negroes, I am most sincerely sick of them.

Abigail Adams to Cotton Tufts, New York, 1 September 1789

Our Situation is a very Beautiful one and I feel in that respect quite happy, but I find myself much more exposed to company than in any situation which I have ever before been in. the morning is a time when strangers who come to N. York expect to find Mr. Adams at home. This brings us Breakfast company besides it is a sweet morning retreat for fresh air & a cool Breeze, I should like to visit my friends during the adjournment but our Finances will not admit of much traveling.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Richmond Hill, N.Y., 24 January 1790

To many of [my dear Friends] I owe Letters, but I really hate to touch a pen. I am ashamed to say how laizy I am grown in that respect.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, New York, 10 October 1790

I do not know of any persons property so unproductive as ours is. I do not believe that it yields us one per cent per Annum. I have the vanity however to think that if Dr. Tufts and my Ladyship had been left to the sole management of our affairs, they would have been upon a more profitable

footing. In the first place I never desired so much land. I would have purchased publick securities with. The interest of which, poorly as it is funded, would have been less troublesome to take charge of than Land and much more productive. But in these Ideas I have always been so un fortunate as to differ from my partner, who thinks he never saved any thing but what he vested in Land.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, New York, 25 October 1790

[Two weeks ago] I retired to my chamber, and was taken with a shaking fit which held me 2 Hours and was succeeded by a fever which lasted till near morning, attended with severe pain in my Head, Back, &c. The next morning I took an Emetick which operated very kindly and proved to me the necessity of it. On Tuesday I felt better and went below stairs, but was again seized with another shaking fit which was succeeded as the former by the most violent fever I ever felt. It quite made me delirious. No rest for 5 Nights & days. It settled into a Regular intermitting Fever. The Doctor after having repeatedly puked me, gave me James's powders, but with very little effect. I began upon the Bark the 10th day which I have taken in large Quantities and it has appeared to have put an end to my fever, but I am very low and weak. I rode out yesterday and found no inconveniency from it. I shall repeat my ride today. I have great cause to be thankfull for so speedy a restoration, but I have a journey before me which appears like a mountain & three Ferries to cross. [The Adams's were moving with the capital from New York City to Philadelphia.]

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 20 April 1792

. . . we proposed setting out on our journey on Monday or Tuesday next. The weather has been so rainy that I have not been able to ride so often as I wished in order to prepare myself for my journey, and how I shall stand it, I know not. This everlasting fever still hangs about me & prevents my entire recovery. A critical period of Life Augments my complaints. I am far from Health, tho much better than when I wrote you last. I see not any company but those who visit me in my chamber.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 26 January 1794

Your Letter is a feast to me—

Abigail Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, Quincy, Mass., 3 February 1794

I go from home but very little, yet I do not find my time hang heavy upon my hands. You know that I have no aversion to join in the cheerful circle, or mix in the world, when opportunity offers. I think tends to rub off those austerities which age is apt to contract, and reminds us, Goldsmith says, "that we once were young."*

*Oliver Goldsmith, *The Life of Richard Nash, of Bath, Esq.* (London, 1762), 166.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 4 February 1794

You Apologize for the length of your Letters and I ought to excuse the shortness and Emptiness of mine. Yours give me more entertainment than all the speeches I hear. There is more good Thoughts, fine strokes and Mother Wit is worth in them than I hear in the Whole Week. An Ounce of Mother Wit is worth a Pound of Clergy and I rejoice that one of my children at least has an

Abundance of not only Mother Wit, but his Mother's Wit. It is one of the most amiable and striking Traits in his Compositions. It appeared in all its Glory and severity in Barneveld.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 26 February 1794

Some were made for Rule others for Submission, and even amongst my own Sex this doctrine holds good. . . . My ambition will extend no further than Reigning in the Heart of my Husband. That is my throne and there I aspire to be absolute.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 3 April 1794

I must leave all your Agriculture to your Judgment and the Advice of your Assistants. . . . You are so valourous and noble a farmer that I feel little anxious about Agriculture.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Philadelphia, 11 April 1794

No Man even if he is sixty Years of Age ought to have more than three Months at a Time from his Family, and our Country is a very hard hearted niggardly Country. It has committed more Robberies upon me, and obliged me to more sacrifices than any other woman in the Country and this I will maintain against any one who will venture to come forward and dispute it with me. As there never can be a compensation for me, I must sit down with this consolation that it might have been worse.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 April 1794

You conduct your Farm with great Spirit, and I wish you good Success.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 May 1794

I have this Week received no Letter from you. I have not for Several months before, failed to receive a delicious Letter worth a dozen of mine, once a Week.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 19 May 1794

It is a fortnight to day Since I had a Letter from you but it Seems to me a month—I cannot blame you for one of yours is worth four of mine.

Abigail Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, Quincy, Mass., 14 August 1794

I am sure I had better be where I am, my dear as my children and grandchildren are to me than be where I am satisfied I could be of no service to either of them—I find myself advancing in years and the early sentiments and habits which I imbibed are daily more strongly impressed upon me—They are so old fashioned that though they make a part of my enjoyment, they are illsuited to modern style and fashion—Like other old people I am very apt to fancy they are the best and I long for nothing more than to have two very likely boys to educate in the same manner in which I brought up my own sons. One great mistake in the education of youth is gratifying every wish of their hearts. Children should know how to suffer want. They are little capable of knowing how to abound—Their enjoyments are much lessened by it.

Charles Adams to Abigail Adams, New York, 22 September 1794

One half of your children are called away from you and though seas do not divide you from the others yet necessity obliges them to be absent but wherever they are I trust they never can forget the maternal tenderness you have ever exercised toward them. You have indeed been a mother to us and such a one as we never can too highly value.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 30 November 1794

My spirits tho sometimes low, from particular causes, are generally on a uniform key.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 6 December 1794

The knitting work & Needle are a great relief in these long winter Evenings which you, poor Gentlemen cannot use.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 12 January 1795

Mrs. [Elizabeth] Powell sends many Compliments to you and regrets that she cannot enjoy your society here, which is so genial to her own Disposition & Taste. Admires your well informed Mind, and thinks you an honour to your Sex &c &c &c.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 21 January 1796

My Ambition leads me not to be first in Rome, and the Event you request me to contemplate is of so serious a Nature that it requires much reflection and deliberation to determine upon it. There is not a beam of Light, nor a shadow of comfort or pleasure in the contemplation of the object. If personal considerations alone were to weigh, I should immediately say retire with the principle. I can only say that circumstances must Govern you. In a matter of such Momentous concern I dare not influence you. I must pray that you may have superior Direction. As to holding the office of v. p. there I will give my opinion. Resign, retire. I won't be second under no Man but Washington.

Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Shaw Peabody, Quincy, Mass., 12 February 1796

Young people Love society, and it is naturel they should. *We old Folks* who have Families find our enjoyment in them, and look not abroad for our principle happiness. I Love the company of Young people, and the society (but do not you betray me) of the Gentlemen more than the Ladies. I have mixt more with them, and I find their conversation more to my taste. I smiled at an observation of Louissa the other day, who tho a very little Talker, is an observing hearer. We had been together on a visit to Boston for a fort night, and being one Day in a large circle, Several of whom were young Ladies. I remarked to her, that she was too reserved and unsocial.

"I Do not know how to talk. I have not heard any thing worth remembring: nothing but insipid trifling She replied." I have felt something like this kind formerly but I am now so loquacious, that I can be grave with the Grave and gay with the Gay.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 20 February 1796

Whether I have patience, prudence, discretion sufficient to fill a Station so unexceptionably as the Worthy Lady who now holds it, I fear I have not. As Second I have had the happiness of

Founders on the Founders

steering clear of censure as far as I know. If the contemplation did not make me feel very serious, I should say that I have been so used to a freedom of sentiment that I know not how to plane so many guards about me, as will be indispensable, to look at every word before I utter it, and to impose a silence upon my self, when I long to talk. Here in this retired Village, I live beloved by my Neighbors, and as I assume no State, and practice no pagentry, unevied I sit calm and easy, missing very little with the World.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 1 March 1796

I have no concern on your Account but for your health. A Woman can be silent, when she will.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 March 1796

I detest still life, and had rather be jostled than inanimate.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 April 1796

What a Jumble are my Letters. Politics, Domestic occurrences, Farming anecdotes. Pray light Your Segars [i.e., cigars] with them. Leave them not to the inspection of futurity, for they will never have any other value than that of giving information for the present moment upon those subjects which interest you and Your affectionate A. Adams

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 21 April 1796

You call your Letters a Jumble but they are my Delight and mine are not half as good as Yours.

Abigail Adams to Ruth Hooper Dalton, c. 24 September 1796

For myself—the declining State of my Health leads me much more to contemplate a residence in the World of Spirits, than becoming Successor to one of the most amiable inoffensive and best of women, and to you my Dear Madam I may say, that the event would excite in My mind an anxiety greater than I ever before experienced, and so far from being an object of my Ambition, that the consciousness of my inability to discharge acceptably the Duties of So important a station, would fill my mind with the most lively apprehensions of my own unworthyness. From very early Life, I have been Innured to the Sacrifice of Personal happiness in the frequent Separations I have experienced from my best Friend, not merely in times of tranquility but in those of great Danger & Hazard. I have ever considered the calls of My Country as the first & foremost claim, myself & family but as Secondary objects. & tho retirement altogether from publick Life as Years increase, and infirmities assail me, would be by far most Eligible to me, I shall Endeavour cheerfully to acquiesce to the allotment of Providence.

Abigail Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Quincy, Mass., 31 December 1796

At my Time of Life, the desire and wish to shine in publick Life is wholly extinguishd.

Retirement to (Peace Field, the Name which Mr. Adams has given to his Farm) is much more eligible to me, particularly as my Health has Severely Sufferd by my residence at Philadelphia. But personally I shall consider myself as the Small Dust of the balance, when compared to the interests of a Nation. To preserve Peace, to support order, and continue to the Country that system

of Government under which it has become prosperous and happy, the sacrifice of an individual Life, important only to its near connexions, ought not to be taken into consideration.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 January 1797

Pray burn this Letter. Dead Men tell no tales. It is really too bad to Survive the Flames. I shall not dare to write so freely to you again unless you assure that you have complied with my request.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 19 February 1797

I am My Dearest Friend allways willing to be a fellow Labourer with You in all those Relations and departments to which my abilities are competent, and I hope to acquire every requisite degree of Taciturnity which my station call for, tho [George] Cabot says truly that it will be putting a force upon nature. I expect many trials when it may be hard work, but as Porcupine Says, I Shall think.—

Martha Washington to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 20 February 1797

It is very flattering for me, my dear Madam, to be asked for rules by which I have acquired the good opinion, which you say is entertained of me.—Within yourself, you possess a guide more certain than any I can give, to direct you:—I mean the good sence and judgment for which you are distinguished;—but more from a willingness to comply with your request, than from any conviction—of the necessity, I will concisely add—

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 12 March 1797

My mind has ever been interested in publick affairs. I now find, that my Heart and Soul are, for all that I hold Dearest on Earth is embarked on the Wide ocean, and in a hazardous Voyage, may the experience wisdom and prudence of the helmsman conduct the vessel in Safety.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 March 1797

I never wanted your Advice and assistance more in my Life.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 6 April 1797

The Times are critical and dangerous, and I must have you here to assist me.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 April 1797

I want Physick and I want Exercise: but I want your Assistance more than either. You must come and leave the Place [i.e., their property in Quincy] to the mercy of Winds.

Thomas Boylston Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 7 April 1797

[John Adams has become president.] For you I am particularly apprehensive, lest the fatigues & toils of your particular department should prove too weighty for I am well aware, that though the laborious part of it may be transferred to subordinate agents, the care & thought about it, will be all your own. The die is cast, however, as you observe, and though the sorrows of our Countrymen should have been powerfully excited at the retirement of our *first parents*, I would fain flatter

Founders on the Founders

myself that their successors will have the good fortune to replace them in their affections. “It is a consummation devoutly to be wished,”* nor will I easily suffer myself to doubt its realization.

*Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act III, scene I, lines 63–64.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 11 April 1797

You had not received any of my Letters which urge your immediate departure for Philadelphia. I must now repeat this with Zeal and Earnestness. I can do nothing without you. We must resign every Thing but our public Duties, and they will be more than We can discharge, with Satisfaction to ourselves or others I fear. . . . I must entreat you, to lose not a moment’s time in preparing to come on that you may take off from me every Care of Life but that of my public Duty, assist me with your Councils, and console me with your Conversation. Every Thing relating to the Farms must be left to our friends.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 16 May 1797

[As first lady] Mrs Tufts once stiled my situation, splendid misery. She was not far from Truth.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 24 May 1797

I keep up my old Habit of rising at an early hour. If I did not I should have little command of my Time. At 5 I rise. From that time till 8 I have a few leisure hours. At 8 I breakfast, after which until Eleven I attend to my Family arrangements. At that hour I dress for the day. From 12 until two I receive company, sometimes until 3. We dine at that hour unless on company days which are Tuesdays & Thursdays. After dinner I usually ride out until seven. I begin to feel a little more at Home, and less anxiety about the ceremonious part of my duty, though by not having a drawing Room for the summer I am obliged every day, to devote two Hours for the purpose of seeing company.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

The pleasures of these evenings [in conversation with John Adams] was much enhanced by the society of Mrs. Adams, who in point of talent, knowledge, virtue, and female accomplishments was in every respect fitted to be the friend and companion of her husband in all his different and successive stations, of private citizen, member of Congress, foreign minister, Vice President and President of the United States.

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 8 November 1797

I passed then into a room opposite and I found there the true counterpart of Mr. Adams. It was his wife. Small, short and squat, she is accused of a horrible crime. It is said she puts on rouge. What is certain is that if her manner is not the most affable, her mind is well balanced and cultivated.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 12 December 1797

I hate Negatives when I have set my Heart upon any thing.

Mary Cranch to Abigail Adams, Quincy, Mass., 17 December 1797

I believe you deriv'd more pleasure from the respect Shown than he did—he says you love parade better then himself—but I who know you both am well Satisfied that Darby & Joan are never So happy as when at home attending to their rural occupations & Surrounded by their chosen Friends & neighbours.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 1 February 1798

I bear my Drawing Rooms, Sometimes crowded, better than I expected, tho I always feel the Effects of the lights the next day—*

*Abigail Adams drawing room may have been lit by Argand lamps, which were very bright, often harsh on people used to candlelight.

Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Shaw Peabody, Philadelphia, 13 February 1798

My dear sister, I am sick, sick sick of publick Life, however enviable it may appear to others and if the End of our Creation was not best answered by the most good we can do, I Should wish to hide myself in the shades of Peacefield, Secured from the Noise of the World, its power and ambition. Publick service becomes urksome to all men of talents and to men in Years, who are worn out by continual opposition and by constant exertions to support order Harmony and peace against ambition disorder and anarchy. I hope we may be held together, but I know not how long, for oil & water are not more contrary in their natures, than North and south. Yet I see so many evils arising from a devisision that I deprecate it during my day—

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 17 March 1798

I find it much more difficult to write with cautious restraint, than with the freedom I have been accustomed to.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 27 March 1798

I received yesterday your kind Letter of March 19th. I expect a Letter every week if you have nothing else to say, but as Sterns observes, “how the Shadows Lengthen, as the sun declines” and this may be applied to the well as the natural System. as we descend the Hill of Life, our gay and visionary prospect vanish, and what gilded our meridian days, our Zenith of Life, as the Shadows lengthen, we see through a different medium and may justly estimate many of our persuits, as vanity and vexation of spirit.

“But theres a Brighter world on high” which opens to us prospects more permanent, and pleasures more durable. to that let us aspire in the sure and certain hope, that by a patient Continuence in the path of Religion and Virtue, we shall assuredly reap, if we faint not, the happy fruits of a glorious immortality.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 25 June 1798

I write you a few lines today, but the weather is so Hot and close, and the flies so tormenting that I cannot have any comfort. The mornings instead of being pleasant as with you, are stagnant. Not a leaf stirs till nine or ten o'clock. I get up & drop into my chair; without spirits or vigor,

breath a sigh for Quincy, and regret that necessity obliges us to remain here. It grows sickly, the city noisome. My Family are thanks to God, recovered from their illnesses, and no New one taken down. We have began the use of the cold Bath, and hope it will in some measure compensate for want of a bracing Air. The largeness and height of our Rooms are a great comfort and the Nights are yet tolerable, and I have freed myself for the season of any more drawing Rooms. Dinners I cannot.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 29 November 1798

This is our Thanksgiving day. When I look Back upon the Year past, I perceive many, very many causes for thanksgiving, both of a publick and private nature, I hope my Heart is not ungrateful, tho sad; it is usually a day of festivity when the Social Family circle meet together tho separated the rest of the year. No Husband dignifies my Board, no Children add gladness to it, no Smiling Grandchildren Eyes to sparkle for the plumb pudding, or feast upon the mind Eye. Solitary and alone I behold the day after a sleepless night, without a joyous feeling. Am I ungrateful? I hope not.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 1 January 1799

You have an Admirable Faculty of employing your Mind. And in the Affairs of the farm materials for it.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 26 November 1799

Gloom is no part of my Religion.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 15 March 1800

I find the best time for writing, is to rise about an hour earlier than the rest of the family; go into the President's Room, and apply myself to my pen. Now the weather grows warmer I can do it. His Room in which I now write has three large windows to the South. The sun visits it with his earliest beams at the East window, and Cheers it the whole day in winter. All my keeping Rooms are North, but my forenoons are generally spent in my own Chamber tho a dark one, and I often think of my sunshine Cottage at Quincy.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 26 May 1800

A strong imagination is said to be a refuge from sorrow, and a kindly solace for a feeling Heart. Upon this principle it was that Pope founded his observation that "hope springs eternal in the human breast."

Fisher Ames to Rufus King, Dedham, Mass., 24 September 1800

[Referring to John Adams's praise for Jefferson.] The good Lady his wife has been often talkative in a similar strain, and she is as complete a politician as any Lady in the old French Court.

Abigail Adams to Hannah Cushing, Quincy, Mass., 1801

I have had much cause for thankfulness that my Health has been for two years past so good that I have sufferd but little from its interruption untill this winter when I was seizd with the prevailing influenza which threatned to terminate in a lung fever, which however took an other turn by a plentiful eruption upon the skin. it confined me more than two months, when it has dissapeard and left me in as good health as I enjoyd before.

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 21 July 1801

I perceive by your letter, that you forgot to give my respects to Mrs. Adams. I now request you to inform her, that though She never liked me one quarter so well as you did, & I was always a little afraid of her penetrating eye, there is no Lady of my acquaintance for whom I entertain an equal respect.

Abigail Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., August 1801

I ought to have acknowledgd your kind favour of July 23 at an earlier period; but the heat of Summer usually unfits me for every occupation; and I never expect to conquer that disposition to an intermitting fever which always assails me whenever I am debilitated by Heat, or any other indisposition; I have had a very severe attack of the disorder incident to the Fall, and tho it did not amount to a dysentary, it reduced me very much—I am recovering from it, tho slowly. I thank you Sir for the communication which you inclosed to me. I have given it to my much beloved Friend doctor Tufts, who has himself used Alchemy with beneficial effects in Similar cases—

Benjamin Rush: Sketches, post-1801

The pleasures of these evenings [in conversation with John Adams] was much enhanced by the society of Mrs. Adams, who in point of talent, knowledge, virtue, and female accomplishments was in every respect fitted to be the friend and companion of her husband in all his different and successive stations, of private citizen, member of Congress, foreign minister, Vice President and President of the United States.

Abigail Adams to Tomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 February 1802

My own reflection upon what has been, and now is, are frequently tinged with a melancholy hue, not on my own account, so much, as for those who are to succeed me. With frugality we have enough for all our wants, because we can circumscribe them within narrow bounds. I once wrote you that I had a small matter saved from expences which I curtaild, and which I have been many years collecting, expecting a time when I might have occasion for it, as I could. I have placed it in the Hands of our good Friend Dr. Tufts who has managed it for me in such a manner as to yeald me an interest of 200 dollers per annum. This I call my pin money, As I have not had occasion for any of it, I have yearly added the interest to the principle. I have now happily by me half yearly interest which I calld for a few days since, and as I have not an immediate use for it, and can receive more in April, I inclose it to you, requesting you to accept it as a small token of the Love and affection I bear you, wishing at the same time, that it was ten times the value. I have but one injunction to make you. It is that you make no mention of it; further than to say you received my Letter safe of the 28th of Feb'ry.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 23 January 1804

I am sorry to say that I write you from my Sick Chamber, where I have been confined for near a week with the Severest attack of the Rhumatism which I have experienced for many years in my Limbs. I hope it will not be very durable, but submission is my lesson, and patience my Study.

Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Quincy, Mass., 9 March 1807

To your kind and friendly Letter I fully designd an immediate replie, but a Severe attack of a rheumatick complaint in my Head has confined me to my Chamber for Several weeks and renderd me unable to hold a pen. tho recovering from it, my head Still feels crakd: Shatterd I am Sure it is—you will therefore pardon any inaccuracy I may commit. my Health which you so kindly inquire after, has been better for two years past, than for many of those which preceeded them. I am frequently reminded that here I have no abiding place. I bend to the blast. it passes over for the present and I rise again.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 12 April 1809

When I went home to my family in May 1770, from the town meeting in Boston, which was the first I had ever attended, and where I had been chosen in my absence, without any solicitation, one of their representatives, I said to my wife, “I have accepted a seat in the House of Representatives, and thereby have consented to my own ruin, to your ruin, and the ruin of our children. I give you this warning that you may prepare your mind for your fate.” She burst into tears, but instantly cried out in a transport of magnanimity, “Well, I am willing in this cause to run all risks with you and to be ruined with you if you are ruined.” These were times, my friend, in Boston which tried women’s souls as well as men’s.

Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 9 January 1810

You will permit me, Madam, to add, that your education in principles of the Christian belief—your constant habits of conformity thereto—have ever led you to forgive, even *your enemies*.

Abigail Adams: Rules for Disposing of the Day, 1810–1812

Rules for disposing of the Day

Rise by Six. if any time before Breakfast to walk out a little way into the garden after Breakfast. to read a chapture in the Bible. then to sit down to Sew or knit for three hours. at 12 to quit work, and read write or amuse themselves as they please. at three oclock to apply again to the needle untill Six when the remainder of the time may be applied as they please. this for a Slated course there may occasionally occur domestic avocations which may Supply the place of the needle. and sometimes a Ride or walk may be indulged as a reward for steady application, but this course ought to be adopted as a General Rule—

Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Shaw Peabody, Quincy, Mass., 26 February 1811

You well know what our early Education was. neither Grammer or orthography were taught us—it was not then the fashion for females to know more than writing and a little arithmetic. no Books upon female Education were then in vogue no Accademies for Female instruction were then

establishd. To our dear and venerable Brother Cranch do I attribute my early taste for Letters; and for the nurture & cultivation of those qualities which have Since afforded me much pleasure and Satisfaction. he it was who put proper Books into my hands—Who taught one to Love the Poets and to distinguish their Merrits—Milton Pope Tompson and Shakespear were amongst the first, but to the works of Richardson was due whatever I possess of delicacy of Sentiment or refinement of Taste in my early and juvenile days—

Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, Poplar Forest, Va., 5 December 1811

. . . knowing the weight which her opinions had with him [i.e., John Adams].

Abigail Adams to Julia Rush, Quincy, Mass., 21 December 1813

. . . your Letter found me this morning rising from the Bed of Sickness, to which I have been for three weeks confined by a dangerous Lung fever. I am much reduced, and weakened by the voilent cough which has accompanied it. my Symptoms, are now favorable my Physician assures me: but it is easier to pull down an old Building, than to repair, or rebuild it and I must Sensibly feel my weakness.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 March 1815

Your Father and I enjoy as much Health as old Age will permit us to. Queen Charlot is just 5 Months older than I am. I would not for her Crown be obliged to exhibit my person at court, old and decayed as I am, and sure my glass does not flatter me.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 24 December 1815

my health is crumbling under frequent attacks of Sickness, and age.

Abigail Adams to Harriet Welsh, Quincy, Mass., 8 March 1816

I must write you a few lines to day from a Night of Rest, I derive Strength, all lost again by a night of wakefulness—If I do not get to Sleep as soon as I go to Bed, and that is early; it is all lost for the night yet I suffer no pain, except some times in my head. no fever, no cough, yet I loose my flesh. my complaint seems to be an universal relaxation of the Solids. If I had lived in the days of Salem Witch craft—Some poor creature might have been hanged for keeping me awake, and tormenting me with Strange figures when I close my Eyes—

Abigail Adams to Harriet Welsh, Quincy, Mass., 15 March 1816

as I know you are anxious for me, I will say, I think I am better; I have rested better for 4 Nights, and tho I am weak, and trembling and can bear but little, I feel more Strength in my Limbs, and my appetite is better—how the warm weather may affect me must be left to time to Show—I fear if I live, I shall never be good for much again, but I will with a gratefull heart acknowledge the goodness of God who yet sees fit to continue me in Being, and encompasseth me with so many mercies.

Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 20 March 1816

I attempted to write to you, by Captain Bronson in Jan'yry but my strength failed me, and I have been ever since, in so low, and debilitated a state of Health, as to despair of ever recovering strength again, but for the last ten days, I have gained some, and my physician, encourages me, that I shall be benefitted by the returning Spring.

I have not had any disease, such as fever, cough, or pain, except in my Head occasionally. it seems to, me to be an universal debility, and dissolution of my constitution.

with the Blessing of heaven, and the kind assiduous attention of my Friends, who hope to build me up, again upon Bark and wine, I have gained for the last ten days, and

“kind Natures sweet restorer, Balmy Sleep”

has again visited me.

I had been deprived of this blessing, for near two months, save what was obtained by the use of anodynes, and my Nerves have been dreadfully agitated. I am much fallen away, and am but the Specter of what I once was; but enough of this poor Frame, scarcely worth retaining—

Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 27 March 1816

In the days of my youth, Female Education was very little attended to, in this Country beyond reading, and writing, and Arithmatic. a few rare instances where musick was taught—to read I was instructed, by my Grandfather for writing, I never had a Master, as you may well judge, by my hand writing at this day, but neither Gramer, orthography, or our Native Language, was considered a part of Female Education, and I have through Life lamented the deficiency in this respect.—If as you say, I write with ease; it is all from Habit. as to Stile, I make not any pretentions to it, and must trust to the candour of my correspondents to receive the Matter, as flowing from the heart, without regarding the Elegance of diction—I might almost Say with Gays Hermit—

“The little learning I have gained”

“Is all from simple Nature drain'd”

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 4 August 1816

If I had the fertile Genius, the exuberant Imagination the fluent rolling Stream of Eloquence, the bright Eyes and Steady hand of your Mother; my Inclination is good to write you as long and as many Letters as She does. But these Blessings are denied.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 12 March 1817

we have had a Russian winter. Your Father and I have Survived it, my own health has been better than for years past & His not worse—tho we are obliged to take great care of ourselves, go out only in fine weather, keep regular Hours—eat little food, and Sleep when we can—when ever you return, you will find the old Mansion like its owners, gone to decay, but not the less ready or willing to welcome you and yours, and to accommodate you, untill like a Bird of passage you again take your flight with unabated Love and affection.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 May 1817

you cannot fail to be shocked after Eight years absence at the change you will find in those most dear to you. when I look in my Glass—I See that I am not what I was—I scarcely know a feature of my own face—but I beleive that this mortal Body—Shall one day put on immortality—and be renovated in the world of Spirits—having enjoyed a large portion of the good things of this Life, and few of its miseries, I ought to rise satisfied from the Feast, and gratefull to the Giver. I look forward with hope, that I may be permitted the priviledge of beholding my dear Children and welcoming them to their Native Country—a happy a flourishing and peacefull Country—at the present day—

Abigail Adams to Harriet Welsh, Quincy, Mass., 31 December 1817

I think mrs Munroe ought to be allowed without censure to take her own time [for levees]; Mrs Washington held her drawing Rooms every week—I only once a fortnight, yet no one found fault with me for the alteration, but to be every day in the week Subject to continual visits, was not my wish—I received visits from 12 untill 2 oclock all days but Sunday—and then I always denied myself—I returnd the first visit made me; but no more, never took Tea, but with the Ladies of Home & Foreign Ministers—never dined abroad except one or twice with mrs Otis—So now you have a record of presidential ceremony—

Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 24 January 1818

I received your journal No 4. containing the drawing Room History, which amused us much. What would have been Said in my day, if So much Style, pomp and Etiquette had been assumed? the Cry of Monarchy, Monarchy, would have resounded from Georgia to Maine.—but according to the old proverb—some persons may Rob; better than others look over the hedge.—I am not condemning this new order of things—but think it perfectly Right, and the only method to bring order out of the confusion, into which the Sans Culotte System, adopted by mr Jefferson, and the Liberty & equality, pursued by mrs Madison, had Subjected the drawing Room. To quote mr Burk, “the Swineish Multitude had free egress, and Regress—untill it became Such a medley as to excite Ridicule”—but this is between ourselves. at Philadelphia, the drawing Room was held under certain Regulations—and no improper company was ever introduced there a writer in Niles Register has undertaken to describe them, and I come in for a Share. he asserts, that parties running high, persons of different political opinions were received coldly, “and that persons about the president and mrs Adams, manifested it in Such a manner, that they withdrew.” Now this is the first time I ever heard of it. all persons who attended Drawing Rooms at all, came without distinction, and were received with civility. If they withdrew, or never came, that was their fault not mine. How mr J. P. might look, I know not. he was a vinegar Bottle from the beginning. I have witnessd much greater, disorder, and want of respect, and politeness, upon a Birth day at St James; than, I ever saw at any of the drawing Rooms; where I have been either a visitor or a principle.

Abigail Adams to Harriet Welsh, Quincy, Mass., 24 January 1818

The President has a letter from Vanderkemp, in which he proposes to have him send a collection of my letters to publish! A pretty figure I should make. No. No. I have not any ambition to appear in print. Heedless and inaccurate as I am, I have too much vanity to risk my reputation before the public.

Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 1 February 1818

Much of a well ordered home, depends upon our domesticks; and it is so difficult to get, in this Land of ease, and freedom, such as will serve with honesty and integrity—That the task of entertaining company, is a toil, a vexation, and a trouble—Servitude is disdained, by all who can acquire a Living in any other mode of Life—I was happy in having attached to me, for a Number of years [John] Brisler and his wife—whose fidelity and capacity were equal to their place, and who were responsible for those more Subordinate—

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 20 October 1818

Now Sir, for my Griefs! The dear Partner of my Life for fifty four Years as a Wife and for many Years more as a Lover, now lyes in extremis, forbidden to speak or be spoken to.

Obituary, 1818

Died at Quincy, the 28th October, 1818, Mrs. ABIGAIL ADAMS, consort of the Hon. JOHN ADAMS, late President of the United States.

This lady was not more elevated by rank, than eminent by her virtues. Of her sex, she was an ornament, not less pure, than it was brilliant. At once the charm and the pride of the domestic circle. Exemplary in the fulfilment of every social and religious obligation; and in the native ease and characteristic dignity, with which they were discharged. Presiding, in her family, as though its cares had been the single object of her thoughts; yet her mind, enlarged by reading, and established by meditation, had the aspect of one, exclusively devoted to mental improvement and intellectual contemplation. It was impossible to know her intimately, without admiring that rare assemblage of qualities, which constituted her character; in which masculine understanding was united with a delicacy, unobtrusive and feminine; what was true, and useful, and necessary to be known, for the right conduct of common life, was mingled and dignified, by being combined, in her mind and practice, with acquirements, at once, extensive, elegant, and extraordinary. She was endowed by nature, with a countenance singularly noble and lovely. In it dignity was blended with sweetness, the beams of intelligence with those of kindness; inspiring at once, respect, confidence and affection. She illustrated and adorned every sphere she was called to fill. Although polished by intercourse with the world, her mind had lost nothing of its original purity and innate worth.

This is not the language of panegyric. If to those, who knew her not, it shall have this aspect, those who knew her best, will feel how short this description falls of all the refined and all the substantial qualities which formed the stamina of her character.

Her father, the Rev. WILLIAM SMITH, a clergyman, respected for his piety and worth, married ELIZABETH, the daughter of the Hon. JOHN QUINCY, and was settled at Weymouth, in this vicinity. These respectable parents were blessed with three daughters, *Mary*, the wife of the late Hon. *Richard Cranch*, of Quincy.—Elizabeth, the wife of the late Rev. *John Shaw*, of Haverhill, and afterwards, of the Rev. *Stephen Peabody*, of Atkinson, who were each qualified, by uncommon talents and virtues, to fill with equal worth, the different, though important stations, to which they were afterwards called. Of these, Mrs. ADAMS was the second. Under the paternal roof, with her beloved sisters, were passed her early years, in the pursuit of those intellectual and domestic accomplishments, on which gentlemen of her father's profession are accustomed to found the future hopes of their children. Religion formed the basis of her early education. Under its sanction, and by its light, she was taught to discern the right in morals, and the useful in learning; and to take delight in the

practice of what was prudent, and in the discovery of what was true; and to seek happiness and honor, in filling, with propriety and exactness, all the duties which peculiarly appertain to her sex.

Connected in early life, by affection and intellectual sympathy, with one of the most eminent men of our age and country, and one among those, chiefly, instrumental, in achieving national Independence, she largely partook of the spirit of the times, and cheerfully braved the dangers, submitted to the privations, and cooperated in the energies demanded by the occasion. The leading patriots of that period well knew her intellectual worth. With many of the most distinguished, she long continued in the habits of correspondence. Her letters yet remain, and are monuments of refined taste and pure sentiment.

After peace and independence had been acquired by her country, Mrs. ADAMS was called to adorn higher stations. The first lady to represent and sustain, in foreign courts, the character of the American female; the second, who was obliged, by her husband's rank, to take preeminence among the females of the United States.

It was the joy and pride of her sex and country, that this lot so early fell on one,

——“Fitted, or to shine in courts
With unaffected grace, or walk the plain
With piety and meditation joined.”

Possessing, at every period of life, the unlimited confidence, as well as affection of her husband, she was admitted, at all times, to share largely of his thoughts. While, on the one hand, the activity of her mind, and its thorough knowledge of all branches of domestic economy, enabled her, almost wholly to relieve him from the cares incident to the concerns of private life; on the other, she was a friend, whom it was his delight to consult, in every perplexity of public affairs; and whose councils never failed to partake of that happy harmony, which prevailed in her character; in which intuitive judgment was blended with consummate prudence; the spirit of conciliation, with the spirit of her station, and the refinement of her sex. In the storm, as well as on the smooth sea of life, her virtues were ever the object of his trust and veneration.

Destined, however, to elevate and adorn, in a peculiar degree, the domestic sphere, she quitted it with reluctance, and returned to it with joy, as to the scene, most congenial to her soul and best suited to give employment to her virtues. In comparison with which, in her estimation, the honors of public life had little attraction, and the gaiety of courts no charm.

Above all, her habitual charity encircled her character with that lovely and immortal wreath which will live and flourish when every other honor and distinction shall have utterly perished. In sickness and sorrow her friends and neighbors ever found, in her advice and sympathy, support and consolation; and the poor a never failing resource in her benevolence, which waited not to be solicited, or sought; but whose

“Active search
Left no cold, wintry, corner unexplored;
Like silent working Heaven, surprizing oft
The lonely heart, with unexpected good.”

It pleased Heaven to protract her life, in all its usefulness, to its seventy-fourth year, and to permit her maternal cares and experience to be extended to her descendants of the third and fourth degree.

Clear and shedding blessings to the last, her sun sunk below the horizon, beaming with the same mild strength and pure radiance, which distinguished its meridian.

The death of such a person is a calamity to all who enjoyed her friendship or shared the benefit of her example. To her immediate family it is as great as it is irreparable. To herself, honored and blessed, not above her deserts, but far above the common lot, it is but the exchange of a temporal for an eternal state; and of the hopes and joys of this world for another of the sublimest rewards and of perfect felicity.

“Farewell!—thy cherished image ever dear,
 Shall many a heart, with pious love revere.
 Long, long shall those, her honored memory bless,
 Who gave the choicest blessings they possess.”

Peter Whitney, Funeral Sermon for Abigail Adams, 1 November 1818

Mrs Adams possessed a mind elevated in its views and capable of attainments above the common order of intellects. Her discernment was quick, her judgement solid and all her faculties so happily adjusted as to form at once the intelligent discrete and captivating mind. In the dispositions of Providence her lot was castt in a period of time and on a theatre of duties and events favorable to the development and exercise of her powers.

Her Opportunities for improvement were not lost. An habitual intercourse with one of the most enlightened Characters at home, and in her travels abroad an Acquaintance with some of high rank and attainments in other Countries and a subsequent correspondence with them, united to a taste for reading and reflection had enriched her intellectual treasures and stored her mind with a fund of rare and useful knowledge. Her acquaintance with men and with events with the civil and political interests of her own country; from the sphere in which she was called to act was deep and extensive. Conversant with the circumstances that led to the dismemberment of this from the parent Country and partaking in the feelings of the leading Characters in the mighty struggle, she had early formed an attachment to the liberties of her Country which was strengthened by her connection and Sympathy and cooperation with the bereaved companion of her life in the exulted stations he has filled.

But though her Attainments were great and she had moved in the highest walks of society and was fitted for the lofty departments in which she acted, her elevation had never filled her soul with pride or led her for a moment to forget the feelings and the claims of others. She was always the same meek and humble and obliging Christian; nor will one voice be heard, uncommon as it is, but in commendation of her worth.

Her conversation was adapted to improve and endear those who were favored with the privilege of her acquaintance. She was easy of access communicative in her intercourse, and all who were admitted to her presence were both entertained and made happy.

In her domestic Character—in the oversight and management of her family concerns, in her discretion and prudence, and in all the qualities that could contribute to the comfort and well being of her house hold She stood almost without a rival.

Among the members of this Society who had long known her excellencies She was beloved and respected without a solitary exception.

The tidings of her illness were heard with grief in every house and her death is felt as a common loss.

To the afflicted she had consolations to impart and to the destitute her charities were timely and unremitted. Multitudes in sickness and in want have been the subjects of her liberal distribution, and have occasion to rank her among the first of earthly benefactors. Often has she wiped the tears

from the cheek of sorrow and carried relief and comfort to the mansions of cold and hunger and nakedness.

Her deeds of kindness her sympathy in the sufferings of those who in the allotments of Providence were struggling with poverty are inscribed on the imperishable records of eternity, and will we doubt not be a source of happiness to her when the treasures of the unfeeling and the merciless are no more. In her religious faith and character she was among the disciples whom Jesus loved. Early initiated into the belief of the Christian doctrine its heavenly influences had dispensed a lustre over all the faculties of her Soul and formed her to the mild and humble to the amiable and engaging temper which all beheld and admired.

Her faith in the Gospel was built on rational and Solid grounds. The conversation and the writings of Infidels which she had heard and read, were unable to shake the firmness of her hold on this system of light and comfort of purity and hope which the Christian revelation presents. In the religion of Jesus she saw the Character of God in all its holiness and perfection, in all its adorable and endearing excellencies. She viewed it as a system of benevolence and love, as designed to enlighten and purify the Soul of Man, to exalt his views and pursuits, and to train him up for a nobler existence, for an endless career of improvement and happiness.

Having deeply imbibed the benevolent spirit of her Master she had nothing of the bigotry and exclusiveness of sects and parties, but could see the followers of Christ, the destined subjects of eternal Salvation, no less in *this* than in that denomination of Christians. In her estimation the creeds of erring Mortals were less than nothings and doctrines of no further importance than as they contributed to the growth of virtuous dispositions and the moral improvement of the Character. *Her* religion was the religion of the heart and the affections. It was that religion which we cannot but think will abide the trial of the last day and continue with the soul when the “hay and the stubble” the follies and distinctions of flaming partizans shall be consumed.

But we are drawing to a scene where the christians faith and hope are felt in all their unutterable importance in all their sublime and consoling effects. The approaches of the last Evening were rapid but not overwhelming to her mind. A constitution which for thirty years has suffered the most violent attacks of disease without any long intermissions was unable with the strength of youth to sustain the final shock.

Mrs Adams sank under the debilitating weight of her Malady; and that mind which had been so clear and vigorous was occasionally bewildered.

Life for several days seemed to be suspended on a thread which the motion of a leaf might rend Asunder. But while reason was spared religion enlivened and supported her Soul. She expressed her perfect submission to Gods will and her readiness at his call to resign herself to his merciful disposal.

Death came to her as the messenger of peace, to add another to the countless multitudes of pure and blessed and immortal spirits.

Such are the outlines of a character whose worth is confessed by all who knew her—and whose memory will be cherished in the heart of the speaker till that heart shall cease to beat.

In turning our thoughts from the dead to the living we would not add a pang to bosoms that are already bleeding under a loss which nothing earthly can supply. But we may be permitted and it is our duty as Christians to tender our Sympathies to the bereaved, to express to them the deep interest we take in their sorrows and our fervent prayers to God for their support.

Afflictive as is the event they deplore it is however attended with this best of consolations.

That the deceased object of their affections is numbered among the children of the highest that she has entered into the ranks of ministering spirits around the throne of God.

They do not wish that his most wise and good purposes were reversed. They do not wish that she were still an inhabitant of earth detained in a frail and dying body from those celestial joys which alone can fill and satisfy the mind. In language which the Savior uttered, and which should be on the lips of every Christian, they are ready to say "Father not our will but thine be done." A little while and the curtain which now hides from human view, the scenes and the beings that are invisible, will drop, and She whose death they mourn may be commissioned perhaps to welcome their arrival to the Mansions of the blessed.

My friends we have been contemplating The character of One who shone with no common splendor who diffused through an extended circle her various and benign influences and who we are happy to believe is gone to a world of everlasting rest and joy.

Have we turned one serious thought to the character we individually possess? has the enquiry been excited whether we are living to useful purposes whether we are fulfilling the end of our being and fitting ourselves for the hope of the righteous in Death? And for his reward in heaven.

Every individual be his rank or condition in life whatever it may has an object of equal and everlasting moment to secure. The exalted and the humble are alike the subjects of Gods Moral government, and accountable to him for their talents and improvements. No elevation of rank or powers—no humbleness of station or abilities will exempt us from the final scrutiny and decision of the Judge. "For we must all appear before the Judgement seat of Christ that every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done whether it be good or bad"

This my bretheren this is the doctrine which above all others should be imprinted on our minds in living Characters. Our responsibility is *solem* and certain as Death. We are now acting parts that have an inseperable relation to our happiness or misery in futurity. In every object we seek to accomplish, in every thing we do which has an influence upon our Moral Character, let us raise our thoughts to that tribunal where we must shortly stand and ask with all the seriousness it deserves whether we can justify our motives and actions to *him* who will judge us in righteousness. Let us be wise for eternity fulfilling our allotted duties improving our time and opportunities to the purposes for which they are given, awaiting with patience and with due preparation for the period of our departure remembering for our encouragement in the service of God and virtue that if we are faithful unto death, we shall receive a crown of life that fadeth not away."

Obituary, 12 November 1818

In the death of Mrs. ADAMS, her friends and society lament no ordinary loss. The grave has closed over the mortal remains of one, whose character combined with as much practical wisdom and substantial virtue as have ever been possessed by any individual. Society is not adorned with a purer example; virtue had not a firmer prop; religion cannot number among its friends a more rational, intelligent, consistent, serious advocate and disciple.

Mrs. Adams was endowed by nature with strong intellectual powers. These were improved by a good education, and by the best use of the advantages, afforded by the distinguished station in society which, in mature life, she was called to occupy, and by that extensive intercourse with mankind to which she was introduced, from her connexion with that great and good man, who was destined by Providence to perform a most important part in the affairs of human life; and who, by a faithful and magnanimous discharge of the highest duties of patriotism and philanthropy, is privileged to be enrolled among the most distinguished benefactors of his country and of mankind.— She might not, perhaps, be called an accomplished woman, as we now use the term, for female education, at the period of her youth, was very different from what it now is; but she was a truly enlightened woman, and adorned with the most valuable accomplishments of the understanding

and heart. Her mind was richly stored from various reading, and her taste in polite literature highly cultivated and refined. Her observation of mankind was exact, and her acquaintance with men and things extensive. Her perceptions were quick and penetrating; her judgment sound and mature; her imagination brilliant; and the flashes of her wit, which continued to burst forth even amidst the snows of old age, rendered her the delight of those who were honored with her society.—Her conversation was intelligent, frank and independent, and her manners remarkably kind and condescending, combining the greatest simplicity, with a dignity and propriety which always commanded respect.

In her domestick character, she shone pre-eminent. Never was there a more affectionate and faithful mother, and never was a woman more attentive to the appropriate duties of the head of a family. Ordinary minds, when placed in situations such as she occupied, dazzled by the glare of distinction or inflated by the pride of rank and power, deem the common yet most important duties and cares of domestic life beneath their regard; but her strength of mind, her excellent principles, her good sense and a high sentiment of duty, preserved her from even the shadow of a reproach of any neglect of this kind. On the contrary, they led her to be most assiduous and punctual in the performance of her family duties and attentive to every arrangement of domestick economy; and her servants and dependants experienced her maternal care and kindness. As a friend and neighbor she evinced a cordial sympathy in the prosperity and adversity of all around her; administering to the relief of the distressed whenever an opportunity was presented, and exhibiting a tender concern in sorrows which it was beyond her power to remove or assuage. The poor of her vicinity have lost in her a discreet and generous benefactor.

The excellences of her character were consummated by religion; this formed its basis; this was the origin of her virtues; and her eminent virtues did honor to the holy source from which they arose. She was a serious and humble Christian. Her religious sentiments were of the most enlightened and enlarged nature, truly worthy of herself; and were of that practical character which gave them an habitual influence over her conduct: they afforded to her direction and support amidst the various trials of a long life;—and, we humbly trust, she has departed to enter upon the rewards of her faith and hopes.

The evening of her life was marked by a cheerful serenity, and her virtues, reflecting the mellow tints and the rich lustre of mature age, exhibiting rather the beautiful scenery of autumn than the desolation of winter, imparted delight and instruction to all whose privilege it was to observe her in this interesting and venerable period.

Greatness and goodness, intellectual superiority, and a correspondent eminence in virtue, are not always found united;—in her the combination was consistent and complete; and human nature has seldom, if ever, more fully or more beautifully displayed its noblest attributes. By those persons who knew her, her memory will ever be cherished with the highest veneration. To the young, emulous of the best distinctions which this life affords, her conduct may be held up as one of the purest models for imitation; wisdom and virtue claim her as a favorite daughter; and, those who are capable of estimating the highest order of moral excellence, mourn in her death the removal of one of the richest ornaments of her sex and species. The light of life, long quivering in its socket, has expired on earth, but will be enkindled anew, and burn with a pure flame among the inextinguishable lights of the celestial world.

This imperfect and inadequate sketch of her character is the tribute of gratitude and respect from one, who esteems it among the greatest blessings of his life, that he was honored with her friendship.

Obituary, *New England Galaxy and Masonic Magazine*, 13 November 1818

The late wife of the Ex-President Adams was a woman, whose talents and virtues will place her on the list of those, who have benefited their generation and honoured their country. She was the daughter of a New-England Clergyman, settled within a few miles of Boston—a man respectable in his holy office, and who educated his children in the best manner of the times; an unquestionable proof of his good sense. The personal and mental accomplishments of his daughter attracted the attention and secured the respect and affections of Mr. Adams, then a young man of distinction and promise at the bar in Massachusetts. They were married in the year 1764, and resided in Boston. The revolutionary difficulties were then fast increasing, and Mr. Adams was conspicuously engaged. When a Continental Congress was formed he was sent a delegate from Massachusetts to this body. It was a perilous moment. The wise were baffled, the courageous hesitated, and the great mass of the people were inflamed, but confused; they had no fixed and settled purpose, but all was left for the development of time. Mr. Adams was one of the boldest in the march of honest resistance to tyranny. He looked farther than the business of the day, and ventured, at that early period, to suggest plans of self government and independence. To Mrs. Adams he communicated his thoughts freely on all these high matters of state, for he had the fullest confidence in her spirit, prudence, secrecy, and good sense, without the test, which the Roman Portia gave her lord to gain his confidence, in matters of policy, “when the state was out of joint.”

When Mr. Adams was appointed to represent his country at the Court of St. James, his wife went with him, and such was her exquisite sense of propriety, her republican simplicity, her delicate and refined manners, her firmness and dignity, that she charmed the proud circles in which she moved, and they speak of her, to this day, as one of the finest women that ever graced an embassy to that country.

When Mr. Adams was chosen Vice President, she was the same unaffected, intelligent, and elegant woman. No little managements, no private views, no sly interference with public affairs was ever, for a moment, charged to her. When her husband came to the chair of the Chief Magistrate, then the widest field opened for the exercise of all the talents and acquirements of Mrs. Adams; and such was her whole course, that her fondest admirers were not disappointed. She graced the table by her courtesy, and elegance of manners, and delighted her guests by the powers of her conversation. Through the drawing room, she diffused ease and urbanity, and gave the charm of modesty and sincerity to the interchanges of civility. But this was not all; her acquaintance with public affairs, her discrimination of character, her discernment of the signs of the times, and her pure patriotism made her an excellent cabinet minister; and, to the everlasting honour of her husband, he never forgot or undervalued her worth; and in the pride of place and power, he never despised the New-England simplicity of manners, in which it is a rule to take counsel from a wife. The politicians of that period speak with enthusiasm of her foresight, her prudence and the wisdom of her observations. Tracy respected, Bayard admired, and Ames eulogized her. All parties had the fullest belief in the purity of her motives and in the elevation of her understanding.

It was a stormy period and the world went wrong. Fatigue and anguish often overwhelmed the President from the weight and multiplicity of his labours and cares; but her sensibility, affection and cheerfulness chased the frown from his brow, and plucked the root of bitterness from his heart. To those who see the matters of state at a distance, or only through the medium of letters, all things seem to go on fairly and smoothly; but, those practically acquainted with the difficulties in administering the best of governments, will easily understand how much necessity there is for the wisdom of the serpent united with the gentleness of the dove; and they too can comprehend how much the delicate interference of a sagacious woman can effect. Pride, vanity, and selfishness are full of

claims and exactions, all bustling and importunate for office and distinction. Peremptory denial produces enmity and confusion, but gentle evasion and cautious replies soften the hearts of the restless and temper the passions of the sanguine. An intelligent woman of address can control these repinings and hush these murmurings with much less sacrifice or effort than men. A woman knows when to apply the unction of soft words without forgetting her dignity or infringing on a single principle which the most scrupulous would wish to maintain. Mrs. Adams calmed these agitations of disappointment, healed the rankling wounds of offended pride, and left them in admiration of her talents and in love with her sincerity.

Notwithstanding these numerous duties and great exertions as the wife of a statesman, Mrs. Adams did not forget that she was a parent. She had several children and felt in them the pride and interest, if she did not make the boast, of the mother of the Gracchi.

Many women fill important stations with the most splendid display of virtues; but few are equally great in retirement; there they want the animating influence of a thousand eyes and the inspiration of homage and flattery. This is human nature in its common form, and the exception is honourable and rare. Mrs. Adams, in rural seclusion at Quincy, was the same dignified, sensible, and happy woman, as when surrounded by fashion, wit and intellect. No hectic of resentment, no pangs of regret were ever discovered by her, while indulging in the retrospection of an eventful life in these shades of retirement. Her conversation shewed the same lively interest in the passing occurrences as though she had retired for a day only, and was to have returned on the morrow to take her share in the business and pleasures of political existence. There was no trick, no disguise in this. It arose from a settled and perfectly philosophical and christian contentment, which great and pious minds only can feel. Serenity, purity, and elevation of thought preserve the faculties of the mind from premature decay, and, indeed, keep them vigorous in old age. To such the lapse of time is only the change of the shadow on the dial of life. The hours which are numbered and gone are noticed, but their flight does not “chill the genial current of the soul.” Religious thankfulness for the past, and faith in assurances for the future—that mortal shall put on immortality—make the last drop in the cup of existence clear, sweet and sparkling.

When the biographer of a future age, shall do justice to the characters of the illustrious women of our country, Mrs. Adams will be found conspicuous on his page, as a dutiful daughter, an excellent wife, a kind, affectionate and careful mother; one who lived long and did much, who discharged the duties of common life with faithfulness and alacrity, and filled the highest stations with success and honour; one, who, though a politician, “could be defended from the cradle to the grave,” and who, though a philosopher, had no doubts of the christian religion.

Mr. Adams is now far advanced into the vale of years, and must feel his loss as irreparable; but he is too wise to repine and has too much to be grateful for to be cast down. The wife of his youth lived with him for more than half a century. With her in his heart and in his hand he “sounded all the depths and shoals of honour.” While he mourns her loss, her virtues will crowd on his soul, clothed in colours made brighter by death. This patriarch is now turned of eighty and possesses his intellectual faculties in an extraordinary degree. May they long continue to be fresh and vigorous, that he may give to the world the mental portraits of his cotemporaries, and illustrations of our history. In him the lamp of life seems to burn more vividly as he gathers the gems which oblivion was about to receive. The genius of the sage is every where respected, and his long and important services to his country every where acknowledged; but our last gaze shall be on his domestic virtues; for they were the brightest in the constellation of his merits. Moral and religious principles, and pure and virtuous affections are indestructible; God has put on them the value of his promise, and the seal of eternity.

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Washington, 15 November 1818

But language cannot do justice to that excellence which in its highest forms consists in *action*. The words of our mother were all kindness, but her actions were all beneficence. Of her it might be said, without irreverence “that she went about doing good. All panegyric upon her will fall short of the truth. Her life gave the Lie to every Libel on her Sex that ever was written; it was a continual refutation of all Satirists upon human nature. Frailties & Infirmities! yes she had them but they were all of tenement, & not of its animating soul. Christian virtues Faith, Hope, Charity in their just & evangelical proportions, meekness of spirit, forgiveness of injuries—good will to all human-kind. Wifely virtues Temperance, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Cheerfulness, affability, condescension: all harmoniously blended together into a pattern of Earthly perfections, all vivified and stimulated by that first necessity of her nature, that of doing good; if with all this, there was mingled any mortal infirmity, it was so imperceptible that in passing from Earth to Heaven she can be scarcely conscious of a change. In all this my Brother is there one word of exaggeration?—No! No!—Have I yet mentioned that watchful & superintending care of her family that rising while it is yet night—that looking well to the “ways of her household” that ever affectionate and dutiful care for the health & comfort of our dear & honoured Father—that more than Motherly tenderness to her Children & ours, to the third & fourth generation, which in the language of the Scriptures forms the Character of the virtuous woman, “whose price is far above Rubies; in whom the heart of her husband doth safely trust, & whose children arise up & call her blessed!” It has pleased the Supreme being and disposer of events to withdraw this combination of all that is excellent, & all that is lovely in human nature from this world. It becomes us to bow in humble submission to his will: derive if possible lessons of wisdom & virtue from our misfortune, which we can henceforth draw, only from the recollection of her example. The loss is heavy & irreparable to us all: to our venerable father it is calamitous beyond expression you feel I am sure how incumbent upon us all is the duty, by every exertion in our power, to administer to him all the consolation, & to shed upon the remnant of his days all the comfort of which they are susceptible. Duties of another kind, & with which to my deep regret I cannot dispense; detain me so far from home & from him, & so entirely absorb my time, that I can do little to sooth his sorrow, to aid him in his affairs, but my wishes & supplications to the throne of God.

Louisa Catherine Adams to John Adams, Washington, 16 April 1819

The Woman you selected for your Wife was so highly gifted in mind, with powers so vast, and such quick and clear perception, altogether so superior to the general run of females, you have perhaps formed a too enlarged opinion of the capacities of our Sex, and having never witnessed their frailties, are not aware of the dangers to which they are exposed by acquirements above their strength—

Charles Adams

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 27 July 1786

I perceive Charles has been guilty of a trick which I thought he would despise; that of prying into, and meddling with things which are nothing to him: and ungenerously looking into Papers,

(which he knew I wished to keep private) because I could not keep them under lock and key. If he looks here, he will feel how contemptible a spy is to himself, and to others.

John Adams

John Adams: Autobiography

Here it may be proper to recollect something which makes an Article of great importance in the Life of every Man. I was of an amorous disposition and very early from ten or eleven Years of Age, was very fond of the Society of females. I had my favorites among the young Women and spent many of my Evenings in their Company and this disposition although controlled for seven Years after my Entrance into College returned and engaged me too much till I was married. I shall draw no Characters nor give any enumeration of my youthful flames. It would be considered as no compliment to the dead or the living. This I will say—they were all modest and virtuous Girls and always maintained this Character through Life. No Virgin or Matron ever had cause to blush at the sight of me, or to regret her Acquaintance with me. No Father, Brother, Son or Friend ever had cause of Grief or Resentment for any Intercourse between me and any Daughter, Sister, Mother, or any other Relation of the female Sex. My Children may be assured that no illegitimate Brother or Sister exists or ever existed. These Reflections, to me consolatory beyond all expression, I am able to make with truth and sincerity and I presume I am indebted for this blessing to my Education. My Parents held every Species of Libertinage in such Contempt and horror, and held up constantly to view such pictures of disgrace, of baseness and of Ruin, that my natural temperament was always overawed by my Principles and Sense of decorum. This Blessing has been rendered the more precious to me, as I have seen enough of the Effects of a different practice. Corroding Reflections through Life are the never failing consequence of illicit amours, in old as well as in new Countries. The Happiness of Life depends more upon Innocence in this respect, than upon all the Philosophy of Epicurus, or of Zeno without it. I could write Romances, or Histories as wonderful as Romances of what I have known or heard in France, Holland and England, and all would serve to confirm what I learned in my Youth in America, that Happiness is lost forever if Innocence is lost, at least until a Repentance is undergone so severe as to be an overbalance to all the gratifications of Licentiousness. Repentance itself cannot restore the Happiness of Innocence, at least in this Life.

John Adams: Autobiography

I soon perceived a growing Curiosity, a Love of Books and a fondness for Study, which dissipated all my Inclination for Sports, and even for the Society of the Ladies. I read forever, but without much method, and with very little Choice. I got my Lessons regularly and performed my recitations without Censure. Mathematics and Natural Philosophy attracted the most of my Attention, which I have since regretted, because I was destined to a Course of Life, in which these Sciences have been of little Use, and the Classics would have been of great Importance. I owe to this however perhaps some degree of Patience of Investigation, which I might not otherwise have obtained.

John Adams to Robert Treat Paine, Braintree, Mass., 6 December 1759

I cannot think it either Vanity or Virtue to acknowledge, that the Acquisition and Communication of Knowledge, are the sole Entertainment of my Life.

John Adams to Cotton Tufts, 9 April 1764

I cannot set still without Thinking.

John Adams to Abigail Smith (Adams), 30 September 1764

Candor is my Characteristic.

John Adams: Diary, 31 December 1772

This Evening at Mr. Cranch's, I found that my constitutional or habitual Infirmities have not entirely forsaken me. Mr. Collins an English Gentleman was there, and in Conversation about the high Commissioned Court, for inquiring after the Burners of the Gaspee at Providence, I found the old Warmth, Heat, Violence, Acrimony, Bitterness, Sharpness of my Temper, and Expression, was not departed. I said there was no more Justice left in Britain than there was in Hell—That I wished for War, and that the whole Bourbon Family was upon the Back of Great Britain—avowed a thorough Dissatisfaction to that Country—wished that any Thing might happen to them, and that as the Clergy prayed of our Enemies in Time of War, that they might be brought to reason or to ruin.

I cannot but reflect upon myself with Severity for these rash, inexperienced, boyish, raw, and awkward Expressions. A Man who has no better Government of his Tongue, no more command of his Temper, is unfit for every Thing, but Children's Play, and the Company of Boys.

A Character can never be supported, if it can be raised, without a good a great Share of Self Government. Such Flights of Passion, such Starts of Imagination, though they may strike a few of the fiery and inconsiderate, yet they lower, they sink a Man, with the Wise. They expose him to danger, as well as familiarity, Contempt, and Ridicule.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 29 September 1774

I shall be killed with Kindness in this Place. We go to congress at Nine, and there We stay, most earnestly in Debates upon the most abstruse Mysteries of State until three in the Afternoon, then We adjourn, and go to Dinner with some of the Nobles of Pennsylvania, at four O'Clock and feast upon ten thousand Delicacies, and sit drinking Madeira, Claret and Burgundy. Company, and Care. Yet I hold it out, surprisingly, I drink no Cider, but feast upon Philadelphia Beer, and Porter. A Gentleman, one Mr. Hare, has lately set up in this City a Manufactory of Porter, as good as any that comes from London. I pray We may introduce it into Massachusetts. It agrees with me, infinitely better than Punch, Wine or Cider, or any other Spirituous Liquor.

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 21 May 1775

I am very unfortunate, in my Eyes, and my Health. I came from home, Sick and have been so ever Since. My Eyes are so weak and dim that I can neither read, write, or see without great Pain.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 26 September 1775

I have enjoyed better Health, this session than the last, and have suffered less from certain Fidgets, Pidlings, and Irritabilities which have become so famous.

John Adams to Josiah Quincy, Philadelphia, 6 October 1775

That a great Revolution, in the affairs of the World, is in the Womb of Providence, Seems to be intimated very Strongly, by many Circumstances: But it is no Pleasure to me to be employed in giving Birth to it. The Fatigue, and Anxiety, which attends it are too great. Happy the Man, who with a plentiful Fortune, an elegant Mind and an amiable Family, retires from the Noises, Dangers and confusions of it. However, by a Train of Circumstances, which I could neither foresee nor prevent, I have been called by providence to take a larger share in active Life, during the Course of these Struggles, than is agreeable either to my Health, my Fortune or my Inclination, and I go through it with more Alacrity and Cheerfulness than I could have expected. I often envy the Silent Retreat of some of my Friends. But if We should so far succeed as to secure to Posterity the Blessings of a free Constitution, that alone will forever be considered by me as an ample Compensation for all the Care, Fatigue, and Loss that I may sustain in the Conflict.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 October 1775

The Situation of Things, is so alarming, that it is our Duty to prepare our Minds and Hearts for every Event, even the Worst. from my earliest Entrance into Life, I have been engaged in the public Cause of America: and from first to last I have had upon my Mind, a strong Impression, that Things would be wrought up to their present Crisis. I saw from the Beginning that the Controversy was of such a Nature that it never would be settled, and every day convinces me more and more. This has been the source of all the Disquietude of my Life. It has lain down and rose up with me these twelve Years. The Thought that we might be driven to the sad Necessity of breaking our Connection with Great Britain exclusive of the Carnage and Destruction which it was easy to see must attend the separation, always gave me a great deal of Grief. And even now, I would cheerfully retire from public life forever, renounce all Chance for Profits or Honors from the public, nay I would cheerfully contribute my little Property to obtain Peace and Liberty. But all these must go and my Life too before I can surrender the Right of my Country to a free Constitution. I dare not consent to it. I should be the most miserable of Mortals ever after, whatever Honors or Emoluments might surround me.

John Adams to Charles Lee, Philadelphia, 13 October 1775

I frankly confess to you that a little Whim and Eccentricity, so far from being an Objection, to any one in my Mind, is rather, a Recommendation, at first Blush, and my Reasons are, because few Persons in the World, within my Experience or little Reading, who have been possessed of Virtues or Abilities, have been entirely without them; and because few Persons, have been remarkable for them, without having Something at the same Time, truly valuable in them. . . .

A Fondness for Dogs, by no means depreciates any Character in my Estimation, because many of the greatest Men have been remarkable for it; and because I think it Evidence of an honest Mind and an Heart capable of Friendship, Fidelity and Strong Attachments being Characteristics of that Animal.

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 25 October 1775

I write every Thing to you, who know how to take me. You dont Expect Correctness from me. When I have any Thing to write and one Moment to write it in I scratch it off to you, who dont expect that I should dissect these Things, or reduce them to correct Writing. You must know I have not Time for that.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Philadelphia, 25 November 1775

I have no Pleasure or amusements which has any Charms for me. Balls, Assemblies, Concerts, Cards, Horses, Dogs, never engaged any Part of my attention or Concern. Nor am I ever happy in large and promiscuous Companies. Business alone, with the intimate unreserved Conversation of a very few Friends, Books, and familiar Correspondences, have ever engaged all my Time, and I have no Pleasure, no Ease in any other Way. In this Place I have no opportunity to meddle with Books, only in the Way of Business. The Conversation I have here is all in the ceremonious reserved impenetrable Way. Thus I have sketched, a Character for myself of a morose Philosopher and a Surly Politician, neither of which are very amiable or respectable, but yet there is too much truth in it, and from it you will easily believe that I have very little Pleasure here, excepting in the Correspondence of my Friends, and among these I assure you Madam there is none, whose Letters I read with more Pleasure and Instruction than yours. I wish it was in my Power to write to you oftener than I do, but I am really engaged in constant Business of seven to ten in the Morning in Committee, from ten to four in Congress and from Six to Ten again in Committee. Our Assembly is scarcely numerous enough for the Business. Every Body is engaged all Day in Congress and all the Morning and evening in Committees. I mention this Madam as an Apology for not writing you so often as I ought and as a Reason for my Request that you would not wait for my Answers. . . .

The Inactivity of the two Armies, is not very agreeable to me. Fabius's Cunctando was wise and brave. But if I had submitted to it in his situation, it would have been a cruel Mortification to me. Zeal and Fire and Activity and Enterprise Strike my Imagination too much. I am obliged to be constantly on my Guard—yet the Heat within will burst forth at Times.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Braintree, Mass., 8 January 1776

Defeat appears to me preferable to total Inaction.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, 16 April 1776

We must move slowly. Patience, Patience, Patience! I am obliged to invoke thee every Morning of my Life, every Noon, and every Evening.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 28 April 1776

The Conclusion of your Letter makes my Heart throb, more than a Cannonade would. You bid me burn your Letters. But I must forget you first.

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 27 July 1776

My case is worse [than Robert Treat Paine's and Samuel Adams's]. My face is grown pale, my Eyes weak and inflamed, my Nerves tremulous, and my Mind weak as Water. Feverous Heats by

Day and Sweats by Night are returned upon me, which is an infallible Symptom with me that it is Time to throw off all Care, for a Time, and take a little Rest. I have several Times with the Blessing of God, saved my Life in this Way, and am now determined to attempt it once more.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 18 August 1776

There are very few People in this World with whom I can bear to converse. I can treat all with Decency and Civility, and converse with them, when it is necessary, on Points of Business. But I am never happy in their Company. This has made me a Recluse, and will one day, make me an Hermit.

Benjamin Rush to Jacques Barbeau-Dubourg, Philadelphia, 16 September 1776

Lord Howe sent a message to us a few days ago requesting a conference with some members of the Congress. Dr. Franklin, Mr. John Adams, and Mr. [Edward] Rutledge were ordered to wait upon his Lordship. He talked much of his powers to accommodate the dispute between Britain & America, but said he could offer nothing & promise nothing till we returned to our Allegiance. Here the negotiation ended. All America disdains such propositions. I must here mention an anecdote in honor of Mr. Adams. When his Lordship asked in what capacity he was to receive the gentlemen of Congress, Mr. Adams told him "in any capacity his Lordship pleased except in that of BRITISH SUBJECTS." This illustrious patriot has not his superior, scarcely his equal, for Abilities & virtue on the whole continent of America.

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 12 December 1776

Where are your new Members [of Congress]? I greatly applaud your Choice of them. Mr. A. I hope is on the Road. We never wanted him more.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 March 1777

As much as I converse with Sages and Heroes, they have very little of my Love or Admiration. I should prefer the Delights of a Garden to the Dominion of a World. I have nothing of Caesars Greatness in my soul. Power has not my Wishes in her Train. The Gods, by granting me Health, and Peace and Competence, the Society of my Family and Friends, the Perusal of my Books, and the Enjoyment of my Farm and Garden, would make me as happy as my Nature and State will bear. Of that Ambition which has Power for its Object, I don't believe I have a Spark in my Heart . . . There [are] other Kinds of Ambition of which I have a great deal. I am now situated, in a pleasant Part of the Town, in Walnutt Street, in the south side of it, between second and third Streets, at the House of Mr. Duncan, a Gentleman from Boston, who has a Wife and three Children. It is an agreeable Family. General Wolcott of Connecticut, and Coll. Whipple of Portsmouth, are with me in the same House.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 15 May 1777

I am suffering every day for Want of my farm to ramble in. I have been now for near Ten Weeks in a drooping disagreeable Way, loaded constantly with a Cold. In the Midst of infinite Noise, Hurry, and Bustle, I lead a lonely melancholly Life, mourning the Loss of all the Charms of Life, which are my family, and all the Amusement that I ever had in Life which is my farm.

If the warm Weather, which is now coming on, should not cure my Cold, and make me better I must come home. If it should and I should get tolerably comfortable, I shall stay, and reconcile myself to the Misery I here suffer as well as I can.

I expect, that I shall be chained to this Oar, untill my Constitution both of Mind and Body are totally destroyed, and rendered wholly useless to my self, and Family for the Remainder of my Days.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 2 September 1777

I am sick of Fabian Systems in all Quarters. the Officers drink a long and moderate War. My Toast is a short and violent War. They would call me mad and rash &c. but I know better. I am as cool as any of them and cooler too, for my Mind is not inflamed with Fear nor Anger, whereas I believe their's are with both.

James Lovell to John Adams, York, Pa., 28 November 1777

I am charged by all those who are truly anxious here for the best prosperity of our affairs in France to press your acceptance of the Commission which has this day been voted you. The great sacrifices which you have made of private happiness has encouraged them to hope you will undertake this new business. As one I hope that you will not allow the consideration of your partial defect in the Language to weigh any thing, when you surmount others of a different nature. Doctor Franklin's Age alarms us. We want one man of inflexible Integrity on that Embassy. We have made Carmichael Secretary who is master of the Language and well acquainted with the politics of several Courts. Mercantile matters will be quite in regular channels and so not a burthen to the Commissioners. Alderman Lee [William Lee], Morris and Williams will have got our commerce into good Argument to deter you, consider that you may perfectly master the Grammar on your voyage and gain much of the Speech too by having a genteel French man for a fellow Passenger.

John Adams to James Lovell, Braintree, Mass., 24 December 1777

The Want of a Language for Conversation and Business, is however all the Objection that lies with much Weight upon my Mind [in accepting commission to go to Europe to negotiate treaties]: altho I have been not ignorant of the Grammar and Construction of the French Tongue from my Youth, yet I have never aimed at maintaining or even understanding Conversation in it: and this Talent I suppose I am too old to acquire, in any Degree of Perfection. However, I will try and do my best. I will take Books and my whole Time shall be devoted to it.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Braintree, Mass., 8 February 1778

Patience! Patience! Patience. The first the last and the middle Virtue of a Politician.

John Adams: Autobiography, 9 April 1778

Returned and supped with Franklin on Cheese and Beer.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Passy, France, 25 April 1778

To tell you the Truth, I admire the Ladies here. Don't be jealous. They are handsome, and very well educated. Their Accomplishments are exceedingly brilliant. And their Knowledge of Letters and Arts, exceeds that of the English Ladies much, I believe.

John Adams to Thomas Greenleaf, Passy, France, 8 September 1778

I never engaged in the service of my Country for the Advancement of my private Interest, So I never entered it to obtain the Character of Generosity, Magnanimity, or Nobleness of Sentiment.

John Adams to William McCreery, Passy, France, 25 September 1778

I have never been used to disguise my sentiments of Men, whom I have been against, in public Life. . . . and never was a man of importance enough, to make me deviate from a Rule that I have observed all my Life, vizt. when obliged to be a Man's Enemy to be openly and generously so.

John Adams to James Warren, Passy, France, 2 December 1778

I Sincerely grieve for my Country in the News that you are not of either House [of the Massachusetts legislature]. But it is Some Comfort to me to think that I shall be Soon a private Farmer, as well as you, and both pursueing our Experiments in Husbandry. The longer I live and the more I see of public Men, the more I wish to be a private one. Modesty is a Virtue, that can never thrive, in public. Modest Merit! is there Such a Thing remaining in public Life? It is now become a Maxim with some, who are even Men of Merit, that the World sees a Man in Proportion as he esteems himself, and are generally disposed to allow him, to be what he pretends to be.

Accordingly, I am often astonished at the Boldness with which Persons make their Pretensions, a Man must be his own Trumpeter—he must write or dictate Paragraphs of Praise in the News Papers, he must dress, have a Retinue, and Equipage, he must ostentatiously publish to the World his own Writings with his Name, and must write even some Panegyrics upon them,—he must get his Picture drawn, his statue made, and must hire all the Artists in his Turn, to set about Works to Spread his Name, make the Mob stare and gape, and perpetuate his Fame. I would Undertake, if I could bring my Feelings to bear it, to become one of the most trumpeted, Admired, courted, worshipped Idols in the whole World in four or five Years. I have learned the whole Art, I am a perfect Master of it. I learned a great deal of it from Hutchinson and the Tories, and have learned more of it since from Whigs and Tories both, in America and Europe. If you will learn the Art I will teach you.

I have not yet begun to practice this. There is one Practice more which I forget. He must get his Brothers, Cousins, sons and other Relations into Place about him and must teach them to practice all the same Arts both for them selves and him. He must never do any Thing for any Body who is not his Friend, or in other Words his Tool.

What I am going to say, will be thought by many to be practicing upon some of the above Rules. You and I have had an ugly Modesty about Us, which has despoiled Us of, almost all our Importance. We have taken even Pains to conceal our Names, We have delighted in the shade, We have made few Friends, no Tools, and what is worse when the Cause of Truth, Justice, and Liberty have demanded it, We have even Sacrificed Those who called themselves our Friends and have made Enemies.

No Man ever made a great Fortune in the World, by pursuing these Maxims. We therefore do not expect it, and for my own Part, I declare, that the Moment, I can get into Life perfectly private, will be the happiest of my Life.

The little Art and the less Ambition with which I see the World full disgusts and shocks me more and more. And I will abandon it to its Course, the Moment I can do it with Honour and Conscience.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Passy, France, 18 December 1778

What shall I say, Madam, to your Question whether I am as much in the good graces of the Ladies as my venerable Colleague [Benjamin Franklin]. Ah No! Alas, Alas No.

The Ladies of this Country [France] Madam have an unaccountable passion for old Age, whereas our Country women you know Madam have rather a Complaisance for youth if I remember right. This is rather unlucky for me for I have nothing to do but wish that I was seventy years old and when I get back I shall be obliged to wish myself back again to 25.

I will take the Liberty to mention an anecdote or two amongst a multitude to show you how unfortunate I am in being so young. A Gentleman introduced me the other day to a Lady. Voila. Madame, says he, Monsieur Adams, notre Ami, Le Colleague de Monsieur Franklin! Je suis enchanté de voir Monsiuer Adams. Answer'd the Lady, Embrassez le, donc. Reply'd (the Gentleman). Ah No, Monsieur, says the Lady, il est trop jeune.

So that you see, I must wait patiently, full 30 years longer before I can be so great a favorite.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Passy, France, 13 February 1779

I never had so much trouble in my Life, as here, yet I grow fat. The Climate and soil agree with me—so do the Cookery and even the Manners of the People, of those of them at least that I converse with, Churlish Republican, as some of you, on your side the Water call me. The English have got at me in their News Papers. They make fine Work of me—fanatic—Bigot—perfect Cypher—not one Word of the Language—awkward Figure—uncouth dress—no Address—No Character—cunning hard headed Attorney. But the falsest of it all is, that I am disgusted with the Parisians—Whereas I declare I admire the Parisians prodigiously. They are the happiest People in the World, I believe, and have the best Disposition to make others so.

John Adams to Richard Henry Lee, Passy, France, 13 February 1779

The Character I sustain, at present, that of a private Citizen, best becomes me, and is most agreeable to me.

John Adams to James Warren, Passy, France, 25 February 1779

I have the Honour to be reduced to a private Citizen and if I could remain there without an eternal Clamour, no Consideration in the World should induce me ever again to rise out of it. But you know the Noise—the Lyes—the slanders—the stupid Groans and Lamentations, that would be raised at such a Resolution.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Passy, France, 28 February 1779

This Day, the Chevalier D'Arcy, his Lady, and Niece, Mr. Le Roy and his Lady, dined here. These Gentlemen are two members of the Academy of Sciences.

Now are you the wiser for all this? Shall I enter into a Description of their Dress—of the Compliments—of the Turns of Conversation—and all that.

For mercy Sake don't exact of me that I should be a Boy, till I am Seventy Years of Age. This Kind of Correspondence will do for young Gentlemen and Ladies under 20, and might possibly be pardonable till 25—provided all was Peace and Prosperity. But old Men, born down with Years and Cares, can no more amuse themselves with such Things than with Toys, Marbles, and Whirligigs.

If I ever had any Wit it is all evaporated—if I ever had any Imagination it is all quenched.

Pray consider your Age, and the Gravity of your Character, the Mother of Six Children—one of them grown up, who, ought never to be out of your sight, nor ever to have an Example of Indiscretion set before her.

I believe I am grown more austere, severe, rigid, and miserable than ever I was.—I have seen more Occasion perhaps.

John Adams: Diary, 26 April 1779

There is a Feebleness and a Languor in my Nature. My Mind and Body both partake of this Weakness. By my Physical Constitution, I am but an ordinary Man. The Times alone have destined me to Fame—and even these have not been able to give me, much. When I look in the Glass, my Eye, my Forehead, my Brow, my Cheeks, my Lips, all betray this Relaxation. Yet some great Events, some cutting Expressions, some mean Hypocrisies, have at Times, thrown this Assemblage of Sloth, Sleep, and littleness into Rage a little like a Lion. Yet it is not like the Lion—there is Extravagance and Distraction in it, that still betrays the same Weakness.

John Adams to Edmund Jenings, Minden, 4 May 1779

I can serve no Cause or Country, with Dishonour. It is not the Constitution of my Mind, if it had been I should never have been here, nor at Paris, nor at Congress.

John Adams to Edmund Jenings, Paris, 8 June 1779

Whatever may be Said of me, I certainly do not abound with Envy, nor am I capable of endeavouring to obstruct or embarrass any public Measure, by drawing a Party after me, to make my self important.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 19 August 1779

The same Opinion of your Abilities and Zeal for our country which made me rejoice in your accepting of an embassy to France, leads me to rejoice with most of your countrymen in your Safe return to your native Shores. I am sure you cannot be idle nor unconcerned 'till the Vessel in which our All is embarked is safely moored. We stand in greater Need than ever of men of your principles. You may be much more useful here than you could have been in the cabinet of Lewis 16th.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Braintree, Mass., 19 September 1779

The Man who can Show a long series of disinterested services to his Country, cannot be disgraced even by his Country. If she attempts it she only brings a stain upon her own character and makes his glory the more illustrious.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, pre-15 March 1780

Mr. Brown, whom I left at Passy, when I returned to you, and whom I found here, upon my return to Paris, will deliver you this and another Letter which I intended to have sent by the Viscount de Noailles, and two small Bundles containing a Piece of Chintz each. The Price is horrid, Sixty Livres a Piece, but I cannot trade, I suppose others would get them at half Price.

If you will make me buy Dittos you must expect to be cheated. I never bought any Thing in my Life, but at double Price.

John Adams to Edmund Jenings, Paris, 20 April 1780

I have been twenty Years, in the midst of Politicks and through the whole of it, invariably constant to the same Principles and the same system, through all Opprobriums, Obloquies, Dangers, Terrors, Losses, and Allurements.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 28 April 1780

I almost envy your Children the happiness of calling that man their father who After contributing his Share towards giving liberty and independence, will finally be honored as the instrument of restoring *peace* to the united States of America.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, post-12 May 1780

The Science of Government it is my Duty to study, more than all other Sciences: the Art of Legislation and Administration and Negotiation, ought to take Place, indeed to exclude in a manner all other Arts.—I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematics and Philosophy. My sons ought to study Mathematics and Philosophy, Geography, natural History, Naval Architecture, navigation, Commerce and Agriculture, in order to give their children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Music, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry, and Porcelain.

John Adams to Edmund Jenings, Paris, 18 July 1780

I cannot and will not be idle.

Benjamin Franklin to Comte de Vergennes, Passy, France, 3 August 1780

I live upon Terms of Civility with him, not of Intimacy.

Comte de Vergennes to Chevalier de la Luzerne, Versailles, 7 August 1780

. . . I have communicated the whole to Mr. Franklin, requesting him to report on it to Congress, and I have reason to think that that Minister will make it his duty to comply with my request. I inform you of these details, Sir, so that you may speak of it confidentially to the President and the

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principal members of Congress and put them in a position to judge whether Mr. Adams is endowed with a character that renders him appropriate to the important task with which Congress has charged him. As for myself, I anticipate that this plenipotentiary will only incite difficulties and vexations, because he has an inflexibility, a pedantry, an arrogance, and a conceit that renders him incapable of dealing with political subjects, and especially of handling them with the representatives of great powers, who assuredly will not yield either to the tone or to the logic of Mr. Adams. . . . Mr. Adams' imagination and principles could easily lead him into mistakes, and compromise the alliance and the honor of his nation.

Benjamin Franklin to Henry Laurens, Passy, France, 9 August 1780

Mr. Adams has given Offense to the Court here, by some Sentiments and Expressions contained in several of his Letters written to the Count de Vergennes. I mention this with Reluctance, though perhaps it would have been my Duty to acquaint you with such a Circumstance, even were it not required of me by the Minister himself. He has sent me Copies of the Correspondence, desiring I would communicate them to Congress; and I send them herewith. Mr. Adams did not show me his Letters before he sent them. I have, in a former Letter to Mr. Lovell, mentioned some of the Inconveniencies, that attend the having more than one Minister at the same Court; one of which Inconveniencies is, that they do not always hold the same Language, and that the Impressions made by one, and intended for the Service of his Constituents, may be effaced by the Discourse of the other. It is true, that Mr. Adams's proper Business is elsewhere; but, the Time not being come for that Business, and having nothing else here wherewith to employ himself, he seems to have endeavored to supply what he may suppose my Negotiations defective in. He thinks, as he tells me himself, that America has been too free in Expressions of Gratitude to France; for that she is more obliged to us than we to her; and that we should show Spirit in our Applications. I apprehend, that he mistakes his Ground, and that this Court is to be treated with Decency and Delicacy. The King, a young and virtuous Prince, has, I am persuaded, a Pleasure in reflecting on the generous Benevolence of the Action in assisting an oppressed People, and proposes it as a Part of the Glory of his Reign. I think it right to increase this Pleasure by our thankful Acknowledgments, and that such an Expression of Gratitude is not only our Duty, but our Interest. A different Conduct seems to me what is not only improper and unbecoming, but what may be hurtful to us. Mr. Adams, on the other hand, who, at the same time means our Welfare and Interest as much as I, or any man, can do, seems to think a little apparent Stoutness, and greater air of Independence and Boldness in our Demands, will procure us more ample Assistance. It is for Congress to judge and regulate their Affairs accordingly.

M. Vergennes, who appears much offended, told me, yesterday, that he would enter into no further Discussions with Mr. Adams, nor answer any more of his Letters. He is gone to Holland to try, as he told me, whether something might not be done to render us less dependent on France. He says, the Ideas of this Court and those of the People in America are so totally different, that it is impossible for any Minister to please both. He ought to know America better than I do, having been there lately, and he may choose to do what he thinks will best please the People of America. But, when I consider the Expressions of Congress in many of their public Acts, and particularly in their Letter to the Chev. de la Luzerne, of the 24th of May last, I cannot but imagine, that he mistakes the Sentiments of a few for a general Opinion. It is my Intention, while I stay here, to procure what Advantages I can for our Country, by endeavoring to please this Court; and I wish I could prevent any thing being said by any of our Countrymen here, that may have a contrary Effect, and increase an Opinion lately showing itself in Paris, that we seek a Difference, and with a view of

reconciling ourselves to England. Some of them have of late been very indiscreet in their Conversations.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Amsterdam, 25 September 1780

I shall lose all Opportunity of being a man of Importance in the World by being away from home, as well as all the Pleasures of Life: for I never shall enjoy any, any where except at the Foot of Pens hill—When Oh When shall I see the Beauties of that rugged Mountain!

Abigail Adams to John Adams, 8 October 1780

I hope you enjoy Health, Dr. Lee says you grow very fat.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Amsterdam, 28 December 1780

Every Thing in Life should be done with Reflection, and Judgment, even the most insignificant Amusements. They should all be arranged in subordination, to the great Plan of Happiness, and Utility.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 28 January 1781

You observe in a late Letter that your absence from your Native State will deprive you of an opportunity of being a man of importance in it. I hope you are doing your country more extensive Service abroad than you could have done, had you been confined to one State only, and whilst you continue in the same Estimation amongst your fellow citizens, which you now hold, you will not fail of being of importance to them: at home or abroad.

Comte de Vergennes to Chevalier de la Luzerne, Versailles, 9 March 1781

[His] way of thinking with regard to the conduct, the principles, and the person of this plenipotentiary. I confess to you, Sir, that whatever good opinion I may have of his patriotism, I regret seeing him charged with the task as difficult and as delicate as that of the peacemaking, because he has a rigidity, an arrogance, and an obstinacy that will cause him to foment a thousand unfortunate incidents and to drive his co-negotiators to despair.

John Adams to Francis Dana, Leyden, 18 April 1781

An excess of Modesty and Reserve is an excess still.

Comte de Vergennes to Chevalier de la Luzerne, Versailles, 19 April 1781

It is important to us in influencing the conduct of Mr. Adams, and in being authorized to keep him from the mistakes into which his only too ardent imagination, his stubbornness, and his pride will not fail to draw him.

Comte de Vergennes to Chevalier de la Luzerne, Versailles, 7 September 1781

The ardor, stubbornness, and inflexibility of Mr. Adams will be tempered by the calm, sagacity, and experience of Mr. Franklin . . .

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We have learned with much pleasure, Sir, that Mr. Adams will not be the only one charged with the interests of the United States. It is not that we distrust the patriotism of that plenipotentiary, but as he himself admits, he is more suited to polemical discussions than to conciliatory steps.

John Adams to the President of Congress, Amsterdam, 15 October 1781

I returned to Amsterdam: not long after I got home, I found myself attacked by a Fever, of which at first I made light, but which increased very gradually and slowly, until it was found to be a nervous Fever, of a very malignant kind, and so violent as to deprive me of almost all Sensibility for four or five days, and all those, who cared any thing about me, of the hopes of my Life. By the help however of great skill and all powerful Bark, I am still alive; but this is the first time I have felt the Courage to attempt to write to Congress. Absence and Sickness are my Apologies to Congress, for the few Letters they will receive from me since June.

Whether it was the uncommon Heat of the Summer, or whether it was the Mass of pestilential Exhalations from the stagnant Waters of this Country, that brought this disorder upon me, I know not: but I have every Reason to apprehend, that I shall not be able to re-establish my Health in this Country. A Constitution ever infirm, and almost half an hundred years old, cannot expect to fare well amidst such cold Damps and putrid Steams as arise from the immense quantities of dead Water that surround it.

John Adams to James Searle, Amsterdam, 20 October 1781

I have been to the Gate of death since You left me, with a malignant nervous fever: but Dr. Osterdyke's masterly skill and Quinquina's wonderful Virtue have brought me back, but I am yet feeble and good for nothing.

Robert R. Livingston to John Adams, Philadelphia, 20 November 1781

We learn from Mr. Dumas, that you have presented your credentials to the states general, we are astonished that you have not written on so important a subject, and developed the principles that induced you to declare your public character, before the States were disposed to acknowledge it. There is no doubt from your known prudence and knowledge of the world, that some peculiarity in your situation, or that of politicks and parties of the United provinces furnished you with reasons that overballanced the objections to the measure which arise from the humiliating light in which it places us. Congress would, I believe wish to have them explained.

John Adams to Edmund Jennings, Amsterdam, 29 November 1781

That they do not give to me, a very blind Confidence is true. That they have given orders to some Persons to Spy [on] me, may be true. That they know me to be an honest Man, and inflexible in the cause and perhaps some times too ardent, I am certain. That I abound too much in my own Conceit is alas I fear much too true, that I don't know how to accommodate myself aux convenances is false, that I will not accommodate myself to any thing mean that I will not be the Tool of Mistresses, Cronies, and the Understrappers of Mistresses and Cronies is determined as the Destinies. That they place confidence in Monsr. Fra[nklin] is not true.

John Adams to Edmund Jennings, Amsterdam, 26 December 1781

It is true that I am not quite recovered of my illness. I have Weaknesses and a Lameness that is new to me. Ill Health is no Novelty to me, but Disobedience in my Legs and Feet, was unknown to me, untill I had the late Fever. I walk, however every day and find that I grow better, though but slowly.

Peter Oliver: Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion, 1782

Mr. Adams was born at a Town, not far from Boston, of Parentage not very distinguishable. It is generally supposed, that he & Mr. Samuel Adams were nearly related; but I believe, that there is no relation, either by Affinity or Consanguinity, except in their united Endeavors in raising & supporting the present Rebellion; & here, one Soul informs both. Mr. J. Adams was, also, educated at Harvard College in Cambridge; & after he was graduated, was employed as a Schoolmaster to Children of both Sexes, in a Country Town. This Employment is generally the Porch of Introduction to the sacred Office, in New England; but Mr. Adams chose to pass from this Porch by the same Way he entered & try his Genius in the Practice of the Law. He is a Man of Sense, & made a Figure at the Bar; but whether Nature had neglected him, or he had acquired, his self, an Acrimony of Temper by his *Busbyan* Discipline, which he was remarkable for; certain it is, that Acrimony settled into Rancor & Malignity—by having an absolute Authority over Children, he was determined to raise hisself to a Superiority which he had no claim to; & he unguardedly confessed, in one of his Sallies of Pride, that “*he could not bear to see anyone above him.*” Whilst he was young at the Bar, he behaved with great Modesty; & as it is a general Misfortune incident to Gentlemen of the Bar, to brow beat their Inferiors, so when any of his Seniors took Advantage of him in this Way, the chief justice Mr. Hutchinson would, with his usual Humanity, support him, as well as show him other Marks of Respect, out of Court; but this Chief Justice, in a short Time, found that there is no Corner in a jealous malignant Heart for Gratitude to creep into.

Mr. Adams, being a sensible Lawyer, was for some Time, friendly to Government; but being in pursuit of a Commission for the Peace, Sr. Francis Barnard, the then Governor refused him. This refusal touched his pride, & from that Time, Resentment drove him into every Measure subversive of Law and of Government, & interwove him with the factious Junto.

Mr. Otis, the original Malcontent, had now outrun himself; & Samuel Adams had taken his Birth. Otis, by drinking, & by Passion, had brought his Business as a Lawyer, & his Finances, to a very low Ebb. Indeed, the Faction had so little Need of him, that they moderately dropped him (he was left out as a Representative in 1770), as they had done others who had served them, & of whom they stood in no further Need. They had now much abler Men, both in Policy & in Law, who could secret the Measures which the other’s open Temper was too apt to disclose. The Exchange was a great Advantage to Faction. Otis being piqued at this Revolution, said of his Brother John Adams, that “*he was a d——d Fool for not taking Warning by his Fare.*” How prophetic this Observation may be, Time alone may discover; but Madmen have, sometimes, uttered Truths which were neglected at the Time of Utterance.

John Adams to Francis Dana, Amsterdam, 5 February 1782

An honest Man has never any thing to do for his Justification, but to wait for the Testimonies of his Enemies.

John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, Amsterdam, 14 February 1782

My Situation, Sir, has been very delicate: but as my whole Life from my Infancy has been passed through an uninterrupted Series of delicate Situations, when I find myself suddenly translated into a new one, the View of it neither confounds nor dismays me. I am very sensible however, that such an Habit of Mind borders very nearly upon Presumption, and deserves very serious Reflections.

My health is still precarious. My Person has been thought by some to have been in danger: but at present I apprehend nothing to myself or the Public.

All appearance of Intrigue, and all the Refinements of Politicks have been as distant from my Conduct, as You know them to be from my natural and habitual Character.

John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, Amsterdam, 21 February 1782

I have long since learned that a Man may give offence and yet succeed. The very Measures necessary for Success may be pretended to give offence.

John Adams to James Lovell, Amsterdam, 25 February 1782

I have one Thing more to Say to you, my dear Friend in Confidence, and then I have done. I Saw myself, ill treated and persecuted, by a set. I own I Seized with Pleasure, so fair, So great an opportunity, of giving my own Character a Reputation and Publicity, which should place it out of the reach of all the little Shafts of Malice, Envy and Revenge. I abhor every Thing that is personal and ever did. Through all our Contests in Massachusetts and in Congress, I ever avoided to the Utmost of my Power Personalities. And I shall never indulge myself in them in Europe. But The Dye is cast—I may be recalled—But recalling now will not disgrace me.

John Adams to Francis Dana, Amsterdam, 15 March 1782

I am of late taken up So much, with Conversations and Visits that I cannot write much, but what is worse, my Health is so feeble, that it fatigues me more to write one Letter than it did, to write 10 when We were together at Paris. In short to Confess to you, a Truth that is not very pleasant, I verily believe your old Friend will never be again the man he has been. That hideous Fever has shaken him to Pieces, so that he will never get firmly compacted together again.

John Adams to Francis Dana, Amsterdam, 28 April 1782

I am rejoiced that my dear John, pursues his studies so well. Let him pursue Cicero. But I regret extremely his absence from Leyden, where there are such noble Advantages. I am So uneasy about this that I wish he could find a good Passage in a neutral Vessell, and return to me. I feel more lonely, than I used as my Health is not so good, and my Spirits still worse. I want my Wife and my Children, about me. I must go home. I can't live so—it is too much. If I should go home it would give great Pleasure to Some who don't love me. And I really feel Benevolence enough to give them this satisfaction. I am weary my Friend, of the dastardly Meannesses of Jealousy and Envy. It is mortifying, it is humiliating to me to the last degree, to see such Proofs of it, as degrade human nature.

John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, The Hague, 16 May 1782

I wish it were in my Power to give Congress upon this Occasion Assurances of a Loan of Money, but I cannot. I have taken every Measure in my Power to accomplish it, but I have met with so many Difficulties that I almost despair of obtaining any thing. I have found the Avidity of Friends as great an Obstacle as the ill Will of Enemies. I can represent my Situation in this Affair of a Loan, by no other Figure than that of a Man in the midst of the Ocean negotiating for his Life among a School of Sharks. I am sorry to use Expressions which must appear severe to You: but Truth demands them.

John Adams to Samuel Adams, The Hague, 15 June 1782

The ill Health, contracted in Amsterdam, which began with a violent nervous Fever, last August, and which left me with Gout and Scurvy, and a complication of Disorders, which are scarce yet cured, have prevented me from Writing to my Friends so often as I wished.

It was necessary that I Should take my Station, at Amsterdam, in the Time of it, for the Sake of the Society of my Countrymen, and for the Convenience of free Conversation with those Persons, who were able And desirous to promote the American Cause. But my Residence in that City has given a terrible shock to my delicate and feeble frame. . . . Our excellent Friend Mr. Laurens, has declined acting in the Commission on account of his ill Health, an Excuse that I might alledge, perhaps with equal Reason, for transmitting a Resignation of all my Employments, for I really am in a very feeble State. I have returned to my old Physician a Saddle Horse and if his Skill does not restore me, I shall certainly try the Air of the blue Hills.

John Adams to James Warren, The Hague, 17 June 1782

Broken to Pieces and worn out, with the Diseases engendered by the tainted Atmosphere of Amsterdam operating upon the Effects of fatiguing Journeys dangerous Voyages, a Variety of Climates and eternal Anxiety of Mind, I have not been able to write you so often as I wished. . . .

What is to become of an independent Statesman? One, who will bow the Knee to no Idol? who will worship nothing as a Divinity, but Truth, Virtue and his Country? I will tell you, he will be regarded more, by posterity than those who worship Hounds and Horses, and although he will not make his own Fortune he will make the Fortune of his Country. The Liberties of Corsica, sweeden and Geneva may be over turned, but neither his Character can be hurt nor his Exertions rendered ineffectual. Oh Peace, when wilt thou permit me to Visit Penshill Milton Hill and all the Blue Hills? I love every Tree and every Rock upon all those Mountains. Roving among these and the Quails Partridges squirrells &c that inhabit them shall be the amusement of my declining Years God willing. I won't go to Vermont. I must be within the Scent of the sea.

Comte de Vergennes to the Duc de la Vauguyon, Versailles, 23 June 1782

It is important for us, Sir, to put Mr. Adams at ease, because he is naturally very suspicious, and he would think the independence of the United States offended if he suspected us of wanting to be the arbiters of his conduct.

John Adams to James Warren, The Hague, 2 July 1782

I Suppose that Milton Hill, furnishes you with Amusement enough, in your beloved science and Practice of Agriculture. I wish I had Fortune enough to purchase me an equal Farm upon Pens Hill, and enter into an Emulation with you, which should make his Hill shine the brightest. I find that the various Combinations of street Dust, Marsh Mud and Horse dung furnish a more delicate Employment, than the foul Regions of machiavellian Politicks. Yet when Honest Wisdom triumphs over its opposite, as is sometimes the Case, Politicks, themselves offerd an Exquisite Entertainment, to a well regulated Mind.

Benjamin Vaughan to Lord Shelburne, Paris, 31 July 1782

Mr. Adams is a man of more vivacity and intrigue [than John Jay].

John Adams to Cotton Tufts, The Hague, August 1782

I long to be with you, even to share in your Afflictions. The Life I lead is not satisfactory to me. Great Feasts and great Company, the Splendor of Courts and all that is not enough for me. I want my Family, my Friends and my Country. My only Conclusion is, that I have rendered a most important and essential service to my Country, here, which I verily believe no other Man in the World would have done. I don't mean by this, that I have exerted any Abilities here, or any Actions, that are not very common, but I don't believe that any other Man in the World would have had the Patience and Perseverance, to do and to suffer, what was absolutely necessary.—I will never go through such another Scene. Happily, there will never I believe be again Occasion for any body to suffer so much. The Humiliations, the Mortifications, the Provocations, that I have endured here, are beyond all description; yet the Unraveling of the Plot, and the total Change in all these respects make amends for all.

John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, The Hague, 7 September 1782

My life has been such a wandering Pilgrimage, that I have not been able to keep any distinct acco't: of them. They are scattered abt: in a thousand of receipts with other things, wh: will require more time to bring together, than I will spend upon it, untill I know the pleasure of Congress.

John Adams to Edmund Jenings, The Hague, 27 September 1782

Thanks be to God, that he gave me Stubbornness when I know I am right.

John Adams to Francis Dana, The Hague, 29 September 1782

[On breaking through restrictions set by Congress] I lament the policy, which has tied your hands. It is a bit of that web, in which you and I, and every honest American, in Europe, has been long entangled. I broke thro' it, as the Whale goes thro' a net.

John Adams to John Jay, The Hague, 7 October 1782

All this Shall be dispatched with all the Diligence, in my Power, but it will necessarily take up some time, and my health is so far from being robust, that it will be impossible for me to ride, with as much rapidity, as I could formerly, although never remarkable for a quick Traveller.

Founders on the Founders

John Thaxter to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 9 October 1782

Thank God for all things, and especially for that Degree of *Faith, Patience, and Perseverance* with which he inspired him, who had the Conduct of this Business. There is no negotiating here without these *Virtues*. Your dearest Friend has gained himself great Honor, and both his Ability and Firmness have been highly complimented and applauded.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 16 October 1782

Mine has been a hard lot in life, so hard that nothing would have rendered it supportable, especially for the last eight years, but the uninterrupted series of good fortune which has attended my feeble exertions for the public. If I have been unfortunate and unhappy in private life, I thank God I have been uniformly happy and successful as a public man.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Paris, 7 November 1782

The Influence of the Stadtholder & his Court, the Intrigues of the English; the Weight of a numerous, wealthy & powerful English Party; the secret and open Negotiations of Neutral Powers, were not the only Obstacles I had to encounter. Secret dark Insinuations against my personal Character from a Quarter from whence they ought not to have come, embarrassed me more than all the rest. Patience & Perseverance, however, at last overcame them all.

John Adams to Jonathan Jackson, Paris, 8 November 1782

In one of your Letters you Suppose that I have an open avowed Contempt of all Rank, give me leave to say you are much mistaken in my sentiments.—There are Times, and I have seen many Such when a Man's Duty to his Country demands of him the Sacrifice of his Rank, as well as his Fortune and his Life, but this must be an Epocha, and for an Object worthy of the Sacrifice.—In ordinary Times the same Duty to his Country obliges him to contend for his Rank, as the only means indeed sometimes, by which he can do Service, and the Sacrifice would injure his Country more than himself.—When the World Sees a Man reduced to the Necessity of giving up his Rank merely to serve the Publick they will respect him and his Opinions will have the more Weight for it, but when the Same World sees a Man yeild his Rank for the sake of holding a Place, he becomes ridiculous.—This you may depend upon it will not be my Case—

John Adams: Journal of Peace Negotiations, 12 November 1782

The compliment of “Monsieur, vousêtes le Washington de la négociation,” was repeated to me by more than one person. I answered, Monsieur, vous me faites le plus grand honneur, et le compliment le plus sublime possible. Eh! Monsieur, en vérité, vous l’avez bien mérité. (A few of these compliments would kill Franklin if they should come to his ears.

John Adams: Diary, 12 January 1783

The Comte de Vergennes knew my Character, both from his Intelligence in America and from my Character and Correspondence with him. He knew me to be a Man who would not yield to some of the designs he had in view. He accordingly sets his Confidential Friend Mr. Marbois, to

negotiating very artfully with Congress. They could not get me removed or recalled, and the next Scheme was to get the Power of the Commission for Peace into the hands of Dr. Franklin.

To this End the Choice was made to fall upon him, and four other Gentlemen who could not attend. They have been however mistaken, and no Wrestler was ever so completely thrown upon his Back as the Comte de Vergennes.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Paris, 29 January 1783

The Times, Madam have made a Strange Being of me. I shall appear a Domestic Animal, never at home, a bashful Creature, braving the Fronts of the greatest ones of the Earth, a timid Man, venturing on a long Series of the greatest dangers, an irritable fiery Mortal, enduring every Provocation and Disgust, a delicate Valetudinarian bearing the greatest Hardships, an humble Farmer, despising Pomp, Show, Power and Wealth, as profuse as a Prodigal and as proud as Caesar—But an honest Man in all and to the Death.

Alas! who would wish for such a Character! Who would wish to live in Times and Circumstances when to be an honest Man, one must be all the rest? Not I. It can never be the Duty of one Man to be concerned in more than one Revolution, and therefore I will never have anything to do with another.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 11 February 1783

Congress yesterday received from Mr. Adams several letters dated September not remarkable for any thing unless it be a display of his vanity, his prejudice against the French Court & his venom against Doctor Franklin.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Baltimore, Md., 14 February 1783

From what you mention in your letter I suppose the newspapers must be wrong when they say that Mr. Adams had taken up his abode with Dr. Franklin. I am nearly at a loss to judge how he will act in the negotiation [of the peace treaty with England]. He hates Franklin, he hates Jay, he hates the French, he hates the English. To whom will he adhere? His vanity is a lineament in his character which had entirely escaped me. His want of taste I had observed. Notwithstanding all this he has a sound head on substantial points, and I think he has integrity. I am glad therefore that he is of the commission and expect he will be useful in it. His dislike of all parties, and all men, by balancing his prejudices, may give the same fair play to his reason as would a general benevolence of temper. At any rate honesty may be extracted even from poisonous weeds.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 27 February 1783

I read in a great Writer, Montesquieu that “l’honneur, en imposant la loi de sevir, veut en être l’arbitre; et, s’il se trouve choqué, il exige ou permet qu’on se retire chez Soi.”

C’est une des Règles suprêmes de l’honneur, Que lorsque nous avons été une fois placés dans un rang, nous ne devons rien faire ni souffrir qui fasse voir que nous nous tenons inferieurs ... ce rang même.”*

These being the supreme Laws of Honor in all the Countries of Europe, it is astonishing that Congress should wound the feelings of their Servants whom they send to Europe in such delicate Points, and by this means lessen their Reputations and Influence, at a time when they wanted Support to their Reputations more than any other Men.

It may be said that Virtue, that is Morality, applied to the Public is, the Rule of Conduct in Republics, and not Honor. True. But American Ministers are acting in Monarchies, and not in Republics. Such a Slur may not hurt a Man in America so much as in France, or England or Holland, but in these Countries it certainly diminishes him and his Utility exceedingly.

But upon the Rule of Virtue, I hold that Virtue requires We should serve, where We can do most good. I am soberly of Opinion, that for one or two Years to come I could do more good in England to the United States of America, than in any other Spot upon Earth. Much of the immediate Prosperity of the United States, and much of their future Repose, if not the Peace of the World, depends upon having just Notions now forthwith instilled in London. But I think the British Court will be duped by the French and will entertain that dread of me, which neither ought to entertain, but which France will inspire because She thinks I should be impartial—so that I expect some Booby will be sent, in Complaisance to two silly Courts, upon that most important of all Services. If Heaven has so decreed, I must submit, and the Submission will be most pleasant to me as an Individual and as a Man. I shall be in a Situation where I shall think that I could do more good in another. But I have been often in such a Situation. And things must take their Course. We must wait for things to arrange themselves, when We cannot govern them.

My Mind and Body stand in need of Repose. My Faculties have been too long upon the Stretch. A Relaxation of a few Years would be the Life the most charming to me, that I can conceive.

Don't be concerned at anything I have written concerning Spots, Blemishes, Stains and Disgraces. When all is known, they will be universally acknowledged to be Laurels, Ornaments and trophies. They will do neither You nor me nor Ours harm to the End.

*Spirit of the Law, I:65–66.

John Adams to William Lee, Paris, 15 March 1783

Congress have been much of the opinion, when left to their own good Sense, of the propriety of having Ministers at the several principal Courts; but great pains have been taken to baffle it, by secretly counteracting their designs, and even by procuring Instructions to Ministers which have defeated their missions. I have long & severely smarted under the anguish, occasioned by such means, but by patience, perserverance, & obstinacy, if you will, I broke thro' all the Snares, from every quarter in Holland & exhibited to the world a demonstration in practice of the error of their Theory: But this has thrown a Ridicule on some Characters that will never be forgiven me—

John Adams to C.W.F. Dumas, Paris, 15 March 1783

If ever a Citizen could claim an Office in Equity, I have an incontestible Right to be Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Great Britain: Because I have had such a Commission in my Portefeuille these four Years.—I came to Europe thro' many Dangers on that Mission, to which I was destined, by the impartial & unsolicited Voice of my Country, with great Unanimity.—The Revocation of my Commission was obtained by foreign Influence, by a bare Majority, and by Misrepresentations, and I will venture to say against the Sentiments of the great Body of the Citizens of the United States. Don't conclude from hence, that I expect to see that Commission revived—Indeed I do not, nor do I care one farthing about it for myself. The Dignity and Honor of the United States require, that it should be revived, as it is the only Way in which they can wipe out the Stain, which they have been sufficiently deceived and imposed upon to bring upon themselves—But for myself, I had rather no such Commission should ever appear—No Swiss was ever more homesick than I am. My Health, my Family require me to go home. And my Country would probably receive

Services from me there, for which I am rather better qualified than for any in Europe, and of much more Importance as I think, now the Peace is made.

If I should now receive a Letter of Credence to the King of Great Britain, it would be to me one of the most melancholly Days I ever saw, and therefore I wish the definitive Treaty signed, that I might get embarked out of the Way of the Possibility of it.—All this You see is confidential.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 28 March 1783

I am Sometimes half afraid, that those Persons who procured the Revocation of my Commission to King George, may be afraid I shall do them more harm in America, than in England, and therefore of two Evils to choose the least and maneuver to get me sent to London. By several Coaxing hints of that Kind, which have been written to me and given me in Conversation, from Persons who I know are employed to do it, I fancy that Something of that is in Contemplation. There is another Motive too—they begin to dread the Appointment of some others whom they like less than me. I tremble when I think of such a Thing as going to London. If I were to receive orders of that sort, it would be a dull day to me. No Swiss ever longed for home more than I do. I Shall forever be a dull Man in Europe. I cannot bear the Thought of transporting my Family to Europe. It would be the Ruin of my Children forever. And I cannot bear the Thought of living longer Separate from them.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 7 April 1783

Supposing a Commission should come to me, I am frightened at the Thought of it. How will the King and the Courtiers, the City and the Country, look at me? What Prospect can I have of a tolerable Life there? I shall be Slandered and plagued there, more than in France. It is a Sad Thing that Simple Integrity should have so many Enemies in this World, without deserving one. In the Case Supposed I must go to London and reconnoitre—see how the Land lies and the faces look, before you think of coming to me. I will not stay there, to be plagued. One may soon judge. If I should find a decent Reception and a Prospect of living comfortably a Year or two there I will write for you. All this is you see upon a supposition which is improbable. It would be infinitely more agreeable to my own heart to come home and quit Europe forever. At home I can take Care of my Children, to give them Education and put them into Business. If I should remain abroad my Children must suffer for it and be neglected. But in all Events I will not stay in Holland, the Air of which is totally inconsistent with my Health. I have tried it, very sufficiently. I can never be well nor enjoy myself there. In other respects I like that Country very well.

John Adams to James Warren, Paris, 9 April 1783

I am in expectation every hour of receiving your Acceptance of my Resignation, and indeed I Stand in need of it.—The Scenes of Gloom Danger and Perplexity I have gone through, by Sea and Land, and the Shocks of Various Climates, have affected my health to a great degree and what is worse my Spirits. Firm as Some People have been complaisant enough to Suppose my Temper is, I assure you it has been shaken to its foundations, and more by the fluctuating Councils of Philadelphia than by any Thing else.—When a Man sees entrusted to him the most essential Interests of his Country, Sees that they depend essentially upon him and that he must defend them against the Malice of Ennemies, the Finesse of Allies, the Treachery of a Colleague, and sees that

he is not to be supported even by his Employers, you may well imagine a Man does not sleep on a bed of Roses. It is enough to poison the Life of Man in its most Secret Sources.

The Fever which I had at Amsterdam, which held me for five Days hickouping and Senseless over the Grave, exhausted me in such a Manner that I never have been able to recover it entirely. I have rode and walked and exercised incessantly now for a Year and three Quarters, and have lived in all respects with great Caution, but all does not do.—I have Weaknesses of Mind and Body, to which I have been all my Life before a Stranger. But I am not yet however So weak as to Stay in Europe, with a Wound upon my honour, and if I had the Health of Hercules, I would go home Leave or no Leave, the Moment another Person is appointed to Great Britain—No fooling in such a March. I will not be horse jockeyed.—at least if I am De Vergennes & Franklin will not be the jockies.

It is not that I am ambitious of the Honour of a Commission to St. James's or that I fondly expect an happy Life there. I could be happier, I believe at the Hague. But my Ennemies, because they are Ennemies or despisers of the Interests of my Country shall never have Such a Tryumph over me. I should think myself forever unworthy of the Confidence of Congress or of any other Body possessed of sense or Spirit if I did.—In Truth I Sigh for Repose—My Family has become an indispensable Necessary of Life to me. I am no longer a Boy, nor a Young Man.—and there is no Employment however honourable, No Course of Life however brilliant, has Such a Lustre in my Imagination as absolutely a private Life. My Farm and my family glitter before my Eyes every day and night.

You may well imagine, that I shall not be beloved in London. I have been as you know, too old and atrocious an offender not to have Millions of Ennemies there.—You know too, that I have acted too daring and decided a Part in France and Holland, as well as in America not to have numerous Ennemies and powerfull ones too in all those Countries.—The Peace does not open to me in publick Life Prospects of Glory & Tryumph and Power and Wealth that can flatter or excite Ambition or Avarice in me.

I knew very well for many Years before I engaged in publick, that if I ever should engage, whatever Dangers I might brave whatever Loses I might Suffer, and whatever Successes I might have, Rewards and Fortunes were never made for me nor mine.—that the utmost I could ever expect would be a comfortable or even a tollerable old Age.—For this I would gladly now compound.—at home I might enjoy it—abroad I certainly cannot.—decide my fate therefore as soon as possible, if it is not yet decided, which I wish & hope and let me embrace you at Philadelphia or at Milton.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 16 April 1783

I begin to suspect that French and Franklinian Politics will now endeavor to get me sent to England, for two Reasons, one that I may not go to America where I should do them more Mischief as they think than I could in London. 2. That the Mortifications which they and their Tools might give me there might disembarass them of me sooner than any where.

Is it not Strange and Sad that Simple Integrity should have so many Enemies? that a Man should have to undergo so many Evils merely because he will not betray his Trust? . . .

I have found by Experience, that in this Age of the World that Man has an awful Lot, who “dares to love his Country, and be poor.”

Liberty and Virtue! When! oh When will your Enemies cease to exist or to persecute! . . .

I have Sometimes painted to myself my own Course for these 20 Years, by a Man running a race upon a right line barefooted treading among burning Ploughshares, with the horrid Figures of

Jealousy, Envy, Hatred, Revenge, Vanity, Ambition, Avarice, Treachery, Tyranny, Insolence, arranged on each side of his Path and lashing him with scorpions all the Way, and attempting at every Step to trip up his Heels.

I have got through, however to the Goal, but maimed, scarified and out of Breath.

John Adams to James Warren, Paris, 16 April 1783

Our Country is a singular one. It is a Temple of Liberty, set open to all the World. If there is any thing on Earth worthy of being contended for, it is this glorious Object. I never had through my whole Life any other Ambition, than to cherish, promote & protect it, and never will have any other for myself, nor my Children. For this Object, however, I have as much as any Conqueror ever had. For this I have run as great risques & made as great Sacrifices, as any of the pretended Heroes, whose Object was Domination & Power, Wealth & Pleasure. For this I have opened to You Characters with Freedom, which it is to me personally dangerous to touch. But it is necessary, &, come what will, I will not flinch. These people know me. They know I stand in their Way, & therefore You will hear of Insinuations enough, darkly circulated to lessen me at Home. I care not. Let me come home & tell my own Story.

John Adams to Francis Dana, Paris, 18 April 1783

I am determined in all Events, God Willing, to enjoy in future the Company of my Family, from which I have now been Separated for near nine Years.—I have great need of Repose. My Health has never recovered from the Consequences of that horrid Fever at Amsterdam, and I fear never will without a Voyage home, my native Air, Relaxation from Drudgery, and a quiet Mind. I have a Thousand other Reasons public and private for wishing to go home.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 6 May 1783

Congress have received a long and curious epistle from Mr. Adams dated in February addressed to the president not to the secretary for foreign affairs. He animadverts on the revocation of his commission for a treaty of commerce with Great Britain, presses the appointment of a minister to that court with such a commission, draws a picture of a fit character in which his own likeness is ridiculously and palpably studied, finally praising and recommending Mr. Jay for the appointment *provided* injustice must be done to an older servant.

John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, Paris, 25 May 1783

Any one, who knows any thing of my History, may easily suppose that I have gone thro' many dangerous, anxious & disagreeable Scenes, before I ever saw Europe: But all I ever suffered in public life has been little, in Comparison of what I have suffered in Europe, the greatest & worst part of which has been caused by the ill Dispositions of the C. de Vergennes, aided by the Jealousy, Envy & selfish Servility of Dr. Franklin.

John Adams to Robert R. Livingston, Paris, 16 June 1783

When the Existence of our Country and her essential Interests were at stake, it was a Duty to run all Risques, to stifle every feeling, to sacrifice every Interest; and this Duty I have discharged with Patience and Perseverance, & with a Success that can be attributed only to Providence.

Founders on the Founders

Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, Passy, France, 22 July 1783

I ought not, however, to conceal from you, that one of my Colleagues is of a very different Opinion from me in these Matters. He thinks the French Minister one of the greatest Enemies of our Country, that he would have straitned our Boundaries, to prevent the Growth of our People; contracted our Fishery, to obstruct the Increase of our Seamen; and retained the Royalists among us, to keep us divided; that he privately opposes all our Negotiations with foreign Courts, and afforded us, during the War, the Assistance we received only to keep it alive, that we might be so much the more weakened by it; that to think of Gratitude to France is the greatest of Follies, and that to be influenced by it would ruin us. He makes no Secret of his having these Opinions, expresses them publicly, sometimes in presence of the English Ministers, and speaks of hundreds of Instances when he could produce in Proof of them. None of which however, have yet appeared to me, unless the Conversations and Letter above-mentioned are reckoned such.

If I were not convinced of the real Inability of this Court to furnish the further Supplies we asked, I should suspect these Discourses of a Person in his Station might have influenced the Refusal; but I think they have gone no farther than to occasion a Suspicion, that we have a considerable Party of Antigallicans in America, who are not Tories, and consequently to produce some doubts of the Continuance of our Friendship. As such Doubts may hereafter have a bad Effect, I think we cannot take too much care to remove them; and it is, therefore, I write this, to put you on your guard, (believing it my duty, though I know that I hazard by it a mortal Enmity), and to caution you respecting the Insinuations of this Gentleman against this Court, and the Instances he supposes of their ill will to us, which I take to be as imaginary as I know his Fancies to be, that Count de V. and myself are continually plotting against him, and employing the News-Writers of Europe to depreciate his Character, &c. But as Shakespeare says, “Trifles lights as Air,” &c. I am persuaded, however, that he means well for his Country, is always an honest Man, often a wise one, but sometimes, and in some things, absolutely out of his senses.

John Thaxter to John Adams, London, 12 August 1783

I have a Letter from Dr. [Cotton] Tufts, (who is this year in the [Massachusetts] Senate) in which he says, “had our Friend now with you, been here at the last Election, he would have had the Suffrages of nine tenths of the People. His Weight, Experience & Wisdom are really much wished for & greatly wanted—”

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Paris, 10 September 1783

You Say that I shall never retire, till weary Nature diminishes my Capacity of acting in dignified difficulty.—Give me leave to say, that the Period is already arrived. Nature is weary, the Capacity is diminished but what is more agreeable to Think of, the dignified difficulties are all at an End.—I always had a Knack at a Difficulty. My Country Clients used to tell me, Mr. Adams is excellent at a difficult Case, and having a reputation for this I was always vexed with them.—Few of the Race of Adam have had more difficulties fall to his share.—But I consider them as all at an End in a manner.

. . . I have absolutely got above all Fatigue from Pomp and Parade. It has no Effect upon me. One may be familiarized to any Thing.

Elbridge Gerry to Abigail Adams, Princeton, N.J., 18 September 1783

Enclosed is an Extract of an official Letter from Doctor F—— to Mr. Livingston, Secretary of foreign affairs dated July 23d. which is calculated to give a private Stab to the Reputation of our Friend; at least it appears so to me. By the Doctor's Observation that by writing the Letter "he hazarded a mortal Enmity," I think it evident, he did not intend the Letter should be seen by Mr. Adams's particular Friends, but that Mr. Livingston should make a prudent Use of it to multiply Mr. Adams' Enemies. Mr. L. could easily do this, by not communicating to Congress the paragraph: but being now out of Office, the Doctor's Craft is apparent. You will please to keep the Matter a profound Secret, excepting to Mr. Adams, General Warren and Lady; and let the Channel of Communication be likewise a secret.

[For the enclosure sent by Gerry, see Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, July 22, 1783.]

David Howell to Nicholas Brown, Princeton, N.J., 25 September 1783

I was pleased on reading over one of Mr. John Adams's Letters to Congress, dated soon after his arrival at Paris & his great Success in Holland in procuring loans & a Treaty of Amity & commerce. He mentions a variety of Compliments paid him by the Parisians; and among others the following "*Vous ete le Washington de la negotiation.*" "*You are the Washington of negotiations.*" This was allowed to be the highest pitch. And it occurred to me that I had a good authority for having in former Letters spoken freely of myself. When persons are elevated to high Stations they are apt to become vain. It is a general fault of human nature & while our enemies are severe one expects candor & forgiveness from friends.

John Adams to Charles Storer, Auteuil near Paris, 11 October 1783

I have been brought very low by another nervous Fever, and remain so weak that I can scarcely hold my Pen. A Journey to London will at least divert my mind, I hope it will recover my Health. We have rec'd Information from Congress that a Commission is to be sent to Me, Mr. Franklin and Mr. Jay to make a Treaty of Commerce with G: Britain. . . .

Congress have done me great Honour, and given me compleat Satisfaction—I have no longer any Thing to complain of and am I believe as happy a Man, notwithstanding the Weakness of my Nerves, as the Sun shines on. My late Fever, although it brought me down very low, has been I am perswaded of great Service to me; and I shall enjoy better Health in Consequence of it.

As to my future Destiny, I am perfectly indifferent, whether I go home, or whether I stay here, or whether I go to Holland again, to which I have no Objection except on Account of my Health—These Things are entre nous.

Samuel Adams to John Adams, Boston, 4 November 1783

Your Negotiations with Holland, as "my old Friend" observd, is all your own. The faithful Historian will do Justice to your Merits Perhaps not till you are dead. I would have you reconcile yourself to this Thought. While you live you will probably be the Object of Envy. The leading Characters in this great Revolution will not be fairly marked in the present Age. It will be well if the leading Principles are rememberd long. You, I am sure, have not the Vanity, which Cicero betrayed, when he even urged his Friend Licinius to publish the History of the Detection of Cataline in his Life Time that he might enjoy it. I am far from thinking that Part of History redounds

so much to the Honor of the Roman Consul, as the Treaty of Holland does to its American Negotiator.

Robert Morris to John Adams, Office of Finance, 5 November 1783

Let me then, my dear Sir, most heartily congratulate you on those virtuous Emotions which must swell your Bosom at the Reflection that you have been the able, the useful, and (what is above all other Things) the honest Servant of a Republic indebted to you in a great Degree for her first Efforts at independent Existence—

Elbridge Gerry to Abigail Adams, Princeton, N.J., 6 November 1783

Since I had the Pleasure of addressing You, nothing of Importance has occurred in the Concerns of our Friend excepting a Letter from Mr Jay, wherein he with great Candour & good Sense has endeavoured to do Justice to Mr Adams' Character, & recommended him as the most suitable person to represent the united States at the Court of London; declaring at the same Time in the most positive terms, that should the place be offered to himself, he would not accept it. I should be exceedingly happy on my own Account, but more particularly on yours, Madam, to see Mr Adams in America, because I am persuaded he would not only be in the Way of rendering at this Time essential Services to his Country, but also (by recovering his Health), to himself & Family. The perplexities of American politics, are neither pleasing nor salutary; much less so must there be, which are in the Center & subject to all the Subtleties & Intrigues of European Systems; but the probability is I think against his immediate return.

Samuel Mather to John Adams, Boston 13 November 1783

As, from Your Discretion, Firmness of Mind and invioable Integrity, I have expected great and good Things to be effected: You will allow me now to tell You, that my Expectation has not been disappointed.

I heartily bless the most wise and *wonderful Counsellour*, that you have been so happily directed and succeeded in your Foreign Embassy to the Credit, Emolument and Comfort of your own Countrey, as well as to your own Honour: And I persuade myself, that, as you have begun, You will continue to deserve well of the Community, to which You originally belong, and of which You are so useful a Member.

Elbridge Gerry to John Adams, Philadelphia, 23 November 1783

The great object of our political Enterprize with Britain is obtained; & if We have Wisdom & Virtue to improve the advantages, the Issue must be happy. "Laus Deo" should be the Motto of America & inscribed on every Device for commemorating this great Event; for none but atheists can be insensible of the first obligations which result on the Occasion.

Our Gratitude should nevertheless be shewn to such Individuals, as by their eminent Services, have been principal Instruments in promoting the Measure; & I consider it as an Act of Justice, with a meritorious Washington & [Nathanael] Green, to rank those that are equally so in my Mind, an Adams & Jay. You well know that I am not addicted to Flattery, that I have an aversion to so contemptible a practice; but sensible as I am of the Benefits derived from your able negotiations in Europe, as well as your Services in America, give me Leave to express an Impatience, & Concern, not merely at the feeble attempts to sully the Reputations You have so nobly acquired; but

also at the Neglect & Indifference that has been manifested in doing that Justice to your Characters which Generosity & good Policy should in my opinion long 'eer this have exhibited; & which no Exertions on my part shall be wanting to perpetuate—indeed the Ingratitude which You have hitherto experienced is not to be imputed to the Citizens of America at large, but to some amongst them of ambitious & perhaps envious principles who think “all made for one, not One for all.”

John Adams to Isaac Smith, Jr., London, 4 December 1783

It is indeed to me the highest Satisfaction to see my Country at Peace after so Long and so distressing a War, and much more to see her in a Situation which places her Liberties and Prosperity out of Danger—nothing which can happen will ever make me regret the Part I have taken, because it was taken upon full Deliberation, and upon the Principle of Duty as a Man and a Citizen, not only without any Prospect of bettering my private Interest but with the Sure and certain Expectation of injuring it very considerably.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 15 December 1783

[After returning from the annual sermon commemorating the Boston Tea Party given by John Clarke.] Whilst he ascribed Glory and praise unto the most high, he considered the Worthy disinterested, and undaunted Patriots as the instruments in the hand of providence for accomplishing what was marvelous in our Eyes; he recapitulated the dangers they had past through, and the hazards they had run; the firmness which had in a particular manner distinguished Some Characters, not only early to engage in so dangerous a contest, but in spite of our gloomy prospects they persevered even unto the end; until they had obtained a Peace Safe and Honorable; large as our designs, Capacious as our wishes, and much beyond our expectations.

How did my heart dilate with pleasure when as each event was particularized; I could trace my Friend as a principal in them; could say, it was he, who was one of the first in joining the Band of Patriots; who formed our first National Council. It was he; who though happy in his domestic attachments; left his wife, his Children; then but Infants; even surrounded with the Horrors of war; terrified and distressed, the Week after the memorable 19th. of April, Left them, to the protection of that providence which has never forsaken them, and joined himself undismayed, to that Respectable Body, of which he was a member. Trace his conduct through every period, you will find him the same undaunted Character: encountering the dangers of the ocean; risking Captivity, and a dungeon; contending with wickedness in high places; jeopardizing his Life, endangered by the intrigues, revenge, and malice, of a potent; though defeated Nation.

These are not the mere eulogiums of conjugal affection; but certain facts, and sold truths. My anxieties, my distresses, at every period; bear witness to them; though now by a series of prosperous events; the recollection, is more sweet than painful.

Benjamin Franklin to Robert Morris, Passy, France, 25 December 1783

My Apprehension, that the Union between France and our States might be diminished by Accounts from hence, was occasioned by the extravagant and violent Language held here by a Public Person, in public Company, which had that Tendency; and it was natural for me to think his Letters might hold the same Language, in which I was right; for I have since had Letters from Boston informing me of it. Luckily here, and I hope there, it is imputed to the true Cause, a Disorder in the Brain, which, though not constant, has its Fits too frequent.

John Cranch to John Adams, 17 January 1784

Sir, added to the faith which the whole world warrants me to place in that candour and liberality of Sentiment which illustrate the solid parts of your great character, that I am unduced to avail myself of the same opportunity to profess the duty and respect I owe to you, both as my relation, and as the most eminent patriot and statesman of the age.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 26 January 1784

Your Letter of the 23d [announcing Abigail's arrival in London] has made me the happiest Man upon Earth. I am twenty Years younger than I was Yesterday.

John Adams to the President of Congress, The Hague, 10 February 1784

A long Course of Journeys and Voyages, a Variety of Climates and continued Application of Mind, have So wrecked my Constitution, which was never very firm, and produced these repeated Attacks of the Fever, that it is high time for me, to take a little repose.

John Adams to Samuel Adams, The Hague, 4 May 1784

Your advice "to reconcile myself to the Thought that Justice may not be done me, till I am dead" is friendly. I am not however apprehensive of Injustice living or dead. I am not ambitious of a Reputation for great Talents or Splendid Actions, with the present Age or with Posterity. The great Anxiety of my Life, has been to do my Duty and avoid just Reproach. And I know very well, that my Life has been passed at such a remote Distance, from every bad Principle and foul Course that no Authority will be credited, which may be so abandoned as to ascribe to me, any Thing very vicious or very vile. When you Say that "while I live, I Shall probably be the Object of Envy," you flatter me, because that Envy is the best Testimony that the Envious can give of their Sense of a Man's Merit.—I do not think that Envy Strictly Speaking abounds in the World. Many are falsely accused of Envy. Indignation against successful Villany, and Contempt of low Cunning or impudent Empiricism, are not Envy, though they are often called so.—In former Parts of my Life, I have made Enemies, or rather have excited little Resentments by too much Ardour, or by little Incautions or indiscretions, upon great Occasions but I was never very Sensible that I was envied, but once. My Commission for Peace was envied by one Man and by one only that I know of, and this dirty Passion, put him upon a series of falsehood, of insidious underhand Maneuvre, and other base Practices, which would tarnish any Reputation whenever or wherever it should be exposed.—These Proceedings distressed me, not for myself for I never cared a farthing for any Consequence they could have upon me, but for the Publick, because I saw, that they put to the utmost hazard some of the most important Interests of our Country. And it is a kind of Miracle that they did not finally forfeit Us all our Fish and Fur, and Venison at least.—These are secured, and I am no longer troubled about any Man's Envy or Jealousy.

The Envy and Jealousy alluded to was aided by two Auxiliaries which made it dangerous—one was the Jealousy of the South which cannot bear to see any Character of Consequence, arising in the North, and the other was an Influence, which has betrayed too much Inclination to domineer in our Councils and Negotiations, and therefore has never treated with common Decency any American Character, which would not be a Prostitute.—I Saw, with a Grief and Indignation which no Historian will record, because no Words can express it, the great Council giving way to these

3 Jealousies, and Sacrificing a Man whose Conduct they were necessitated to applaud. But all this is past.

You assign me a Station, which would probably be envied. But I shall probably never be in it, and I assure you, Since I Saw it, I have much less Inclination for it, than I ever had.

There is one certain Way of getting rid of Envy and that is getting out of envied Places. This is now, I thank God and ever shall be in my Power. But I will never make Use of this Power from the fear of Envy.—As soon as I shall see, that there is no further Service to be done by me, I can retire with greater Joy than I ever felt upon any Honour that was done me, for my own Gratification I declare to you I had rather be a Select Man of Braintree, than Ambassador to any Court in the World.

John Adams to Jonathan Jackson, The Hague, 15 June 1784

You will keep my Name out of Sight as much as Prudence requires, because, having done enough to make three great Nations my Ennemies, the English the French and the Dutch it is not to be wondered at, that I have hosts of them who take fire at my Name. Notwithstanding this I believe I have as few Personal Ennemies in either Nation as any Honest Man ever had, who was obliged to Act So bold a Part.

Elkanah Watson: Journal, The Hague, 6 July 1784

[On a visit to porcelean producer Delft] If I had not exerted myself, I should probably have witnessed the unpleasant scene of one of the most brilliant characters of the age (Mr. A——) scrambling in a muddy canal, his wig afloat upon the surface, and all from a laudable zeal to save a child then drowning; the moment he saw the struggling infant bobbing on the top, I thought he would have darted headforemost into the canal, regardless of his personal safety: But I restrained his impetuosity for a moment, as a lusty fellow had that instant soused himself in. . . .

In popularity and influence at this court, Mr. A—— undoubtedly bears the palm in the diplomatic body. He is universally esteemed, for his profound penetration and extensive political knowledge, the first character our western world has yet produced.

He talks but little—thinks a great deal—and what he says is always to the purpose; and in point of future events, his words seem to be the words of an oracle. He may indeed be considered as a veteran in politicks, having long acted a conspicuous and important part, and acquired vast experience in several of the courts of Europe, in a very serious crisis.

Though he does not ape the graces of a Chesterfield, yet we have found in him the more important accomplishments of an ambassador; for his stern republican virtues, have in every instance rose superiour to the duplicity and affected consequence of European courtiers.

John Adams to C.W.F. Dumas, Auteuil near Paris, 25 August 1784

[Reunited with Abigail and Nabby and settled in France] We had another long Passage from Dover [England], but reached Paris, on the 13th and on the 17th left the Hotel de York, for this Hil at Auteuil, where Mr. Barclay had taken me a House, Vis-à-vis la Conduite. The House is large and convenient enough. The Garden is elegant. The Situation is excellent, far enough from the Mass of Putrifaction in Paris, and high enough above the Fogs of the Seine. But its best Recommendations, are its Tranquility, and its proximity to my beautifull park the Bois de Boulogne, where I can walk or ride as I please. It is within a mile of Mr. Franklin, at whose house we shall

do Business, as his Infirmity prevents him from riding in a Carriage, or going abroad, except for a Walk. Congress have cut out work for us, enough for two Years. . . .

Once more after an Interruption of ten Years, I pronounce myself a happy Man, and pray Heaven to continue me so.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren Auteuil near Paris, 15 December 1784

It is ten Years and more Since I devoted myself wholly to the Publick. How I Should feel in private Life, I know not. But I believe that the Habits of public Life, have made no deeper Impression. Literary Pursuits are the Object of my youthfull Desires, but the Turn in public affairs disappointed me, and I am now too old, and too blind, ever to resume them with much Ardour, or any Prospect of Success.—My little Farm is now my only Resource, and Books for Amusement, without much Improvement or a Possibility of benefiting the World by my Studies.

James Madison to James Monroe, Orange, Va., 12 April 1785

The appointment of Mr. A. to the Court of G. B. is a circumstance which does not contradict my expectations: nor can I say that it displeases me. Upon geographical considerations N. E. will always have one of the principal appointments, and I know of no individual from that quarter, who possesses more of their confidence or would possess of that of the other States: nor do I think him so well fitted for any Court of equal rank, as that of London. I hope it has removed all obstacles to the establishment of Mr. Jefferson at the Court of France.

John Adams to Elbridge Gerry Auteuil near Paris, 2 May 1785

There is another Sort of Vanity, real Vanity as much as either of the other Sort, but certainly less pernicious. It is, on the contrary, although a Weakness and, if you will a Vice, a real Proof of a valuable Character. It is even a Vanity which arises from the Testimony of a good Conscience. When a Man is conscious of Services and Exertions, from the purest Principles of Virtue & Benevolence and looks back on a course of Years, Spent in the Service of other Men, without Attention to himself, when he recollects, Sacrifices, Sufferings and dangers, which have fallen in his Way, and Sees himself preserved through all and his labours crown'd with transcendant Success there arises a Satisfaction, and sometimes a Transport which he must be very wise indeed, if he can at all times conceal. I Say more it is Hypocrisy oftener than Wisdom that pretends to conceal it. If I were to Say that I have felt this Consciousness, and experienced this Joy, I should be chargeable with Vanity, although you and every Man who knows me, must know it to be true, and that it is impossible it Should be otherwise.—if at Sometimes I have betrayed in Word or Writing Such a Sentiment, I have only to Say in excuse for it that I am not a Hypocrite, nor a cunning Man, nor at all times wise, and that altho I may be more cautious for the future, I will never be so merely to obtain the Reputation of a cunning Politician a Character I neither admire nor esteem. I have Seen So much of it, between the Years 1755 and the Years 1785, as to give me a thorough disgust to it. But the Gentlemen think that a public Minister “ought never to have the weak Passion.” In this I agree with them.—It is always an Imperfection, a Weakness, a Fault and if you will a Vice: but do they expect to find a Minister without a fault, and is not a weak Passion universally a Smaller Fault, than a Strong one? Is not ever Pride more dangerous than Vanity, as are not Avarice & Ambition, more pernicious than both? Is not even Craft, Cunning, Intrigue, much worse than the weak Passion?

. . . I have not been illinformed of this, but I may have despized and neglected it too much.— Instead of mortifying me, I declare that I believe it has increased my Vanity and made me more careless of avoiding the Appearance of it, than any Thing that ever happened to me in my whole life. It is I believe more than four Years ago, that a Friend of mine then in the Low Countries Sent me an Extract of a Letter from a Personage of great Consideration here to another of equal Note in London, which had been Sent to him, as I Suppose to caution him against me. The extract is in these Words, as near as I can recollect, not having the Paper before me. [French language extract of the letter.]—“we have not a very blind Confidence in Mr. Adams. We believe him honest: We know him to be ardent and indeed inflexible in his cause, but he abounds too much in his own Sense, and will not give into on Conveniences.”—I Saw the draft of this, with Indignation sometimes, Contempt at others, but more often with real Exultation. And I am bold to Say to you, that if my Name Should live but two Centuries, this Extract will last as long and will do me more honour with thinking and virtuous Men if such should then exist than Virginia Statues to the Marquis or yours itself to the General. If I had given into a few Such conveniences, as appointing Mailbois to command your Armies instead of Washington, sending useless Arms to America at great Prices, yeilded Slyly away your Fisheries, and not disputed with France or Spain their right to the Illinois & Louisiana, I could have obtained a Confidence as blind as I wished, and infinitely more gratification to a weak Passion, than I shall ever now enjoy during Life. I have passed Mr. Gerry through a Multitude of Snares, Temptations, and Dangers in Europe, which I have never ventured to explain even to my most intimate Friends. It would not have been Safe for the public to put them upon Paper. Perhaps it never will be wise, how much soever they might gratify my weak Passion. Nor are these Snares and Dangers all past. There are more to come.—I am Still to dance on a slack rope, or a tight Rope, Still to march on the Brink of Precipices, with English, French and American Politicks watching the Moment to push me over, Do you wonder at Mr. Jay’s return, or do you think it Surprizing that I should wish to follow his Steps. An honest Man here, is not so happy as the military Gentlemen in America, with ten thousand Brother Officers ready to Support his Character and propagate his Fame, as well as ward off false Attacks. Our Business is Secret, and must be so very often liable to Jealousies, Surmizes, Misrepresentations and Slanders, which We are not at Liberty even to contradict and refute. Facts which if known would justify Us; and do us honour, we cannot publish without being charged with breach of Trust. &c

Such Considerations, while the Publick was interested in my Fate, more than can be expressed with Decency have more than once put me on the rack and come very near to cost me my Life. At present the Country is safe and I look upon myself as of very little Consequence to any Body, and therefore, nothing that can happen to me will give me so much Anxiety. Pidlrs may nibble at Inadvertences at unguarded Expressions, in times of great Agitation of Mind, or at Excesses of Joy upon escaping Snares that would have deceived the Eyes of Argus. They will now disturb my repose but little, and not at all long.—. . .

When a Man is hurt he loves to talk of his Wound, and I know of no other Way to account for this long Letter which you see is intended only for you, and as it is not worth copying cannot be made shorter.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Grosvenor Square, London, 12 December 1785

I have been so long agitated in the World, and puzzled with Business, that indeed I dont know, whether I should feel my Existence at Braintree, and My Eyes and my Health will not admit of Reading or Writing by Candle Light, so that I should want Amuzement of Evenings, but the Care

of a Farm, and Books and Papers in the Day, would serve me very well, and as far as I can judge of my own Inclinations I had rather live in that Retirement, for my personal Enjoyment, upon one hundred a Year than at any Court in Europe upon five Thousand. It may be depended on then that I have no dread upon my Mind of being obliged to return and plant Cabbages at the foot of Penn's hill.

John Jay: Report on Anglo-American Relations, New York, 31 January 1786

Resolved, That Congress approve of the Manner in which Mr. Adams appears from his several Letters to have executed the Duties of his Legation to the Court of Great-Britain, and that they are greatly pleased with the Diligence, Attention and Intelligence he has manifested therein.

David Ramsay to John Adams, New York, 14 May 1786

You do me great honor by requesting a continuance of my correspondence. Your letters have given me infinite pleasure & have established your reputation in the minds of every member of Congress as not only the industrious but the able Statesman.

John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Grosvenor Square, London, 24 May 1786

You may depend upon it every Man who expects any Thing from my Negotiations will be disappointed. I am not an idler. My whole Time is employed to the Utmost of my Strength and Capacity, and to no more purpose, than if I were at Horse Races or Stage Plays, and this will assuredly continue to be the Case, untill the Trade and Revenue of this Country Shall be made to feel the Effect of the Conduct of Congress and the States in regulating their Trade.—if it is not thought worth while to continue me here, untill that Event takes Place, I am myself fully of that mind, and am quite prepared to be recalled.

John Adams to John Thaxter, Jr., London, 2 June 1786

As to me personally you know that success does me no more good than no success, I get nothing by it but abuse and I could get no more than abuse by ill success or no success. This will not abate however my Industry or Zeal to do all in my power.

Abigail Adams to Cotton Tufts, London, 1 August 1786

Mr. Adams received yesterday your obliging favor of June 28th by way of Liverpool. His Eyes which I sometimes fear will fail him, have a weakness owing to too intense application, which is very troublesome to him, and this being now the case, he will not be able to write his Friends as he wishes.

Benjamin Hichborn, Boston, 24 October 1786

I had determine to write you about two years since to inform you of what I dare say no one else woud, which was that in case you returned to America, you without the least doubt have been chosen Governor—I suppose were you here at any time before our next Election you woud have an almost unanimous vote—Bowdoin I believe will not be chosen & unless you shoud be here I suppose Hancock will—

Luigi Castiglioni: Sketches of American Statesmen, 1787

Mr. Adams is 40 to 50 years old, short and corpulent; and his kindly but simple face gives no indication of the range of his knowledge.

John Adams to James Warren, Grosvenor Square, 9 January 1787

Popularity was never my Mistress, nor was I ever, nor shall I ever be a popular Man. This Book* will make me unpopular.—But one Thing I know, a Man must be sensible of the Errors of the People, & upon his guard against them, & must run the risk of their displeasure sometimes, or he will never do them any good in the long run.

*Adams's, Defence of the Constitutions of the United States.

John Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, 15 January 1787

We are not born for ourselves alone. Benevolence is really a part of our Nature, as self-Love, and man is never so happy as when he is conscious that he is useful to others.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 30 January 1787

You know the opinion I formerly entertained of my friend Mr. Adams. Yourself & the governor were the first who shook that opinion. I afterwards saw proofs which convicted him of a degree of vanity, and of a *blindness* to it, of which no germ had appeared in Congress. A 7 months intimacy with him here and as many weeks in London have given me opportunities of studying him closely. He is vain, irritable and a bad calculator of the force and probable effect of the motives which govern men. This is all the ill which can possibly be said of him. He is as disinterested as the being which made him: he is profound in his views: and accurate in his judgment except where knowledge of the world is necessary to form a judgment. He is so amiable, that I pronounce you will love him if ever you become acquainted with him. He would be, as he was, a great man in Congress.

Elizabeth Smith Shaw to Abigail Adams, Haverhill, N.H., 8 February 1787

I *fancy* sometimes to myself how *these matters*, will operate upon the Mind of *your Friend*. We think sometimes, he may do us more service *here*, than he can in his present Situation. We want his Wise Counsels, to direct our publick Weal.

Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, Paris, 19 February 1787

I did really expect that that ungracious, rascally court [i.e., Great Britain] would wear out the patience of Mr. Adams. Long habits of doing business together & of doing it easily & smoothly, will render me sincerely sensible of his loss. And I fear we shall lose him on the other side the water also, for I shall consider it as a loss, if, instead of going to Congress, he should be buried in some office.

John Adams to Richard Cranch, London, 21 February 1787

I believe there is not another Man in the World whose Life has been such a series of Remorses as mine. It seems as if there was a Destiny that I should never be paid. The time is drawing near, for eleven or twelve months will soon be round, when we embark for Home. This is an irksome undertaking—to break up a settled habitation and remove a family across the Seas, at any time of life is no small matter, but when people grow into years and are weary of changes it is more disagreeable. It is in vain to murmur, and we must submit.

In every Point of view, it would be impertinent for me to think of remaining longer in Europe. It would be some expense to the public, without any benefit, and a great torment to me, without any profit. I shall leave to future Conversations at Your Fireside, all further revelations upon these subjects. It is idle to complain. If there is not some other Plan pursued at home, no good can be done abroad.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, London, 1 March 1787

For a Man who has been thirty Years rolling like a stone never three years in the same Place, it is no very pleasant Speculation, to cross the seas with a Family, in a State of Uncertainty what is to be his fate; what reception he shall meet at home; whether he shall set down in private Life to his Plough; or push into turbulent Scenes of Sedition and Tumult; whether be sent to Congress, or a Convention or God knows what.—If it lay in my Power, I would take a Vow, to retire to my little Turnip yard, and never again quit it.—I feel very often a violent disposition to take some Resolution and swear to it. But upon the whole, it is best to preserve my Liberty to do as I please according to Circumstances. . . .

There are but two Circumstances, which will be regretted by me, when I leave Europe. One is the opportunity of Searching any questions of this kind, in any books that may be wanted, and the other will be the Interruption of that intimate Correspondence with you, which is one of the most agreeable Events in my Life. There are four or five Persons here, with whom I hold a friendly Intercourse and shall leave with some degree of Pain But I am not at home in this Country.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 6 June 1787

Mr. Adams' Book which has been in your hands of course, has excited a good deal of attention. An edition has come out here and another is on the press at N. York. It will probably be much read, particularly in the Eastern States, and contribute with other circumstances to revive the predilections of this Country for the British Constitution. Men of learning find nothing new in it, Men of taste many things to criticize. And men without either, not a few things, which they will not understand. It will nevertheless be read, and praised, and become a powerful engine in forming the public opinion. The name and character of the Author, with the critical situation of our affairs, naturally account for such an effect. The book also has merit, and I wish many of the remarks in it, which are unfriendly to republicanism, may not receive fresh weight from the operations of our Government.

John Adams to John Jay, Grosvenor Square, London, 22 September 1787

I shall appear before posterity in a very negligent dress and disordered air. In truth I write too much to write well, and have never time to correct anything.

Congressional Resolution on John Adams's Recall, New York, 5 October 1787*

Resolved that Congress entertain a high sense of the services which Mr. Adams has rendered to the United States in the execution of the various important trusts which they have from time to time committed to him and that the thanks of Congress be presented to him for the patriotism, perseverance integrity and diligence with which he has ably and faithfully served his Country.

*Drafted by Secretary for Foreign Affairs John Jay, 26 July 1787.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 25 May 1788

Of rigorous honesty, and careless of appearances he lived for a considerable time as an economical private individual. . . . his pecuniary affairs were under the direction of *Mrs. Adams*, one of the most estimable characters on earth, and the most attentive and honorable economists. Neither had a wish to lay up a copper, but both wished to make both ends meet. I suspect however, from an expression dropped in conversation, that they were not able to do this, and that a deficit in their accounts appeared in their winding up.

John Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, Braintree, Mass., 16 July 1788

You may be anxious, too, to know what is to become of me. At my age, this ought not to be a question; but it is. I will tell you, my dear child, in strict confidence, that it appears to me that your father does not stand very high in the esteem, admiration, or respect of his country, or any part of it. In the course of a long absence his character has been lost, and he has got quite out of circulation. The public judgment, the public heart, and the public voice, seem to have decreed to others every public office that he can accept of with consistency, or honor, or reputation; and no other alternative is left for him, but private life at home, or to go again abroad. The latter is the worst of the two; but you may depend upon it, you will hear of him on a trading voyage to the East Indies, or to Surinam, or Essequibo, before you will hear of his descending as a public man beneath himself.

Benjamin Lincoln to George Washington, Hingham, Mass., 24 September 1788

I am happy in knowing Mr. J. Adams. My acquaintance commenced with him early in life, few men can boast of equal abilities and information and of so many virtues, his foibles are few,—I am happy in knowing his sentiments of your Excellency, there is not virtue in your character which the most intimate of your friends have discovered but it seems to be known and acknowledged by him—I am, from a free conversation with him, as well as from his general character perfectly convinced that there is not a man in this part of the confederacy, if one can be found through the whole of it who would render your Excellency's situation at the head of the government more agreeable or who would make it more his study that your Administration should be honorable to yourself, and permanently interesting to the people.—

Alexander Hamilton to Theodore Sedgwick, New York, 9 October 1788

On the subject of Vice President, my ideas have concurred with your, and I believe Mr. Adams will have the votes of this state. He will certainly, I think, be preferred to the other Gentleman [John Hancock]. Yet, *certainly*, is perhaps too strong a word. I can conceive that the other, who is supposed to be a more pliable man may command Antifederal influence.

The only hesitation in my mind with regard to Mr. Adams has arisen within a day or two; from a suggestion by a particular Gentleman that he is unfriendly in his sentiments to General Washington. Richard H. Lee who will probably, as rumor now runs, come from Virginia [to the U.S. Senate] is also in this state [i.e., of opposing Washington]. The Lees and Adams' have been in the habit of uniting; and hence may spring up a Cabal very embarrassing to the Executive and of course to the administration of the Government. Consider this. Sound the reality of it and let me hear from you.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 17 October 1788

J. Adams has made himself obnoxious to many particularly in the Southern states by the political principles avowed in his book. Others recollecting his cabal during the war against General Washington knowing his extravagant self importance and considering his preference of an unprofitable dignity to some place of emolument better adapted to private fortune as a proof of his having an eye to the presidency conclude that he would not be a very cordial second to the general and that an impatient ambition might even intrigue for a premature advancement.

Alexander Hamilton to James Madison, New York, 23 November 1788

On the whole I have concluded to support Adams [for Vice President]; though I am not without apprehensions on the score we have conversed about. My principal reasons are these—First He is a declared partisan of referring to future experience the expediency of amendments in the system (and though I do not *altogether* adopt this sentiment) it is much nearer my own than certain other doctrines. Secondly a character of importance in the Eastern states, if he is not Vice President, one of two worse things will be likely to happen—Either he must be nominated to some important office for which he is less proper, or will become a malcontent and possibly espouse and give additional weight to the opposition to the Government.

A Federalist, *Pennsylvania Packet*, 7 January 1789

. . . the learned and patriotic Adams [should be elected vice president]

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 January 1789

Pardon me! Disciple of Woolstonecraft. I never relished Conversations with Ladies, accepting with one at a time and alone rather than in Company I liked

Comte de Moustier: Journal, 9 February 1789

In the election which took place on the fourth of this month, Mr. John Adams seemed to have mustered the most votes after George Washington, which assures him the place of vice president of the United States. It is believed that this advantage is not so much the result of the high opinion of his talents and his patriotism; rather a succession of remarks which the Federalists of the different states made on the danger of irritating this old servant of Congress and those of his party. We like him less, they say, than we fear him.

Benjamin Rush to Tench Coxe, Philadelphia, 14 February 1789

The issue of the elections for president shew how easy it is for even wise men to be mistaken. Mr. Wilson, yourself & one more person, never doubted a moment of General Washington obtaining an unanimous Suffrage. But you know we are not politicians & therefore our advice had no weight upon the question of throwing away Votes. It would have been better for the honor of America to have given Mr Adams a more united vote,—and would have added strength to the government. I consider him as a Colossus of wisdom & virtue; and in a contest for a convention or even Amendments, I shall rely more upon his firmness, & influence than upon any other man's in the government. The Objections which are made to him *here*, from his want of the ~~Openness~~ ^{Openness} of ~~mind~~ ^{mind} proper upon some occasions remind me of the lines of Dr. Young.*

*“In Shirley’s form might Cherubims appear,
But then—She’s got a freckle on her ear.[”]*

*Edward Young, “On Women,” *Love of Fame, The Universal Passion* (1725–1728).

Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 7 April 1789

Mr. Adams, having failed in the negotiation of a treaty of commerce with England, which was the cherished object of his desires and no longer being able to remain decorously in a country where, in spite of the praise lavished on England in his writings, he suffered only unpleasantness, arrives just a little before the task of forming a new government is at hand. This man, lauded in advance, before his success has been determined, captures the attention of his compatriots who on his word believe him as great in politics as General Washington is in war and who, thinking that a profound politician is needed more today than an able general, see him as the leading figure in the United States and accordingly, in the world. Thus it is that small talents mustered and employed with perseverance often elevate an ordinary man, who possesses the art of self-promotion and sometimes the imprudence to make use of it for himself above men who are superior to him in talent; in virtue; in merit of all kinds/ I do not at all mean to apply this observation specifically to Mr. Adams, but it arises from circumstance because it proves that should Mr. Adams not turn out to be as distinguished a man as we are assured he is, he will have succeeded nonetheless in this manner.

Gov. John Pickering to John Langdon, Portsmouth, N.H., 17 April 1789

I rejoice that the American FABIUS & SOLON are chosen President and Vice-President of the United States—their known & tried integrity and talents bode well to the Union.

Henry Wynkoop to Reading Beatty, New York, 23 April 1789

Enclose a paper containing an Account of the Reception & Address of his Excellency the Vice President, on whom I waited yesterday morning, found him in perfect Health & Spirits with no small Addition of corpulence since I saw him in Philadelphia in 1775.

William Pickman to Benjamin Goodhue, Salem, Mass., 29 April 1789

Capt. Dennis handed us the Account of the Reception of the President & Vice together with the speech of the latter in senate. We are highly pleased with this short but Comprehensive Introduction. Every Word was A sentence & every sentence an whole—fewer words never contained more sentiment. It Augurs well, & may we never be Ashamed of Our Countrymen.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, New York, 14 May 1789

I have as many difficulties here, as you can have; public and private, but my Life from my Cradle has been a series of difficulties and that series will continue to the Grave.

Thomas FitzSimons to Benjamin Rush, New York, 15 May 1789

I said nothing to you in my last upon a Subject, which has Very much Agitated the Senate, and in which the V.P. has given recent proofs of his Superlative Vanity.

Victor Marie DuPont to His Brother Éleuthère Irenée DuPont, New York, 15 May 1789

Mr. Adams arrived the twentieth. They gave him a very nice reception and he received it with much dignity. This is a small man, quite vain and ambitious, but, we are assured, of great talent. It is incredible with what enthusiasm the inhabitants of New England extol him. The best politician, the best negotiator, the best legislator of the century, are the epithets which accompany his name in our newspapers. These trite and exaggerated flatteries must be quite disagreeable to a man who is portrayed as the most austere, humble, and simple republican; but it seems that he does not dislike it as much as it is said he does; and under the philosophical cloak, a tiny bit of ear is showing. As for the rest, he is an economist.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, New York, 17 May 1789

You Say I had not a firmer Friend in the late Election. I must protest against this mode of reasoning. I am not obliged to vote for a Man because he voted for me, had my Office been ever so lucrative or ever so important. But ask your own heart, is not my Election to this Office, in the Scruffy manner in which it was done, a curse rather than a Blessing? Is there Gratitude? Is there Justice? Is there common Sense or decency in this Business? Is it not an indelible Stain on our Country, Countrymen and Constitution? I assure You I think it so, and nothing but an Apprehension of great Mischief, and the final failure of the Government, from my Refusal and assigning my reasons for it, prevented me from Spurning it.

Now my Friend We start fair—Never must I again hear a Selfish motive urged to me, to induce my Vote or Influence in publick affairs.

I never served the Public one moment in my Life, but to the loss and injury of myself and my Children, and I suffer as much by it, at this moment as ever.

Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 17 May 1789

I should inform You, Sir, that, in spite of Mr. Adams's tenacious opinions and the haughty republicanism that he shares with his countrymen I find him much more open and disposed to good sense than Mr. Jay. . . .

John Adams to Nathaniel P. Sargeant, New York, 22 May 1789

Despondency is not one of my Characteristics: on the contrary the world in general suppose me too much inclined to be sanguine. However this may be I have seen the dangers which surround me, and I hope have never been afraid to meet them. If I had been I should have perished long ago. I had more reasons to say that I should wear a Crown of Thorns than you can be aware of. Indeed I have been astonished to see how little informed Massachusetts Gentlemen who have never been before in Congress are of the real state of American Politicks—fifteen years cruel experience has made an indelible impression on my heart—New England is reproached with local Attachments. But the Truth is she is the least influenced by State Prejudices of any in the Union. She sacrifices her interests to the good of the Union. She sacrifices one after another all her ablest & meritorious Characters, She mortifies herself, and all her Friends in complaisance to southern Pride. Insolence and scorn—on the contrary She cries up to the Stars Southern Characters, to enable them to make her humiliation and Abasement the more Remarkable—a greater Insult was never offered to a People than the Maneuvered by which she was horse jockeyed in the late election of Vice President; yet she does not feel it nor see it—you may depend upon it, every honest man in whatever Station in the new Govt. will wear a Crown of Thorns until New England shall be more attentive, generous and Consistent—till then her honor & Interest will be sacrificed by one Adventurer after Another.

William Maclay: Journal, 28 May 1789

I began now to think of what Mr. Morris had told me. That it was necessary to make Mr. Adams Vice President to keep him quiet. He is antifederal, but one of a very different turn from the general Cast, a mark may be missed as well above as below, and he is an high flyer.

St. George Tucker to Thomas Tudor Tucker, 3 June 1789

Stimulated by my Indignation I have actually begun a political farce, the object of which is to ridicule the frivolity of the proceedings of the Senate [in debating titles], & to expose in its proper Colors the Character of *their* President, whom I consider as the high priest of Monarchy; ready to immolate a Hecatomb of his most virtuous Countrymen at that shrine.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, New York, 9 June 1789

I also, am as much a Republican as I was in 1775. I do not “consider hereditary Monarchy or Aristocracy as Rebellion against Nature.” On the contrary I esteem them both Institutions of admirable Wisdom and exemplary Virtue, in a certain Stage of Society in a great Nation. The only Institutions that can possibly preserve the Laws and Liberties of the People. And I am clear that America must resort to them as an Asylum against Discord, Seditions and Civil War and that at no very distant Period of time. I shall not live to see It—but you may: I think it therefore impolitick to cherish Prejudices against Institutions which must be kept in View as the Hope of our Posterity. I am by no means for Attempting any Such thing at present. Our Country is not ripe for it, in many respects and it is not yet necessary but our Ship must ultimately land on that shore or be cast away.

I do not “abhor Titles, nor the Pageantry of Government”—if I did I should abhor Government itself—for there never was, and never will be, because there never can be, any Government without Titles and Pageantry. There is not a Quaker Family in Pensilvania, governed without Titles and Pageantry, not a School, nor a College, nor a Club can be governed without them.

“I love the People,” with you—too well to cheat them, lie to them or deceive them. I wish those who have flattered them so much had loved them half as well. If I had not loved them I never would have Served them—if I did not love them now, I would not Serve them another hour—for I very well know that Vexation and Chagrine, must be my Portion, every moment I shall continue in public Life.

John Adams to William Tudor, New York, 12 June 1789

You need not be apprehensive of “any Faction” attempting to lessen the influence of the V.P. He has no dread of that upon his Mind. He will have as much Weight as he ought, and he would not have more if it were offered him. He flatters himself he knows his Stops, pretty well, at fifty three or four years of age. He must contend for “the dignity and Energy of Government” because he knows, that without dignity and Energy there can be no Government at all.

William Maclay: Journal, 22 June 1789

[Caleb] Strong this day mentioned in conversation that the President *would continue no longer in office than [when] he saw matters fairly set going*, and then Mr. Adams will begin his reign. This no doubt is a desirable era for the New England men. The very principles which actuated Dr. Rush and myself when we puffed John Adams in the papers and brought him forward for Vice-President will probably make him President. We knew his vanity, and hoped by laying hold of it to render him useful among the New England men in our scheme of bringing Congress to Pennsylvania. But his pride, obstinacy, and folly are equal to his vanity, and, although it is a common observation that fools are the tools of knaves—and I am certain weak men are often brought forward with such views—yet John Adams has served to illustrate two points at least with me, viz., that a fool is the most unmanageable of all brutes, and that flattery is the most irksome of all service.

John Adams to George Mason, Jr., Richmond Hill, N.Y., 4 July 1789

Your congratulations on my late appointment are very obliging. The Duties, of my office require a constant and laborious attention: but there is so much information, candor and dignity in the characters with whom I am associated, that application to business in concert with them is pleasure.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, New York, 9 July 1789

This is *entre nous*. Independence, my Boy and freedom from humiliating Obligations, are greater Sources of happiness, than Riches.

My office requires, rather Severe duty, and it is a kind of Duty, which if I do not flatter my self too much, is not quite adapted to my Character. I mean it is too inactive, and mechanical. The Chancellor sometimes wishes to leave the Woolsack, and engage in debate. But as it cannot be done, I am content, tho it sometimes happens that I am much inclined to think I could throw a little light upon a subject—if my health and Patience should hold out my four years, I can retire and make Way for some of you younger folks, for one Vacancy makes many Promotions.

David Stuart to George Washington, Abington, Fairfax County, Va., 14 July 1789

Nothing could equal the ferment and disquietude, occasioned by the proposition respecting titles—As it is believed to have originated from Mr. Adams & [R.H.] Lee, they are not only unpopular to an extreme, but highly odious—Neither I am convinced, will ever get a vote from this State again. As I consider it very unfortunate for the Government, that a person in the second office should be so unpopular, I have been much concerned at the clamor and abuse against him—Perhaps I feel it more sensibly, from being reminded of my insignificant exertions for him, as an Elector—The Opponents to the government affect to smile at it, and consider it as a verification of their prophecies about the tendency of the government. Mr. [Patrick] Henry’s description of it, that it squinted towards monarchy, is in every mouth, and has established him in the general opinion, as a true Prophet—It has given me much pleasure to hear every part of your conduct spoke of, with high approbation, and particularly your dispensing with ceremony occasionally, and walking the streets; while Adams is never seen but in his carriage & six—As trivial as this may appear, it appears to be more captivating to the generality, than matters of more importance—Indeed, I believe the great herd of mankind, form their judgments of characters, more from such light occurrences, than those of greater magnitude, and perhaps they are right, as the heart is more immediately consulted with respect to the former, than the latter, and an error of judgment, is more easily pardoned, than one of the heart.

John Adams to Jeremy Belknap, New York, 24 July 1789

My Experience, has very much diminished my Faith in the Veracity of History.—it has convinced me, that many of the most important facts are concealed.—some of the most important Characters, but imperfectly known—many false facts imposed on Historians and the World—and many empty Characters displayed in great Pomp.—All this I am sure, will happen in our American History.

George Washington to David Stuart, New York, 26 July 1789

One of the Gentlemen, whose name is mentioned in your letter, though high toned has never, I believe, appeared with more than *two* horses in his carriage—but it is to be lamented that *he* and *some others* have stirred a question which has given rise to so much animadversion and which I confess has given me much uneasiness.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 29 July 1789

[In response to Adams’s advocacy of aristocratical titles for the Presidency] It is a proof the more of the justice of the character given by Doctr. Franklin of my friend: always an honest man, often a great one, but sometimes absolutely mad.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Richmond Hill, N.Y., 9 August 1789

. . . his Rule through life has been to vote and act, independent of Party agreeable to the dictates of his conscience,

Henry Marchant to John Adams, Newport, R.I., 29 August 1789

When my Friend has all His Feelings wound up, upon an important Subject, and Vent must be given:—He has a Manner of Expression so peculiar to Himself, and so striking to the Heavens, that the Impression as from a stroke of Lightning is left behind, while the Flash and Sounds—The mode of Expression is lost or forgotten—His Words I will not engage to recollect with exactness—

Abigail Adams to Cotton Tufts, New York, 1 September 1789

Mr. Adams is well and will write to you soon. The Senate are so close to Business & he frequently has so much reading to do & such constant attention to the debates, that he comes home quite exhausted & unable to take his pen.

John Adams to James Lovell, New York, 1 September 1789

I have not yet answered your letter of the 26 of July. You guess well—I find that I shall have all the unpopular questions to determine: and shall soon be pronounced Hostis Republican generis*—What they will do with me I know not, but must trust to providence. You insinuate that I am accused “of deciding in favor of the power of the prince because I look up to that goal.” That I look up to that goal sometimes is very probable because it is not far above me, only one step, and it is directly before my eyes: so that I must be blind not to see it—I am forced to look up to it and bound by duty to do so, because there is only the breath of one mortal between me and it. There was lately cause enough to look up to it, as I did with horror, when that breath was in some danger of expiring. But deciding for the supreme, was not certainly the way to render that goal more desirable or less terrible nor was it the way to obtain votes for continuing in it, or an advancement to it. The way to have ensured votes would have been to have given up that power—There is not however to be serious, the smallest prospect that I shall ever reach that goal. Our beloved Chief is very little older than his second, has recovered his health and is a much stronger man than I am—a new Vice president must be chosen before a new President—This reflection give me no pain but on the contrary great pleasure: for I know very well that I am not possessed of the confidence and affection of my fellow Citizens, to the degree that he is. I am not of Caesar’s mind. The second place in Rome is high enough for me. Although I have a spirit that will not give up its right or relinquish its place whatever the world or even my friends, or even you who knew me so well may think of me, I am not an ambitious man. Submission to insult and disgrace is one thing: but aspiring to higher situations is another I am quite contented in my present condition and should not be discontented to leave it.

*An enemy of the republic.

John Adams to Thomas B. Adams, New York, 2 September 1789

Public business my son, must always be done by somebody—it will be done by somebody or other. If wise men decline it others will not: if honest men refuse it, others will not. A young man should well weigh his plans. Integrity should be preserved in all events, as essential to his happiness, through every stage of his existence. His first maxim then, should be to place his honor out of the reach of all men: In order to this he must make it a rule never to become dependant on public employments for subsistence. Let him have a trade a profession a farm a Shop, Something where by can honestly live, and then he may engage in public affairs, if invited, upon independent principles. My advice to my children. is to maintain and independent character, though in poverty and

obscurity: neither riches nor illustration will console a man under the reflection that he has acted a mean a mercenary part, much less a dishonest one.

Benjamin Franklin to M. Le Veillard, Philadelphia, 5 September 1789

I hope you have perfectly recovered of the Effects of your Fall at Madam Helvetius, and that you now enjoy perfect Health; as to mine, I can give you no good Account. I have a long time been afflicted with almost constant and grievous Pain, to combat which I have been obliged to have recourse to Opium, which indeed has afforded me some Ease from time to time, but then it has taken away my Appetite and so impeded my Digestion that I am become totally emaciated, and little remains of me but a Skeleton covered with a Skin. In this Situation I have not been able to continue my Memoirs, and now I suppose I shall never finish them.

John Adams to William Cushing, New York, 8 September 1789

My present office is as agreeable to me as any public office ever can be: and my situation as pleasing as any on this earth, excepting Braintree. My compensation will be straightened to such a degree, that to live among foreign ministers, travelling Americans, Governors, Chancellors, Judges, Senators and representatives in a style which my unmerciful Countrymen exact of all their public men, will require the consumption of the whole of it with the whole income of my private fortune added to it: and after all I shall be but poorly accommodated. But I have often been obliged to apply to myself what one of my predecessors in the Corps diplomatique in Holland, wrote to his master. The President Jeanin, Ambassador from Henry 4th of France, wrote him from Holland "Sire I have been so long used to labor a great deal, and profit little, that the habit is familiar, and I am contented." Jeanin however profited more and labored less, and never ran the gauntlet among halts, axes, libels, Daggers, cannon balls, and pistol bullets as I have done, nor performed one half of the immense journeys and voyages that have fallen to my lot.

Every unpopular point is invariably left to me to determine so that I must be the scape goat, to bear all their sins, without a possibility of acquiring any share in the honor of any of their popular deeds.

John Randolph of Roanoke to St. George Tucker, New York, 11 September 1789

Mr. Vice President says no man can be a sensible man without understanding Latin or French & a Gentleman ask'd him what he thought of Genl. Washington.

Fisher Ames to John Lowell, New York, 13 September 1789

Mr. Adams [as Vice president] has acted with a noble decision, and has repeatedly given the casting voice on great questions.

John Adams to Cotton Tufts, New York, 16 September 1789

Have you read Ned Church's fragment.? What Passion, or what Principle, could put it into that fellows head? I never injured, or offended him. I never saw him—He did not call on me. He never asked any Thing of me.—Washington refused or neglected him: and he fawns on Washington and Spits fire at Adams. poor Devil! I pity him.—it is however good Verse and will do me honour.—so i'l enjoy it.—

The Fellow Supposed it impossible but the first must always be jealous of the Second; and on this principle expected to recommend himself at Court by abusing a Rival: but in this he mistook the Characters both of the first and Second, between whom there is the most perfect Harmony and good Understanding.

John Adams to Henry Marchant, New York, 17 September 1789

There is more confinement, in my present situation than in any I have ever been in these thirty years, and another evil is come upon me, under which I suffered formerly, but from which I have been wholly relieved during my absence from America. Public speaking ever gave me a pain in my breast, which was not only troublesome for the time, but dangerous for the future. My present office not only obliges me to a constant and close attention of mind, but to continual reading and speaking, which has again affected la poitrine [i.e., the chest or breast] as it used to do, and raises many doubts how long I shall be able to go on.

John Adams to James Sullivan, New York, 21 September 1789

The older we grow the more those ideas of equilibrium to which we were born and bred will wear out of the minds of the people.

William Tudor to John Adams, Boston, 30 September 1789

It is singular that Massachusetts should continue “nothing” from a Want of System & Union in her Delegates. And what is still more disgraceful that Her paltry Policy, & debasing Economy should withhold a Compensation for the noblest Services of her ablest Citizens. Had the Vice president been born on the other side of the Potomac, how greatly would his Foreign services & American Merits have been estimated! As he belongs to New England, it is left to Posterity to do Justice to his Character, his Talents & his unparalleled negotiations. And with such a glorious future Prospect, a Man ought to be content to be a Beggar—say the ungrateful, the Envious & the Miserly.

Comte de Moustier to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 3 October 1789

The Vice president is nowhere near as important a personage as Mr. Adams would like to make him; all the efforts he has made in this regard have only served to render him ridiculous and expose him to many unpleasantnesses. They almost came to the point of expressing in front of him in the Senate the absolute uselessness of a dignity such as his. Thus his position affording him but little consideration, while his personal pedantry renders him odious or ridiculous it must be hoped that his influence will have very little effect. The little success that he had in England has greatly tempered his exaltations in favor of that former Mother Country. As for the rancor which he always has at the bottom of his heart against France, for not having known to appreciate his merit and great talents (as a political compiler and speculative thinker) I hope that this will produce few noticeable effects.

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John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 26 December 1789

I have enough to do to write in Answer to Invitations to dinner and to Tea Parties: but I have long since taken the Resolution that I will not again loose myself and all my time in a wild vagary of Dissipation. As it is not my Power to live on equal terms with the Families and Personages who exhibit so much real Hospitality in this City, I would not lay myself under obligations to that which I could not repay. But besides this I have other Motives. I have Occasions for some time to write Letters to my friends, and for more, that I may read something, and be wholly ignorant of what is passing in the literary world. There is more pleasure and Advantage to me, in this than is to be found in Parties at dinner or at Tea.

Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 26 December 1789

. . . the great and honest Mr. Adams [should be elected vice president]

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 6 February 1790

I shall now take up a more important subject; and in return for the advice received, (for I do not choose to be in any Man's debt) address some hints to the Vice-President, relative to his own political situation, & the strictures made upon his conduct by his Enemies. I shall ask no excuse for my assurance, & am certain my motive needs no Apology.

Be it remembered then, that the Vice-President is a native of New England, & that the inhabitants of the Southern States are not yet entirely cured of their local jealousies—that without any considerable advantages from the pride of family, or the favours of fortune, he has raised himself to that eminent station, solely by his personal merit, & the importance of his public services—& that this circumstance has provoked the pride & raised the envy of many of the Southern Aristocrats, who suppose themselves born to greatness, & cannot bear to be eclipsed by merit only—That this Party are endeavouring to represent his character in an unfavorable light, & if possible prevent his ever rising to the first office in the States, whenever a vacancy shall happen. The obloquy they have endeavoured to raise against him, as having deserted his republican principles, & become fond of the splendor, & titles of monarchical Courts, is well known, & needs no remark, because it has nearly subsided in the New England States, where his character is known & justly appreciated—it may perhaps still be a subject of unjust censure in the southern States—But must there at length subside, as their people, who are an age behind us in political knowledge, become convinced of the necessity of energy in the executive Department. But they attempt an attack on another ground, & endeavour to render him unpopular in the Senate, the principal theatre on which his political talents can now be exerted. They assert that the Constitution gives the President of the Senate no right to mingle in their debates—that he can on no occasion with propriety offer his sentiments at large, except when he is requested to give information respecting the affairs of foreign courts, which have fallen under his personal observation, or when in case of an equivote, he states his reasons on giving his casting voice. They add, that as a public Speaker, the talents in

which he excells all others, are force of argument & strength of language, approaching to sarcasm, and expressive of some degree of contempt for the opinions & reasonings of his adversaries—that in consequence, whenever he mingles in debate, he offends those whose sentiments he opposes—while the party he supports are not always pleased, as his idea of the necessity of affording his assistance is a tacit reflection on them, as incompetent advocates of a good cause—that he who mingles in debate subjects himself to frequent retorts from his opposers, places himself on the same ground with his inferiors in rank, appears too much like the leader of a Party, & renders it more difficult for him to support the dignity of the chair, & preserve order & regularity in the debate—while he gives his enemies frequent opportunity by reporting casual expressions, which have fallen in the warmth of argument, to misrepresent his opinions & designs, with little danger of detection—as the doors of the Senate are always shut.

Of the truth or justice of these remarks I am no judge—but I have heard them so frequently made, & sometimes by men who I am sure are not unfriendly, and in every other respect have the highest esteem for your abilities & character, that I thought it my duty to communicate them—especially as on so delicate a subject it was doubtful whether You would hear of them in any other way—I should have chosen to hint them in a personal interview, but my business has disappointed me of a visit to New York, which I had intended in the course of this winter.

John Adams to John Trumbull, New York, 9 March 1790

You talk of my Ennemies: but I assure You I have *none*. I am the Ennemy of no Man living; and I know of none who is an Ennemy to me.—I have injured no Man alive—I have not intentionally offended any Man: and I know not that I have actually offended any. This I think gives me a right to say that I have not an Ennemy. . . . When I said I had no Ennemy, I did not mean to deny that I was envied—but Envy is not Enmity.—But Envy need not labour to prevent me from being President. there is no danger. The President is happily likely to live longer than the V.P.—and if it should be otherwise ordered, the V.P. has no desire to be P.—He would retire to his Farm with more pleasure than ever he accepted any public office. Whether this is believed or not is a matter of Indifference at present. . . .

To be candid with you, the situation I am in, is too inactive and insignificant for my disposition, and I care not how soon I quit it.—While in it, however I wish to do my Duty, and avoid giving just offence.

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 14 March 1790

Art & dissimulation are the very Antipodes to your character.

Louis Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 31 March 1790

There is no more question of Mr. Adams [being elected President] who has lost all his credit the better one has understood him; there are even some people who doubt he can ever be reelected vice president. Too monarchical in his sentiments, he has even had the imprudence to extol the British Constitution on every occasion with no regard for the principles of the country in which he lives, principles which at the commencement of the revolution he himself had in some ways inspired.

John Adams to John Trumbull, New York, 2 April 1790

. . . my Soul and Body have been devoted to the Public for thirty Years. The Success that has in all this Period attended the Public in every Thing in which I have been engaged, astonishes and overwhelms me whenever I look back upon it.—My Mind and Heart are full and my Eyes flow,—not with Vanity nor Pride; but with Wonder and with gratitude. Thus far you will Say, I set up my Pretensions very high.—But the Reverse of the Picture mortifies all my Vanity and what is more gives me very Serious apprehensions of great Calamities to the Public.—Through the whole thirty years, I have Seen and felt that the Public have been Served against their Wills. I have Seen affection and Gratitude and Enthusiasm for others, but never for me. A Reluctance to receive and acknowledge my services has ever been apparent. A constant Pleasure has been taken in throwing little Slights, and Sly mortifications and sometimes cruel Insults in my Way.—But this is not the Worst. I have Seen Such Characters as Will. Molineux, Dr. Young, Common sense Paine and fifty others, run away with the Passions and Confidence of the People, obtain more Influence than I had, and propagate Principles and systems destructive to the People and the public good, in Spight of all the Arguments I could Use and all the Interest I could make with them or the People. If there was an End of these Things, I should be happy. But there is more of this Spirit than ever, and I See my Friends and the Friends of the Public duped in so gross a manner, that I despair. A lying Manoeuvre, brought me into my present Seat in a manner that invites every Puppy to give himself Airs.—By Writing to the Southern states that New England would not vote generally for Washington and by Writing to New England that Virginia and S. Carolina would not vote for him, they raised an apprehension that I should be President; to prevent which so many Votes were thrown away that I had not a Majority—and what hurt me more than all the rest, even Connecticut was the Dupe of this Intrigue. The Consequence of this is, a general popular opinion that I stand on so weak ground, that I may be insulted in Gazettes and Pamphlets at Pleasure.

The Number who worship splendor are greater than that of those who despise it. Humphreys whom I love as you do, may do well to lay aside his French embroidery—I never wore any in Europe; but I must now from necessity wear over again my French cloaths; for my salary will not admit (thanks to New England representatives) of my purchasing new ones, more cheap and plain.

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 17 April 1790

I can witness from my own knowledge of the history of your life, that You have not done yourself more than Justice in the account of your exertions, services & sufferings in the public cause—Nor do I believe those services so much forgotten or disregarded as You seem to suppose—That no strong enthusiasm has prevailed in your favor is easily accounted for. An able Negotiator may do infinitely more service to his country, than a General, who fights one successful battle—but he will not be equally the object of the enthusiasm of momentary praise—To raise the enthusiasm of the People, our services must not only be useful, but brilliant—nay 'tis sufficient if they are brilliant, whether importantly useful or not. As a Writer, You never flattered the passions, or adopted the false opinions of the multitude, but have exerted your pen to oppose both. . . . This is no time to desert the public—Your exertions were never more wanted. I never had any other Master in Politics but Yourself, & I am too old to begin in a new school.

John Adams to Richard Price, New York, 19 April 1790

I thank you, Sir, for your kind Compliment.—As it has been the great Aim of my life to be Useful; if I had any reason to think I was so, as you seem to suppose, it would make me happy.

Founders on the Founders

For “Eminence” I care nothing.—For, though I pretend not to be exempt from Ambition, or any other human passion, I have been convinced from my Infancy, and have been confirmed, every year and day of my life, that the Mechanic and Peasant, are happier than any Nobleman or Magistrate or King; and that the higher a man rises, if he has any sense of duty, the more anxious he must be. . . .

I am a sincere Inquirer after Truth.—But I find very few, who discover the same Truths.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, New York, 21 April 1790

This Day twelve months I first took the Seat in which I now sett, and I have not been absent one Moment, when the senate has been sitting, excepting one Day when my own Salary was under Consideration. This Confinement will injure my health, if I cannot soon take a Journey.

John Adams to John Trumbull, New York, 25 April 1790

They may depend upon it, they will find in me a Man who has Patience but will not be a Sport nor a Dupe.

Louis Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin, 13 June 1790

The popularity of Mr. Adams, Vice President of the United States, is falling lower and lower. The monarchical ideas that he is always spreading in his speeches and in his writings excite the indignation of some and the contempt of others. Superstitiously prejudiced in favor of the English constitution, he floods the gazettes with his political dreams about the creation of Lords and the royal prerogative. As Vice President he likes to consider himself as heir apparent of the American Presidency and his principles are distrusted the more the motive making him act is clearly seen. In his publications the austere republican who at the beginning of the Revolution preached equality of conditions in the streets of Boston is no longer recognized. His conversations manifest his decided contempt for the people and his desire to introduce an hereditary nobility, he who had formerly written against the establishment of the order of Cincinnati as prejudicial to the equality of conditions. He was satisfied up to now to set forth only the theory of his principles, but he is beginning to apply them in writing some commentaries on the conduct of the National Assembly of France under the title of *Discourses on Davila*. He told me one day with his customary modesty: “I see well that I will have to make another trip to France in order to explain to them my book which they have not rightly understood.” This book is a pretended apology of the American Constitutions, in which he gives excessive praise to that of England. Dr. [Richard] Price having written him “that it was to be desired that the National Assembly had turned this book to a better account,” he has had that flattering letter printed. Finally, one cannot take more trouble than Mr. Adams does to make himself disagreeable to the greatest number; and the public, tired of his diatribes, begins to harass him with lampoons and epigrams. It appears certain at present that he will never be President and that he will have a very formidable competitor in Mr. Jefferson who, with more talents and knowledge than he, has infinitely more the principles and manners of a republican.

John Adams to Elkanah Watson, Jr., Philadelphia, 16 December 1790

My Rambles abroad appear to me like a Dream: and if your Book had not recalled the Scene of the drowning Babe I might never have thought of it more. My Imagination is always refreshed

with the Recollection of my Walks and rides about the Hague which are charming: and with those in the Bois de Boulogne, more than with the more Splendid Scenes at Courts or in Cities.

John Adams to John Trumbull, Philadelphia, 23 January 1791

I find the office I hold, tho laborious, so wholly insignificant, and from the blind Policy of that part of the World from whence I came, So Stupidly pinched and betrayed that I wish myself again at the Bar, old as I am. My own Situation is almost the only one, in the World in which Firmness and Patience are Useless.

John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Philadelphia, 24 February 1791

It was not, till yesterday that I received your kind Letter, with your Discourse on Animation;* for both of which obliging favours I pray you to accept of my best Thanks.

My incessant Drudgery, for three and thirty Years in the dull fields and forests of Law and Politicks, has rendered it impossible for me to Spare much of my time, in disquisitions of natural Knowledge. Whenever any Thing of the kind however has accidentally fallen in my Way, it has revived the fond Attachment of my Youth, and given me more pleasure than I can account for.

There is no Physical Subject has occurred oftener to my Thoughts, or excited more of my Curiosity, than that which you chose for your Discourse, *Animal Life*. It has long appeared to me astonishing, that it should be impossible to discover, what it is, which the Air conveys into our Lungs and leaves behind it, in the Body when We breathe. This, whatever it is, Seems to be, the Cause of Life, or at least of the continuance and Support of it, in the larger Animals, whether the Air, in any Similar manner, Supports the Animalcules which We discover by Microscopes, in almost every kind of substance I know not.

*On the Principle of Vitality. A Discourse Delivered in the First Church in Boston, Tuesday, June 8th, 1790. Before the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Boston, 1791) (Evans 23038).

John Adams to Peter Thacher, Philadelphia, 25 February 1791

As we advance in life Friends with whom we have cooperated, and Enemies with whom we have contended fall around us. For my own part mine have fallen in such numbers both in Europe, and America, within a few years, that I begin to feel almost alone in the World; At my age, new Friends are not easy to procure, and indeed new Enemies if we have any such, appear of much less consequence. An Old man really seems to me sometimes, to have more regard even for his old enemies, than his new friends. My generation is going fast off the stage, and another rushing on, and with its opinions, Moral, Metaphysical, Political and Civil, which I comprehend not. There are in Europe appearances, which indicate such changes, that it is not extravagant to say, that there may be countries in another Century intollerant not only of Christianity but of Theism; Martyrdom at the Stake for professing the Belief of a God, and a future State, seems beyond credibility but it would be but a natural consequence of opinions and systems now propagating with the Zeal of Proseliteism.

John Adams to John Trumbull, Philadelphia, 31 March 1791

I thank you Sir for your friendly communications respecting myself. It was news to me. I have said little concerning myself, and am determined to say still less; to you however I will be so free

in confidence as to say, that as it has appeared to be the desire, both of North and South to annihilate me and my Office, I have acquiesced, not indeed without some little wonder at the policy at least of the North. If as you think my spirit is not agreeable to some Gentlemen, I shall not however humiliate much less debase that spirit in complaisance to those Gentlemen. If as you say my morals are not agreeable, I am at a loss to know whether those morals are too good or too bad. If they are too good I shall not make them worse in complaisance to those Gentlemen. Heaven knows I wish them better as much as any of them; If as you suppose my manners are not agreeable, I am at a loss to guess in what particular. Manners comprehend Court[e]sy Civility, Hospitality and graceful attitudes, gestures and motions. In point of civility I have not been wanting in hospitality I have gone beyond not only all the means that their generosity has furnished, but beyond all the income of my private Fortune. Instead therefore of reforming in this particular in their sense I am determined to alter according to my own sense, and live more within my income. As to elegance of behavior, without making any vain pretensions in this respect I may boldly affirm no Southern Gentleman has a right to reproach me except the President, and he I know has no disposition to do it. That there is and will be a Rival [for the Vice Presidency] I doubt not. There is a French intrigue at work to this purpose as deep as it is wicked. My countrymen with all their sagacity and all their vigilance are not enough acquainted with the World, not with the History of their own Revolution, to be upon their guard against political inventions concealed with infinite art, urged with unwearied diligence, multiplied and varied with fruitful ingenuity, and pursued with long perseverance. Panegyrics upon panegyrics come from Europe upon some characters in order to lessen others; Politicks are carried on instead of Philosophy in learned and scientific Accademies; Newspapers from Georgia to New-hampshire Magazines &ca. are Cooked and dress'd. The populace are made the dupes of their own feelings, Aristocrats are bloated with their own pride. To me these things are familiar. I have been a suffering witness and have a good memory. But my misfortune is that no man knows them all but myself; but I will own to you, all that ever I have suffered, has never made so deep an impression on me, as to see N. England duped more than all the rest, and made the blind instrument of punishing the only friends She ever had, for their friendship to her. I shall go on however so long as It spirit and principles will support me; but the first moment these fail me, will be considered as a Revelation of the will of Heaven to retire.

John Adams to Henry Marchant, Philadelphia, 3 March 1792

You mention one very grave and serious charge against me which I never heard of before; to be sure it deserves a sober refutation. You say—Mr. Ad—s does not walk the Streets enough.— This I deny—I can prove by many witnesses that I walk a league in the Streets of Philadelphia every day, which is more than any other member of Congress ever did. So that in this respect I am undoubtedly the man of the most merit, any where to be found.

Pierce Butler to Colonel Robert Anderson, Philadelphia, 18 September 1792

I am told an attempt will be made to Oust the Vice President. I think it shou'd not be done; for tho' I disapprove of his political Tenetts, I think there are worse Characters in the General Governmt. America owes to this Man—he has given the Prime (almost the whole) of his life to his country—he step'd forward at an early and critical period, and, whatever his present Politicks may be, was then a firm Republican; he has the virtue of not being a hypocrite; whatever his opinions are he discloses them—did every other person in the general Government do so, possibly we shou'd see some more exceptionable Characters than Mr. Adams. It is well known in Senate that

he and myself have not thought alike; and that he forced me by his imprudence to be very plain with him; but that shall have no influence on my opinion of the Man, or what appears to me wrong, the displacing of him.

Pierce Butler to John Hunter, Philadelphia, 28 September 1792

It is said here that some attempts will be made to displace the Vice President. I hope not—for tho' I don't like His Political tenets I am persuaded worse men may be found. It is well known in Senate that He and myself do not think alike in Politicks; and that He by his imprudence obliged me to speak plainer to him than I wish'd to do; but this has no effect on my opinion of the man. He is no hypocrite. He speaks as he thinks; if every man in the General Government did the same, we shou'd find worse men than Mr. Adams in it. I am therefore not for displacing Him.

Alexander Hamilton to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Philadelphia, 10 October 1792

Mr. Adams, whatever objections may be against some of his theoretic opinions, is a firm honest independent politician.

Alexander Hamilton to John Steele, Philadelphia, 15 October 1792

Mr. Adams like other men has his faults and his foibles. Some of the opinions he is supposed to entertain, we do not approve—but we believe him to be honest firm faithful and independent—a sincere lover of his country—a real friend to genuine liberty; but combining his attachment to that with the love of order and stable government. No man's private character can be fairer than his. No man has given stronger proofs than him of disinterested & intrepid patriotism.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 December 1792

How the Election is gone I know not. It cannot go amiss for me, because I am prepared for every Event. Indeed I am of the Cat kind and fall upon my feet, throw me as they will. I hear some very good Stories to this purpose sometimes.

Aedanus Burke to James Monroe, Charleston, S.C., 16 December 1792

As to Mr. John Adams, his political Maxims I well know. I have long thought, that with principles like his, so hostile to a Republic so bigoted to Royalty, that such a man should hold the second place in the Admionistration of our popular System, is a stain upon the System itself, and must give to its friends but a sad presage concerning its duration. As far as the Election of Mr. Adams goes, it is a blow of suicide against the Republican system; the folly whereof strikes one forceably, when we recollect that under a Monarch or single Ruler, he would never dream of elevating to the summit of authority, a man who openly avowed himself a foe to Royalty. He would never commit an act of such supreme folly, as our Republicans have run into more than once or twice. It answers no end to dwell upon this subject; all I have to do, is to wish that more good sense & information may go forth among the people.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 24 January 1793

I cannot say that my desire of Fame increases. It has been Strong in some Parts of my Life but never so strong as my Love of honesty. I never in my Life that I know of sacrificed my Principles or Duty to Popularity, or Reputation. I hope I am now too old ever to do it. But one knows not how tryals may be borne, till they are made.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 February 1793

The Personal hatreds and Party Animosities which prevail here, have left me more in tranquility than any other Person. The Altercations between the humble Friends of the two or three Ministers have done no service to the Reputation of either. The S[ecretary] of the Treasury has suffered as much as the Secretary of State. Ambition is imputed to both, and the Moral Character of both has Suffered in the Sensing. . . . Hamilton has been intemperately puffed and this has excited green Eyed Jealousy and haggard Envy. Jay's Friends have let Escape feelings of Jealousy as well as Jefferson's. And it is very natural. Poor me who have no Friends to be jealous, I am left out of the question and pray I ever may.

John Adams to John Trumbull, Quincy, Mass., 18 March 1793

I am commencing my Agricultural Career for the season in which I shall have as much Pleasure as all your Law, Politicks, Wit and Fame will procure you though not so much profit. It is very fortunate for me that I have a little farm and that I love it ardently for without both, I shall soon Sink under the Weight of dull Care.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 December 1793

My office reIto compleatly insignificant that all Parties can afford to treat me with a decent respect which accordingly they do, as far as I observe, or hear or suspect. They all know that I can do them neither much good nor much harm.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 21 January 1794

I go to Senate every day, read the Newspapers before I go and the Public Papers afterwards, see a few Friends once a Week, go to Church on Sundays; write now and then a Line to you and to Nabby: and oftener to Charles than to his Brothers to see if I can fix his Attention and excite his Ambition in which design I flatter myself I shall have Success.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 February 1794

The Times are very calm here at present and political societies are very Silent. There is Scarcely Animation enough in either house, to excite Attention. One may sleep in the midst of a Debate. I have not yet tried however.

I am more solitary than I was last Winter. But I can read. Writing is painful to my Eyes.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 8 February 1794

Congress have been together more than two Months and have done nothing, and will continue Sitting two Months longer, and do little. I for my part am wearied to death with Ennui—Obliged

Founders on the Founders

to be punctual by my habits, confined to my Seat, as in a Prison to see nothing done, hear nothing Said, and to Say and do nothing.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 10 February 1794

I am weary of this eternal Indecision. I wish for the Time when Old Sam And Old John conducted with more wisdom and more success. This is Egotism enough to deserve the Guillotine to be sure but I cannot but recollect old scenes, and old Results.

Mary Smith Otis to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 23 February 1794

Your good gentleman I think enjoys his health very well. He some times says he is not, but he looks fat & hearty. I rather think he is more homesick, & times-sick, than bodily indisposed.—

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 11 March 1794

Let him [i.e., John Quincy Adams] listen to the Charge of a Father to mind his private Business and keep himself forever independent of the Smiles or Frowns of political Parties. A rigorous Frugality in Spight of all the Sneers of Bankrupts, Debauchers and Puppies. A Solid Income from a landed Estate in the Country; an unwearied Attention to study and Business; and an Integrity inexorable to every temptation, will carry him, as it has his father, through Life with more comfort and Honour and enable him to do more good than hundreds of thousands of Reptiles and Insects by which he may be sometimes annoied.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 12 March 1794

[In the U.S. Senate.] Business is now carried on with rapidity in both House, and I shall have a month of Severe Duty. I have not been Absent a Day. It is to be sure a Punishment to hear other Men talk five hours every day, and not be at Liberty to talk at all myself: especially as more than half I hear appears to me very young inconsiderate and inexperienced.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 11 May 1794

Your favour of the 25th of last month, came to my hands Yesterday and I am glad to find you so well pleased with your Retirement.—I felt the same delightful satisfaction after my Return from Europe, and I feel still every summer upon my little farm all the Ardour, and more than all the Ardor of youth: to such a Degree that I cannot bear the thought of writing or reading, unless it be some trifle to fill up a vacant half hour. . . .

If I had your Plantation and your Labourers I should be tempted to follow your Example and get out of the Fumum et opes strepitumque Romæ,* which I abominate.

*“The smoke, the wealth, the din of Rome.”

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 12 May 1794

Baron Steuben is gone to his Plantation there to reside for the Remainder of his Days. I often wish that the time was come for me to return to mine, much humbler and poorer than his. But Retirement like other Things would only please for a while and then become insipid.—so I go on a little longer. You Young Folks must prepare to take your turns.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 15 May 1794

By the Way this statehouse Yard is a beautiful Thing formed on an English Plan, like the In-closure in Grosvenor Square. I walk there every day for Air and Exercise in the shade. It is not a Pain's Hill nor a stow, nor a Leasows—but it is pretty.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 19 May 1794

Mr. John [Quincy Adams], I hear rises in his Reputation at the Bar as well as in the Esteem of his fellow Citizens. His Writings have given him a greater Consideration in this Place than he is aware of.—I am Sometimes told that I ought to be proud of him; and truly I don't want to be told this. He will be made a Politician too soon. But he is a Man of great Experience, and I hope sound Philosophy. He was a greater statesman at Eighteen, than some senators I have known at fifty.—But he must learn Silence and Reserve, Prudence, Caution—above all to curb his Vanity and collect himself. faculties or Virtues that his Father has often much wanted.—I have often thought he has more Prudence at 27 than his Father at 58.—

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 26 May 1794

I shall take Leave on Saturday 31 of May: but cannot hope to get home before the 10 or 12th of June. The Journey lies before me, like a Mountain—I am too old and too feeble for these long Journeys, dry sessions and uncomfortable Scene—I am at an Age when I ought to be at home with my Family.

Abigail Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, Quincy, Mass., 14 August 1794

A powerful motive for me to remain here during the absence of your Father is the necessity there is that such care and attention should be paid to our affairs at home as will enable us to live in an humble state of independence whenever your father quits public life which he daily becomes more and more anxious to do. You, my dear daughter, must know that nearly thirty years of the most active part of your father's life have been devoted to the service of his Country—the pecuniary emoluments of which have never permitted him to live equal to the stations in which he has been placed nor by any means equal to what as a private gentleman with his professional abilities he would have attained if he had not been called into public life. He has lived to see the Country rise to a state of freedom and prosperity and is conscious that the faithful discharge of the part allotted to him has contributed largely to her glory and independence. He has ever sustained the character of the independent freeman of America. Unseduced by the intrigues of France on the one hand neither duped by the Politics of Britain on the other he sought the best interests of America with an undeviating progress through all her dangers and perils.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 9 November 1794

I am apt to Suspect Speculations upon Credit, tho sometimes they may be Successful. I however have always placed my Glory in Moderation, not having Spirit enough to undertake, nor Understand enough to conceive great Projects and Enterprizes.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 January 1795

May I never have to reproach myself with faults which I have seen so often with Grief, shame, and Indignation in others. I know not that ever in my Life I gave a Vote against my Judgment. May I never deprive myself of the Power of saying this to my Wife and to my God in my last hour: I wonder that many of my Votes have not sent me home but here I am after a series of trying Years.

Four and thirty Years, the most of my Thoughts and Anxieties have been for the Public. Twenty Years have been wholly devoted to public Employment. My forces of Mind and Body are nearly spent. Few Years remain for me, if any. In public Life probably fewer still. If I could leave my Country in greater Security, I should retire with Pleasure. But a great cloud hangs over it yet. I mean a Cloud of Ignorance. Knavery and Folly. Whether a torrent can be stemm'd or not is yet uncertain. My Hopes however are stronger than my fears, and I am determined to be as happy as I can.

To a heart that loves Praise so well and receives so little of it your Letter is like Laudanum which Mr. [John] Henry the senator [from Maryland] Says is the Divinity itself.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 20 January 1795

Cold as it is, my heart is as warm as ever towards her whom I commit.

John Adams to Charles Adams, Philadelphia, 7 February 1795

I am not without Anxiety on account of your health. You appeared to me, when you were here, to be too plethorick. There are innumerable Disorders which originate in Fulness, especially in a seditary and a studious Life. You must rouse yourself from your Lethargy and take your Wallk, every Day. When you cannot walk abroad, walk in your Room: open your Windows and air your Room as often as you can. Make it a rule not to sit long in the Same Place. Rise up now and then, open your Windows & walk about your room a few Times, then sit down again to your Books or your Pen.

One of the most essential Things for a Lawyer is to study his Constitution and take Care of his Health.—Exercise is indispensable—No Regimen without it, will do. No Abstinence no Medicine, No Diet will Supply its Place. Move or die, is the Language of our Maker in the Constitution of our Bodies. Your Constitution is a very good one, and it will be unpardonable in you not to preserve it. . . . without immediate Ennergy, Exertion and Activity, Charles your Health will decline and your Mind will become weak, heavy and clumzy like your Body.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 26 April 1795

It is painful to the Vanity of an Old Man to acknowledge the Decays of Nature; but I have lost the habit of Writing from the Want of a Clerk, from weak Eyes and from a trembling hand, to such a degree, that a Pen is as terrible to me, as a sword to a Coward, or which is perhaps a more suitable comparison, as a rod to a Child.

John Adams to Jeremy Belknap, Quincy, Mass., 22 October 1795

Inclosed is the Letter of Dr Tucker.—If I should agree with him in his Maxim Fiat Justitia ruat Cælum* the question would still remain what is Justice. Justice to the Negroes would require that

they should not be abandoned by their Masters and turned loose upon a World in which they have no Capacity to procure even a Subsistence. What would become of the old? the young? the infirm? Justice to the World too would forbid that such Numbers should be turn'd out to live by Violence or Theft or fraud.

I believe no better Expedient will be found than to prohibit the Importation of new Negroes, and Soften the Severity of the Condition of old ones, as much as possible, untill the increasing Population of the Country shall have multiplied the whites to such a Superiority of Numbers, that the Blacks may be liberated by Degrees, with the Consent both of Master and Servant

*Let justice be done, though the heavens fall.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 January 1796

It is no light thing to resolve upon Retirement. My Country has claims—my Children have claims and my own Character have claims upon me. But all These Claims forbid me to serve the Public in disgrace. What ever any one may think I love my Country too well to shrink from Danger in her service provided I have a reasonable prospect of being able to serve her to her honor and Advantage. But if I have Reason to think that I have either a Want of Abilities or of public Confidence to such a degree as to be unable to support the Government in a higher Station, I ought to decline it.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 January 1796

I believe You have become a favorite at Court [i.e., with President Washington]. You dine so often.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 20 January 1796

I am as you say quite a favorite. I am to dine again. I am Heir Apparent you know and a Succession is soon to take Place. But whatever may be the Wish of the Judgment of the present Occupant, the French and the Demagogues intend I presume to set aside the Descent. All these hints must be Secrets. It is not a subject of Conversation as yet. I have a pious and a philosophical Resignation to the Voice of the People in this Case which is the Voice of God. I have no very ardent desire to be the Butt of Party Malevolence. Having tasted of that Cup I found it bitter, nauseous and unwholesome.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 23 January 1796

The Southern Gentry are playing at present a very artful Game, which I may devallope to you in Confidence hereafter, under the Seal of Secrecy. Both in Conversation and in Letters they are representing the Vice President as a Man of Moderation. Although rather inclined to limited Monarchy and somewhat attached to the English, he is much less than Jay or Hamilton. For their Parts for the sake of Conciliation they should be very Willing he should be continued as Vice President, provided the Northern Gentlemen would consent that Jefferson should be President. I most humbly thank you for your Condescension, Messieurs Transchespeaks.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 26 January 1796

[With no mail from Abigail, John worried that she was sick. To occupy his time, he read from several books] and Smoked I know not how many Segars.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 29 January 1796

I have read this Week Dr. Styles's History of Whalley Goffe, Dixwell and Whale* and Governor Adams's Speech to the General Court and I find them both melancholly Examples of superannuation. In the Speech I see the fruit of old Spite against Washington Jay and Old England as well as weak Affectation of Popularity. Personal Malice against Men or Countries, has either no Existence in my heart, or they are suppressed & overawed by a decisive sentiment of their Antichristian and Antiphilosophical and Antimoral Turpitude & Deformity. Yet I cannot answer for myself that my shaking hands and trembling Lips may not expose to the World Weakness, folly and Wickedness as gross as this. If I should live to advanced Age, Reflections like these determine me at all Events to retire from the public stage in good Season.

*Ezra Stiles, *A History of Three of the Judges of King Charles I* (Hartford, Conn., 1794). The three judges were Edward Whalley, William Goffe, and John Dixwell.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 31 January 1796

I read forever, and am determined to sacrifice my Eyes like John Milton rather than give up the Amusement without which I should despair.

Search We the Spot which mental power contains? Go where Man gets his living by his Brains. If I had my Living by my Brains for seven Years past I should have had more mental Power. But Brains have not only been Useless but even hurtful and pernicious in my Course. Mine have been idle a long time—till they are rusty.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 2 February 1796

I See daily So many affecting Proofs of the debilitating Power of Age, that I pity an old Man when he exposes himself. I had Yesterday a Scene in my own Chamber, which moved the tender feelings of my heart for a friend advanced in Years, not many however beyond my own. I feel bold and Strong myself, tho my hands shake but my Age admonishes me to have a Care. . . .

Let not my Communications worry thee. I am unchangeably determined to serve Under no other than Washington. Telemachus Says to the Suitors. 1. Odyssey, 490 &c.

I am not averse

From Kingly cares if Jove appoint me Such.

I will not resist Jupiter—I will resign to his Will. If his Will is that that any other should be president I know his Will also is that I should be a Farmer—for he has given me an understanding and a heart, which ought not and cannot and will not bow under Jefferson nor Jay nor Hamilton. It would be wicked in me. It would be countenancing Tyranny Corruption & Villany in the People.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 8 February 1796

Upon the whole however my health and Spirits have been better this Winter, than at any time since I had the Ague, a Blessing which I attribute to the free Use of my horse the last Summer.

Health and Spirits and Leisure have revived my old Passion for Reading to such a degree as diverting me from my usual Exercise of Walking when I cannot ride, alarms me for the Continuance of my Health.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 10 February 1796

I am weary of the Game. Yet I don't know how I could live out of it. I don't love Slight, neglect, Contempt, disgrace nor Insult more than others. Yet I believe I have firmness of Mind enough to bear it like a Man, a Hero and a Philosopher.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 15 February 1796

I have not the Smallest dread of private Life, nor of public—if private Life is to be my Portion my farm and my Mare shall employ the rest of my days.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., [28] February 1796

I am happy to learn that You enjoy your Health so well. The Season is approaching when colds are prevalent. You are so subject to them that I daily expect you to complain.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 1 March 1796

As to the Subject of yours of the 20th [about the Presidency]. I am quite at my Ease. I never felt less Anxiety when any considerable Change lay before me. Aut transit aut fin. I transmigrate or come to an End. The Question is between living at Phila. or at Quincy, between great Cares and Small Cares. I have looked into myself and see no meanness nor dishonesty there. I see weakness enough. But no timidity.

The only Question that labors in my Mind is whether I shall retire with my Leader? I hate to live in Phila. in Summer and I hate still more to relinquish my farm. I hate Speeches, Messages, Addresses and answers, Proclamations and such affected, constrained Things. I hate Levees and Drawing Rooms. I hate to Speak to a 1000 People to whom I have nothing to say. Yet all this I can do. But I am too old to continue more than one or at most more than two heats [i.e., summers], and that is scarcely time enough to form contact and compleat any very useful system.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 3 March 1796

I find the V.P. toasted at most of the Feasts and even Brown has announced Mr. Adams's appearance at the Theatre with Pleasure. All this is as I, conjecture Electioneering. The other side will probably begin soon. And I shall regard it with as much Apathy, as is in my nature.—I feel collected and unmoved. The Principle of the Conclave goes a great Way in many Elections. All Parties will frequently concur in the Choice of the oldest Cardinal, because he cannot hold the Papal Chair long.—I am so old that they all know they can make me miserable enough to be glad to get out of it as soon as Washington if not in half the time.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 11 March 1796

Oh that I had a Bosom to lean my Head upon: But how dare you hint or Lisp a Word about Sixty Years of Age. If I were near, I would soon convince you that I am not above forty.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 12 March 1796

Alass she was little more than thirty Years older than myself.* I shall never see her Years. But why should I regret such a Prospect as that. Although I am convinced that human Life is an happy and agreeable Sceane, a charming delightful state, upon the whole, and although my share of it has been checquered with Perplexities Difficulties Dangers and Distresses which fall to the Lott of but few, yet it has been Sweet and happy on the whole, and calls for Gratitude to my maker & Pre-server; Yet every Year according to my opinions and Persuasions and Expectations brings me nearer to a State of Superiour Excellence and more unmixed Enjoyment, where I hope to meet all my Relations and other Friends who may have done their Duty in this. There my Dearest Friend may We meet and never be again seperated by any Necessities to go to Europe or Philadelphia or else where.

*Adams's Aunt Hunt.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 19 March 1796

Having no Horse and reading more & walking less than Usual I am solicitous about my health.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 9 April 1796

I am so fatigued and disgusted with the Insipidity of this dull Life that I am half a Mind to vow that if W. [Washington] don't Resign I will. The Old Hero looks very grave of late.

However there is a high Probability that I am upon my last Year of public Life, for if there should not be a Choice by the People I will not suffer a Vote to be given for me in the H. of R. [House of Representatives]. I will never Serve in that high and Responsible situation without Some foundation of People to stand on. If I should be chosen V.P. only by a Plurality I will refuse. In short there are so many probable Cases in which I am determind to retire that the Probability of it is upon the whole very strong, indeed I feel myself to be a fool to serve here at all.

William Tudor, Sr., to John Adams, Boston, 27 May 1796

Anxious as I must ever feel for its Prosperity I should dread the Resignation of our fortunate & glorious President, if I did not with ardent Satisfaction anticipate that the good Sense of my Countrymen, & the guardian Genius of America, will place in his Seat the Man among her Citizens who long, energetic and successful Labours coequal in the Cabinet with those of the immortal Washington in the Field of our Revolutions merit & I hope will meet their Supreme Reward.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 11 July 1796

You should learn to accumulate some solid property before You take upon you the charge of a Family. You are certainly old enough. Your Father was married nine Days Younger than you now are, but the Scene before him was a very different one from that which presents itself to you. An arduous struggle at the Bar for the Support of a Family were all his expectations, as he rose soon to Eminence in that profession, I have not a Doubt that if he had continued it for half the term of years which Since have been solely devoted to the publick service, his Property would have been three times what it now is; but the commencement of the Revolution calld him to the counsels of his Country. The drama open, and the important parts in which he has been calld to act, are all known to You, but to no other Man of your Age. Military Services make a greater eclat in the

Founders on the Founders

world, but no citizen has deserved better of his Country—She has given him her confidence she has given him her Honours, but she has not given him wealth believing perhaps with Petrarch, “Virtue has not a greater Enemy than Wealth.” The inheritance of his Children must be his virtues of Much greater estimation to them than the mines of Mexico or Peru without them.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 7 August 1796

A Political Career in the Service of the United States is Subject to so many Uncertainties that it is a precarious Revenue for the support of a Family and lays the Strongest Obligations on you to the Strictest and Severest Oeconomy, that you may be able to maintain your Independence and provide for Accidents and Vicissitudes. A young Lady of fine Parts and Accomplishments, educated to drawing, dancing and Music, however domestic and retired from the World she may have been in her Father’s House, when she comes to shine in a Court among the Families of Ambassadors and Ministers of state, if she has not more Discretion, Prudence and Philosophy than commonly belong to her sex, will be in danger of involving you in Expences far beyond your Appointments. I give you a hint and you must take it.—If your Accounts are not kept with the Utmost Correctness and your Resolution is not decisive you will be undone—You must live in a Style more retired & reserved than any Minister of your Rank or you will soon be exhausted.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 16 August 1796

Your Father wrote you last week. He is as buisy as usual in attending to his Farm, which Seems his only recreation, & keeps his spirits in action, and gives him Health for his Winter’s confinement; indeed I believe he could not endure the one if he was not relieved by the other.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Stratford, 27 November 1796

Although, however, I think the moment a dangerous one, I am not Scared. Fear takes no hold of me, and makes no Approaches to me, that I perceive, and if my Country makes just Claims upon me, I will be as I ever have been prompt to shares Fates & Fortunes with her.

To Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 5 December 1796

[Discussing the upcoming presidential election] It is not improbable that [Thomas] Pinkney will step in between the two who have been treated as the principals in the question. It is even suspected that this turn has been secretly meditated from the beginning in a quarter where the *leading* zeal for Adams has been affected. This Jockeyship is accounted for by the enmity of Adams to Banks and funding systems which is now become public, and by an apprehension that he is too headstrong to be a fit puppet for the intriguers behind the skreen.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 December 1796

This is the very Day the which.—I laugh at myself twenty times a Day, for my feelings, and meditations & Speculations in which I find myself engaged. Vanity Suffers. Cold feelings of Unpopularity. Humble reflections. Mortifications—Humiliation.—Plans of future Life, Economy. Retrenching of Expences. Farming. Return to the Bar. Drawing Writs, arguing Causes. Taking Clerks. Humiliations of my Country under foreign Bribes. Measures to counteract them. All this

miserable Nonsense will come & go like evil into the Thoughts of Gods or Men, approved or unapproved. . . .

It really Seems to me as if I wished to be left out. Let me See! Do I know my own heart? I am not Sure. However all that I seem to dread, is a foolish, mortifying, humiliating, uncomfortable Residence here, for two tedious months after I shall be known to be Shimmed, as my Wallmen Speak.

I can pronounce Thomas Jefferson to be chosen P. of U.S. with firmness & a good grace. That I don't fear.—But here alone abed, by my fireside nobody to Speak to, poreing upon my Disgrace and future Prospects—this is Ugly. The 16th of Feb. will soon come and then I take my Leave, forever. Then for Frugality and Independence.—Poverty and Patriotism. Love and a Carrot bed. . . .

The Federalists are all very confident however of a small Majority. I say and believe that small Majority worse than none. & wish there could have been a large Majority any other Way.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 8 December 1796

I feel myself in a very happy temper of Mind. Perfectly willing to be released from the Port of Danger but determined if call'd to it, to brave it, if its horrors were ten times thicker than they are. I have but few Years of Life left and they cannot be better bestowed, than upon that Independence of my Country in Defence of which that Life has ever been in Jeopardy.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 12 December 1796

I am not enough of an Englishman nor little enough of a French Man for some People. These would be very willing that Pinckney should come in, Chief. But they will be disappointed.

Giles Says “the Point is settled.—The V.P. will be President. He is undoubtedly chosen. The old Man will make a good President too. (there's for you). But We shall have to *check* him a little now and then. That will be all.”

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 December 1796

Elevated Expectations of Grandeur and Glory as well as Prosperity have accompanied me through Life and been a great source of my Enjoyment. They are not diminished by the present Prospect. . . .

I shall not suffer so much in retiring as the P[resident] whose tender feelings are excited both by Kindness & Unkindness. I shall retire without much of either to harrow up my soul. It is rather a dull Prospect to see nothing but one's Ploughshare between one and the Grave but I am confident I can bear it as well as the P.—My Misery will all be over by the Ninth of Feb. if I am released—But that is too long.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 18 December 1796

It is now Said, but I have not made the Calculations, to be made certain that neither Mr. Pinckney nor Mr. Jefferson can be President: consequently my Troubles are not far off. Strong in the Confidence of my own Honesty, and favoured by the Appearance of tolerable health and the feeling of Some Strength, I perceive no Consternation at the Prospect.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 19 December 1796

The general Delusion of Speculation has involved the great Chiefs. McClenichan is in Trouble his son Stewart left nothing. Mr. Morris Mr. Nicholson Mr. Wilson Mr. Greenleaf Mr. Barclay & many others are talked of as in Such distress as to Spread a general Consternation among the Merchants. I can never enough deplore the Delerium of plunging into Schemes of such vast magnitude and complication, living in Such Pomp and Such Expence upon Property of others—giving Charities, making feasts, Signing Subscriptions, blazing away with Furniture &c and then discovering that all this is Credit, and that Multitudes of honest People must be involved in distress in Consequence of it. I saw enough at East Chester—But I had long expected it. Where is the moral Principle? Where is the Modesty? Of rolling in Luxury upon the Property of others? I fear that Dishonesty will appear as well as Distress. That large Sums in Trust, will be found misapplied. Trusts violated and prostituted. Give me Poverty give me Death rather than the Sting of remorse for violated Confidence.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 20 December 1796

I am told that Blair McClenican, and Mr. Barclay as well as McKean were very busy against me. The two first are now in a Predicament that would more than revenge me if I was Vindictive, which I never was and will not now begin to be.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 30 December 1796

I think a Man had better wear than rust.

Elbridge Gerry to Abigail Adams, Cambridge, 7 January 1797

I am honored by yours of the 31st of December & perfectly agree with you, respecting the difficulties to be encountered by our friend in executing the honorable office to which he is appointed, but difficult as it is, when we consider the abilities, integrity, & firmness of the patriot, I think we have little reason to doubt that his administration will terminate to his honor—if he was weak, versatile, or subject to influence, his enemies, who will always endeavour to be nearest his person, will be the most officious with their information & council, & the most assiduous with their flattery, would soon make him conspicuously ridiculous: but having an opinion of his own, he will establish his *principles* of conduct, & excepting immaterial deviations which circumstances will sometimes require. He will abide by *them*, & test thereby the measures of his real & pretended friends.—as much as I respect & esteem Mr. Adams, if these were not my sentiments, I could never have wished for his promotion to the presidential chair: because it would prove an ignis fatuus,* which would lead him to destruction. But with the qualities which he possesses, like a ship ballasted with iron, he may meet with repeated & violent tempests none of which will be able to upset him; should however the convulsion of the elements be too great for the best constructed barque, he may, like the best of mariners be overwhelmed & every good man will lament his fate. This is an hazard, inevitable from the nature of things.

True it is, that “an assemblage of fortunate circumstances” to favor his administration, “has been the singular lot” of the predecessor in office, & he is in my opinion a very great & good character: but it is said nevertheless & if true to be lamented that by the wiles of insidious & unprincipled men he has nominated to offices foreign as well as domestic, some characters which would not bear the public test, & are a reproach to religion, to morality, good government & even

to decency. He is likewise charged with manifesting a disposition, of extending his power at the expence of the constitution; & notwithstanding the virulence of party has not confined itself merely to the attempt of depriving him of his welllearned laurels. But has attempted to transform is virtues into vices, yet perhaps candor will admit that in both these case he has not used those precautions which have marked his general administration. I must confess however, that wise & politic as it may be to mark the quicksands which have exposed to danger this skillful pilot, I have the highest respect for him; & think there are few characters who are his equals in history ancient or modern—

*A will-o-wisp; something deceptive or deluding.

Ruth Hooper Dalton to Abigail Adams, Washington, 14 January 1797

I am happy to find the Country have not forgot to be grateful to so good a Man, and firm Friend. I have no doubts but the place of our Worthy and Great President will be well filled by him. With confidence I can say that had He had the appointment it would have fallen as it has.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 15 January 1797

You know the temper of Mr. A. better than I do: but I have always conceived it to be rather a ticklish one.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 18 January 1797

I must wade through all these Difficulties or be overpowered by them. And if the Case should happen that I should get Safely or even triumphantly through, it will be forgotten in one month that I had any hand in it—judging of the future by the past.—

Cotton Tufts to John Adams, Weymouth, Mass., 23 January 1797

Our Newspapers have announced to us the Choice of a President of the United States and that it has devolved on You. I congratulate You on this Occasion. As an American I feel highly gratified—as a Friend I confess that I feel some Deduction from my pleasing Sensations, when I contemplate the Fatigue Anxiety & Vexation to which you must be expos'd: this is indeed a Misfortune annexed to every exalted Station. I will not however admit this to be of Weight sufficient to deter or prevent a great & good Man, from undertaking the arduous Task when Providence points out the Way, and a Field for the most extensive Usefulness presents itself to his View—

John Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, Philadelphia, 21 February 1797

If the way to do good to my country, were to render myself popular, I could easily do it. But extravagant popularity is not the road to public advantage.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 3 March 1797

The President [George Washington] in reply to an address presented to him on his Birth Day by the officers and Militia of Pensilvana, says, “the Patriotism uprightness and abilities of him who is to succeed to the station I now have the honour to hold, will leave you no room to regret my retirement.”

Oliver Wolcott, Sr., to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., 20 March 1797

We have done the best we could in our election. We have chosen a very honest man, a friend to order and to our national independence and honor; but that you may know that I am not mistaken, I will for once, under a strong seal, venture to tell you that I always considered Mr. Adams a man of great vanity, pretty capricious, of a very moderate share of prudence, and of far less real abilities than he believes he possesses. I therefore sincerely wish he may have able counsellors, in whom he will confide; though, as he will not be influenced but by an apparent compliment to his own understanding, it will require a deal of address to render him the service which it will be essential for him to receive.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 3 April 1797

My Duty to my Mother—I hope to see her in the Autumn—But alas my healthy Walks and rides over Pens hill and Peacefield Hill, will be wanting all the Spring and Summer. And I fear for my health—My Application to Business, of a very dry, dull and perplexing nature is incessant. The Papers I have to read and judge of, are so numerous, that it is Business enough for any man's Life—besides it is enough completely to put out my feeble Eyes. The writing I have to do is also a great deal. Indeed I expect nothing but to loose my health and be obliged to resign. Don't expose this croaking and groaning however. I should loose all my Character for firmness, if any one should read this. Indeed I sometimes Suspect that I deserve a Character for Peevishness and fretfulness, rather than Firmness.

I believe honesty is always anxious and consequently peevish and fretful. It is always afraid of doing wrong, or making mistakes.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 April 1797

I never was in greater Straits for money in my Life, than at this time. I know not how to get along and expect to be obliged to borrow at the bank.

My farm would give me more Pleasure in a Week than my office in four Years—Except that all the Pleasure of Life that is solid consists in doing one's duty.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 18 April 1797

My Eyes will totally fail me in six months. I shall be obliged to resign for Want of sight, if I go on as I began. The Number of Papers to read is prodigious. My Eyes complain most bitterly.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 24 April 1797

You can't imagine what a Man of Business I am—how many Papers I read and how much I write, every day. I fear you will effeminate me when you come.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 23 June 1797

The task of the President is very arduous, very perplexing and very hazardous. I do not wonder Washington wishd to retire from it, or rejoiced at seeing an old oak in his place—he has manifested his intire approbation of the measures persued by the Executive.

John Marshall to Mary W. Marshall, Philadelphia, 3 July 1797

I dined on Saturday in private with the President whom I found a sensible plain candid good tempered man & was consequently much pleased with him.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 14 July 1797

You will be pleased to learn that amidst this War of parties and Nations the chief Majistrate preserves his spirits and his fortitude unshaken, and that he sustains the burden of his office with patience and magnanimity.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, East Chester, N.Y., 3 November 1797

I respect Mr. Washington's Character and Conduct in all Things: but I will imitate him *servilely in nothing*.

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 8 November 1797

At one o'clock I was presented to Mr. Adams. He was sitting, reading a newspaper, facing the fireplace with Mr. [Samuel B.] Malcolm, a young man 20 years old, his private secretary. I saw a dumpy little man dressed wholly in gray, well-powdered hair and a long pigtail. His face appeared to me that of a good and honest man, touched nevertheless with a grain of malice.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 15 November 1797

I can see where the respect and attention is sincere, many affecting proofs I have witnessd in this tour. One in particular of a private nature, at Brunswick—a White headed venerable Man desired to be admitted to the President. When he came in, he bowed respectfully and said he was happy to see him inquired if that was his Lady? I came said he many miles this morning on purpose. I told my wife this morning that I would come, and Id why aint you affraid. No said I, Iyou think I should be affraid to go and see my Father? This was said with so much hearty sincerity, that to me it was of more value, than the whole Military cavalcade of Pensilvania.

Abigail Adams to John Fenno, Philadelphia, 18 November 1797

Every person who is acquainted with the republican manners and habits of the President, can witness for him that every kind of show and parade are contrary to his taste and inclination, and that they can be agreeable on no other ground, than as the will of the people, manifesting their determined resolution to support the government and the administrators of it, so long as the administration is conformable to the constitution.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 12 December 1797

[Bache accused Adams of writing a newspaper article saying that it was] "*Positively known*" to proceed from the pen of the Duke of Braintree as he stiles the President.

Mary Cranch to Abigail Adams, Quincy, Mass., 17 December 1797

I believe you deriv'd more pleasure from the respect Shown than he did—he says you love parade better than himself—but I who know you both am well Satisfied that Darby & Joan are never So happy as when at home attending to their rural occupations & Surrounded by their chosen Friends & neighbours.

William Cranch to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 5 March 1798

I have been here about ten days, & have resided at the Presidents. Next to my own parents, yours are nearest to my heart, and possess the strongest Claim to my filial reverence & affection. The President seems to retain all his vigour, & remains firm as mount Atlas. I was much pleased with a toast given lately at Cambridge—"John Adams, Prest. of U.S. the american Terminus," with a note, that Terminus was the Roman God of boundaries who swore he would not stir one foot for Jupiter.

Abigail Adams to Hannah Phillips Cushing, Philadelphia, 9 March 1798

The President desires to be kindly rememberd to the Judge and to you. Beds of Roses, have never been his Destiny to repose in. The Thorns and thistles are too thick Sown in his path at Present, for the most Wary and cautious to tread secure from wound. The virtue spirit and Energy of the people will I hope aid and support him in every right and proper measure, and the Wisdom of the most high direct him to those measures. In times like the present, all Neutral ground should be abandoned, and those who are not for us, be considerd as against us—

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Orange, Va., 2 April 1798

The President's message is only a further development to the public, of the violent passions, and heretical politics, which have been long privately known to govern him.

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, Albemarle, Va., 8 April 1798

Mr. A: will never surprise me by any act of the wild & extravagant kind. If he was in a sober and discreet manner to repair the breach between this country & France, & heal the wounds which his predecessor has given to the reputation & interest of his country, I should be surprised. His passion is to out-do his predecessor, & thus I expect to find no difference, between the knight of the present day and the former one, than what the superior violence of his passion may lead to.

Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 9 April 1798

My respects ever await the president of the united states. You may tell him if you please that if we should ever happen to meet another personal interview, his presence might awaken some Ideas of the *Divine science of politics*, which he used zealously to exhort us to Cultivate.—this might also animate to that *loquacity* and undisguised Chit-Chat, that he formerly admired in your uniform friend.

Abigail Adams to Cotton Tufts, Philadelphia, 14 April 1798

The President received your Letter. If he can possibly get time he will write to you, but he is overwhelmed with business, dispatches arriving from England from Holland and from France, officers to appoint Naval & military, Recommendatory Letters to read weigh and examine that he may be enabled to make his appointments judiciously, and now addresses that he cannot get time once a week to Ride or walk, upon which his Health greatly depends but labour with support, is a pleasure to what it is to be for ever tugging against the stream.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 28 April 1798

We are wonderfully popular except with Bache & co who in his paper calls the President old querulous Bald blind crippled Toothless Adams. Thus in scripture was the Prophet mocked, and tho no Bears may devour the wretch, the wrath of an insulted people will by & by break upon him—

Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 3 June 1798

I suppose the fact to be that since man was created and government was formed no public officer has stood higher in the confidence and affection of his countrymen than our present President now does. His firm and manly tone of conduct has regenerated all the energies of our revolutionary character and placed us, I hope, upon an eminence from which we shall look down with contempt and safety upon the machinations and power of the French Directory. So irresistible has been the current of public opinion in favor of the government that within a fortnight past it has broken down the opposition in Congress.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 10 June 1798

The answers of Mr. Adams to his addressors form the most grotesque scene in the tragi-comedy acting by the Government. . . . He is verifying completely the last feature in the character drawn of him by Dr. F[ranklin] however his title may stand to the two first. “Always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes wholly out of his senses.”

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 23 June 1798

The President is delighted with your account of the Clover and Barley Fields—he most sincerely pines after them—but he is tied to his table 9 Hours of the day—some of the addressers complain that his answers are too short. they do not consider nor know how numerous they are, or what other business there is to attend to. some fore noons, he is calld from his Room 20 times in the course of it, to different persons, besides the hours devoted to the Ministers of the different departments, the investigations necessary to be made of those persons who apply for offices or are recommended, the weighting the merits, and pretentions of different Candidates for the same office &c &c &c. His Eyes which you know used to be very troublesome to him, are quite well, and he is enabled to read and write with ease to himself which is a great favour.—

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 4 December 1798

If you come on, you must expect to find me cross. Sam. Adams Says Old Men are fractious and appealed to his Wife, if she did not find it so. I shall be more fractious than he, I fear for I shall be plagued.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 13 December 1798

To reconcile you to your fate I have a great mind to give you a detail of mine. A Peck of Troubles in a large Bundle of Papers, often in a hand Writing almost illegible, comes every day from the office of —— office of —— office of —— &c. &c. &c. Thousands of sea Letters, Mediterranean Passes and Commissions & Patents to sign—No Company—No society—idle unmeaning Ceremony—Family Vices, Follies, Extravagance, shiftlessness, and Health, sinking for what I know under my Troubles & fatigues.

You and I, seem to have arrived prematurely at the Age when there is no pleasure.—

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 December 1798

I begin to doubt whether I was in the Way of my Duty in ever engaging in public Life. With my Family of Children ought I not to have staid at home, minded their Education and sought their Advancement in Life! It is too late for this Casuistry now. The Die is cast and I am not far from the End of my Life. I have done all for my Children that I could: and meant all for the best. What have I not suffered? What have I ever enjoyed? Still my Enjoyments have been upon my farm. Oh that my Children and Grand Children were all Farmers!

Rufus King to Alexander Hamilton, London, 19 December 1798

The President has no talent for war.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 25 December 1798

I am pretty well—I had a cold, not a bad one—and something of the Inflammation in my face of last spring, but it is gone. [Dr. Benjamin] Rush gave me such a Dose of Salts that I thought it not fit to go out to Congress next day. But the day after I was well enough.—I am Old—Old very Old and never Shall be very well—certainly while in this office for the Drudgery of it is too much for my Years and Strength. . . .

It is Christmas and a fine Day. I rode Yesterday—fourteen miles and intend as much to day. Our Family is very quiet.—No Quarrels—No Complaints—an hundred and twenty Leagues in this cold season would be a terrible risque for you—and only to be here two Months and then a worse Journey home.—My Health would be no better for your being a Witness of any Pains or Achs I might have. I have had recourse to an old Medicine, Sulphur Cram of Tartar and honey which has done me more good than [Lionel] Lockier or [Benjamin] Rush. I Sleep well—appetite is good—work hard—Conscience is neat and easy—Content to live and willing to die; So I Sincerely think.—Hoping to do a little good—able to do very little—perplexed and embarrassed very often: by the Folly of some: the Intrigue of others—and the Selfishness & Ambition of many.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 18 January 1799

The answer of the House of Reps. of this State to the Govr. [Increase Sumner] is well drawn, and a tribute paid in it to the chief Magistrate of the union which reflects honour upon him.

With a patriot and Statesman at the Helm, who is capable of inspiring a whole Nation with noble Sentiments. This Idea is the more gratefull for the truth which it contains.

George Cabot to Rufus King, 2 June 1799

A man having done so weak a thing & in so unwarrantable manner will never forgive those whose opinions he greatly respects & which condemn him altogether; his vanity would not allow him to consult those whose advice would have saved him from error; nay he avoided them because he knew they would dissuade him, & he now is cold to them & *to their friends* because in every countenance he reads reproof. There is however a perfect disposition to treat him with all possible delicacy & respect, but you know his weaknesses as well as his virtues & you must know that he would naturally under the circumstances incline to hear those who flatter him rather than those who presume to question his infallibility. We all think well of his heart & of consequence feel none of those resentments which would be just if we thought otherwise.

Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 5 June 1799

No opinion is yet formed in relation to our next election of President and Vice President. Mr. Adams has been so desultory in his administration, that the public confidence in his discretion is greatly impaired. To govern by fits and starts—without the advice of his friends around him—nay without even consulting them—in order to be characterized as an independent man—free from influence—is not a system calculated for solid and durable fame. He still continues at Braintree, and the government, like Pope's wounded snake, drags its slow length along.

George Cabot to Rufus King, 16 October 1799

A man who forfeits the good opinion of the wise & the good imposes upon himself the necessity of accommodating himself a little more to men of an opposite character; he places himself in a situation which men of sense & principle disapprove; his pride forbids him to relinquish it & he flies for support to those who will give it.

Alexander Hamilton to Rufus King, New York, 5 January 1800

At home, every thing is in the main well; except as to the Perverseness and capriciousness of one [Adams] and the spirit of faction of many.

John Dawson to James Monroe, Philadelphia, 20 April 1800

[In predicting Jefferson's victory over Adams in the presidential election of 1800.] I think "Old Codfish" may prepare for Braintree & "red breeches" to quit the mountain.

Christopher Gore to Rufus King, New York, 5 May 1800

The President has no confidence, but great distrust of every man, I believe without exception, in whom you and I have confided. Pickering, Hamilton and Higginson he seems to hate without

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any modification. Cabot and Ames are not behind in his estimation, nor does he seem to think much better of Wolcott, although his hatred is not so extreme against them.

Timothy Pickering to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Philadelphia, 25 May 1800

On my return from the country on the 23d I found your obliging letter of the 19th. expressing your astonishment at my removal, asking for what end? & how it was done? and for some information relative to the late important events.

The story will be long; but I cannot satisfy your queries without reciting it. Dates will demonstrate that the sentiments I shall now express, are not the fruits of *resentment* against Mr. Adams for removing me from office: my feelings are of a very different kind. You may collect them from the following extract of a letter which I wrote to a friend in Massachusetts on the 12th. of last September, respecting Mr. Adams

The Extract.

“How long must a man live to be known?—How long may a man be conspicuous in public affairs, and yet to almost all his fellow citizens remain unknown? If a public man be a *villain*, he will ere long be detected, punished or dismissed: but if, with upright views, he is an opinionist—inordinantly vain—what mischief may he not do?—Of all possible qualities in a public man, on whose decision great affairs depend, *Vanity* I have thought the most dangerous. This Solomon taught many ages past: ‘Seest thou a man wise *in his own conceit*?’ You will find the answer in the proverbs.” (This answer is—“there is more hope of a *fool* than of him”)

Indignation & disgust—these are & long have been my feelings towards Mr. Adams, disgust at his intollerable vanity, indignation for the disgrace & mischief which his conduct has brought on the cause of federalism and the country.—when I say “long have been” I mean for near two years past, when I began to know him.—In ascribing to Mr. Adams “upright views,” I refer to public measures in general. If you were to scan his actions minutely, you would find them influenced by selfishness, ambition & revenge; that his heart is kankered with Envy, and deficient in sincerity; that he is blind—stone-blind—to his own faults and failings, and incapable of discerning the vices and defects of all his family connections; Hence his insatiable desire to provide, in public offices, for himself and them; and his injurious treatment of those who have opposed his wishes. Of this number I have the honour to be one.

Alexander Hamilton to James McHenry, New York, 6 June 1800

The man is more mad than I ever thought him and I shall soon be led to say as wicked as he is mad.

Fisher Ames to Oliver Wolcott, Dedham, Mass., 12 June 1800

This man is vindictive enough at any risk or even ruin, to disappoint those who will, he thinks, *alone* disappoint him. His vanity is also soothed to exhibit his fate as proceeding from the art or force of the artis, rather than the disgust of the feds. In that event want of votes would seem more tolerable than the detected want of character. Yet do not condemn me if I say that man has talents for every thing but business, and keep him to making books, he is a great man. Precisely such men act most absurdly. The weak parts of great characters are most prominent and decisive of events. It has long been a common place axiom of my creed, that the world’s wisdom has not half as much to do in its government as its weaknesses. This man fancied parties could not do without him. . . .

This extravagant opinion of himself, this ignorance of parties and characters, this pride that wanted Jefferson to be, and to be exhibited to be his second, and that was not hurt at being in return his dupe, this caprice that was often shifting style and that forbid him ever to have a sober, reflected system.

George Cabot to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Brookline, 14 June 1800

It is one of the evils incidental to popular systems, that the best friends of government feel themselves obliged to conceal the defects and magnify the good qualities of those who administer public affairs. A reputation and degree of personal power is by this means acquired, which may be used for wrong purposes, and cannot be suddenly counteracted. A perfect silence has been observed in Massachusetts until very lately on the caprices, ill-humor, selfishness, and extreme vanity of a man who with these faults and weaknesses possesses some good qualities, great talents for unpolitical speculation, and has rendered some important services. Many good men had the fear, as you know, that Mr. Adams would make wild steerage, if placed at the helm, notwithstanding he had written well on the subject of political navigation; but those men suppressed their opinions, and cooperated with others in giving praise as often as they could, and thus contributed to strengthen the public sentiment in his favor. Thus his fame is in some sort interwoven with the web of the national government.

Timothy Pickering to George Cabot, Philadelphia, 16 June 1800

In the course of my correspondence with General Washington in 1798, in which I informed him of the President's hatred of Hamilton, and stated the necessity of his (General Washington's) direct interposition to prevent Hamilton's degradation and Knox's elevation, I used this expression: "I respect the President for many great and excellent qualities; but I cannot respect his errors, his prejudices, or his passions." I have regretted that my opinion then expressed should have unavoidably changed; that subsequently I had reason to retract it, and to deny him the useful qualities of an ordinary statesman. I had then no conception that vanity, ambition, and avarice could so blunt the moral sense of a man, who had so long sustained a fair reputation, as to render him capable of base, dishonorable, and dishonest conduct in the administration of public affairs. Instead of resentment for his treatment of me, I lament, for the sake of human nature and civil society, the degeneracy of such a man; a man grown gray in the public service, and who, with all his foibles, was esteemed the constant, firm patriot and upright man. The measure he took to color, at least to his own mind, the pardon of the three insurgents, which I have described in my letter to Mr. Gore, is such an outrage on decency, propriety, justice, and sound policy as stamps the man with indelible disgrace, and demonstrates his unfitness for any public trust.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to George Cabot, Philadelphia, 16 June 1800

It is with grief and humiliation, but at the same time with perfect confidence, that I declare that no administration of the government by President Adams can be successful. His prejudices are too violent, and the resentments of men of influence are too keen, to render it possible that he should please either party, and we all know that he does not possess, and cannot command the talents, fortitude, and constancy necessary to the formation of a new party. . . . I am no advocate for rash measures, and know that public opinion cannot be suddenly changed; but it is clear to my mind that we shall never find ourselves in the straight road of federalism while Mr. Adams is President.

John Adams to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 20 June 1800

Criticism, now criticised so long, I regard no more than “Great George a Birthday Song.”

Timothy Pickering to Rufus King, Philadelphia, 26 June 1800

I am informed that the President denies that there has been any coalition between him & Mr. Jefferson. He has also denied that he ever said there was a British faction in the Senate and among those American citizens who may be called *public men*. On this I will only say that the President is not always consistent or accurate in his remembrance. To me, he said, that Mr. Jefferson had very little of that knowledge which was necessary for a statesman; and shortly after to McHenry, that Mr. Jefferson was a very proper person to be President of the U. States; “and that he would sooner serve as Vice-President under him, or even as Minister resident at the Hague, than be indebted for his election to *such a being* as Hamilton;” whom in the same sentence he called a *bastard* and as much an alien as Gallatin. No one could have imagined Mr. Adams capable of such billingsgate language. But a man so entirely under the dominion of violent passion, is capable of anything.

Alexander Hamilton to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, New York, 1 July 1800

On this point there is some danger, though the greatest number of strong minded men in New England are not only satisfied of the expediency of supporting *Pinckney*, as giving the best chance against Jefferson, but even prefer him to *Adams*; yet in the body of the people there is a strong personal attachment to this gentleman, and most of the leaders of the second class are so anxious for his re-election that it will be difficult to convince them that there is as much danger of its failure as there unquestionably is, or to induce them faithfully to cooperate in Mr. Pinckney, notwithstanding their common and strong dread of Jefferson. . . .

That this gentleman ought not to be the object of the federal wish, is, with me, reduced to demonstration. His administration has already very materially disgraced and sunk the government. There are defects in his character which must inevitably continue to do this more and more. And if he is supported by the federal party, his party must in the issue fall with him. Every other calculation will, in my judgment, prove illusory.

Doctor *Franklin*, a sagacious observer of human nature, drew this portrait of Mr. Adams:—“He is always honest, *sometimes* great, but *often mad*.” I subscribe to the justness of this picture, adding as to the first trait of it this qualification—“as far as a man excessively *vain* and *jealous*, and *ignobly* attached to *place* can be.”

Alexander Hamilton to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, New York, 7 August 1800

As between Pinckney & Adams I give a decided preference to the first. If you have not heard enough to induce you to agree in this opinion I will upon your request enter into my reasons. Mr. Adams has governed & must govern from *impulse* and *caprice*, under the influence of the two most mischievous of Passions for a Politician, to an extreme that to be portrayed would present a caricature—*Vanity* and *Jealousy*. He has already disorganized & in a great measure prostrated the Federal Party.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to Fisher Ames, Washington, 10 August 1800

But however dangerous the election of Mr. Jefferson may prove to the community, I do not perceive that any portion of the mischief would be avoided by the election of Mr. Adams. We know the temper of his mind to be revolutionary, violent, and vindictive; he would be sensible that another official term would bring him to the close of life. His passions and selfishness would continually gain strength; his pride and interest would concur in rendering his administration favorable to the views of the democrats and jacobins; public offices would be frequently bestowed on men capable of servile compliances; the example of a selfish attention to personal and family interests would spread like a leprosy in our political system, and by corrupting the fountains of virtue and honor would destroy the principles by which alone a mild government under any form can be sustained.

James A. Bayard to Alexander Hamilton, Wilmington, Del., 18 August 1800

What is the charm which attaches the East so much to Mr. A.? It can be nothing personal. . . . He is liable to gusts of passion little short of phrenzy which drive him beyond the control of any rational reflection.

I speak of what I have seen. At such moments the interest of those who support him or the interest of the nation, would be outweighed by a single impulse of rage.

This is enough but not all. He wants Magnanimity. The President is not exempt from the little interests—the little jealousies and little animosities of Mr. Adams.

We may thank the guardian Genius of the country which has watched over its destinies for the last 4 years.

I do not hold this language to the multitude because I suppose we must vote for him and therefore cannot safely publish what we think of him. But he has palsied the Sinews of the Party and if I relied on forebodings as ominous, I should believe, that before another presidential cycle has completed itself, he would produce a ruinous & fatal Schism among the Federalists.

Fisher Ames to Rufus King, 24 September 1800

This man I allude to is too much the creature of *impulse* or freakish humor—he is a revolutionist from temperament, habit and lately what he thinks policy—he is too much irritated against many if not most of the principal sound men of the country ever to bestow on them *his* confidence or to retrieve *theirs*. In particular he is implacable against a certain great little man whom we mutually respect [Alexander Hamilton]. With so much less than the old & requisite harmony with the best friends of the country, he has certain antipathies and prejudices connected with them that are equally strange, stubborn & pernicious. He really thinks it a light matter to have a war with G. B. as he hates that government in every thing but its theory, believes it corrupt and affects to believe it possesses *influence* here; he can scarcely refrain and he seldom tries to refrain from inveighing against British influence, and to conciliate to himself the mob honors that cant will obtain. He does not hesitate to say that public debt would go down and paper money come up in that case. But he loves to bluster and vapor about the courage he once displayed when *he* was not afraid of that great power when we had not half our present force. He has the *os magne sonitutum* and with all the ignorance of men & business that must belong to the possessor of the before mentioned tenets, he indulges the vanity, so much his favorite & his master.

Fisher Ames to Rufus King, Dedham, Mass., 24 September 1800

I think there is rather too much complacency on the part of our man towards his antagonist, and too little towards the intended second of the former [party]. This proceeds from several causes—but chiefly from the lofty idea he entertains of his own superior wisdom and greatness which disdains to have either for a second or a successor any less personage than the *first* of the other side. He has also a strong revolutionary taint in his mind, admires the characters, principles and means which that revolutionary system exacts and for a short period seems to legitimate, and as you know holds cheap any reputation that was not *then* founded and top'd off. Accordingly he respects his rival and the *Gazette* here, absolutely devoted to him and in the hands of his personal friends exclusively, is silent and has been for some months in respect to that rival.

Letter from Alexander Hamilton Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, New York, 24 October 1800

He has certain fixed points of character which tend naturally to the detriment of any cause of which he is the chief, of any administration of which he is the head; that by his ill humors and jealousies he has already divided and distracted the supporters of the government; that he has furnished deadly weapons to its enemies by unfounded accusations, and has weakened the force of its friends by decrying some of the most influential of them to the utmost of his power.

Few go as far in their objections [to the reelection of Adams as President] as I do. Not denying to Mr. Adams patriotism and integrity, and even talents of a certain kind, I should be deficient in candor, were I to conceal the conviction, that he does not possess the talents adapted to the *Administration* of Government, and that there are great and intrinsic defects in his character, which unfit him for the office of Chief Magistrate. . . .

I was one of that numerous class who had conceived a high veneration for Mr. Adams, on account of the part he acted in the first stages of our revolution. My imagination had exalted him to a high eminence, as a man of patriotic, bold, profound, and comprehensive mind. But in the progress of the war, opinions were ascribed to him, which brought into question, with me, the solidity of his understanding. . . . I remember also, that they had the effect of inducing me to qualify the admiration which I had once entertained for him, and to reserve for opportunities of future scrutiny, a definitive opinion of the true standard of his character. . . .

But this did not hinder me from making careful observations upon his several communications, and endeavoring to derive from them an accurate idea of his talents and character. This scrutiny enhanced my esteem in the main for his moral qualifications, but lessened my respect for his intellectual endowments. I then adopted an opinion, which all my subsequent experience has confirmed, that he is a man of an imagination sublimated and eccentric; propitious neither to the regular display of sound judgment, nor to steady perseverance in a systematic plan of conduct; and I began to perceive what has been since too manifest, that to this defect are added the unfortunate foibles of a vanity without bounds, and a jealousy capable of discolored every object. . . .

The particulars of this Journal [i.e., Adams's diary entries while a peace commissioner] cannot be expected to have remained in my memory—but I recollect one which may serve as a sample. Being among the guests invited to dine with the Count de Vergennes, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Adams thought fit to give a specimen of American politeness, by conducting Madame de Vergennes to dinner; in the way, she was pleased to make retribution in the current coin of French politeness—by saying to him, "*Monsieur Adams, vous etes le Washington de negotiation.*" Stating the incident, he makes this comment upon it: "These people have a very pretty knack of paying

compliments.” He might have added, they have also a very dexterous knack of disguising a sarcasm. . . .

A primary cause of the state of things which led to this event, is to be traced to the ungovernable temper of Mr. Adams. It is a fact that he is often liable to paroxysms of anger, which deprive him of self command, and produce very outrageous behavior to those who approach him. Most, if not all his Ministers, and several distinguished Members of the two Houses of Congress, have been humiliated by the effects of these gusts of passion.

James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, Baltimore, Md., 19 November 1800

The *Chief* will destroy himself fast enough without such exposures. Can it happen otherwise to a man (as I wrote the other day to Mr. Wolcott), who, whether sportful, playful, witty, kind, cold, drunk, sober, angry, easy, stiff, jealous, careless, cautious, confident, close, or open, is so, almost always, in the *wrong place* and to the *wrong persons*.

My great fear is, that while he is destroying himself, he will destroy the government also. . . .

The folly, madness and insatiable vanity of this man is excited by and descends to things the most trifling.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Orange, Va., 10 January 1801

I would not wish to discourage any attentions which friendship, prudence, or benevolence may suggest in his behalf, but I think it not improper to remark, that I find him infinitely sunk in the estimation of all parties. The follies of his administration, the oblique stroke at his Predecessor in the letter to Coxe,* and the crooked character of that to T. Pinkney, are working powerfully against him. Added to these causes is the pamphlet of H. which, tho’ its recoil has perhaps more deeply wounded the author, than the object it was discharged at, has contributed not a little to overthrow the latter staggering as he before was in the public esteem.**

*During the election of 1800, Republican newspapers printed a letter from Adams to Tench Coxe written in May 1792 impugning the character of Thomas Pinckney, who was serving as U.S. minister to Great Britain.

**Hamilton’s pamphlet attacking Adams, *Letter from Alexander Hamilton Concerning the Public Conduct and Character of John Adams*, which was published on the eve of the presidential election of 1800.

John Adams to William Tudor, Sr., Washington, 20 January 1801

Your Plan for transporting me out of the reach of the shower of Ennui, is very curious. No No. What a figure? A President of the U.S. descending from the head of the second commercial Power of the World, to become a Min. Plen. at a foreign Court—haunting the Levees of Kings Queens & Ministers and taking rank after an Ambassador from Sardinia Naples &c No No. If you had proposed to me, to negotiate over again the old Articles of Alliance between you and me, at the Bar, although you had insisted on their being offensive and defensive, I would have considered Seriously of it. Suppose We should revive our old Partnership and return to the Barr, upon some terms or other. This I think would neither degrade me nor disgrace my Country. To myself I should consider it an honor, in my present situation and future prospects.

I believe however upon the whole, I must be Farmer John of Stony field, and nothing more, (I hope nothing less) for the rest of my Life. The happiest Life it will be to me, (at least I think so) that I ever led. I shall have one thing to regret, the Res Augusta domi, which will be forever irremediable. This will deprive me of the Pleasure of hospitality and social Intercourse more than I

can well reconcile to my nature, and more than I ever have experienced, since I began at the Barr— And this will deprive me of another Amusement perhaps more necessary to me, I mean those Operations upon my farm, which require more expence than they repay in Profit. It is too late to repent. I have committed faults: two very great ones have been, 1. too little Attention to my own Interest. 2. too little regard to my own Reputation. Others will find other faults enough.

I am not about to write Lamentations or Jeremiades over my fate, nor Panegyricks upon my Life and Conduct. You may think me disappointed. I am not. All my Life have I expected it, and you might be surprized perhaps to see how little it affects me. After a year, Like the retired statesmen in Gill Blass, I may foIght I knew see a Spectre: but I dont believe I shall.

John Adams to William Cranch, Quincy, Mass., 23 May 1801

The farmer of stony field has enjoyed himself better since he assumed that honorable station than he ever did before as member of Congress, minister abroad, or Vice President of President of the United States. How long this tranquility will continue I know not. Men are weak. No man can answer for himself a loss of health, a family misfortune, any of the common accidents of life are sufficient some times abbatue le courage of the firmest of human minds especially in old age.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 30 May 1801

Your Father is quite the Farmer, so far as the Rural Scenes delight and amuse him.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 12 June 1801

Your Father appears to enjoy a tranquility and a freedom from care which he has never before experienced, his Books and his Farm occupy his attention.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

He was a distant relation of Saml. Adams, but possessed another species of character. He had been educated a lawyer, and stood high in his profession in his native state. He was a most sensible and forcible speaker. Every member of Congress in 1776 acknowledged him to be the first man in the house. Dr. Brownson (of Georgia) used to say when he spoke, he fancied an angel was let down from heaven to illuminate the Congress. He saw the whole of a subject at a single glance, and by a happy union of the powers of reasoning and persuasion often succeeded in carrying measures which were at first sight of an unpopular nature. His replies to reflections upon himself, or upon the New England States, were replete with the most poignant humor of satire. . . . He was equally fearless of men, and of the consequences of a bold assertion of his opinion in all his speeches. Upon a motion in Congress Feb. 19, 1777 to surrender up to general Washington the power of appointing his general officers, he said in opposition to it “There are certain principles which follow us through life, and none more certainly than the love of the first place. We see it in the forms on which children sit at schools. It prevails equally to the latest period of life. I am sorry to find it prevail so little in this house. I have been distressed to see some of our members disposed to idolize an image which their own hands have molten. I speak here of the superstitious veneration which is paid to general Washington. I honor him for his good qualities, but in this House I feel myself his superior. In private life I shall always acknowledge him to be mine. He wrote much, as well as spoke often and copiously in favor of the liberties of his country. All his publications and particularly his letter to Mr. Wythe, containing a plan of a constitution for Virginia, discover a strong

predilection for republican forms of government. . . . Events soon justified the wish contained in his letter, after which he rose in the public estimation so as to become, in the subsequent years of the Revolution, in some measure the oracle of the Whigs. He was a stranger to dissimulation, and appeared to be more jealous of his reputation for integrity, than for talents or knowledge. He was strictly moral, and at all times respectful to Religion. In speaking of the probable issue of the war he said to me in Baltimore in the winter of 1777, "We shall succeed in our struggle, provided we repent of our sins, and forsake them," and then added, "I will see it out, or go to heaven in its ruins." He possessed more learning probably, both ancient and modern, than any man who subscribed the Declaration of Independence. His reading was various. Even the old English poets were familiar to him. . . . When he went to Holland to negotiate a treaty with that country, he left a blank in Congress. I can say but little of his public conduct while he was in Europe, but that he was able, faithful and successful in all the business that was committed to him.

He returned to his native country with prejudices in favor of the British constitution. These prejudices he did not conceal when he became Vice President and president of the United States. But no change was produced in his manners and moral principles by the air of European courts. He was still familiar and unaffected in his deportment, and strictly upright in his conduct both in public and private life. The constant and laborious exercise of his intellectual faculties for 40 years, it was said, had produced some inequality in their operations after he became President of the United States. It is certain he was more irritable in his temper, and less cautious in speaking of men and things, than he had been in the early and middle stages of his life. It was his misfortune to administer the Government of his country at a time when it was alternately attracted and repelled by two of the most powerful nations of Europe, contending by a furious and extensive war for the supremacy of the globe. In the vibrations of parties, he retained a fixed point, by which means he offended both.

John Adams: Autobiography, 1802

Here I will interrupt the narration for a moment to observe that from all I have read of the History of Greece and Rome, England and France, and all I have observed at home, and abroad, that Eloquence in public Assemblies is not the surest road, to Fame and Preferment, at least unless it be used with great caution, very rarely, and with great Reserve. The Examples of Washington, Franklin and Jefferson are enough to show that Silence and reserve in public are more Efficacious than Argument or Oratory. A public Speaker who inserts himself, or is urged by others into the Conduct of Affairs, by daily Exertions to justify his measures, and answer the Objections of Opponents, makes himself too familiar with the public, and unavoidably makes himself Enemies. Few Persons can bare to be outdone in Reasoning or declamation or Wit, or Sarcasm or Repartee, or Satire, and all these things are very apt to grow out of public debate. In this Way in a Course of Years, a Nation becomes full of a Man's Enemies, or at least of such as have been galled in some Controversy, and take a secret pleasure in assisting to humble and mortify him.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., February 1802

I have read Seven Volumes of De la Harpe in course, and the last Seven I have run through and searched but cannot find what I chiefly wanted, His Philosophy of the 18 Century from the Beginning to the End*—that revival of the ineffable Nonsense of Epicurus as related by Lucretius not as explained by himself in his Letter in Diogenes Laertius. I am in love with La Harpe. I knew not there was such a man left.—If I had read this work at 20 years of Age, it would have had, I know

not what effect.—If it had not made me a Poet or Philosopher it certainly would not have permitted me, to be a public Man. I never read any Writer in my Life, with whom I so universally agreed in Poetry, Oratory History, Philosophy, Morality and Religion. I find him too perfectly persuaded as I have been for forty years, that Greece & Italy are our Masters in all Things and that Greek & Italian are the most important Languages to study—

*Lycée; ou cours de Literature, ancienne et moderne par I. F. La Harpe.

John Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 1 February 1802

Politicks are forbidden fruit to me, at present, and what other Subject can I choose for a Letter? Shall I tell you what Books I read? or how many times a Week I go into the Woods? These Informations would not be interesting to you. . . . When Cares for my Country arise, as they do very often, I Silence them and divert them as well as I can, by reflecting that I have done all in my power and can do no more.

Hannah Cushing to Abigail Adams, Scituate, Mass., 8 September 1802

I was highly gratified in reading the letter written in '90 & lately published. It brought forcibly to my recollection Gov. [Increase] Sumner's observation upon our late President that like a diamond the more he is rubbed the brighter he shines.

John Adams: Autobiography, 5 October 1802

As the Lives of Philosophers, Statesmen or Historians written by themselves have generally been suspected of Vanity, and therefore few People have been able to read them without disgust; there is no reason to expect that any Sketches I may leave of my own Times would be received by the Public with any favour, or read by individuals with much interest. The many great Examples of this practice will not be alleged as a justification, because they were Men of extraordinary Fame, to which I have no pretensions. My Excuse is, that having been the Object of much Misrepresentation, some of my Posterity may probably wish to see in my own hand Writing a proof of the falsehood of that Mass of odious Abuse of my Character, with which News Papers, private Letters and public Pamphlets and Histories have been disgraced for thirty Years. It is not for the Public but for my Children that I commit these Memoirs to writing: and to them and their Posterity I recommend, not the public Course, which the times and the Country in which I was born and the Circumstances which surrounded me compelled me to pursue: but those Moral Sentiments and Sacred Principles, which at all hazards and by every Sacrifice I have endeavored to preserve through Life.

Thomas Paine: To the Citizens of the United States, *National Intelligencer*, 22 November 1802

It has been the political career of this man to begin with hypocrisy, proceed with arrogance, and finish in contempt. May such be the fate of all such characters.

John Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 January 1803

Mr McKean is as far from being an enthusiast for Democracy as I am: Parade, Ceremony, Pomposity and Finery are ten times more in his head and heart too than in mine. I never was fond of any of these Things. I always despized and detested them. The Stations I have held demanded them: The World demanded them of me, but I always loathed them. Monarchy, and hereditary Presidents and Senates have been ten times more approved by him than by me. Indeed, neither was ever approved or desired by me in the Government of this Country: though I know that the great Nations of Europe cannot exist without them but in endless War and Bloodshed. Elections of first Magistrates and Senators would be nothing but a contention of Bribery: and that Party which would exhaust the largest Purse would carry the Point and then pluder the People to fill it again.

John Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 2 April 1803

Notes on the Characters of the Members of Congress in 1774, I have none in Writing.—It is a delicate Thing to write from Memory. Indeed I could Say very little worth reading. Dr Rush has an elaborate Collection of Biographical Memoirs of those Men. To record little Passions Envy, Jealousy, Rivalry, little Intrigues of great Men, would be a disgusting, a melancholly and a disgraceful Task: To transmit to Posterity great Virtues, rich Talents, exalted Courage, inflexible firmness, would be a delightfull Employment. History to be usefull must comprehend both. To me, the Undertaking would be too painfull. I cannot bear to reflect upon the Scenes I have beheld. The Sincere have been allways tortured by the Sinister: and Sometimes even by the Sincere. Such is the Lot of humanity.

Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, Washington, 4 October 1803

General Washington had his eye on him, whom he certainly did not love.

Mercy Otis Warren, History of the American Revolution, 1805

In his diplomatic character, Mr. Adams had never enjoyed himself so well, as while residing in the Dutch republic. Regular in his morals, and reserved in his temper, he appeared rather gloomy in a circle; but he was sensible, shrewd, and sarcastic, among private friends. His genius was not altogether calculated for a court life, amidst the conviviality and gaiety of Parisian taste. In France he was never happy: not beloved by his venerable colleague, Doctor Franklin; thwarted by the minister, the Count de Vergennes, and ridiculed by the fashionable and polite, as deficient in the *je ne scai quoi*, so necessary in highly polished society; viewed with jealousy by the court, and hated by courtiers, for the perseverance, frigidity, and warmth, blended in his deportment; he there did little of consequence, until the important period when, in conjunction with Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jay, a treaty of peace was negotiated between Great Britain and the United States of America.

Mr. Adams was undoubtedly a statesman of penetration and ability; but his prejudices and his passions were sometimes too strong for his sagacity and judgment. . . .

On Mr. Adams's return from England, he undoubtedly discovered a partiality in favor of monarchic government, and few scrupled to assert for a time, that he exerted his abilities to encourage the operation of those principles in America. . . .

Mr. Adams, in private life, supported an unimpeachable character; his habits of morality, decency and religion, rendered him amiable in his family, and beloved by his neighbors. The opinions of a man of such sobriety of manners, political experience, and general knowledge of morals, law

and government, will ever have a powerful effect on society, and must naturally influence the people, more especially the rising generation, the young men, who have not had the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the character, police, and jurisprudence of nations, or with the history of their own country, much less with the principles on which the American revolution was grounded.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 8 January 1805

For fifteen years, i.e from the year 1760 to 1775 I was in the Valley, the dark Valley of Grief Gloom and disappointment; Unalterably devoted to Principles whose Advocates were for a great portion of that time a Smaller Minority than yours is now. My constant Refuge was my Profession. There, I thank God, I never failed to command respect, or to get Money: But it cost me Severe labour of mind and Body.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 20 January 1805

I have been uncommonly engaged and interested in Reading Shakespeare, and particularly his Historical Drama's which I have read thro' Attention, and have almost compleated the Second time.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 27 February 1805

No civilized Society can do without Lawyers. . . .

You hear I am still facetious upon Some Subjects, But my facetiousness you know was always awkward and seldom understood.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 23 December 1805

Shall I Send you diagrams of my Grounds, which the fine Weather of November and December has enabled me to plough, for Corn, Potatoes, Barley Clover and Timothy? But what a Miniature picture of a Lilliputian Plantation, would Six Acres and four Acres and three Acres and two Acres appear in Comparison of President Washington's which as Mr [Tobias] Lear informed me employed five and thirty Ploughs in continual motion all the year round. But General Washington was a wise man from his Youth, took good care of himself and married a rich Wife; whereas I was a Simpleton from the beginning, took little care of the main chance and married a Girl as poor as myself. My Plough and my Molecule of Compost have been my important Business.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 23 July 1806

Cobbet once said to Sam Malcolm "There never was a greater difference between two Men, than between Washington and Adams, in one point the desire of fame. Washington had an enormous, an insatiable thirst for it: but Adams was as excessively careless of it." He did not I presume intend it, and I certainly did not consider it, as a compliment. I am very sensible that I have been negligent of it, to a fault, and a very great fault too. There has been very many times in my life, when I have been so agitated in my own mind as to have no consideration at all, of the light in which my Words Actions and even Writings, would be considered by others. Indeed I never could bring myself Seriously to consider that I was a great Man, or of much importance or consideration

to the World. The few traces that remain of me, must I believe go down to posterity in much confusion and distraction, as my life has been passed. Enough Surely of Egotism!

What must I say of my own vanity and levity? Crimes, I thank God, I have none to record. Follies, indiscretions, and trifles, enough and too many.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 21 May 1807

I never kept a Copy of any Letter, till I became a Member of Congress in 1774.

Thomas Jefferson to William Short, Washington, 12 June 1807

He has a better heart than head.

John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Quincy, Mass., 19 August 1807

Permit me Madam to ask the favour of you, to point out the Act or Word, which appeared to you to evince this Pride of Talents. I know not that I ever felt any Such Pride. A Man whose disposition is So open as mine and who has indulged himself in So much facetiousness and So much Irony among his Friends as you know I always have done, may have often mistaken for his Friends, Enemies of the blackest rancour of heart, who may have misrepresented him in a thousand Instances. But Pride of Talents has been very far from my heart. I never in my Life believed that I had any Talents beyond mediocrity. I have always been Sensible to my mortification that all I have done, has been accomplished by the Severest and most incessant Labour. I have no reason to be proud of any thing. If I could be proud of any Thing it would be Industry: but even in this, I am much more inclined to be ashamed that I have done no more than to be proud of what I have done. I mean not by this, any affectation of Modesty for I will open my whole Soul to you on this Subject. I have great Satisfaction in believing, that I have done more Labour, run through more and greater dangers, and made greater Sacrifices, than any Man among my Contemporaries living or dead, in the Service of my Country, and I Should not hesitate to hazard all Reputation if I did not convince the Public of it too, if I should ever undertake it. This I deliver to you as my cool, Sober, deliberate opinion, and am not afraid it should go down to Posterity as Such. Will you please to name the Man who has done Suffered and Sacrificed So much? Name him and I will make a Sketch of a Comparison and either convince you or expose my self, perhaps both. You may call this Pride or Vanity or Self Sufficiency, or vain Glory or what you please. But it is the Truth. . . .

We come now to the “much Ambition.” I am not about to unman myself. If I Should represent myself more than Man, no Person would believe me: and if I pretended to be less, I hope I Should find no Credit. Ambition is wrought into the Soul of every human Being from Alexander and Napoleon down to the Infant in his Mother’s arms. I must be a Monster then in my own Estimation if I had been destitute of it in any part of my Life. Ambition too is the most lively in the most intelligent and the most generous Minds. I am far therefore from being offended at being represented as ambitious. There can be no rational question about the Existence of ambition in any human Breast, it is Scarcely extinct in Idiots and Lunaticks. The only questions Should be to what objects it is directed? and by what Laws is it governed? If the Object be the good of our Friends, Neighbours, Country and Mankind, this is Surely not censurable. If it is regulated by Truth, Honour, Justice and Benevolence it is certainly laudable. Now Madam I beseech you to tell me, when where, and in what Transaction of my Administration, or indeed of my whole Life my Ambition prompted me to any other Object or was not regulated by those moral Sentiments and Rules? What

Projects inconsistent with the Strictest Purity did my Ambition ever Suggest instigate or pursue? Whilst I hope for your candid Answer to these Questions, I will Say if any Man living or dead could produce incontestible Proofs, of a Sense of Duty prevailing over the most Seducing temptations of Ambition, I am bold to Say I have it in my Power to produce a great many of them. On the contrary I challenge all my Enemies to produce an Instance, in which my Ambition aimed at improper Objects, or pursued good ones by unjustifiable Means. I have never adopted the Maxim that the End would Sanctify or justify the means.

Careat Successibus Opto
Quisquis ob Eventu facta notanda putat.*

*Let him evermore want success who thinketh actions are to be judged by the events.

John Adams to Skelton Jones, Quincy, Mass., 9 March 1809

I rec'd yesterday your favour of the Month of August 1808 and if the following answers to your Questions will be any gratification to your curiosity or any Aid to your Work, they are at your Service.

1. My Father was John Adams, the Son of Joseph Adams the Son of another Joseph Adams, the Son of Henry Adams who all lived independent New England Farmers and died and lie buried in this Town of Quincy formerly called Braintree and more anciently Still Mount Wollaston. My Mother was Susanna Boylston Daughter of Peter Boylston of Brookline, the oldest Son of Thomas Boylston a Physician who came from England in 1656 and purchased a Farm in that Town near Boston.—

2. I was Born in Quincy on the 19 of October, 1735

3. My early Life and Education were first at the Public Latin School in the then Town of Braintree, then at a private Academy under Mr Joseph Marsh, within three doors of my Fathers House, then at Harvard Colledge in Cambridge, where after four years Studies I received a Degree as Batchelor of Arts in 1755 and after three years more that of Master of Arts.—

4. Among these accidents, the principal that I recollect were certain Theological Controversies, which were conducted as I thought with an uncharitable Spirit of Intolerance that convinced me I should be forever unfit for the Profession of Divinity and determined me to the Profession of the Law. To this cause were added many Compliments from my Accademical Companions who endeavoured to make me believe that I had a Voice and a Tongue as well as a Face and Front for a Public Speaker and that I was better fitted for the Bar than the Pulpit. For the Faculty of Medicine I never had any Inclination having an Aversion to Sick Rooms, and no fondness for Rising at all hours of the night to visit Patients.

5. Mr Maccarter a Clergyman, of Worcester, authorised by the Select-Men at the Commencement at Colledge in 1755, happened to be pleased with the performance of my part in the publick Exhibition engaged me to take the Charge of the Latin School in that Town, where in a few Months I entered as a Clark in the Office of Col. James Puttnam a Counsellor at Law in very large Practice and of very Respectable Talents and Information.

Here as I boarded in his Family I had opportunities of Conversing with all the Judges Lawyers and many others of the Principal Characters of the Province and heard their Speculations upon Publick affairs. This was highly delightful to me, because my Father who had a publick Soul had drawn my attention to Publick affairs, from my earliest Infancy, I had listened with eagerness to his Conversation with his Friends during the whole Expedition to Cape Breton in 1745 and I had received very grievous impressions of the Injustice and Ingratitude of Great Britain towards New

England in that whole Transaction as well as many others before and after it, During the Years 1754. 1755. 1756. 1757. The Conduct of Generals Shirley Bradock, Abercrombie Webb and above all Lord Loudon which were daily discussed in Mr Putnams Family gave me such an opinion and such a disgust of the British government that I heartily wished the two Countries were Seperated forever. I was convinced We could defend ourselves against the French and manage our affairs better without than with English, in 1758 and 1759. Mr Pitt coming into Power sent Wolfe and Amherst, whom I saw with his Army as they passed through Worcester and these conquered Cape Breton and Quebec I then rejoiced that I was an Englishman and gloried in the Name of Breton, But alas how Short was my tryumph in British Wisdom, and Justice, In February 1761 I heard the argument in the Council Chamber in Boston upon Writs of Assistance, and there Saw that Britain was determined to let nothing divert me from my Fidelity to my Country.

6 An inflexible course of studies and Labours to promote preserve and Secure that Independance of my Country which I so early saw to be inevitable against all Parties Factions and Nations that have Shown themselves unfriendly to it.

7 The fourth of March 1801. The Causes of my Retirement are to be found in the Writings of Freneau Markoe Ned Church Andrew Brown Paine Calender Hamilton Cobbet and John Ward Fenno and many others but more especially in the Circular Letters of Members of Congress from the Southern and Middle States, Without a compleat Collection of all these Libels no faithful History of the last twenty years can ever be written. Nor any adequate account given of the Causes of my Retirement from public Life.

8 My Life for the last Eight years has been Spent in the Bosom of my Family surrounded by my Children and Grand Children. In my Farm in my Garden and Library. But in all this there is nothing interesting to the Public.

9 Five feet Seven or nine Inches, I really know not which.

10 I have one head, four Limbs and five senses, like other Men, and nothing peculiar in any of them.

11 I have been Married forty four years, 12 To Miss Abigail Smith on the Twenty fifth of October 1764, in her Father's House at Weymouth the next Town to this, and by her Father who was a Clergyman—

13 Three Sons and a Daughter, 14 This would require twenty Volumes.

15 My temper in general has been tranquil except when any Instance of extraordinary Madness deceit Hypocrisy Ingratitude Treachery, or Perfidy has suddenly struck me. Then I have always been irascible, enough and in three or four Instances, very extraordinary ones, too much so. The storm however never lasted for half a hour, and anger never rested in the Bosom.

16. Very little I believe.

17 Under my first Latin Master who was a Churl, I spent my time in Shooting Skaiting Swimming Flying Kites and every other boyish Exercise and diversion I could invent More mischiveous. Under my second Master, who was kind I began to love my Books and neglect my sports.

18 from that time I have been too Studious, At Colledge, next to the ordinary Routine of Clasical studies, Mathematicks and natural Philosophy, were my favourite pursuits, When I began to study Law, I found Ethicks, the Law of Nations, the civil Law the common Law, and the Common Law, a field too vast, to admit of many other Inquiries. Classicks, History and Philosophy have however never been wholly neglected to this day—

19 Such Persons are all dead or so old as to be incapable of writing any long details.—

20 I have no Miniature and have been too much abused by Painters ever to sit to any one again.

John Adams to Skelton Jones, Quincy, Mass., 11 March 1809

My temper in general has been tranquil, except when any instance of extraordinary madness, deceit, hypocrisy, ingratitude, treachery or perfidy, has suddenly struck me. Then I have always been irascible enough, and in three or four instances, very extraordinary ones, too much so. The storm, however, never lasted for half an hour, and anger never rested in the bosom.

John Adams to William Sumner, Quincy, Mass., 28 March 1809

I am weary, my Friend, of that unintermitted Insolence of which I have been the Object for twenty years, Stoical Patience, unlimited Submission passive obedience and Non Resistance are the only Arms I have, as yet opposed to it.—

Mausoleums, Statues, Monuments will never be erected to me. I wish them not—Panegyrical Romances, will never be written, nor flattering Orations pronounced to transmit my Character to Posterity in glorious Colours. No nor in true Colours neither.—All Colours but the last I abhor. Nevertheless I will not die unlamented. . . .

For my Character I appeal to foreign Nations even to the English, But above all I appeal to Posterity.—

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 12 April 1809

In all my negotiations in France and Holland . . . I had so uniformly resisted all the arts and intrigues of the Count de Vergennes and M. de Sartine and all their satellites, and that with such perfect success that I well knew, although they treated me with great external respect, yet in their hearts they had conceived an ineradicable jealousy and aversion to me. I well knew, therefore, that French influence in America would do all in its power to trip me up.

You advise me to write my own life. I have made several attempts, but it is so dull an employment that I cannot endure it. I look so much like a small boy in my own eyes that with all my vanity I cannot endure the sight of the picture.

John Adams to William Cunningham, Quincy, Mass., 7 June 1809

I rodomontaded with Lyman and Wright. They called me Father of New-England—I resented that, because if I was a Father at all, I was Father of all the States.—I am, in earnest, a friend to the whole Union, comprehending East, West, North and South, and I will not countenance a project of division.

John Adams to François Adriaan Van der Kemp, Quincy, Mass., 15 December 1809

Happy are you in your various Learning and the Enjoyment of your Books. I can read but little on account of my Eyes. My Wife and Children and Grand Children are very good to read to me, but they cannot always read when I want, nor always such Books as I should choose.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 16 March 1810

I am Sick of the Palsy as usual before you left me: rather increased by the Severe Cold of Some Parts of the Winter: but whether Sick or Well as long as I live my heart will be with you and yours.

Abigail Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, Quincy, Mass., 10 April 1810

Your father too enjoys his health, but not without an increase of that tremor upon his hands which makes it difficult for him to hold a knife or take a cup of tea. His spirits are good, and he amuses himself with the little flock of grandchildren who are, one or the other, with us.

Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, Monticello, 16 January 1811

I think it part of his character to suspect foul play in those of whom he is jealous, and not easily to relinquish his suspicions.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 21 June 1811

I am well, my appetite is as good as ever. I sleep well o' nights; no burdens, whether grasshoppers or mammoths of body or mind, affect me. I still enjoy a chair in this study, but avoid close thinking from principle. My natural vision is not bad, but I use glasses for ease to my eyes, which you have known to be weak and subject to inflammations for almost forty years. My hearing, for anything that I perceive or my friends have remarked to me, is as good as ever. So much for the bright side.

On the other I have a "quiveration." What in the name of the medical dictionary, you will say, is a "quiveration"? A wild Irish boy, who lives with my son T. B. A., let a horse run away with a chaise. One of the family ran out and cried out, "Nat! Why did you not scream and call for help?" "Sir! Sir!" said Nat, "I was seized with such a *quiveration* that I could not speak." Nat's quiveration is the best word I know to express my palsy. It does not as yet much incommode me in writing, although my hands are chiefly affected. Another circumstance on the dark side is, my organs of speech are gone. It would divert you to witness a conversation between my ancient friend and colleague, Robert T. Paine, and me. He is above eighty. I cannot speak, and he cannot hear. Yet we converse.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 20 August 1811

You stand nearly alone in the history of our public men in never having had your *integrity* called in question or even suspected. Friends and enemies agree in believing you to be an honest man.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 28 August 1811

I am surprised to read your opinion that "my integrity has never been called into question" and that "friends and enemies agree in believing me to be an honest man." If I am to judge by the newspapers and pamphlets that have been printed in America for twenty years past, I should think that both parties believed me the meanest villain in the world. . . . Washington and Franklin could never do anything but what was imputed to pure disinterested patriotism. I never could do anything but what was ascribed to sinister motives.

If I should inculcate "fidelity to the marriage bed," it would be said that it proceeded from resentment to General Hamilton, and a malicious desire to hold up to posterity his libertinism. Others would say that it is only a vainglorious ostentation of my own continence. For among all the errors, follies, failings, vices, and crimes, which have been so plentifully imputed to me, I cannot recollect a single insinuation against me of any amorous intrigue, or irregular or immoral connection with woman, single or married, myself a bachelor or a married man.

It is most certain that the End of my Life cannot be remote. My Eyes are constantly fixed upon it, according to the Præcept or Advice of the Ancient Philosopher: And, if I am not in a total delusion, I daily behold and Contemplate it, without dismay.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, 4 September 1811

No hand but your own must compose your voice from the tomb. Your stile is bold, original occasionally brilliant, and at all times full of nerve. There is not a redundant word in it. It is the Artillery of language. Your son when he returns may review your address, and give it the touches of modern grammar, and order, but with all his genius and taste in composition, in which he is unrivalled in our Country, he will not be able to render it more impressive upon your fellow-citizens.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 2 November 1811

Two Month's since going out in the dark in my Garden to look for the Comet, I Stumbled over a Knot in a Stake and tore my Leg near the Shin in Such a manner that the Surgeon with his Baths Cataplasms, Plaisters and Bandages has been daily hovering about it and poor I, deprived of my horse and my Walks have been bolstered up with my Leg horizontal on a Sopha.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 21 November 1811

I walk as usual a few miles a day.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 17 February 1812

I rejoice in the correspondence which has taken place between you and your old friend Mr. Jefferson. I consider you and him as the North and South Poles of the American Revolution. Some talked, some wrote, and some fought to promote and establish it, but you and Mr. Jefferson *thought* for us all. I never take a retrospect of the years 1775 and 1776 without associating your opinions and speeches and conversations with all the great political, moral, and intellectual achievements of the Congresses of those memorable years.

Benjamin Rush to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 3 March 1812

[On the resumption of correspondence between Adams and Thomas Jefferson.] If Mr. Adams' letters to you are written in the same elevated and nervous [i.e., vigorous] style, both as to matter and language, that his letters are which he now and then addresses to me, I am sure you will be delighted with his correspondence. Some of his thoughts electrify me. I view him as a mountain with its head clear and reflecting the beams of the sun, while all below it is frost and snow.

John Adams to Thomas McKean, Quincy, Mass., 21 June 1812

The last eleven years of my life have been the most comfortable of the seventy-seven. I have never enjoyed so much in any equal period. . . . I am as cheerful as ever I was; and my health is as good, excepting a quiveration of the hands, which disables me from writing in the bold and steady character of your letter, which I rejoice to see. Excuse the word quiveration, which, though I borrowed it from an Irish boy, I think an improvement in our language worthy a place in Webster's

dictionary. Though my sight is good, my eyes are too weak for all the labor I require of them; but as this is a defect of more than fifty years standing, there are no hopes of relief. The trepidation of the hands arising from a delicacy, or, if you will, a morbid irritability of nerves, has shown itself at times for more than half a century, but has increased for four or five years past, so as to extinguish all hopes that it will ever be less.

John Adams to Ebenezer Seaver, Quincy, Mass., 14 August 1812

It is all over with me. I can recollect an Old Anecdote and repeat it with the Garrulity of Age: But close thinking is out of the question. You must have Seen proofs enough that any novel Scenes or extraordinary Exertions or fatigue are too much for my Nerves.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 17 August 1812

How is it, my Friend, that I, poor, ignorant I, must Stand before Posterity as differing from all the great Men of the Age! Priestly, Price, Franklin, Burke Fox Pitt, Mansfield Cambden, Jefferson Madison? So it is. I Shall be judged the most vain conceited, impudent arrogant Creature in the World. I tremble when I think of it. I blush, I am ashamed. But as I have Dr Rush and one or two others to keep me in Countenance. I hope I Shall not be wholly reprobated.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 14 November 1812

I am not good at details. My Patience has not enough of Marble, Steel, or adamant in it. Summaries, or rather Hints are better adapted to my Capacity.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 4 January 1813

Be pleased to accept my humble Duty for the notice you have condescended to take of me. I will do my best to shake a little animation into my Master for a few days or months or possibly years. But what is the Prospect before him? What can he expect? or hope? or wish? He is 77 and more: three and twenty years will make him 100. thirteen years will make him 90: three years will bring him to fourscore. And what are three, thirteen, or three and twenty years, at Any stage of Life, in Infancy Manhood or old age? especially in extream old age? How many Pains and Aches, which I cannot shake away, has he to endure? How much low spirits? how many gloomy anxious moments for the dangers, disgraces, disasters, degeneracy, Vices, Follies, Ignorance, Stupidity, and Vanity of his Country? How many Wives, Daughters, Sons, Grand Children, Brothers Cousins may he loose in 23. 13. or 3. Years? How many of the few remaining public political Friends must disappear? Even Dr Rush himself? Oh! if he were to read this he would shed many Tears. Pray conceal it from him! But there are other Things. How much Ecclesiastical Bigottry superstition and Persecution may he have to bewail? How much Calumny Intrigue Party Spirit, political Fury and civil War may he have to deplore? I will leave the rest, Sir to your profound Reflections. I will only compare the foregoing Periods with some of his past Life. Fifteen years he spent at schools Male and female grammar and A.B.C. When he play'd Truant, and when he did not he spent all his Mornings Noons and Nights in making and sailing Boats, in Swimming Skaiting, flying Kites and shooting in marbles, Ninepins, Bat and Ball, Footbal &c &c &c Quoits Wrestling and sometimes Boxing &c &c &c and what was no better running about to Quiltings and Huskings and Frolicks and Dances among the Boys and Girls!!! These 15 years went off like a Fairy Tale. Apply such a 15 years to his present age and it will make 93.

Founders on the Founders

He then spent 4 years at Collidge. He had begun to love a Book. Fare well Shooting Skaiting Swimming, and all the rest. Oh! the Mathematicks the Metaphisicks the Logick not forgetting Classicks! Seeking Books and Bookish Boys, devouring Books without Advice and without Judgment. The 4 years were gone like a tale that is told. Add such a 4 years to his present age and it will make him 81. He then passed 3 years at Worcester, among black Letter French and Latin Law and kept a school to pay for the Priviledge—The 3 years were gone seemingly in the twinkling of an Eye. Add such a three years to his present age and it will make him 80. He then removed to Braintre County of Suffolk in Massachusetts, where he spent 17 years at the Bar, riding Circuits, getting Money and a Wife and Children. But the 17 years flew away like the Morning Cloud. Add 17 such years and you will make him 90. Four years more were then spent in Congress, you know how. But they were gone like a dream. Add 4 such years to his present age and you make him 81. Then he was ten years in Europe; on the mountain Wave, over the Hills and far away. But the 10 years were gone he scarcely knew how. Add 10 such and they will make him 87. He had then an Interval of eight or nine months. Then he was 8 years V. President; a Target for the Archers; a Constant object of the Billingsgate, scurrility, Misapprehension, Misconstruction Misrepresentations Lies and Libels of all Parties. These 8 went away like a nauseous Fog. Add such an 8 to his age and you make him 85. He was then President for 4 years. A Tale told by an Ideot full of sound and fury Signifying Nothing. Vanity of Vanities all was Vanity! Add such a four years and you would infallibly kill him long before he would be 81. Twelve years have past in solitude, far the pleasantest of all: yet where are they? gone like the Dew, the blossoms, the Flowers and the Leaves. Add such another 12 and you make him 89; withered, faded, wrinkled tottering trembling stumbling, sighing groaning, weeping! Oh! I have Some Scruples of Conscience, whether I ought to preserve him: whether it would not be charity to stumble, and relieve him from such a futurity. Add only 24 such years as have passed since his return from Europe to America and you make him 101. an object of wonder and of Pity to a gaping staring World!

John Adams to William Plumer, Quincy, Mass., 10 January 1813

I know not when or where I have ever received a more luminous letter, than yours of the 2nd of this month. It is a Misfortune to an Old Man to receive a good letter: because it Springs a mine in his memory, and disposes him to write a Volume, which his life would not be long enough to finish. Hence the proverbial Garrulity of Age. I find nothing So difficult as to abridge and compress.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 15 January 1813

Vanity is one of your “diseases of the Mind.” you and all the World know to what a Scandalous degree, I have been infected with it, all the days of my Life.

John Adams to François Adriaan Van der Kemp, Quincy, Mass., 9 August 1813

My Philosophy and my Religion, Such as they are, are brought to a Tryal.

My dear, my only daughter lies in the next Chamber consuming with a Schirrous Cancer; my Daughter in Law, Charles’s Widow lies in the next Chamber, extreamly weak, and low with one of the most dangerous diseases to which We are liable. My Wife a valetudinarian through an whole Life of 69 Years, is worn down with care, exertion and anxiety. In the midst of all this, my own Eyes are attacked by a venom that threatens to put them out.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 14 September 1813

It has been long, very long a settled opinion in my Mind that there is now, never will be, and never was but one being who can Understand the Universe. And that it is not only vain but wicked for insects to pretend to comprehend it.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 November 1813

One Thing is clear in my mind, and that is that you ought to be at home; if there, you should be obliged to live on Turnips Potatoes and Cabbage, as I am. My Sphere is reduced to my Garden: and So must yours be. The wandering Life that you have lived, as I have done before you, is not compatible with human nature. It was not made for it, We must move in narrower Circles.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 24 December 1813

You, almost from your Cradle, and I from 16 years of Age have been Heluones Librorum.* We have hunted Books in Boston, in Bourdeaux in Paris in Nantes L'Orient and Brest; in Amsterdam, The Hague and Leyden, in London Berlin and Petersburg. But I think neither of us can boast of much discriminating Judgment in our Choice. We have many good Books: but thousands that are comparatively worth very little. I once bought Muratori, and Byzantine Historians, at the same shop, where I might have had Fabricius. I would now give more for Fabricius, than for all of them. I have bought Smollets and Humes and Rapins and Tyrrels &c &c. &c I would now give all of them for Rymers Fœdera. I would now give more for the Parliamentary History, and the Debates in Parliament, than for hundreds of Volumes of English and French and Dutch and German Trash. I was taught and practised at the Barr, the Precept "Petere Fontes"; but how I forgot it, in my Travels and You in yours I know not.

*Glutton for books.

John Adams to Henry Colman, Quincy, Mass., 14 January 1814

Every Thing I receive from you affords me delight. Caroline reads the Vision to me by Candle Light when I cannot See.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 16 May 1815

I Shall call on you for Books and give you much trouble. Minute the expence and send it to your Brother or to me, and I will pay your Brother. I must be independent, even of you. I must think myself independent, as long as I live. The Feeling is essential to my existence.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 24 December 1815

your Fathers bodily health is much firmer than mine, yet he bends under the weight of years, and decays fast.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 February 1816

your Father performd a great feat the other day. he went to Stuart's the Other day and brought home his portrait and mine. his own is a most admirable likeness, a Speaking likeness. but mine—

alass will be known only to those who knew me 20 years ago. my Grandchildren will not know it. there is a likeness to be Seen in the features of that which mr Copley took of you.

Stuart took one of your Father this last Summer for mr Shaw; to be placed in the Athenæum, equally good

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 22 March 1816

Your Father's zeal for Books will be one of the last desires which will quit him.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 29 June 1816

your Father retains his faculties, and his hearing wonderfully—his Spirits are generally good—but his Limbs fail him—he is less fond of exercise—tho he walkd to your Brothers yesterday, & back, which is three miles—Yet our decayed Tenements must Soon Crumble to dust, but I hope we have an other and a better Country to repair to, whose builder and Maker is the most high—and where I trust we Shall meet those Dear to us, who have gone before us—

Josephus B. Stuart's Account of a Visit to Monticello, 24 December 1816

[Jefferson] thinks old John Adams honest but had bad advisers—

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 October 1817

“Political Calms” cannot be of long duration in this Country. As Our Constitutions of Government general and particular are Greehouses and Hotbeds of Ambition: eternal and incalculable Competitions will grow out of them as naturally and necessarily as Grass and Corn grow in a rich deep Soil well Sunned Watered and cultivated. Storms must arise. My Advice to every Man in public Station is to be always prepared and ready to retire at a moments Warning. I commenced my public Life with this fixed and avowed Determination and I have kept it to a Punctilio. I never would be, and never was dependant, for one Moment On public favour.

Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 20 May 1818

I must see a Letter from my son. I dont know how to write to him untill I get one.—His Father groans out, well I must write to my son—yet much of what he writes now, he dictates to others—Sometimes his pen refuseing to be guided, or I should say rather, that his hand is unable to guide his pen—his mind *is* still active, and he enjoys Society, But Age with hasty Steps pushes us off the Stage. we have had our day. why then decline giving place to others?

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Washington, 22 November 1818

I have received a short Letter from our dear and honoured father, have heard from various quarters of the fortitude with which he has met the most distressing of calamities. Knowing his character as I do this was what I expected: But the struggle which is not apparent to the world, is not the less but the more trying within—Watch over his health, my dear brother with unremitting, though if possible to him imperceptible attention. Assist him with unwearied assiduity in the management of his affairs; and always according to his own deliberate opinions and wishes—It has been suggested to me, with some regret, that he as determined to dismiss his Carriage and horses—

No one can regret more than I do the necessity under which he feels himself to forego the convenience at his years, but I know that his judgement is so sound his resolution so firm, and his motives so noble-minded that I think no effort ought to be made to dissuade him from it—I would say the same of every thing for which he made express an inclination—Let the study of every one around him be to gratify his wishes according to his ideas, and not according to their own. It is always easy to see when advice would be agreeable to him, and useful advice, though he does not always assent to it when first given, never fails to have upon his final determination all the influence that it ought to have.

John Adams to Susanna Boylston Treadway, Quincy, Mass., 25 January 1819

The Paine of Writing has become to me insupportable.

Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Adams Wells, Monticello, 12 May 1819

As a speaker he [Samuel Adams] could not be compared with his living colleague and namesake, whose deep conceptions, nervous style, and undaunted firmness, made him truly our bulwark in debate.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 23 November 1819

My Health is astonishing to myself, I can say, like Deborah Queen Ann Dutchess of Marlborough—who in one of her letters, after innumrating a multitude of her griefs, and misfortunes, says, I believe nothing but Distemper will kill me—though I have not had three remarkable Illnesses, I have been afflicted with three times three misfortunes—grievous enough—to have shaken the philosophy of the most hardend Stoic—I ought however, to remember the saying of a Bishop with whom I dined once at Versailles who asked me many questions concerning Dr Frankline,—his Health, his Spirits, and his mind—I answered his Health is very robust, his Spirits very cheerful—and his Intellect as bright as ever. Monseigneur reply'd “mais a son age il ne faut que tres peu de chose pour abbatre un colosse”*—

*“But at his age it takes very little to fell a giant.”

John Adams to Caroline De Windt, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 24 January 1820

The longer I live, the more I read, the more patiently I think; and the more anxiously I inquire, the less I seem to know.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 12 May 1820

The question between spirit and matter appears to me nugatory because we have neither evidence nor idea of either—all that we certainly know is that some substance exists, which must be the cause of all the qualities, and Attributes which we perceive—Extension, Solidity, Perception, memory, and Reason, for all these are Attributes, or adjectives, and not Essences or substantiv[es]—. . .

Oh delightful Ignorance—when I arrive at a certainty that I am Ignorant and that I always must be ignorant while I live I am happy for I know I can no longer be responsible—we shall meet hereafter and laugh at our present botherations—

Francis Adrian Van der Kemp to Thomas Jefferson, Oldenbarneveld, 25 June 1820

My high respected friend John Adams—enjoys the Same blessing [of happiness]—although his trembling hand, does no longer permit him, to make use of his pen—I expect—to pay him my last visit next month.

Francis Adrian Van der Kemp to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 28 August 1820

I found mr. Adams enjoying a large Share of health in body and mind—the latter equal, the former far Superior, than what he enjoyd Seven years past,—the trembling of his hands excepted. His Steps are yet firm, more So than mine—his conversation is animated—So that he is listened to with marked attention by his Surrounding friends—and he Seems to forget that he is 85—otherwise his memory is yet great, So that I heard him detail with exactness minutiae with which I had been partially acquainted for forty years. It did my friend a Sensible pleasure, when I communicated to Him, how he was remembered in your last Letter, and he hoped, I Should answer it from Montezillo—

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 3 February 1821

My appearance in the late convention was too ludicrous to be talked of. I was a member in the Convention of 1779 and there I was loquacious enough. I have harangued and scribbled more than my share but from that time to the convention in 1820 I never opened my lips in a publick debate. After a total desuetude for 40 years I boggled and blundered more than a young fellow just rising to speak at the bar, what I said I know not, I believe the Printers have made better speeches than I made for myself. Feeling my weakness I attempted little and that seldom, What would I give for nerves as good as yours? But as Wesley said of himself at my age, “old time has shaken me by the hand, and parallized it.”*

*Robert Southey reported in *The Life of Wesley; and the Rise and Progress of Methodism* (London, 1820) that shortly before his death at the age of eighty-seven, John Wesley said that “Time has shaken me by the hand, and death is not far behind” (2:561).

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 11 June 1822

I cannot mount my Horse, but I can walk three miles over a rugged rocky mountain, and have done it within a month; yet I feel when sitting in my chair, as if I could not rise out of it, and when risen, as if I could not walk across the room; my sight is very dim hearing pretty good, memory poor enough.—

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Montezillo (Quincy), Mass., 12 July, 1822

My blindness and Palsy lay me under a necessity of neglecting to answer many letters, and other kind civilities which otherwise I should delight to acknowledge.

Thomas Jefferson: Conversation with Daniel Webster, 1824

John Adams was our Colossus on the floor. He was not graceful, nor elegant, nor remarkably fluent; but he came out occasionally with a power of thought & expression, that moved us from our seats.

Martin Van Buren's Account of Visit to Monticello, c. 23 May 1824

I visited the elder Adams, at Quincy, the next summer after I was at Monticello, and I do not recollect ever to have seen a more striking & venerable figure than he appeared at that day. The traces of advanced age were more perceptible in him than in Mr. Jefferson, but did not appear to affect him either in mind or body, beyond the unavoidable infirmities of the decline of life.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 14 January 1826

I am certainly very near the end of my life. I am far from trifling with the idea of Death which is a great and solemn event. But I contemplate it without terror or dismay, "aut transit, aut finit,"* if finit, which I cannot believe, and do not believe, there is then an end of all but I shall never know it, and why should I dread it, which I do not; if transit I shall ever be under the same constitution and administration of Government in the Universe, and I am not afraid to trust and confide in it.

*Either it is a transformation, or it is the end.

George Washington Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 5 July 1826

By the letters which I yesterday forwarded from Boston you were informed of the very low condition in which my Grandfather lay: The moment I heard of it I came out of town and arrived in time to see him but not to hear him speak. After two days of suffering occasioned by an accumulation of phlegm in the throat which he was too weak to throw off. he yesterday forenoon became easier; spoke of all the members of his family; asked to have letters written to you and was to the last entirely sensible. At half past six in the afternoon his spirit passed away: he died as calmly as an infant sleeps and we believe has found another and a better world.

Boston *Columbian Centinel*, 8 July 1826

The private character of President Adams was perfectly pure, unsullied and unstained. There was no Christian or moral duty which he did not fulfil; the kindest of husbands and the best of fathers. To the excellent precepts and education which he gave his children, the nation are undoubtedly indebted for having at this time at their head his eldest son.

President Adams was serene and tranquil to the last. Conscious of having performed his duty, and of a life well spent and devoted to his country, the blasts of calumny which assailed his declining years never ruffled the serenity of his mind. He regarded them as little as the troubled elements, for he knew that like them they would soon subside, and that then, every thing would be like his own bosom, peace and sunshine. To say that he had weak points and foibles is but to say that he was a man. But his defects were those of a bold and daring spirit, an open, generous and confiding heart. He knew no guile and he feared none. Having no selfish purposes to answer, he practiced no arts to effect them. At the age of ninety, at the completion of a half century from the commencement of that revolution he had been so instrumental in effecting, he sunk by gradual decay into the arms of death. He lived to see his country's liberties placed on a firm and immovable

basis, and the light of liberty which she diffused enlightening the whole earth. On the Jubilee of Independence, his declining faculties were roused by the rejoicings in the metropolis. He inquired the cause of the salutes, and Ias told it was the fourth of July. He answered, "it is a great and glorious day." He never spake more. Thus his last thoughts and his latest words were like those of his whole life, thoughts and words which evinced a soul replete with love of country and interest in her welfare.

Timothy Pickering to Daniel Webster, Boston, 19 July 1826

All unpleasant feelings towards Mr. Adams, had ceased long before the occurrence of the above mentioned correspondence. A subsequent event obliged me, in my own vindication, to expose publicly his faults. Still I view, as I have always viewed him, as a man of eminent talents, zealously, courageously & faithfully exerted in effecting the Independence of the Thirteen United Colonies: and I believe that he, more than any other individual, roused and prepared the minds of his fellow citizens to decide positively and timely that greatest revolutionary question.

Timothy Pickering to John Marshall, Salem, Mass., 26 December 1828

[Pickering quotes Thomas Hutchinson's *The History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*, from 1749 to 1774 (London, 1828).]

"John Adams (says the Governor) was a distant relation and intimate acquaintance of Mr. Samuel Adams."—"He is said to have been at a loss which side to take." (I am disposed to absolve John Adams from this *on dit* suggestion.)—"He joined in opposition. As the troubles increased, he increased in knowledge, and made a figure, not only in his own profession, but as a patriot; and was generally esteemed as a person endowed with more knowledge than his kinsman [Samuel Adams], and equally zealous in the cause of liberty; but neither his business nor his health would admit of that constant application to it, which distinguished the other from all the rest of the province. In general, he may be said to be of stronger resentment upon any real or supposed personal neglect or injury than the other; but in their resentment against such as opposed them in the cause in which they were engaged, it is difficult to say which exceeded."

"His ambition was without bounds, and he has acknowledged to his acquaintance that he could not look with complacency upon any man who was in possession of more wealth, more honours, or more knowledge than himself."

This anecdote is so perfectly characteristic, as with me, to need no collateral evidence of its truth. But enough is to be found, even in his own writings. I have, in my Review of his Correspondence with Cunningham, quoted two passages on the subject of ambition; or the inordinate love of praise—a near relative, if not the same. On this passion in him, I remarked (at page 3) that it could bear no opposition, or even lukewarmness, in regard to the means of gratifying it; & that he had himself described it in language that would not have occurred to any man who had not felt it, in its utmost intensity. "The desire of the esteem of others, (says he) is as real a want of nature as hunger; and the neglect & contempt of the world, as severe a pain as the gout or the stone." And in pp. 99–100, I quote another passage. He says—"Ambition strengthens at every advance, and at last takes possession of the whole soul so absolutely, that the man sees nothing in the world of importance to others, or himself, but in this object." And in the next sentence, combining the love of gold and the love of praise with Ambition, he says these three passions are capable of "subduing all others, & even the understanding itself, if not the Conscience too, until they become absolute

and imperious masters of the whole mind.” The “subtlety” of these three passions, even in their excesses, he, very composedly, calls “a curious speculation.”

. . . a man who, I remarked, had read and thought more on the subject of government than perhaps any other citizen in the United States.

James Madison Conversation with Jared Sparks, April 1830

John Adams was a bold and decided champion of independence from the beginning.

James Madison to James K. Paulding, April 1831

That he had a mind rich in ideas of its own, as well as in its learned store; with an ardent love of Country, and the merit of being a colossal champion of its Independence, must be allowed by those most offended by the alloy in his Republicanism, and the fervors and flights originating in his moral temperament.

John Quincy Adams

John Adams to Abigail Adams, L’Orient, 14 May 1779

My Son has had a great Opportunity to see this Country: but this has unavoidably retarded his Education in some other Things.

He has enjoyed perfect Health from first to last and is respected wherever he goes for his Vigour and Vivacity both of Mind and Body, for his constant good Humour and for his rapid Progress in French, as well as his general Knowledge which for his Age is uncommon.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, L’Orient, 14 June 1779

My dear Fellow Traveller is very well, and is the Comfort of my Life. He is much caressed, wherever he goes.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Amsterdam, 25 September 1780

John has seen one of the Commencements when the young Gentlemen delivered their Orations and received their Premiums, and Promotions which set his Ambition all afire. Charles is the same amiable insinuating Creature. Wherever he goes he gets the Hearts of every Body especially the Ladies. One of these Boys is the Sublime and the other the Beautiful.

C.W.F. Dumas to John Adams, The Hague, 9 May 1783

Your son comports himself with all the sense and manners of a well-brought-up young man. He is the favorite of Madame Dumas, and we have every indication that he finds our company as agreeable as we do his. He has not forgotten his mother tongue, speaks very good French, and can make himself understood in German and Dutch.

John Adams to Abigail Adams (Nabby), Paris, 13 August 1783

. . . nothing in this life would contribute so much to my happiness, next to the company of your mother, as yours. I have reason to say this by the experience I have had of the society of your brother, whom I brought with me from the Hague. He is grown to be a man, and the world says they should take him for my younger brother, if they did not know him to be my son. I have great satisfaction in his behaviour, as well as in the improvements he has made in his travels, and the reputation he has left behind him wherever he has been. He is very studious and delights in nothing but books, which alarms me for his health; because, like me, he is naturally inclined to be fat. His knowledge and his judgment are so far beyond his years, as to be admired by all who have conversed with him. I lament, however, that he could not have his education at Harvard College, where his brothers shall have theirs, if Providence shall afford me the means of supporting the expense of it.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 14 August 1783

He is grown up a Man, and his Steadiness and Sobriety, with all his Spirits are much to his honour. I will make of him my Secretary while I stay.

John Adams to Abigail Adams (Nabby), Paris, 14 August 1783

Your education and your welfare, my dear child, are very near my heart; and nothing in this life would contribute so much to my happiness, next to the company of your mother, as yours. I have reason to say this by the experience I have had of the society of your brother, whom I brought with me from the Hague. He is grown to be a man, and the world says they should take him for my younger brother, if they did not know him to be my son. I have great satisfaction in his behaviour, as well as in the improvements he has made in his travels, and the reputation he has left behind him wherever he has been. He is very studious and delights in nothing but books, which alarms me for his health; because, like me, he is naturally inclined to be fat. His knowledge and his judgment are so far beyond his years, as to be admired by all who have conversed with him.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 7 September 1783

I Shall have no other Secretary than my son. He however is a very good one. He writes a good hand very fast, and is very Steady, to his Pen and his Books.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 25 January 1784

John is a great Comfort to me. He is every Thing you could wish him. Wholly devoted to his studies he has made a Progress, which gives me entire Satisfaction.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 26 January 1784

I cannot go to meet you in London, but there are a Variety of Reasons decisive against it, which I will communicate to you here. Meantime, I Send you a son who is the greatest Traveler of his Age, and without Partiality, I think as promising and manly a youth as is in the World.

John Adams to Abigail Adams (Nabby), The Hague, 26 July 1784

I send you a son who is the greatest Traveller of his age, and without Partiality, I think as promising and manly a youth as is in the World.

John Adams to Francis Dana, Auteuil near Paris, 4 November 1784

He is a noble Fellow, and will make a good Greek or Roman I hope, for he Spends his whole Time in their Company when he is not writing for me.

Francis Dana to John Adams, Cambridge, Mass., 30 January 1785

He is capable of any thing; and cannot fail to cultivate his good natural abilities under so able an Instructor.

Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, Paris, 18 March 1785

This young gentleman is I think very promising. To a vast thirst after useful knowledge he adds a facility in acquiring it. What his judgment may be I am not well enough acquainted with him to decide: but I expect it is good, & much hope it, as he may become a valuable & useful citizens.

John Adams to President of Harvard, Joseph Willard, Auteuil near Paris, 22 April 1785

My Son, John Quincy Adams, for whom this favour is intended [i.e., admittance to Harvard at an advanced placement] will have the Honour to deliver you this Letter, and I beg leave to recommend him to the kind Protection of the Corporation, and the candid Friendship of his fellow Students. He has wandered with me in Europe for Seven Years, and has been for the last Eighteen Months my only Secretary. So that it may be easily conceived, I Shall part with him with Reluctance. But the Necessity of breeding him to some Profession, in which he may provide for himself, and become a usefull Member of Society, and a Conviction that no American can be any where So well educated as in his own Country, have induced me to relinquish the Pleasure of his Company and the Advantage of his Assistance. I think I do not flatter him nor myself, when I Say, that he is a Studious youth, and not addicted to any Vice: of his Advancement in Literature and the Sciences you will form an Estimate from his Examination, which would probably be more for his Ease and Safety if it could be in French, with which Language he is more familiar than his own. But as this is not to be expected, an allowance will naturally be made [on] Account of his long absence from home.

John Adams to Cotton Tufts, Auteuil near Paris, 24 April 1785

Dr. Franklin has been soliciting for Years, to get his Grandson [William Temple Franklin] appointed a Minister abroad. Supposing no doubt that his own Services, would prevail: I know too well the Character of my Countrymen, to believe that they will thus impute the Merit of the Parent to the Offspring, and therefore instead of proposing my son for publick Employments, I am Sending him to qualify himself for private ones. I might retain him as my private Secretary, But I will not educate him in such a state of Dependence upon Congress nor my self. He shall Stand on his own Legs, place himself on a Level with the Youth his Contemporary Countrymen, and become a Town Meeting Man first, if he ever wishes for public Employment.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 26 April 1785

a Letter from Mr. Gerry, of Feby. 25th. says, Mr. Adams, is appointed Minister to the Court of London.* I believe he will promote the Interests of the United States, as much as any man: but I fear his Duty will induce him to make exertions which may be detrimental to his Health: I wish however it may be otherwise. Were I now to go with him, probably my immediate Satisfaction, might be greater than it will be in returning to America. After having been travelling for these seven years, almost all over Europe, and having been in the world and among Company for three: to return and spend one or two years in the Pale of a College, subjected to all the rules, which I have so long been freed from: then to plunge into the Dry and tedious study of the law; for three years, and afterwards not expect, (however good an Opinion I may have of myself), to bring myself into Notice, under three or four years more; if ever: it is really a Prospect some what discouraging for a youth of my Ambition (for I have Ambition, though I Hope its object is laudable).

But still . . . Oh! how wretched

Is that poor Man, that hangs on Princes favours.**

or on those of any body else. I am determined that as long as I shall be able to get my own living, in an honorable manner, I will depend upon no one. My father has been so much taken up all his lifetime, with the Interests of the public, that his own fortune has suffered by it: So that his children will have to provide for themselves; which I shall never be able to do, if I loiter away my precious time in Europe; and shun going home untill I am forced to it. With an ordinary share of common Sense, which I hope I enjoy, at least in America, I can live *independent* and *free*, and rather than live other wise, I would wish to die, before, the time, when I shall be left at my own Discretion. I have before me a striking example, of the distressing and humiliating Situation a person is reduced to by adopting a different line of Conduct and I am determined not to fall into the same error.***

*Congress appointed John Adams minister on 24 February; he received his commission on 2 May.

***King Henry VIII*, Act III, scene ii, lines 366–367.

***Probably a reference to William Temple Franklin.

Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, Paris, 11 May 1785

This will be delivered you by young Mr. Adams, whom I beg leave to introduce to your acquaintance, and recommend as worthy of your friendship. He possesses abilities, learning, application, and the best of dispositions. Considering his age, too, you will find him more improved by travel than could have been expected.

John Thaxter to Abigail Adams, Haverhill, N.H., 4 June 1785

Whenever your Son returns, you may be assured, Madam, that Inclination and Duty will equally induce me to render him all that Assistance, and to furnish him with such Advice and Council, as may be in my power. His Genius and Application will ever secure the Attention and Advice of his Friends, and enable him to make a distinguish'd figure in whatever profession he engages in.

Elbridge Gerry to John Adams, New York, 3 August 1785

Your son Mr. Adams delivered me your Favours of the 25th & 28th of April, & these were More acceptable as they were received from his Hands. I think him a promising Character, that

will make a Figure in publick or private Life, & be an Honor to this Country as well as to his Connections. He has had much Attention paid to him in this City, & by Invitation of the president [Richard Henry Lee] is now in his Family.

Mary Smith Cranch to Abigail Adams, Braintree, Mass., 14 August 1785

Cousin John is come, dear youth, and brought with him in his own Face such a resemblance of His Papa and Mama as I never before saw blended in one. And I am happy to perceive that it is not only in his Person that he bears such a likeness to his Parents. I have already discover'd a strength of mind, a memory, a soundness of judgment which I have seldom seen united in one so young. His modesty is not the least of his virtues. In the Eyes of his cousins, tis of great price. If his application is equal to his abilities he cannot fail of making a great Man. He will be destitute of his Father's ambition if it is not. His mother's animated countenance assures me I need not fear a disappointment.

Mary Cranch to Abigail Adams, Braintree, Mass., post-27 August 1785

Cousin John is come, dear youth, and brought with him in his own Face such a resemblance of His Papa and Mama as I never before saw blended in one. And I am happy to perceive that it is not only in his Person that he bears such a likeness to his Parents. I have already discover'd a strength of mind, a memory, a soundness of judgment which I have seldom seen united in one so young. His modesty is not the least of his virtues. In the Eyes of his cousins, tis of great price. If his application is equal to his abilities he cannot fail of I a great Man. He will be destitute of his Fathers ambition if it is not. His mothers animated countenance assures me I need not fear a disappointment.

Mary Smith Cranch to Abigail Adams, Lincoln, 14 September 1785

I ask'd cousin John yesterday, whether his Friends answer'd his expectations. He says they have greatly exceeded them. I could not bear to have him disappointed. If attention will please him he must be pleased. He receives it as he ought, it does not puff him up with vanity. He is admir'd every where he goes for his modest behaviour. I want to know what he thinks of us all. He enters into characters with a penetration that astonishes me. If I had anything in my disposition that I wish'd to hide I would not be acquainted with him. He is form'd for a Statesman. I shut him out of the room when I want to work. I can do none when he is in it. I can do nothing but look at him. Tis an expressable pleasure that I feel in tracing the countenance, the air, and manners of my dear Brother and Sister most agreeable united in him. I do not wonder you were loathe to part with him.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 4 October 1785

I have been invited to several places, but as yet have had to plead, as an excuse, that my trunks are not come, and I have no Clothes to appear decently in. Although I am much in want of my trunks, yet I should be glad if I could make the excuse serve, longer, than I shall be able to: for I feel every day the desire of forming new Acquaintances, diminishing. I have been for these eight years continually changing my Society: as soon as I have been able to distinguish good Characters from bad, and have obtained any friends, I could have any Confidence in, I have been obliged to leave them, probably never to see them more. My heart instead of growing callous by a frequent repetition of the same pain, seem'd to feel every seperation more than, any of the former ones. I

am really weary of this wandering, strolling kind of Life, and now I wish to form few new acquaintances, have few friends, but such as I may

Grapple to my heart with hooks of steel.*

*"Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel," *Hamlet*, Act I, scene iii, line 63.

John Quincy Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, Haverhill, N.H., 8 October 1785

Whenever I get settled in to my Studies, I feel as if I could live Hermit like: and I hope I may always preserve such Disposition to a degree.

Royall Tyler to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 15 October 1785

I am happy, that I can inform you, that your Son meets with general, Universal Respect and approbation: That he is remarked as having brought home no Tincture of what we Style, "European Frivolity of Manners," of which the Traveled Youth of our Country, Usually import so large a Quantity. He is Pleasing to The Old, as he is Respectful in his Deportment: to The Young: as he affects no Superiority over the Youth of his Country, and Discovers none, except that which in his Conversation, is manifestly the Result of an Industrious improvement of Superior Advantages.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 3 November 1785

I feel a degree of Melancholy which may be owing to my having been so much confined these three or four days, but I rather imagine proceeds from another Cause. When our Reason is at variance with our heart, the mind cannot be in a pleasing State: I have heretofore more than once, been obliged to exert all my Resolution, to keep myself free from a Passion, which I could not indulge, and which would have made me miserable had I not overcome it. I have escaped till now more perhaps owing to my good Fortune, than to my own firmness, and now again, I am put to a trial. I have still more Reason, than I ever had, to repress my feelings; but I am also perswaded, that I never was in greater danger; one Circumstance there is, which gives me hopes; and if it takes place, will put an end to my danger and my fears.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 28 November 1785

I have for about a month past, recited in the morning, with my brother in Virgil, and it is rather to me a relaxation, than a study. It is a general Observation, that mankind have too exalted ideas, of those goods they do not possess, and too low an opinion of them, when attained. But I believe, with Respect to Science, this maxim must be reversed. It is most commonly despised by the ignorant, but is well appreciated by those, who have overcome, the difficulties, that occur in the road to it. A youth seldom takes pleasure, in the first pursuit of those Studies, which afterwards afford him, the highest Entertainment. When I first went through Virgil, I was struck with many Beauties, which it is impossible to overlook, but the difficulty of understanding the passages, often overbalanced the Satisfaction, I then derived from them: but whenever I read over any part of this Author again I am abundantly rewarded, for all the pains I ever took, in becoming acquainted with him.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 21 December 1785

All day at home. I am often at a great loss, what to say at the End of a day, in this Journal, of mine: I would place my thoughts upon Persons and things: but Persons I do not often see, and when I am in Company with a new Character, and recollect my Observations upon it, they are for the most part either such as I am afraid I should in future consider as partial and ill natured, or wholly insignificant; and my time is so entirely taken up, in other employments, that I make very few reflections upon things. However this scene of perpetual sameness, which does not agree perfectly with my disposition, will not last very long. The family I am in, presents as perfect a scene of happiness, as I ever saw: but it is entirely owing to the disposition of the persons. A life of Tranquility is to them a life of bliss. It could not be so to me. Variety is my Theme, and Life to me is like a journey, in which an unbounded plain, looks dull and insipid; while it affords greater pleasure to be surrounded by a beautiful valley, altho' steep and rugged mountains must be overcome, before it can be got at. I know not whether my Choice is the wisest: and it is possible I may live to change it; but such it is, at present.

Elizabeth Smith Shaw to Abigail Adams, Haverhill, N.H., 2 January 1786

Mr. JQA is not quite so fleshy as when he first arrived, he can afford to spare a little Flesh.

Charles Storer to Abigail Adams, Boston, 12 February 1786

John I found as studious as an Hermit. Though he is not a very early riser, yet "he trims the midnight taper," and that's the only way to become a great man, as *Mr. Adams* told me once.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 8 May 1786

We recite this week in Terence, and Caesar to Mr. James. This is the tutor of the oldest standing in College. He is very well acquainted with the branch he has undertaken, and Persons, that are not Students, say that he is much of a Gentleman. But it seems almost to be a maxim among the Governors of the College, to treat the Students pretty much like brute Beasts. There is an important air, and a haughty look, that, every Person, belonging to the government, (Mr. Williams excepted) assumes, which indeed it is hard for me to submit to. But it may be of use to me, as it mortifies my Vanity, and if any thing, in the world, can teach me humility, it will be, to see myself subjected to the commands of a Person, that I must despise.

Lucy Cranch to Abigail Adams, Braintree, Mass., 24 June 1786

Mr. J.Q.A. is too much of the philosopher, and student to be at such a frolick,* it could not draw his steadfast aside. We sometimes fear that he will injure his health by his very great attention to his studies. he is determined to be great in every particular.

*A parade celebrating the opening of the Charles River Bridge.

Abigail Adams Smith to Elizabeth Cranch, London, 18 July 1786

My Letters from my Brother inform me that he is Learning to Play upon the flute which has given me much anxiety, do my Dear Eliza dissuade him from the practice. It is certainly very prejudicial to Health, and tho it may amuse him for the Present, I fear the Consequences.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 29 September 1786

It is a most unhappy Circumstance, for a Man to be very ambitious, without those Qualities which are necessary to insure him Success in his Attempts. Such is my Situation,

If it be a Sin to covet Honour
I am the most offending Soul alive.*

But I have not the faculty of convincing the persons that compose the small Circle in which I move, that my deserts are equal to my pretensions and disappointment must naturally follow. I often wish I had just Ambition enough to serve as a Stimulus to my Emulation, and just Vanity enough to be gratified with small Distinctions. But I cannot help despising a fellow of such a Character. I esteem a Man who will grasp at all, even if he cannot keep his hold, but one who in the fifth or sixth Station can be content, whilst he has an equal Chance of obtaining the first must be despicable. May that Spirit, which inspires my Breast never be bent into an evil Course; and above all may Envy never find a corner of my Heart to lurk in!

These Lines have been suggested by an Event which happened this Day: If any one should read them except myself; I request he would not consider them as a proof, of my intolerable Vanity and self-conceit; but that he would think my heart is sometimes so full, that it spontaneously dictates to my hand Sentiments, which many would endeavour to conceal, with the utmost Care, and for which I must at Times condemn myself.

*Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, Act IV, scene iii, lines 28–29.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 19 October 1786

Spent the day, in alternately reading, writing, walking, and playing. This is dull life, and convinces me, how grossly the whole herd of novel and romance writers, err, in trumping up, a Country life. Let them say what they will: the most proper situation for man, is that which calls forth the exertion of faculties, and gives play to his passions. A negative kind of happiness, like that of the brutes, may be enjoyed in the Country, but the absence of pain or anxiety is not sufficient for a man of sensibility. The passions of the mind, are what chiefly distinguish us from the brute creation, and as a country life tends to diminish their influence, it brings us nearer a par with them, and is therefore derogatory to the dignity of human nature.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 20 June 1787

It is not without many melancholy reflections that I bid a last adieu to the walls of Harvard! The scenes through which I have past since my entrance at the university have been for the most part agreeable, I have formed an intimacy, with a number of amiable and respectable characters of my own age, and with dispositions corresponding to my own. I have never once regretted, but have frequently rejoiced that I left Europe, to come and pass a twelve-month here. It has been productive of very good effects; particularly, in reducing my opinion of myself, of my acquirements, and of my future prospects, nearer to the level of truth and reality. I hope, that in two or three years more, I shall have taken down, without any violence, all the elegant castles which my imagination had built in the air, over my head, and which for want of a foundation, were liable, to be overset, and crush the builder, if any accident had happened. And I believe that even now, (making allowance, for a little vanity, which has frequently been flattered,) I do not exaggerate my prospects, more than other young people of my age, and circumstances, do.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 11 July 1787

This day completes my twentieth year: and yet I am good for nothing, and cannot even carry myself forward in the world: three long years I have yet to study in order to qualify myself for business: and then—oh! and then; how many more years, to plod along, mechanically, if I should live; before I shall really get into the world? Grant me patience ye powers! for I sicken, at the very idea: thus is one third of a long life employ'd in preparing to act a part during another third; and the last is to be past in rest and quiet waiting for the last stroke, which places us just where we were 70 years before. Vanity! Vanity! all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Joseph Willard to John Adams, Cambridge, Mass., 1 September 1787

I congratulate your Excellency and Lady, upon the reputation your eldest son has acquired, for his abilities, scholarship and virtues. His attention to his studies, proficiency in literature, strict conformity to the rules of the University and purity of morals have gained him the high esteem of the Governors of this Society,* and indeed, of all his acquaintance. I think he bids fair to become a distinguished character.

*The American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 2 October 1787

I began to copy off, not a small volume, of forms for declarations. This is a piece of drudgery, which certainly does not carry its reward with it. But it is a necessary piece of work, for which reason I think the sooner it is finished, the better. I was in hopes before I came here, that I should have time for reading books of entertainment: but after passing eight hours a day in the office, and spending four more in writing minutes, and forms at home, I am not husband of time sufficient to set any more apart for any kind of mental application, and indeed if for three years I can proceed with as much industry, as I have done since I entered the office, the de[vi]l will be to pay, if I have not some stock of law. Health is all I shall ask.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 13 December 1787

The repetition of the same events, from day to day, is the only variety which can supply materials for this record of my transactions. Conversations, are seldom interesting. New characters seldom arise, and I am employed more time in thinking what I shall say for one day, than I am in writing the occurrences of a week. Fertility of imagination, might supply the deficiency of materials, but my soil produces no spontaneous fruits.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 10 February 1788

I have done keeping late hours. I find they are wholly incompatible with my health. I have of late, several times, after setting up at writing till one or two o'clock in the morning, been utterly incapable of getting any sleep the whole night. My nerves have got into an unhappy tone, and I am obliged to desist from continued application. My spirits for sometime have been low, and I have felt an incapacity of enjoyment, but that is now wearing off, and I am in hopes, that before long I shall again be able to resume at least as much diligence as I have been used to.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 12 May 1788

I took a long, solitary walk this evening, and then came home, and amused myself, for a half an hour, with my flute.

Elizabeth Shaw to Abigail Adams, Haverhill, N.H., 21 September 1788

Mr. Lincoln perhaps may tell you that Mr. Adams came here a Saturday, to experience a little of my maternal Care.—That he is unwell &ca—

But least you should hear of it, & be too anxious I will tell you that I hope he will be better in a few Days—Mamma will say, “why did he not come home to Braintree—” Because it was too far—& if he can get what he wants (a little kind attention) nearer, it would not be worth his while.

He has not been well since he left Braintree—What did you do to him? Did you give him too strong Coffee, & Green Tea—Or did you read to him some *woeful Story*?—

He cannot sleep a night, & his nervous system seems much affected—Dr Sweet has given him the Bark to take, & I went & made him a mug of valerian Tea as soon as he came—He slept quietly last night, & seemed much refreshed, If I can coax him to sleep to night I shall feel quite grateful—For he has not rested two nights together for some time—He is the best man to take his medicine that I ever saw—He hardly makes a wry mouth—As his reward, I shall take him for a Gallant to his Aunt, & Cousin this week, & amuse his Mind by riding, & visiting—&ca &ca I am afraid he has applied himself too closely, to his Studies—He is so avaritious in coveting the best Gifts that I fear such intense application will injure his Health, more than he is aware of

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 14 October 1788

My occupations have been very regular, and similar for a week past. Last Thursday night I again experienced a total want of sleep. By the help however of medicine and of constant exercise I think I am in a way to recover.

Abigail Adams Smith to John Quincy Adams, Richmond, N.Y., 18 April 1790

I am Sensible that your knowledge of Mankind is more enlarged and Extensive than perhaps any young Man of your age Possesses. that your knowledge of Books is Superior, and that your acquaintance with Human Nature has been derived from observation as well as from reading, that you have traversed those paths of Science and Learning which others much more advanced in years have yet to pursue—but you may yet be deficient in Practical knowledge, and as *one* who feels much interested in your Prosperity and Wellfare, I could wish to see you a few years further advanced in Life before you engage in a Connection which if you form at present must impede your progress and advancement

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 21 September 1790

To avoid an early matrimonial connection, was one of the principles which I think I have heard you say was recommended to you by Mr. Gridley. Happiness in life I am fully persuaded must be derived principally from domestic attachments; but a foundation must be laid before the superstructure can be erected. I hope I am in no danger from this quarter.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Bush Hill, Pa., 12 March 1791

I suppose J.Q.A. will reach Boston by the time this Letter gets to you. He seems happy in the expectation of our passing the summer in Braintree, but he appears to have lost much of his sprightliness and vivacity. He says that the want of Business in his profession and the dismal prospect for the practitioners of the Law in Massachusetts, is the weight which depresses him, & that He should still be obliged at his age, to be dependant upon his parents for a support. Altho these feelings are proofs of a good mind, and a sensible Heart, I could wish that they did not oppress him so much. He wishes sometimes that he had been Bred a Farmer, a Merchant, or an, anything by which he could earn his Bread, but we all preach Patience to him.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 21 January 1794

John may pursue his Studies and Practice with confidence as well as Patience. His Talents, his Virtues his Studies and his Writings are not unknown, nor will they go without their Recompence, if Trouble is a recompence for Trouble. If the People neglect him the Government will not: if the Government neglect him the People will not, as least very long.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., February 1794

He has acquired to himself by his Writings his abilities and his general Character for information a Reputation which his enemies fear and which cannot be combated by any imputation upon his Life and manners.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 4 February 1794

You Apologize for the length of your Letters and I ought to excuse the shortness and Emptiness of mine. Yours give me more entertainment than all the speeches I hear. There is more good Thoughts, fine strokes and Mother Wit is worth in them than I hear in the Whole Week. An Ounce of Mother Wit is worth a Pound of Clergy and I rejoice that one of my children at least has an Abundance of not only Mother Wit, but his Mother's Wit. It is one of the most amiable and striking Traits in his Compositions. It appeared in all its Glory and severity in Barneveld.

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Boston, 13 February 1794

I know very well, that my own opinion ranks me in the scale of importance, at least as high as I deserve; that it rates my powers perhaps more than at their full value. Yet my success in the world has not hitherto been such as to feed my vanity very plenteously. Though advanced almost to the age of thirty, I have no political existence, and my ideas of Liberty and Government, are so widely distant from the fashion of the day, that they are much more likely to be injurious than beneficial to my advancement. At the bar after nearly four years practice, I remain obscure and unknown; without any expectation of brilliant success, and scarcely with the Hope of obtaining with all the industry in the power of Man, and with integrity unblemished, even a decent subsistence. Surely then as far as success is the criterion of talents, I have no Reason to be vain.

From what I have last said, you will not I trust conclude that I am discontented with my present situation. My greatest fear for myself at present is, that I shall grow too easy, careless and indolent.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 12 April 1794

My business I can hope will increase. But as it is I have no disposition to complain. It gives me bread and I find myself so well satisfied with that, that my greatest apprehension is of growing indolent and listless. It is hardly possible to obtain a conquest over the ambitious principle without subduing in some measure that of an honorable activity. You recommend to me to attend the town meetings and make speeches; to meet with caucuses and join political clubs. But I am afraid of all these things. They might make me a better politician, and give me an earlier chance of appearing as a public man; but that would throw me completely in the power of the people, and all my future life would be a life of dependence. I had rather continue some time longer in obscurity, and make some provision for fortune, before I sally out in quest of fame or of public honors.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 23 April 1794

The Mediocrity of Fortune that you profess or affect ought not to content you.—You come into Life with Advantages which will disgrace you, if your success is médiocre.—And if you do not rise to the head not only of your Profession but of your Country it will be owing to your own *Laziness, Slovenliness* and *Obstinacy*.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 19 May 1794

Mr. John, I hear rises in his Reputation at the Bar as well as in the Esteem of his fellow Citizens. His Writings have given him a greater Consideration in this Place than he is aware of.—I am Sometimes told that I ought to be proud of him; and truly I don't want to be told this. He will be made a Politician too soon. But he is a Man of great Experience, and I hope sound Philosophy. He was a greater statesman at Eighteen, than some senators I have known at fifty.—But he must learn Silence and Reserve, Prudence, Caution—above all to curb his Vanity and collect himself. faculties or Virtues that his Father has often much wanted.—I have often thought he has more Prudence at 27 than his Father at 58.—

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 26 May 1794

I think I have every day less ambition than the former, to pursue a political career. In my profession I trudge along, without eminence, and without total idleness. I see very few things in this life beyond the wants of nature, that I desire: and whether it be philosophy or insensibility, I find myself contented with my state as it is.

Elizabeth Smith Shaw to John Quincy Adams, Haverhill, N.H., 9 June 1794

And now permit me, my worthy Nephew to congratulate you upon the *cold apathy* which you say has, (or you fancy has) taken possession of your Breast—if *real*, it must be extremely advantageous to your Peace, & Tranquility—

When I have beheld you nobly struggling with those tender *Passions*, which *few at your age*, would have thought of *contending* with—& seen you sacrificing your own Inclinations, to *Situation*, & *filial Duty*, my Heart has honoured, & paid a silent Tribute to your Merit—I knew that your Health suffered—& indeed I feared you would have fallen a Victim to the *strength of your Reason*, & your *frozen Judgment*.

Abigail Adams to Martha Washington, Quincy, Mass., [20 June 1794]

That I do not know in any one Instant of his conduct either at home or abroad, he has given me any occasion or regret, and I hope from his Prudence, honour, Integrity & fidelity that he will never discredit the Character so honourably conferr'd upon him [by President Washington's appointment as minister to The Netherlands].

Martha Washington to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 19 July 1794

That parental feelings should be put to the test at a separation (perhaps for years) from a dutiful, and meritorious son, is not to be wondered at; but as there is no trial bereft of consolation, so in the one before you, you have a flattering view of his future welfare.—The prudence, good sense and high estimation in which he stands, leaves you nothing to apprehend on his account from the want of these traits in his character;—whilst abilities, exerted in the road in which he is now placed, affords him the fairest prospect rendering eminent services to his country; and of being, in time, among the foremost in her councils.—This I know is the opinion of my Husband from whom I have imbibed the idea.—

John Jay to John Adams, London, 27 July 1794

I have heard, and wish it may be true, that your Son is appointed to Holland. He will there meet with many of your friends. His Talents, Education, & attention to Business promise Utility to his Country, Honor to himself, and Satisfaction to You—That all these Prospects may be realized is the sincere wish of Dear Sir your most obt. & hble Servt.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 27 July 1794

[In speaking about leaving his law practice to become U.S. minister to The Netherlands.] To that profession I can never return without losing many of the advantages which rendered its practice tolerable. The reputation which hitherto I had acquired was still very much confined and limited; it was founded upon four years of constant application and attention to business. My absence will not only stop its growth, but will carry me back to that obscurity in which I began. The study of the common and statute law has nothing attractive to secure any attention to it unless some inducement of immediate interest serves as a stimulus. My business and my studies in the character which I am now to assume have very little affinity with those of a practicing lawyer. I shall probably have but little leisure, and shall not be disposed to devote it to Kings Bench or Chancery Reports, to Littleton's *Tenures* or Coke's *Commentaries*. Yet these studies must essentially be uninterrupted to preserve the learning of a lawyer, and two or three years' intermission will have the double effect of disgusting me with them, and of disqualifying me from the practice of the law without a redoubled application to them.

In proportion as my own professional advancement will be checked that of my contemporaries, and particularly of those who started from the goal nearly at the same time with myself, will be promoted. They will continue to make their way, and will in a few years have reached the summit of reputation and of business. My juniors who are now just opening their offices, or are yet students, will then have reached the station from which I have departed, and thus after having been elevated to a public station much beyond my own wishes and expectations, and invested with a character more conspicuous than those of my fellow citizens of equal years and standing in the

world, in returning to the bar I shall descend as much below the level of my ambition and pretensions as I have been by my present appointment raised above it.

The profession, therefore, can be considered by me in no other light than that of a last resort, in case all other resources should fail; and yet I have no reason to suppose that anything more eligible will occur to me in case I should at the end of two or three years be destitute of public employment.

Unpleasant however as this perspective is, I think it infinitely preferable to that of remaining in the public service to perform duties which may be executed equally well by any other man, and with the consciousness of holding a public office without confidence, without utility, and for no other purpose than barely to give me a subsistence.

The idea of being many years absent from my country, from my family, my connections and friends, is so painful, that I feel a necessity for fixing upon some period to which I may look forward with an expectation of being restored to them. The distance between the two countries is so great and the communication of course so small, that it is hardly possible for an American to be long in Europe without losing in some measure his national character. The habits, the manners, and affections insensibly undergo an alteration, the common changes to which society is incident remove many of the friends and connections which he left behind him, and no others are substituted in their stead. His own propensities are so liable to follow the course of the stream into which he has been banished, that he gradually takes an European disposition, becomes a stranger to his own country, and, when at length he returns, finds himself an alien in the midst of his fellow citizens.

The attachment which I feel for my native land is not merely a sentiment of the heart, it is also a principle dictated by my reason. Independent of my feelings and inclinations, I hold it to be a duty of the most rigid obligation to make the place of my birth the center of all my wishes, and the chief object of all my pursuits. Wherever my lot may be cast, I hope I shall always turn towards it with as much frequency of devotion and as constant veneration, as that with which the most faithful disciple of Mahomet presents his face towards the tomb of his prophet. I cannot therefore look forward with indifference to any situation that shall have a tendency to loosen the ties which connect me with my country. I cannot anticipate without concern a length of absence, which may give my inclinations a bias different from that of my duty.

For these reasons I am convinced of the propriety there is in marking out for my own determination the limits of time for the duration of my present mission. It is very possible that I may have no occasion for any such limitation, and that my commission will be superseded by the will of the President, as soon or sooner than I shall desire; but this is an event, which is wholly out of my control, and which therefore cannot enter into my calculations.

If after three years residence at the Hague I should see no particular object requiring my further continuance there; if the business of an American Minister there should continue to be the mere agency of a broker, and my office be of no benefit but to me, I shall feel myself under an obligation to return home and resume my profession, or any other employment in private life that shall afford me an honorable support.

I have written very freely to you, Sir, upon this subject, because I wish to have the sanction of your opinion and your advice. The principle which I have adopted has been so consonant to your own practice, and has been in my mind so clearly the result of your instruction, that I think it cannot but meet with your approbation. Perhaps the time upon which I have fixed may not preserve so accurately the medium as I should wish, and if you are of that opinion, I must solicit you for the result of your reflections in writing, if it be not too inconvenient. Your kindness will excuse the unceasing egotism of this letter, which could admit of no apology, were it not directed to the indulgence of a parent, for the purpose of obtaining the guidance of paternal wisdom.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 February 1795

. . . as vanity is not a predominant principal with you.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 23 June 1795

Both the public Dispatches and private Letters of our dear Boys are the delight of all who read them. No public Minister has ever given greater Satisfaction, than Mr. Adams has hitherto. His Prudence, Caution and penetration are as much approved as the Elegance of his Style is admired. Providence I hope and pray will make him a Blessing to his Country as well as to his Parents.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Helvoetsluys, 31 October 1795

It is possible that the result of my present mission may ascertain the termination of my residence in Europe, independent of any act of my own will: or perhaps it will serve to give a direction to it. Your recommendation to me to return to America, at the close of a three years absence, unless removed to a different scene, and raised to an higher trust, will have as all advice from you will always have great weight in my mind. But I must assure you in the most unequivocal manner, that I have not the shadow of a wish for a more elevated rank than that in which I am now placed, and that, of the only two American Missions in Europe, where the higher character is employed, I consider the English as an object of aversion and the French of indifference.

As there is no present prospect of vacancy in either of those places, it will be unnecessary for me to give you the numerous reasons upon which my sentiments concerning them are formed. A dislike both of the Government and National character perhaps amounting even to a prejudice, is the principal ground of the first, and the unsettled revolutionary state of the Country, is at least a counterbalance to any predilection I might otherwise entertain in favour of the other.

Besides these considerations, if I had not collected a sufficient portion of the “Stoic Spirit,” to dull the edge of my ambition: if the vanity of rank, or the parade of representation had in my eyes such charms as could overpower my philosophy, I should at least teach my desires a subordination to the sentiments of Justice; at least command them to compare the merits of their claims with those of others, and be silent. If diplomatic promotion in this course of duty, be an advantage or a reward, and the occasion should occur, for bestowing it, The United States besides all their deserving Citizens at home, have other Servants in Europe in the same Station with me older in years, more versed in public affairs, entitled by long and faithful service to the notice of public recompense; and without a delirium of extravagance could I expect advancement while they remain stationary? Without an arrogance of equal injustice and absurdity could I wish it?

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, London, 26 December 1795

The *opinion* of the great man [John Adams] seems to look through the parental microscope. If the flattery of my Vanity, constituted my happiness, I could not possibly wish for higher gratification; but you know what value I am apt to set upon my own opinions; when others go beyond my own estimation of myself *they* are certainly under a mistake, and it gives me more pain than pleasure to find myself over rated.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 6 January 1796

It seems to be a proverbial opinion, that to be an object of Envy, is a desirable and a pleasant thing.—But I have no such wish, and on the contrary desire to avoid it as much as possible. One of the most predominate ingredients in my composition is the love of ease, and I therefore dread the necessity of having to contend, even defensively, with ardent, eager, intriguing, or violent men. To all this however a Man must make up his mind in political existence as much as to sickness or death in natural life. It is a sort of trial, which I would fain escape or at least postpone.

Gouverneur Morris: Diary, London, 18 January 1796

Hammond tells me that both Pinckney and Adams were invited [to a royal ball], but neither of them came. Adams sent an excuse after accepting, and I find that the jealousy which I marked in his temper and the suspicious turn of his mind have already disgusted those whom he had to do business with. I am sorry for it.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 9 March 1796

Alas! Poor John! But his Father and his Mother too know what it is, to be cooped up in Taverns Waiting for Winds. Aye and the Boy too has had more Experience of it than a Million of old Men. Many a Week and many a Month has he been detained with me waiting for Winds and Waves and ships both political and Physical. He has resources within to amuse and employ him

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 20 March 1796

You know how passionately fond our Son has ever been of that great master of humane nature [i.e., Shakespeare]. He may truly be said to have inherited this from his parents.

John Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 9 June 1796

Your Brother has had a long Residence in England, but We suppose is returned before this. His Conduct in England has been prudent and cautious, and has given no Uneasiness as I believe to his Employers. He has not been very miserable in London I Suspect but I hope he has been wise.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 30 June 1796

I propose to pass one year more in this Country, to complete the three years, which I had originally devoted to my present mission. In the mean time I shall endeavour to make arrangements which may supply me for the future with the means of subsistence. I shall always have it in my power to return to the Bar, but I shall give the preference to any other resource of equal advantage, that I can procure. Three years of total abandonment not only of the practice, but of the studies of the Law, and a pretty constant application of the same time to a pursuit so different from it, will deprive me of whatever fitness I had for that profession, which certainly offers no alluring prospect to a man who intends to dismiss his ambition of all public employment. There is some probability that I may be induced to make a settlement in one of the Southern States. My principal objection to it, is that it will remove me at so great a distance from my native spot, and more especially from you. This indeed is so great, that it will make me hesitate however advantageous the prospect may otherwise appear to me.

John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Johnson, The Hague, 9 July 1796

You tell me you are not ambitious, but will offer me your congratulations, if my father should be placed at the head of the American Government. Indeed my friend that is an high station, but I have no Ambition to see him placed in it. For like all other high stations it is planted with thorns and surrounded with dangers. Besides, the more conspicuous he becomes in the world, the more incumbent it will be upon me to prove myself not unworthy to be his son: I have already an heavy burthen on that account to bear, and do not wish to see it encreased. For myself I am not ambitious of rank, but it is impossible to be indifferent on the point of reputation.

I *must* not be unworthy of my father or of my Country. That Country is not esteemed at its true value by the English People. But even there the qualities which are destined to make the American Nation one of the first upon Earth, will produce their effect in time. I will never lose any of the character which will distinguish the Nation, and as far as may ever be in my power I will strive to promote it. I speak to you with entire confidence because whatever my conduct or my fate may be your interests, are now united to mine, to be separated only by Death.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 11 July 1796

You all My Dear Sons are placed in a conspicuous view, with minds and faculties capable of rising to Eminence. Virtuously Educated, well Principald, you must endeavour.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 25 July 1796

It is true that I shall consider myself as at liberty to retire from the public service, if I should find it for the interest of my private affairs to do so.—I will never retire from an improper motive, nor from a disposition to *prefer* my own interest to that of my Country.—My present situation though not splendid, is comfortable. Though, not without leisure, I find every minute of my time precious; because I can employ it all to my own satisfaction. I lose very little of it indeed, and if life and health are continued to me, the employment shall not eventually be to the loss of my Country.—But that sort of society which is to be found only in the intimacy of domestic and family connections has become a necessary of my life. I still find it in my brother, but if I continue here longer than another year, his intention is to return home; and severely as I shall feel his loss, I cannot advise him to spend more of his time in the drudgery of mechanical labour, and the subordinate station of a Secretary. If when he leaves me, I shall still think it impracticable upon my means to support the charges of a family in my present situation, I shall also determine to go home, to use my industry once more for my own concerns, and as far as the necessary regard to them will permit, to serve my Country in a private station.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 14 November 1796

The appointment to the mission of Portugal I find from your letter was as I had before concluded unknown to my father. I have already written you upon the subject, and I hope, my ever dear and honored mother, that you are fully convinced from my letters which you have before this received, that upon the contingency of my father's being placed in the first magistracy, *I* shall never give him any trouble by solicitation for office of any kind. Your late letters have repeated so many times that I shall in that case have nothing to *expect* that I am afraid you have imagined it possible that I might form expectations from such an event. I had hoped that *my mother* knew me better; that she did me the justice to believe that I have not been so totally regardless or forgetful of the principles

which my education has instilled, nor so totally destitute of a *personal* sense of delicacy as to be susceptible of a wish tending in that direction. I have indeed long known that my father is far more ambitious for my advancement, far more solicitous for the extension of my fame, than I ever have been, or ever shall be myself; but I have hitherto had the satisfaction to observe that the notice with which my country and its government have honored me, and the confidences which they have been pleased repeatedly to repose in me, have been without the smallest agency of my father, other than the recommendation which his services carried with them. . . .

But I entreat you above all to be persuaded, that the image of my Country never can be absent from my mind, and that I never can find contentment or delight at a distance from my Parents. What an heart should I have if it were capable of other sentiments. To love his Country and venerate his Parents is undoubtedly among the most imperious duties of Every Man; but I am bound to mine by more than ordinary ties; by the obligations of such tenderness, and indulgence, of such inestimable instruction and virtuous principles, of such gratuitous kindness and unmerited favours, that I should indeed disgrace the name and character of a Man, if I could dismiss the remembrance or the sense of them for a moment from my heart and mind.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 November 1796

I presume, the Meaning of your Father was, that the Services of a foreign Minister were very little known and attended to by the Country in general. Those only in the administration of Government knew his Merrits or Demerrits, particularly in times of tranquility, and according to the old adage out of Sight, out of Mind. As it personally respects You, Your Services have been Duly appreciated, and I rejoice much more in your promotion by the Father of His Country than if you had received it from any other Hand. It must however enhance the value, to know that the Senate were unanimous.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 18 January 1797

But I never have been anxious for Promotion, nor I trust ever shall be. Ambition is far from being a pungent Passion in my Heart, and with a strong conviction of the Vanity of all human greatness, I have been taught a sense of Independence and delicacy which will always deter me from a very fervent wish for any thing that it is in the power of man to confer or deny.—I have besides had from the Executive of the Union, promotion, beyond my merits or expectations, and if I can reasonably indulge any desire for further notice of honour from my Country, there are other constitutional and regular judges of merit and talents, clear-sighted to discover and ready to employ them, to whose suffrages I can cheerfully leave the estimation of my titles to the means of public service.

George Washington to John Adams, Philadelphia, 20 February 1797

I thank you for giving me the perusal of the enclosed.—The sentiments do honor to the head & heart of the writer;—and if my wishes would be of any avail, they shd. go to you in a *strong hope* that you will not withhold merited promotion from Mr. Jno. Adams because he is your son.—For with out intending to compliment the father or the mother, or to censure any others: I give it as my decided opinion, that Mr. Adams is the most valuable public character we have abroad;—and that there remains no doubt in my mind that he will prove himself to be the ablest, of all our diplomatic Corps.

If he was *now* to be brought into *that* line, or into any other public walk, I could not upon the principle which has regulated my own conduct, disapprove of the caution which is hinted at in the letter.—But he is already entered;—the public, more and more as he is known, are appreciating his talents and worth;—and his country would sustain a loss if these were to be checked by over delicacy on your part.

John Adams to Abigail Adams Smith, Philadelphia, 21 February 1797

Your brother John continues to give the highest satisfaction to government by his great industry, his deep discernment, his independent spirit, and his splendid talents. I hear such commendations of him as no other man abroad obtains.

John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Johnson, The Hague, 14 March 1797

To my books I can return with pleasure, even from the most pleasing excursion of the fancy. They leave no languor, no satiety, no listlessness of indolence upon the mind. They are therefore the only refuge of one to whom the common course of Society is now more than ever insipid.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 21 May 1797

By my baggage, I mean principally my books for I have scarcely any other. I have never kept house here, as indeed I could not, and am therefore not encumbered with furniture. But I have collected a small parcel of books, valuable for their contents though not by their splendor, and I cannot reconcile myself to part with them. They have been gathered with a real intention of use, and not for shew, though even in this, comparatively speaking, solitude, I am able only to snatch here and there a moment for the entertainment and instruction they afford.—The practice however of purchasing books at all the sales (which are frequent) and a certain reserve, which has kept me much out of what is called *la Société*, or *la bonne compagnie*, or has accompanied me into it, have given me a formidable reputation as of a student, which I but ill deserve.—I am not completely idle, but my father would think me inexcusably indolent.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 26 June 1797

With respect to the *strong hope* which he intimates, I have thought it required an explicit Declaration to my father from me. I wish not to discuss or even to dispute the propriety of the distinction suggested, to exempt me from the exclusion which the writer gave to all his own relations.—However the matter may stand as it respects my father, I know and feel how *my* duty operates, and you may rest assured that I never shall hold a public office under the nomination of my father.

But where is my Independence?—for his question has been made me; and I am sensible that when upon the point of assuming the weighty charge of a family, it is a most serious question to me. Still however I can answer—It is in the moderation of my wishes, and in my industry.—Far as I am from bearing an affection to the practice of the Law, I will most certainly return to it in all the humility of its first outset rather than forfeit my independence; but it must have changed essentially its character upon the score of liberality in Massachusetts, if I cannot upon my return find any mode of private employment as honest and much more productive.

Abigail Adams to Mary Cranch, Philadelphia, 3 March 1798

[On his appointment as minister to the Court of Prussia.] I received, he observes, an office, tho no promotion, at once invidious in appearance and oppressive in reality, but I have done. My Country has every claim upon me. If her Service were merely a Bed of Roses, it would not be a worthy incitement to ambition.

Thomas Boylston Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 20 September 1801

The Ex-Ambassador, is to me, precisely the same man, as when I left him; but many of his former acquaintance exclaim—How you are altered! The only difference I could discern in his appearance was a sort of fatherly look, which has lately come to him, and which will, no doubt grow upon him, with increase of years. I am happy, that he is once more restored to his Country & friends, for they will both, be benefitted by his talents, however employed. He has no propensity to engage in a political career, and from his contempt of the conduct of all the parties, which have hitherto existed, I think he will not rank with any, unless it be with one modded on his own system. Should he converse freely on political topics, and discuss, openly, the conduct & characters of leading men, on both sides, he will, by the federalists be called a Jacobin and by the jacobins, a federalist. As a neutral character, he would not long continue if he could, nor could he if he would.

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 27 September 1801

I have determined for the sake of peace, and for the want of better employment, to resume my residence and my profession in Boston—I have not yet got an house, nor reconciled myself to entering upon my own—But I confirm myself more and more in the determination to have no concern whatsoever in politics—There is not a party in this country with which an honest man can act without blushing, and I feel myself rather more strongly attached to my principles than to the ambition of any place or power, in the gift of this Country—

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 27 December 1801

Your Brother and Family have been with me ever since their arrival, untill last week when they got into their House in Boston; Mrs Adams has had a very allarming cough and pain in her Breast which confined her almost the whole time she was here, and it has not left her yet, tho she has been both Bled and Blisterd; her frame is so Slender and her constitution so delicate that I have many fears that she will be of short duration; The constant state of anxiety which has harrassed his mind upon her account, has added a weight of years to his Brow, which time alone could not have effected in double the ~~Time~~ Space. Commencing anew the practise of the Law is very far from being agreeable to him after a period of seven years in which his attention has been altogether occupied by other objects—yet what is to be done a Helpless Family to provide for; all public employment in its best estate precarious, uncertain, unthankfull, and now disgracefull to a Man of Honour and principle—To dig he cannot; to beg, he disdains.—To what but the profession in which he was bred can he turn his attention? Humiliating as the circumstances are, under which he must commence anew the buisness. Very little buisness of a profitable nature is to be found in Boston where the practise is less lucrative than in most of the other States; I know very well that it has been in compliance with the wishes of your Father that all my Sons Studied Law, but it was contrary to

my judgement, and I know it was so to your inclination; I think you would have been more successfully employd in a mercantile Line, but that is now out of the question; the present State of our Country offers no great encouragement to talents, integrity or patriotism; where we are to be whirled, how tossed and Buffeted Time will unfold, but that we are to experience a reverse in the prosperous Situation of our Country is too evident.

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Boston, 2 January 1802

Seven years of total disuse have so far obliterated all my legal ideas, that I return to the bar almost as ignorant how *the law is written* as when I first commenced student—A certain degree of application to gather up again the crumbs and fragments of my knowledge in past time, is indispensable—This picking up of threads and stitches annihilates time again to a great amount—

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 13 June 1802

Thus you see what has become of my resolutions to renounce the career of politics. I must confess it, with some confusion of face—I have again suffered myself to be launched upon the tempestuous sea, contrary to the dictates of my better judgment, and my full conviction that it is all vanity and vexation of spirit—My private affairs must suffer of course, and my professional pursuits will be much impeded, if not altogether arrested.

Thomas Boylston Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 20 October 1802

I hope you are not Suffering yourself to be a candidate for Such company [i.e., the U.S. Senate]; but the newspapers Say, that Such is the fact. I cannot undertake to judge of your motives, but unless they are more cogent, than Such as present themselves to my mind, as inducements to the acceptance of a preferment of this nature, I must think, that you are a convert to the sentiment of Dr [Charles] Jarvis, respecting the love of popularity.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 27 January 1803

You have read your Brothers oration with pleasure I am sure; were he not my Son, I Should Say that I know not his equal in the Country for composition, and for keen cutting classic satire.

Abigail Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 21 May 1804

Mr Adams has picked up his flesh some since his return. I was quite allarmed to see how he had fallen off. He cannot engage in any service but with his whole attention, and the labours, and anxiety of the mind are a weariness to the flesh. His countenance looks healthy, and the air and sun of the Country will give him a brown hue.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 7 February 1805

Your Friends all know that your Talent, Learning and Application would insure you a place in the most honorable and lucrative rank at the Bar, whenever you please to take it. But you are too much disposed to gloom and despondency. Men must brave Adversity: and be modest in prosperity. If they cannot, or will not be rich and popular they must submit to be poor and obscure.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 9 January 1806

You have not mentiond your own Health; how is it? Your Friends write me that you do not look so well as when you first arrived and they think that the walk twice a day is too much for you. In the morning when the weather is fine it might not be an injury to you; but when; exhausted by attention, or perplexd by Buisness; or vext by ignorance or stupidity, a tedious long walk with an empty Stomack is very unhealthy you may depend upon it. it serves to irritate the whole nervous system; which wants soothing and calming with the oil and wine of comfort and consolation, instead of ploding along on foot a three miles trudge. besides the very look of it will be attributed to a cause which has no foundation. Some will call it parsimony, others will call it odity, but all this I Should not heed so much as the real injury I conceive it will be to your Health—Pray assure me that you will ride in all bad weather, and I shall be easier in my mind, and go to rest more tranquil at night.—

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Washington, 11 February 1806

The pressure of business has also forcibly driven my classical studies from my head—I do indeed still appropriate about an hour a day to that object, but it is little better than a lost hour; the studies of a Scholar, require a mind at ease; a vacant mind—or at least a mind not engross'd by other objects—But when the questions of public import, and measures of national deliberation take hold of my mind, and have warmly engaged me nine or ten hours in the day, I lose entirely the power of abstraction, and the means of studying the poetry, history, or languages of antiquity—

William Plumer Memorandum, 5 March 1807

John Q. Adams was with me in the stage on my journey. He gave me much information of his living in Europe—the manners & characters of the Europeans. He is a man of much information—but too formal—his manners are too stiff & unyielding—he is too tenacious of his opinions.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 8 January 1808

Your Situation you think critical. I think it is clear, plain and obvious. You are supported by no Party. You have too honest a heart, too independent a Mind and too brilliant Talents, to be Sincerely and confidentially trusted by any Man who is under the Dominion of Party Maxims or Party Feelings,: and where is there another Man who is not.? You may depend upon it then that your fate is decided. You will be countenanced neither by France, Spain or England. You will be supported neither by Federalists or Republicans. In the next Congress, Dr Eustis will be chosen Senator, and you will be numbered among the dead like Jay, Elsworth, King, Ames, Dexter and an hundred others of the brightest Geniuses of this Country. You ought to know and expect this, and by no means to regret it.—Return to your Professorship but above all to your Office as a Lawyer devote yourself to your Profession and the Education of your Children.

John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Washington, 5 March 1809

I had some conversation with him [Thomas Jefferson] in the course of the evening, in the course of which he asked me whether I continued as fond of POETRY as I was in my youth. I told him, yes; that I did not perceive I had lost any of my relish for good poetry, though my taste for the

minor poets, and particular for *amatory verses*, was not so keen as it had been when I was young. He said he was still fond of reading Homer, but did not take much delight in Virgil.

John Quincy Adams to Skelton Jones, Boston, 17 April 1809

I have already remarked, that from the unsettled and desultory manner in which my years of infancy were employed, I never attained a profound knowledge of any of the sciences. I had always however an eager relish for the pursuits of literature, and acquired at an early period of life a taste for the fine arts. In the capitals of the great European nations the monuments of architecture and of sculpture continually meet the eye, and cannot escape the attention even of the most careless observer. Painting, music, the decorations of the drama, and the elegant arts which are combined in its representations, have a charm to the senses and imagination of youth, vivid in proportion to the perfection which they naturally attain in those large cities, where immense multitudes of men are compressed within so small an extent of space. The exhibitions of excellence in all these faculties, which I had frequent opportunities of witnessing, at the time of life when they were calculated to make the strongest impression, gave me a taste for them, which has contributed to much of the enjoyment of my life.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 7 August 1809

Parents must have their trials. I am now experiencing another. My oldest son sailed on Saturday, the 5th of this month, for St. Petersburg with his family. The separation was like tearing me to pieces. A more dutiful and affectionate son there cannot be. His society was always a cordial and a consolation under all circumstances. I maintain my serenity, however, I can only pray for his safety and success. The objects of his mission I know only by conjecture. I have thought these thirty years that we ought to have a minister at that court.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, St. Petersburg, Russia, 8 February 1810

The General Superintendence of the Creator and Governor of the Universe, is indeed sufficient for the preservation and well being of all his Creatures, but in the greatness and multitude of evils and of perils which surround a wanderer upon the face of the terraqueous globe, the heart if not the judgment feels the want of some Special protection; of some intermediate agent, possessed of powers and attributes, superior indeed to those of human Nature, but yet limited in their extent, and capable of confinement to exclusive objects—

From the day when we embarked from Mr: Gray's wharf in Charlestown; untill that, when we landed opposite the Statue of Peter the Great at St: Petersburg, we were exposed to many great and imminent dangers—I have given a minute account of them all in several letters to my brother, which I trust will all have been perused by you, before this will come to your hands—When in the midst of them, and knowing that human power was inadequate to extricate us from them; there was more hope and consolation in the belief of being under the peculiar charge of a superior though a finite Spirit, than in the philosophical conviction, that all partial evil is universal good, and that whatever might befall us, the System of the Universe, would enjoy an equal portion of felicity

A beneficent Providence, whether operating by general laws, or by the subordinate energy and care of a guardian Angel, did conduct us safely through all those perils, and brought us to the end of our *outward* voyage, after a navigation of nearly three months duration.

Abigail Adams to Catherine Nuth Johnson, Quincy, Mass., 29 December 1810

he is too open and independent a Man ever to be a popular Man. he has talents which excite envy and cannot be a favorite. he is no time server. The public, and not himself, is his first consideration—

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 15 January 1811

When you return you will find as I did, they will not know what to do with you. To make you a great Man will be dangerous, and to make you a little one will be impossible. You have made an Impression upon our Nation that never can be obliterated alive or dead: but it is a Thing that requires great delicacy, Self Government and Reserve, which it is to be hoped you will preserve or Acquire, though your Father never could.

John Adams to Richard Rush, Quincy, Mass., 15 January 1811

Mr Adams's Speeches in the Senate of this Commonwealth and in the Senate of The United States as well as at the Bar, have always been in a Strain of cool Reasoning without any affectation of ornament or Effort at any uncommon Elegance, Simplicity Perspicuity and Precision are the predominant Characteristicks of his Style in Conversation as well as in all his extemporaneous Discourses in Public. His public orations have been raised, a little and from his ardent Love of Poetry I have often wondered that more of it has not appeared in his Speeches. His head is full of the Poets. I never knew a Man more universally read and Studied in the English Poets. There is Scarcely one in the Language that he has not attentively read. He is too much of a Poet himself, for a Statesman. It has cost him Some Pains to restrain his Propensity to the Muses: and yet he has Spent too much time in their Company. Oberon of Wieland has been translated by him from the German into English, and I have compared many Parts of it with Sotheby's, and Although Sotheby is unquestionably one of the best English Versifyers I am at a loss to determine which Translation is the best. His Translation of Some Parts of Juvenal are fully equal and in Some Books Superiour to Giffords. I hope you will not think him too much of a Schollar for a Statesman.

You, and all the World will Suspect me, as I Suspect myself of parental Partiality. But though I have endeavoured to divest myself of every bias and every Prejudice, I cannot see otherwise.

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, St. Petersburg, Russia, 10 April 1811

[On declining President Madison's nomination to the U.S. Supreme Court.] Without pretending to any extraordinary degree of self-knowledge, I am conscious of too little law even for practice at the bar, still less should I feel myself qualified for the bench of the Supreme Court of the United States. I am also, and always shall be, too much of a political partisan for a judge; and although I know as well as any man in America how and when to lay the partisan aside, I do not wish to be called so often and so completely to do it, as my own sense of duty would call me, were I seated upon the bench.

Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, 2 August 1813

The publick always sieze with avidity every thing that is supposed to come from the pen of Mr J. Q. Adams now that he is abroad. His communications to you at present must be of peculiar interest.

Louisa Catherine Adams to Abigail Adams, St. Petersburg, Russia, 2 September 1813

Mr A is even more buried in study than when he left America, and has acquired so great a disrelish for society, that even his small family [circle] appears at times to become irksome to him. his health is very indifferent, and the melancholy prospect, of public affairs all over the World, preys upon his spirits, he is however better than he was last Winter, and would he not persevere in the system of living very *low*, might soon be restored to his accustomed state of health, this climate is too dreadful to admit of trifling with the constitution—

Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, 13 December 1813

I cannot help hoping that your son does not mean to let any considerable portion more of his life pass in Russia. Principles like his, sustained by talents so profound, ought not to be too long away from us. I think I see, I am afraid I see, crises before us that will require the aid of such statesmen as he in New England. The nation at large has a great stake in his principles, his patriotism, his high qualifications, his name. I have a thousand times wished since the war began that he had been among us instead of six thousand miles off; that the public eye might have been more upon him; that he might have been ripening still more largely in the public confidence than he stands already, and no individual in the country has more numerous claims to a high and lasting hold upon it; and above all that the nation in the important part of it which he belongs might have had the benefit of his forcible and luminous pen towards the support of the just cause in which it is now fighting.

Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, 31 December 1813

I cannot help hoping that your son does not mean to let any considerable portion of his life pass in Russia. Principles like his, sustained by talents so profound, ought not to be too long away from us. I think I see, I am afraid to see, crises before us that will require the aid of such statesmen as he in New England. The nation at large has a great stake in his principles, his patriotism, his high qualifications, his name. I have a thousand times wished since the war began that he had been among us instead of six thousand miles off; that the public eye might have been more upon him; that he might have been ripening still more largely in the public confidence than he stands already, and no individual in the country has more numerous claims to a high and lasting hold upon it; and above all that the nation in the important part of it to which he belongs might have had the benefit of his forcible and luminous pen towards the support of the just cause in which it is now fighting.

Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 31 March 1814

While I congratulate my Country, that she has such an Envoy at this important crisis at the Court of Petersburg, I must again give you joy that you have a Son so capable of transacting the great affairs of Nations and of the World.—He develops the intrigues of European Courts with ease, and traces their Machiavelian Politicians with accuracy.—He writes like a Patriot, a Politician, and a Christian.

Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, 23 October 1814

I lately spent an evening with young Mr Dallas, who came home in the John Adams. He is an intelligent young gentleman, and deals out a great deal of European anecdote, of Lords and Emperors, Kings and princes.

He speaks with nothing but praise of Mr J. Q. Adams; who, he says, was both our spokesman and penman at Ghent; the leading man of our group of ambassadors there.

Josephus B. Stuart's Account of a Visit to Monticello, 24 December 1816

J Quincy a learned man, & reformed monarchist. Would act for the best interests of his country.

Richard Rush to Abigail Adams, Washington, 2 April 1817

The appointment of Mr Adams gives, as far as I can ascertain, the highest satisfaction. If ever a citizen of our country owed his elevation to the solid merits of his own character, your son, madam, allow me to say, has emphatically a claim to that distinction. His talents and services were the dignified titles that pointed him out for the post. To promote the publick good, to give to the country the benefit of the counsels of such a statesman, these also were the dignified and national motives that led to his selection. Yes madam, I must say, that I know Mr Monroe to have been actuated by such motives, the right ones to govern the virtuous and enlightened chief of a nation.

Louisa Catherine Adams to Abigail Adams, Washington, 2 March 1818

Mr Adams is so-exceedingly busy that he now works every night till twelve o'clock and I scarcely hear the sound of his voice—he has hardly had time to ask me how I am since I have been sick. one of the heaviest of his privations is the loss of his correspondence with you and he begs me to assure you that he will seize, with avidity the first moment which can call his own to assure how much and sincerely We unite in best wishes for yourself and our father and with what pleasure We anticipate a visit to the North next Summer

Joseph Story to Ezekiel Bacon, Washington, 12 March 1818

Already there is considerable stir and whispering as to who is to be the next President. It is thought here that J.Q. Adams will not be a successful candidate. It seems that the great objection to him is, that he is retiring and unobtrusive, studious, cool, and reflecting; that he does nothing to excite attention, or to gain friendships. He contents himself with doing his duty without seeking any reward. I suspect that he is not calculated for popularity; the old proverb asserts that "God helps them who help themselves."

Charles Willson Peale to Rembrandt Peale, Washington, 15–19 January 1819

We are invited to a Tea party at Mrs. Adams' on Thursday next. Your Mother says that she would rather be with you, however go we must, more especially as I know that Mr. Adams is a Man of great merit, fond of the Arts, and knows all the celebrated painters in London & Paris. His Industry and capability will probably bring him to the Presidential Chair, although he may have several competitors, who also are of high standing.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 4 June 1819

I am a man of reserved, cold, austere, and forbidding manners; my political adversaries say, a gloomy misanthropist, and my personal enemies, an unsocial savage.

James Buchanan to Hugh Hamilton, 22 March 1822

His disposition is as perverse and mulish as that of his father.

Timothy Pickering to John Marshall, Salem, Mass., 7 June 1824

I hoped, however, that John Q. Adams might not obtain the chair of state. With much talent and a great deal of learning, I believed him to possess the malignity of a monk; and by his public acts, & final open apostacy, he had shown that, like his father, to affect the object of his ambition, he was capable of making sacrifices utterly repugnant to the character of an honest statesman. My friend the late eminent chief justice Parsons, when I was conversing with him, some ten or twelve years ago, made this remark, concerning Mr. Adams & his son John Q. Adams—"they are both men of strong passions; but there is this difference between them—the father is placable—the son implacable." Mr. Parsons knew them very well. J.Q.A. read law in his office. And notwithstanding the father's virulent calumnies in the Correspondence, I still believe Judge Parson's distinction to be substantially correct. The review of the works of Fisher Ames by the son, is marked with rancor; and the style, sentiments & spirit of his Washington 4th of July oration are of a character to disgrace him as well as a scholar as a man—especially of a man holding the high office in our government which embraces our foreign relations. He expected by it to advance his interest in the southern, western & other states, where the haters of England were supposed to be most numerous: but I believed that with every man of sense & honor it would be read with disgust, & by many with abhorrence.

Joseph Story to Mrs. Joseph Story, Washington, 4 March 1825

At twelve o'clock, the Judges in their robes accompanied the President to the Senate Chamber, and there a procession was formed, and thence we went in troops to the House. Mr. Adams, from the Speaker's chair, delivered his address with great animation and energy, and though he trembled so as hardly to hold his paper, he spoke with prodigious force, and his sensibility had an electrical effect. His speech was one of the best I ever heard—strong, sustained, correct, and liberal, beating down party distinctions, and leading the way to a manly exposition of the Constitution. It is everywhere very direct and unequivocal, and will produce a great sensation of approbation or of disapprobation. I think you will like him the better for it; and sure I am that all will agree that it is fearless and independent and meeting public responsibility.

Louisa Catherine Adams

Louisa Catherine Adams to Abigail Adams, Washington, 22 February–2 March 1818

[February] 22 My feet were excessively painful and on removing my stocking I found them swelled to an enormous size, and very much enflamed so as to make it impossible for me to move

from my chair—When the Doctor came I asked him what was the matter, he told me that he believed it was the enflamatory Rheumatism, and if I were not a Lady he should say the Gout, and desired me to rub them with sweet oil. he told me I must not go home at any rate, as the least exposure to cold might be attended with bad consequences, so I was obliged to stay although I had a high fever on me, my own opinion was that it was a very violent erisipelas, but he insisted on it that I was mistaken, and I adopted his remedy, which appeared to ease me for a short time. . . .

[February] 23. The next morning my feet were as much swollen but not at all painful, and as the nurse was taken very ill I was under the necessity of making extraordinary exertions as the Childs spasms still continued and I was obliged to be chief nurse to the whole family, Although my Sisters assisted as much as possible. I felt very ill, but towards evening the Child grew so much better and the nurse so much worse I thought it would be cruel to leave her, and as Mr. M Adams did not come to fetch me till nine o'clock, I did not think it would be prudent to go out of the warm room at that time of the evening—I had however no thoughts of setting up but found myself under the necessity of watching the mother and Children until 7 o'clock the next morning when I laid down on the Mattress on the floor completely exhausted. The young Lady who sat up with me fainted away in the night, and the baby had so strong a spasm I took it up for dead, so that I was alone and I may say without assistance throughout this frightful night—

[February] 24 I waked about an hour after I had lain down with a frightful feeling about the breast and lungs, which amounted to spasm, in a few minutes it went off, but I found myself so ill that I was very anxious the carriage should come for me, as I was sure I should be very bad before the day was over, I had ordered it at eleven—as the time elapsed my impatience encreased, as I found my illness rappidly encreasing, and at two o'clock I was seized with the most violent spasm on the heart which nearly destroyed me and was carried home in the evening in a very dangerous state—My own Physician immediately said it was an erisipelas which had struck upon some of the Vital parts, from improper management, and with care and proper treatment I have got through and have this day left my room for the first time—which is the 2 of March—

Louisa Catherine Adams to Her Son John Adams, Washington, 11 March 1819

Will you permit me to say that I do not approve of smoking it is a pernicious and a disagreeable habit and alway's particularly disgusting to our Sex—attend to this caution early my Son—

Louisa Catherine Adams to Her Son John Adams, Washington, 4 August 1819

I meant you to understand that what I said of Cigars was applicable to the long standing desire which both your father and myself had expressed that you should leave off this pernicious practice and I was mortified to learn from a Gentleman who had seen you that you were to use his expression “an inveterate smoker.” It was your constantly avoiding to answer these anxious fears which I so strongly intimated that I wrote and with a view to convince you of the fatal consequence which might result to Charles from your example whose health must be materially injured by this abominable practice which acts as a stimulus to every bad passion.

Samuel Adams

John Adams: Diary, 22 December 1765

Adams is zealous, ardent and keen in the Cause, is always for Softness, and Delicacy, and Prudence where they will do, but is staunch and stiff and strict and rigid and inflexible, in the Cause.

John Adams: Diary, 30 December 1772

Spent this Evening with Mr. Samuel Adams at his House. . . . Adams was more cool, genteel and agreeable than common—concealed, and restrained his Passions—&c. He affects to despise Riches, and not to dread Poverty. But no Man is more ambitious of entertaining his Friends handsomely, or of making a decent, an elegant Appearance than he. He has lately new covered and glazed his House and painted it, very neatly, and has new papered, painted and furnished his Rooms. So that you visit at a very genteel House and are very politely received and entertained.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 September 1774

When the Congress first met, Mr. Cushing made a Motion, that it should be opened with Prayer. It was opposed by Mr. Jay of N. York and Mr. Rutledge of South Carolina, because we were so divided in religious Sentiments, some Episcopalians, some Quakers, some anabaptists, some Presbyterian and some Congregationalists, so that We could not join in the same Act of Worship. Mr. S. Adams arose and said he was no Bigot, and could hear a Prayer from a Gentleman of Piety and Virtue, who was at the same Time a Friend to his Country. He was a Stranger in Philadelphia, but had heard that Mr. Duche (Dushay they pronounce it) deserved that Character, therefore he moved that Mr. Duché, an episcopal Clergyman, might be desired to read Prayers to the Congress.

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 30 July 1775

Pray, who do you intend to make Secretary of the Province?* Has not our Friend deserved it? Is he not fit for it? Has any other Candidate So much Merit, or so good Qualifications? I hope his temporary Absence [from Massachusetts serving in Congress] will not injure him.

*Samuel Adams became Secretary of the Massachusetts Council on August 16, 1775.

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 17 September 1775

Be it known to you then that two of the most unlikely Things, within the whole Congress of Possibility, have really, and actually happened. The first is the Sudden Marriage of our President, whose agreeable Lady honors us with her Presence and contributes much to our good Humor, as well as to the Happiness of the President. So much for that.

The next Thing is more wonderful Still.

You know the aversion which your Secretary* has ever entertained to riding Horseback. He never would be persuaded to mount a Horse. The last time we were here, I often labored to persuade him, for the Sake of his Health, but in vain. Soon after We Set out, on the last Journey, I reflected that Some Degree of Skill and Dexterity in Horsemanship, was necessary to the Character of a Statesman. It would take more Time and Paper than I have to Spare, to show the Utility of

Horsemanship to a Politician; So I shall take this for granted. But I pointed out the particulars to him, and likewise showed him that Sociability would be greatly promoted, by his mounting one of my Horses.

On Saturday the second day of September 1775, in the Town of Grafton He was prevailed on to put my Servant with his, into Harrison's Chaise and to mount upon my Horse, a very genteel, and easy little Creature. We were all disappointed and Surprised. Instead of the Taylor riding to Brentford We beheld, an easy, genteel Figure, upon the Horse, and a good deal of Spirit and facility, in the Management of the Horse, insomuch that We soon found our Servants were making Some disagreeable Comparisons, and Since our arrival here I am told that Fessenden (impudent Scoundrel) reports that the Secretary rides fifty per Cent better than your Correspondent.

In this manner, We rode to Woodstock, where we put up for the Sabbath. It was Soon observed that the Secretary, could not Sit so erect in his Chair as he had Sat upon his Horse, but Seemed to be neither sensible of the Disease or the Remedy. I Soon perceived and apprised him of both. On Sunday Evening, at Mr. Dexter's, where we drank Coffee & Spent an agreeable Evening I persuaded him to purchase two yards of flannel which we carried to our Landlady, who with the assistance of a Taylor Woman in the house, made up a Pair of Drawers, which the next Morning were put on, and not only defended the Secretary from any further Injury, but entirely healed the little Breach which had been begun.

Still an Imperfection remained. Our Secretary had not yet learned to mount and dismount. Two Servants were necessary to attend upon these Occasions, one to hold the Bridle and Stirrup, the other to boost the Secretary. This was rather a ridiculous Circumstance Still. At last, I undertook to instruct him the necessary Art of mounting. I had my Education to this Art, under Bates, the celebrated Equerry, and therefore might be Supposed to be a Master of it. I taught him to grasp the Bridle, with his Right Hand over the Pummell of his Saddle, to place his left Foot firm in the Stirrup; top twist his left Hand into the Horse's Mane, about half Way between his Ears and his Shoulders, and then a vigorous Exertion of his Strength would carry him very gracefully into the Seat, without the least Danger of falling over on the other Side. The Experiment was tried and Succeeded to Admiration.

Thus equipped and instructed, our Horseman rode all the Way from Woodstock to Philadelphia, Sometimes upon one of my Horses, Sometimes on the other—and acquired fresh Strength, Courage, Activity and Spirit every day. His Health is much improved by it, and I value myself, very much upon the Merit of having probably added Several Years to a Life So important to his Country, by the little Pains I took to persuade him to mount and teach him to ride.

*Samuel Adams was the Massachusetts Secretary of State.

James Warren to Samuel Adams, Watertown, Mass., 28 September 1775

[Commenting on Adams learning how to ride a horse while traveling to Congress in Philadelphia.] I had the pleasure Yesterday of hearing for the first Time of your safe Arrival at Philadelphia, and of your performing the Journey in a manner that Contributed much to your Health, to the said that Horsemanship and dexterity in riding on the Saddle are necessary to Complete that Character, I really give you Joy on this Occasion and that this Important Acquisition was made by the help of flannel without Injury. I am obliged to my Friend, Mr. Adams, for this Intelligence, whose Letter I received yesterday by Mr. Cabot wholly on that Subject, which shows the Importance of it in his mind and his fondness for fame and Glory, for he assumes the whole merit of first Advising and then giving the Necessary Instructions. I never feel disposed to lessen his Glory and Fame and

shall readily in this Instance allow him the Honor of Completing the Character of a great Statesman and prolonging the Life of a distinguished Patriot.

John Adams: Autobiography, March 1776

Mr. Samuel Adams had become very bitter against Mr. Hancock and spoke of him with great Asperity, in private Circles, and this Alienation between them continued from this time till the Year 1789, thirteen Years, when they were again reconciled.

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 27 July 1776

The Secretary, between you and me, is completely worn out. I wish he had gone home Six months ago, and rested himself. Then, he might have done it, without any Disadvantage. But in plain English he has been so long here, and his Strength, Spirit and Abilities so exhausted, that an hundred such delegates here would not be worth a Shilling.

Ambrose Searle: American Journal, 2 January 1777

Saml. Adams has often publicly boasted in Philadelphia of late, that for 20 Years past he has been inculcating his republican Opinions among all the young Gentlemen in & about Boston, and that he now saw the happy Fruit of it. Mr. Andrew Allen says, that of all the men he ever knew, this Adams is the most capable of leading or inflaming a Mob. He has vast Insinuation, & infinite Art, by which he has been able to impose upon most Men.

Elbridge Gerry to James Warren, York, Pa., 13 November 1777

Our Friends the Mr. Adams left this place two Days since. . . . The Absence of these Gentlemen occasions a Chasm in Congress, who employed the microscopic Eye of the One to penetrate the obscure Designs of intriguing Adversaries and the deep Erudition of the other to raise Barriers against them.

Samuel Adams to Samuel P. Savage, Philadelphia, 3 July 1778

I now begin to promise myself the Pleasure of seeing the Liberties of our Country established on a solid Foundation. It will then be my most earnest Wish to be released from all public Cares, and sit down with my Family and a little Circle of *faithful* Friends in the Cottage of Obscurity. There we will give Thanks to the God of Heaven for the great Things he has done for America, and fervently pray that she may be virtuous, without which she cannot long enjoy the Blessings of Freedom.

Samuel Adams to Samuel Phillips Savage, Philadelphia, 6 October 1778

You tell me that Boston is become a new City, and explain yourself by mentioning the exceeding Gaiety of Appearance there. I would fain hope this is confined to Strangers. Luxury & Extravagance are in my opinion totally destructive of those Virtues which are necessary for the Preservation of the Liberty and Happiness of the People. . . . Shall we not again see that Sobriety of Manners, that Temperance, Frugality, Fortitude, and other manly Virtues which were once the Glory and Strength of my much loved native Town. Heaven grant it speedily!

Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 20 October 1778

My Boston Friends tell me with great Solitude that I have Enemies there. I thank them for their Concern for me, and tell them I knew it before. The Man who acts an honest Part in public Life, must often counteract the Passions, Inclinations or Humors of weak and wicked Men and this must create him Enemies. I am therefore not disappointed or mortified. I flatter myself that no virtuous Man who knows me will or can be my Enemy; because I think he can have no Suspicion of my Integrity. But they say my Enemies “are plotting against me.” Neither does this discompose me, for what else can I expect from such kind of Men. If they mean to make me uneasy they miss their Aim; for I am happy and it is not in *their* Power to disturb my Peace. They add, the design is to get me recalled from this Service. I am in no Pain about such an Event; for I know there are many who can serve our Country here with greater Capacity (though none more honestly). The sooner therefore another is elected in my Room the better. I shall the sooner retire to the sweet Enjoyment of domestic Life. This, you can witness, I have often wished for; and I trust that all gracious Providence has spared *your* precious Life through a dangerous Illness, to heighten the Pleasures of my Retirement. If my Enemies are governed by Malice or Envy, I could not wish them a severer Punishment than their own Feelings. But, my Dear, I thank God, I have many Friends.

Samuel Adams to Samuel P. Savage, Philadelphia, 1 November 1778

You was mistaken in supposing that I ascribed the Independence of America to New England *only*. I never was so assuming as to think so. My words are that America is obliged to Massachusetts, and this is an acknowledged Truth. It is the opinion of others as well as myself, that the Principles and Manners of New England from time to time led to that great Event. I pray God she may ever maintain those Principles, which in my Opinion, are essentially necessary to support & perpetuate her Liberty. You may see my Sentiments of the Patriotism of other States in the Union, in a Letter I lately wrote to Mrs. A (if it is in Being), in which I relate a Conversation which passed between Monsieur — and myself. But enough of this, I love my Country. My Fears concerning her are that she will ruin herself by *Idolatry*.

A part of your Letter you tell me is confidential. I will always keep the Secrets of my Friends when I can do it honestly, though I confess I do not like to be encumbered with them.

Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 13 December 1778

It is diverting enough to hear the different Language held forth concerning me, by a kind of Men whom I despise beyond Expression. In New England they say I am averse to an Accommodation with Great Britain, and make that an Exception against me. In Philadelphia I am charged, indirectly at least, with a frequent Exchange of Visits with the Companion of Berhenhout, Lord Lindsay, Governor Johnston & the Son of Lord Bute, with a View of secretly bringing about an Accommodation with that King and Nation which I have solemnly abjured. What is there which Malice joined with a small Share of Wit will not suggest! I am not apt to conceal my Sentiments. They are far from being problematical. They are well known here & at Boston; and I can trust my Consistency in the Judgment of every honest and sensible Man that is acquainted with me. The Censure of Fools or Knaves is Applause.

Samuel Adams to Samuel Cooper, Philadelphia, 25 December 1778

A Politician must take men as he finds them and while he carefully endeavors to make their Humors & Prejudices, their Passions & Feelings, as well as their Reason & Understandings subservient to his Views of public Liberty & Happiness, he must frequently observe among the many if he has any Sagacity, some who having gained the Confidence of their Country, are sacrilegiously employing their Talents to the Ruin of its Affairs, for their own private Emolument. Upon such Men he stamps the Stigma *Hic niger est*, and if he thinks them capable of doing great Mischief to prevent it, he ventures to hold them up to the public Eye. This he does at the Risk of his own Reputation; for it is a thousand to one but those whose Craft he puts at Hazard will give him the odious Epithets of suspicious, dissatisfiable, peevish, quarrelsome, &c, and honest, undiscerning Men may be induced for a time to believe them pertinent; but he solaces himself in a conscious Rectitude of Heart, trusting that it will sooner or later be made manifest; perhaps in this World, but most assuredly in that Day when the secret Thoughts of all Men shall be unfolded.

James Lovell to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 9 August 1779

And has not that very philosophic Politician been yet to see you?

Joseph Galloway: Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion*

Samuel Adams—a man, who though by no means remarkable for brilliant abilities, yet is equal to most men in popular intrigue, and the management of a faction. He eats little, drinks little, sleeps little, thinks much, and is most decisive and indefatigable in the pursuit of his objects. It was this man, who by his superior application managed at once the factions in Congress at Philadelphia, and the factions in New England. Whatever these patriots in Congress wished to have done by their colleagues without . . . Mr. Adams advised and directed to be done, and when done, it was dispatched by express to Congress.

*London, 1780, 67–68.

John Adams to Thomas Digges, 14 March 1780

The Committee of Correspondence is purely an American Invention. It is an Invention of Mr. Samuel Adams, who first conceived the Thought, made the first Motion in a Boston Town Meeting, and was himself chosen the first Chairman of a Committee of Correspondence, that ever existed among men.

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 20 November 1780

In your Letter of the 17th of September which is still before me you say, that “the Tongue of Malice has always been employed against me,” and in mentioning it, you discover the Feelings of a Friend. It may perhaps in some Measure relieve those Feelings, if I tell you that it serves to make me the more watchful over my self, lest by any Misconduct, I should afford Occasion to malicious Men, to say that of me which would give me just Cause to be ashamed. It is said to be a Misfortune to a Man, when all speak well of him. Is it then an Advantage to a Man, that he has Enemies? It may be so, if he has Wisdom to make a good Use of them. We are apt to be partial, in our own Judgment of ourselves. Our friends are either blind to our Faults, or not faithful enough to tell us

of them. The malicious Man will utter all Manner of Evil of us, and contrive Means to send it post haste to our Ears; and if among much Slander, they say some Truths, what have we to do, but to correct past Errors, & guard against future ones. The Report you mention as propagated of me, is groundless. Would any Man in his Senses, who wishes that the War may be carried on with Vigor, prefer the temporary and expensive Drafts of Militia, to a permanent and well appointed Army! But Envy knows no other Business than to calumniate.

Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 24 November 1780

You seem, my Dear, to express more Concern than I think you ought, at certain Events that have of late taken Place in the Common Wealth of Massachusetts. Do you not consider that in a free Republic, the People have an uncontrollable right of choosing whom they please, to take their Parts in the Administration of public Affairs? No Man has a Claim on his Country, upon the Score of his having rendered public Service. It is the Duty of every one to use his utmost Exertions in promoting the Cause of Liberty & Virtue; and having so done, if his Country thinks proper to call others to the arduous Task, he ought cheerfully to acquiesce, and he may Console himself with the Contemplation of an Honest Man in private Life. You know how ardently I have wished for the Sweets of Retirement. I am like to have my Wish. You are witness that I have not raised a fortune in the Service of my Country. I glory in being what the World calls a poor Man. If my Mind has ever been tinctured with Envy, the Rich & the Great have not been its objects. If I have been vain, Popularity, though I had as much of it as any Man ought to have, is not the Phantom I have pursued. He who gains the Approbation of the Virtuous Citizens, I will own may feel himself happy; but he is in Reality much more so, *who knows he deserves it*. Such a Man, if he cannot retreat with Splendor, he may with Dignity. I will trust in that all gracious Being, who in his own good Way, has provided us with Food and Raiment; and having spent the greatest Part of my Life in public Cares, like the weary Traveller, fatigued with the Journey of the Day, I can rest with you in a Cottage. If I live till the Spring, I will take my final Leave of Congress and return to Boston. I have Reasons to be fixed in this Determination which I will then explain to you. I grow more domestic as I increase in years.

Peter Oliver: The Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion, 1781

I shall next give you a Sketch of some of Mr. *Samuel Adams's* Features; & I do not know how to delineate them stronger, than by the Observation made by a celebrated Painter in *America*, vizt. "That if he wished to draw the Picture of the devil, that he would get *Sam Adams* to sit for him": & indeed, a very ordinary Physiognomist would, at a transient View of his Countenance, develop the Malignity of his Heart. He was a Person of Understanding, but it was discoverable rather by a Shrewdness than Solidity of Judgment; & he understood human Nature, in low life, so well, that he could turn the Minds of the great Vulgar as well as the small into any Course that he might choose; perhaps he was a singular Instance in this Kind; & he never failed of employing his Abilities to the vilest Purposes. He was educated at *Harvard College*; and when he quitted that Scene of Life, he entered upon the Business of a Malster, the Profits of which afforded him but a moderate Maintenance; & his Circumstances were too well known for him to gain a pecuniary Credit with Mankind.

He was so thorough a *Machiavilian*, that he divested himself of every worthy Principle, & would stick at no Crime to accomplish his Ends. He was chosen a Collector of Taxes for the Town of *Boston*; but when the Day of Account came, it was found that there was a Defalcation of about

£1700 Sterling. He was apprised of it long before, & formed his plans accordingly—he knew the Temper of the Town of *Boston*, that the most Part of them were inclined to Opposition of Government, and he secured an Interest with them. This he did, by ingratiating himself with *John Hancock Esqr.*, a considerable Merchant of that Town, in the same Manner that the Devil is represented seducing *Eve*, by a constant whispering at his Ear. . . .

I here . . . return to Mr. *Adams*, when he had embezzled the public Monies of *Boston*—in order to extricate himself, he duped Mr. *Hancock*, by persuading him to build Houses & Wharves which would not bring him 2 percent Interest for his Money. This Work necessarily engaged a Variety of Artificers, whom *Adams* could prefer. This secured these Orders of Men in his Interest; & such Men chiefly composed the Voters of a *Boston* Town Meeting. At one of their Meetings the Town voted him a Discharge of 2/3ds of his Debt, & Mr. *Hancock* & some others, into whose Graces he had insinuated his baleful Poison, subscribed to a Discharge of the other Third—thus was he set at large to commit his Ravages on Government, until he undermined the Foundations of it, & not one Stone had been left upon another. He soon outrivalled Mr. *Otis* in popularity. His was all serpentine Cunning, Mr. *Otis* was rash, unguarded, foulmouthed, & openly spiteful; all which was disgusting to those who piqued themselves upon their Sanctity. The other [i.e., Adams] had always a religious Mask ready for his Occasions; he could transform his self into an Angel of Light with the weak Religionist; & with the abandoned he would disrobe his self & appear with his cloven Foot & in his native Blackness of Darkness—he had a good Voice, & was a Master in vocal Music. This Genius he improved, by instituting singing Societies of Mechanics, where he presided; & embraced such Opportunities to the inculcating Sedition, 'till it had ripened into Rebellion. His Power over weak Minds was truly surprising. I have done with him for the present; you will soon hear more of him.

Thomas Rodney's Characters of Some Members of Congress, post-8 March 1781

Samuel Adams of Massachusetts has been in Congress from their first Meeting has a pretty general knowledge of their affairs and is particularly attentive to every thing that affects his own State or friends; he is neither eloquent nor Talkative; but having the full command of his passions, and possessing a great deal of caution and Court cunning he is fitted for a politician in every Case Where great and good abilities are not requisite.

François Barbé de Marbois to Comte deVergennes, Philadelphia, 13 March 1782

Mr. Adams takes pleasure in trouble and difficulties; he glories in forming a party of opposition against the Government, although he himself is president of the Senate.

Marquis de Chastellux: Travels in North-America, in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782

Mr. Samuel Adams, Deputy for Massachusetts Bay, was not at this dinner, but on rising from the table I went to see him. When I entered his room, I found him *tête-à-tête** with a young girl of fifteen who was preparing his tea; but we shall not be scandalized at this, on considering that he is at least sixty. Every body in Europe knows that he was one of the prime movers of the present revolution. I experienced in his company the satisfaction one rarely has in the world, nay even on the theater, of finding the person of the actor corresponding with the character he performs. In him, I saw a man wrapt up in his object, who never spoke but to give a good opinion of his cause, and a high idea of his country. His simple and frugal exterior, seemed intended as a contrast with the

energy and extent of his ideas, which were wholly turned towards the republic, and lost nothing of their warmth by being expressed with method and precision; as an army, marching towards the enemy, has not a less determined air for observing the laws of tactics.

*Literally head to head, i.e., a private conversation, a liaison.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Paris, 28 March 1783

I have one favor for you to ask of Mr. Adams the President of the [Massachusetts] Senate. It is that he would make a complete Collection of his Writings and publish them in Volumes. I know of no greater Service that could be rendered to the Rights of Mankind. At least that he would give you a List of them. They comprise a Period of forty Years, and although they would not find so many Rakes for Purchasers, as the Writings of Voltaire, they would do infinitely more good to mankind especially in our rising Empire. There Posterity will find a Mass of Principles, and Reasonings, suitable for them and for all good Men. The Copy, I fancy would sell to Advantage in Europe.

John Adams to William Lee, Paris, 10 April 1783

For my own part I am not afraid nor ashamed to say, that I think *Mr. S: Adams* is the man, who has acted the longest & the most essential part, as well as the most dangerous & difficult, in this Revolution—and I say this, without fear of being contradicted by Posterity; because there are extant Writings of this Gent[leman], for a Succession of 40 years together, which will one day be collected, all tending to the great end we have seen, written with a Simplicity & Elegance, a majesty & energy, which will be read with admiration in future ages, & would have done honor to any that is past. He will have the honor too of a disinterestedness, equal to that of any Character in Athens or Rome, and, what will still add to his glory, he has done all under the constant pressure of Poverty & Distress. A Collection of his Writings would be one of the most usefull & important works, especially for our Country, which was ever published.

I am on a delicate & invidious Subject; but historical Justice is as essential to the formation of virtuous Citizens, & consequently as indispenable for the prosperty [of] States, as distributive Justice—But there is such a prostitution of all Justice, such a confusion of Right & wrong, virtue & vice, to accomplish the Apotheosis of Dr. F., as ought to excite the indignation of every honest man—There is such a partiality to him too, among our own Countrymen, their Allies & their Enemies, arising from the imposing bubble of his Reputation, as embarrasses Congress in their Deliberations, & forces even that august body into similar Partialities. Such a Reputation is as real a Tyranny as any that can be erected among men—

Francisco Rendón to Don José de Gálvez, Philadelphia, 12 April 1783

Mr. Arthur Lee . . . an extremely shrewd and reckless man.

William Lee to John Adams, Brussels, 24 April 1783

You cannot have a higher opinion of Mr. Saml. Adams than I have, for he was long before I left London my constant Toast as the American Aristides.

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, The Hague, 11 June 1784

In a Letter I wrote a Year ago to Mr. Adams, I urged upon him to make and publish a Collection of his Writings and I have mentioned it many Times in Conversation with Americans. It is a Work which ought to be given to the public; But Mr. Adams will never do it. It will be done, imperfectly by some other, hereafter. My Advice to you is to Search for every Scratch of his Pen, and lay it up with Care.

James Sullivan to John Adams, Boston, 22 November 1784

Mr. Adams holds out well, and is yet the Staunch Whig of 1775. But has his Enemies.

Charles Storer to John Adams, New York, 23 November 1785

Since my return I have waited on *Mr. S. Adams*—He is staunch & plain in his principles: is striving hard against innovations & change of manners & politics—but striving against a strong Current he labors & can but just keep his ground—

Luigi Castiglioni: Sketches of American Statesmen, 1787

Lean, small, a great talker, and crudely dressed, he reveals at first sight both by his words and behavior the turbulent and intolerant character of those individuals who, like death-dealing instruments of war, if they are necessary in disturbed times, should be removed from the sight of men in times of peace.

James Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 18 May 1787

Our old Friend Mr. A., however, is re-chosen [president of the Massachusetts senate], though he seems to have forsaken all his old principles and professions and to have become the most arbitrary and despotic Man in the Commonwealth.

***New York Journal*, 7 January 1788**

. . . that father of patriots SAMUEL ADAMS.

James Madison to Edmund Randolph, New York, 10 January 1788

The accounts [on the newly proposed Constitution] from Massachusetts vary extremely according to the channels through which they come. It is said that S. Adams who has hitherto been reserved, begins to make open declaration of his hostile views, His influence is not great, but this step argues an opinion that he can calculate on a considerable party.

John Armstrong to George Washington, Carlisle, Pa., 20 February 1788

Old Sam: Adams amazes me more than any other individual, because I cannot conceive what can induce one of his years to overlook the immediate necessity of at least beginning to make a reform.

Boston *Independent Chronicle*, 18 December 1788

A correspondent observes, that some of us know Fisher Ames, Esq., as a *pretty speaker*; but the WORLD knows the Hon. Samuel Adams, Esq., as a PATRIOT, and STATESMAN.

John Jay: Circuit Court Diary, 14 November 1790

The Father of S.A. was a malster—I Yesterday saw the dwelling small House old & out of Repair—He had a college Educatn.—learned no Trade or Profession—practiced none—Loved Leisure & indulged that Propensity—employed himself in party Matters—became eminent at Town meetings—grew poor, and accepted occasional Benevolences from one or another whom he served or who liked him—was chosen Town Collector—did not account for the Money—part was pd. By friendly Contributions—the Rest forgiven—

James Iredell to Hannah Iredell, Boston, 1 November 1792

I had the honor of dining with the Committee and Corporation of the College, and of being seated next to the Lieutenant Governor, the famous Sam. Adams who though an old Man has a great deal of fire yet. He is polite and agreeable. I think he is the very image of the Pictures I have seen of Oliver Cromwell.

Stephen Higginson to Alexander Hamilton, Boston, 24 August 1793

. . . there are but a few who advocate the French Claims [of fitting out privateers], & these are made up of inveterate Antifederalists & men desperate in their circumstances. The former will join any party, & pursue any measures to embarrass the union; & among these are Our Governor, Lt. Governor & some others in public Life.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 18 January 1794

This post will bring you the speech of the Lieut. Governor. “They call it an old woman’s speech” but I would deny my sex, if any old woman in the country would have made a speech so little to the purpose. Not one word Relating to the business of the Common Wealth or the affairs of the State but a long Farrago, to prove what every Child knows, that all Men have equal Natural Rights. His Head seems to be turned with some vague Ideas about Liberty and equality, whether he had an Idea that his want of Property might be an objection in the minds of some against voting him into the Chair, and this was address to his fellow citizens to remove that obstacle. I am perfectly at a loss to fathom his views. Then he must lug in France to show his attachment to that part of the Nation who have so wisely leveled all distinction. The Speech has tincture of the Jacobine Spirit, and is a convincing proof that he is wholly Unfit for the Chair.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 26 January 1794

I conjecture the Votes will generally run for Mr. Adams, Mr. Gerry and Mr. Dana and that two of the three will be chosen. I wish the old Fellow was a little more national: but he cannot do much harm and will not last long. Master Cleverly* used to say thirty Years ago “I pity Mr. Sam Adams for he was born a Rebel.” I hope he will not die one.

*Joseph Cleverly was a Braintree schoolmaster.

Henry Marchant to John Adams, Newport, R.I., 10 February 1794

[Hancock's] immediate Successor has given the Gen: Assembly a moral Lecture and a Slice of French Equality;—However some Things were well said.—He has been attacked for deviating from His former Sentiments agt. speechifying.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 24 March 1794

The old gentleman has hurt himself by this improper compliance with an insolent request. [Calling and then cancelling a feast honoring French military victories.] The general opinion seems to be that there will be no choice of a governor by the people at our ensuing election. It is my opinion however that Mr. Adams will be chosen.* He may do less harm than some others, but he will certainly never do any good. *Stat magni nominis umbra.*** His present impotence leans for support on his former services, and the office will be given him as a reward, not as an employment.

*If no candidate for governor received a majority of the popular vote, the election was decided by the state legislature.

**He stands the shadow of a mighty name (Lucan, *Pharsalia*, Book 1, line 135).

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 April 1794

At nine o Clock at night I suppose your Election is over, and another fortnight will enable Us to guess whether An Adams or a Cushing is to be the great Man. Although the Old Gentleman's Conduct is not such as I can approve in many Things of late Years, Yet I find it difficult to believe that the People of Massachusetts will forsake him in his last moments. Alas! his Grandeur must be of short duration if it ever commences. I shall be happier at home, if Cushing succeeds and the State I believe will be more prudently conducted.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Philadelphia, 11 April 1794

Our Election has been calmly carried, and your Brother chosen. It seems the Name is in high estimation, as the Prophet Samuel finds himself not only first but second, being Elected by the people both Governor and Lieut. Governor which I believe is the first instance of the kind in this State.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 11 April 1794

You will see by the return of votes that Mr. Adams is undoubtedly chosen Governor by a large Majority of the people, and it is probable Mr. Gill will be Lieut. Governor. Judge Cushing stands high upon the list, but the cry of Gratitude towards an old Servant of the publick, whose Years could not be long, was powerful, nor would they fix a Stigma upon him by placing an other over his Head. Their Principal was good, and I wish they may always act as wisely. Yet at this very critical Time, a more National and unprejudiced Man as well as a more active one, might have proved a greater Blessing to the State.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 12 April 1794

Our election of Governor took place last Monday. The numerous candidates of whom everybody talked, and for whom nobody intended to vote, had silently sunk into oblivion, and Judge Cushing alone remained to be opposed to the claimant *by succession.** In this town uncommon

pains were taken by both parties. There were 500 votes more than have ever been given upon any former election. Mr. Adams had 1400, and Judge Cushing 900. Our federalists droop the head and think all is lost. They know not so much of the human heart, or of the American character as you do. You told me what the event of the elections would be last October, and I then thought your “oracle *plus sur que celui de Chalcas*.” A friend of mine who lives in the country, by the name of [Horatio] Townsend, a sensible man and a warm Federalist, has repeatedly told me previous to the election, that he did not think the prophet would even have votes enough to make him a candidate for the election. Why? Because he is superannuated and antifederal. I have so often told him that I believed the choice of the people would be for this doting antifederalist. Since the election he writes me “I give you joy of the prospect of your old friend’s being elected Governor. The votes went very different from what I expected. *I was not sufficiently acquainted with the moral habits of the people*. The main argument of his being a scapegoat of seventy-five had more weight than I had expected.”

*Samuel Adams was serving as lieutenant governor when Governor John Hancock died.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 April 1794

Mr. Adams’s Election is no surprise to me. I should indeed have wondered if he had been disgraced and should have lessened my Veneration for the sentiments of Justice and Gratitude in the Breath of the People of Massachusetts. I wonder not at his lukewarmness at the national Government. I wonder rather that I am not as indifferent to it, as he is. He knows as well as I do, what a kind of Enemies We are associated with. I have no Apprehensions that he will oppose or embarrass the general Government more than another. A Governor must ex officio be good for nothing.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 12 May 1794

I hear that the Friends of Mr. Adams were driven to their Shifts in Boston. Obligated to assemble Lackies & footmen and Coachmen and an hundred free Negroes, to make up their Number. If this is true, I am sorry for it. The old Tories and their Satellites, have done much Injury to this Country by their constant Indulgence of their hatred of the old Gentleman and their ill natured Opposition to him. Her will forever defeat them, unless the People loose all sense of Justice as well as Gratitude. He has more Merit than they all, and in my Opinion will be as good a federalist as any, of them would be, after being chosen Governor. We shall never see a Governor an Overzealous Federalist.

John Adams to Thomas Welsh, Philadelphia, 19 November 1794

I thank you for your kind Letter. The Elections in Massachusetts have done honour to the Principles and Dispositions of the People. The Error of my old Friend is no surprise to me, for although I knew his the Abhorrence of Jarvis in his heart, I have lately seen his Versatility in so many Instances, that his Character, always Subtle ~~fine~~ and Slippery, is now become lubricated to a degree Susceptible of almost any Refinement in Casuistry. Old Cato Said “Corrupta civitate corruptio est licita”^{*}—~~others have~~ Jona. Sewall Said from Mandeville I believe

When it is to combat Evil
'Tis lawful to employ the Devil.

I could never reconcile these Maxims to my Judgment or my Feelings. But I know a Man who always Seem’d to think, that the End Sanctified the Means. Was Boston understood to be the Horse

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and Dedham the Cart? or was the State Government the Horse and the federal Government the Cart? or was the Town the Horse & the Country the Cart?

*“In a corrupt city corruption is lawful” (Sallust, *Bellum Catilinæ*, ch. 53, line 5.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 27 January 1795

The Governor’s Speech is pretty well. It is the better for a little Correction. It is the most constitutional and unexceptionable speech he ever made as Governor. A little of the old Leaven leaks out in an Insinuation against somebody. The Old Man’s Virtue is at length lost in Ambition. And if Ambition and Avarice have seized him, who is secure? When Ambition and Avarice, are predominant Passions and Virtue must soon become the Principle of the Government.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 2 February 1795

The venerable Governor made the best Speech he ever made, but the old Leaven ferments a little in it.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 June 1795

G[overnor] A’s Speech is a good one upon the whole—a little seasoned as you say, to make it popular with a certain Party, to whom he too often sacrifices.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 21 January 1796

At Length you have the Speech of a poor weak old Man, superannuated indeed and fearing a shadow. . . . I think he had better have left it, unnoticed than have come out in this manner, but it shows fully that the powers of his mind are unequal to enlarged views, and that he is under the influence of the Clubs.

Thomas Welsh to John Adams, Boston, 25 January 1796

The Governor made a very submissive, short and extemporaneous reply* “that he did mean to be understood to intend to dictate to the House upon the subject of the Treaty and that he only spoke in his private Capacity.” upon the whole the Governor appears to have lost his Reason, his Health and almost his public Influence.

*Governor Samuel Adams was responding to the state legislature’s response to his speech.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 29 January 1796

I hope our Mass. House & senate will correct the old Doatard—if they don’t they deserve the Confusion & every evil Work to which his impudent Speech directly tends.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 2 February 1796

It is devoutly to be wished that the Massachusetts had a Governor capable of diffusing his Thoughts over fifteen seeing states and being their Dependences on each other as well as their Relations with foreign Nations. Mr. Adams cannot. His Pride and Vanity are vastly more extensive than his Abilities. He always had a contracted Mind—tho a subtle and a bold one. He never was

over honest nor over candid. He will lie a little for his own Vanity and more for his Party, and as much as a Spartan for his notions of the public good.

John Adams to Thomas Welsh, Philadelphia, 2 February 1796

A Governor of a State in a Solemn Speech to both Houses, at the opening of a session, expressing a private Opinion only of a Treaty and that in the most rude insulting and unmeasured Language is such a Complication of Imbecility Hypocrisy and Superannuation, As I never heard of.

I pray that my Country may take from me all temptation to remain in Office before the Approach of Dotage shall take from me the Capacity of doing any thing but Mischief to the Public and dishonour to my Character.

Whatever Tenderness of Friendship I may feel for a Gadsden a Rutledge a Dickinson, a Warren or an Adams, with all of whom I have acted on the Public Stage in earlier Life, I am Stunned and astonished at their Vanity Presumption and Ignorance—I cannot but ascribe it to the Imbecility and decrepitude of Age.

In their Solitudes, unable to read, to converse or to think, destitute of all the Information which Government possesses do they think to dictate and to domineer, like Pedagogues over School boys!

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 5 March 1796

The Electioneering Toast, You sent me, I answer by one equally good, from Ipswich. “3. John Adams. May his Virtues, Genius and knowledge long revolve, the first planet from our political Sun.” Poor Saml. Got a Rap. “Saml. Adams. not the errors of Dotage dosgrace that Life whose manhood was usefull to his Country.”*

*For the oasts given at a celebration in Ipswich, see the Boston *Federal Orrey*, 3 March 1796.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Philadelphia, 4 April 1796

Tomorrow is our Election Day, and after scolding and abusing the Old Man some, their Hearts relent towards him, and I am very certain from what I have read and what I have heard, all of which will serve rather than inure his cause, he will again be Reelected and I believe by a large proportion of the State. In the first place he lives in the Town of Boston. That has its Weight with their Pride and Ambition. In the next place, they recollect his former Services, his Age, and his Virtues. Those take hold of their gratitude, and they know not how to bring his grey Hairs with sorrow to the Grave. There they have some merit. They know there is not any other Man held up sufficiently popular to unite the people. These are the considerations of the Patriots. The Antis support him, because they think him a spoke in their Wheel. I own for myself, whilst I pity his infirmities I should have been sorry to have had him dropped.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 7 April 1796

Your Governor is chosen. Who is he. My faith is that the old Patriarch will stand his Ground. But he deserves to be left out for his Childish Turbulence.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 April 1796

Mr. Adams as I expected is undoubtedly Elected, tho he lost many votes by his, I will not say conduct, but want of Conduct.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 April 1796

I have always thought it injudicious to make any Attempt against the Governor, knowing as I do the habitual Attachment to him, as well as the difficulty of uniting People in another. The Countenance he gives to a very profligate Party is very pernicious to the Public but he is stimulated to it in Part by the opposition to him, and he would not do less out of office.

Oliver Wolcott, Sr., to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Litchfield, Conn., 25 April 1796

I do not believe that any material change of opinion of Massachusetts is to be inferred by their electing Mr. Adams their Governor; he is an old and infirm man.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 28 November 1796

You will see how miserable the old Man is led by the Party in his I to the two Houses. He just barely tells them that they were calld together for the purpose of Chusing Electors. Not a word of the President's Resignation. Not one solitary word of approbation upon the administration of that Great and good Man

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 3 January 1797

The old Patriarch, has got a Name of Old Scrathum, or old Scratch or Some Such Oddity that will amuse the Blackguards for a time.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 29 January 1797

Yes My Dear Friend I had seen and read the Tenth Muse, and I think she abuses our poor old Governour who tho quite in his Dotage, is not the Man there represented. I do not think him a Hypocrit, but a real Lover and Friend of Religion from pure Principles. He has served his Country many Years with honour and with fidelity. I respect his Virtues, tho I pity his weakness. It is said that he means to decline another Election. If this should be the case, I will go & see him and Mrs. Adams as soon as they are out of Office, and shew them that personally, I respect old Friends and Friendships.

Thomas Jefferson to James Sullivan, Monticello, 9 February 1797

I am always glad of an opportunity of inquiring after my most ancient & respected friend Mr. Samuel Adams. His principles, founded on the immovable basis of equal right & reason, have continued pure & unchanged. Permit me to place here my sincere veneration for him.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 21 February 1797

I enclose to you, the Tenth Muse of 98.—It will give You some idea of what has been passing here. The Wit Whoever he is, bears too hard upon our old Governour, who for the good he has

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done, ought to be more tenderly handled. The old Gentleman has taken his leave, and declines standing another Election. His fondness for a Republican Government, and his Love of Liberty, led him to form an opinion of the transactions in France from their professions, rather than from their actions. He considered them as an oppressed people, struggling for freedom, and not as a people forging chains tenfold heavier for other Nations, than those which they were bursting from off themselves. Thus has his administration been marked with weakness, and the imbecility of Age.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, The Hague, 21 May 1797

I find by the newspapers that Mr. S. Adams has declined being re-elected as Governor of Massachusetts.—His age and infirmities are entitled to repose, and his retirement from the public service, will prove his best security to preserve unimpaired the grateful sense of his former exertions in the cause of his Country.

Benjamin Rush: Travels Through Life, c. 1800

Upon the motion for leaving Philadelphia Samuel Adams (who seldom spoke in Congress) delivered a short, but very animating speech. His feelings raised him frequently upon his toes at the close of his sentences. There was nothing very oratorical in his manner, but what he said infused a sudden vigor into the minds of every member of the House.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches, c. 1800

He was near sixty years of age when he took his seat in Congress, but possessed all the vigor of mind of a young man of five and twenty. He was a republican in principle and manners. He once acknowledged to me “that the independence of the United States upon Great Britain had been the first wish of his heart seven years before the war.” About the same time he said to me “if it were revealed to him that 999 Americans out of 1000 would perish in a war for liberty, he would vote for that war, rather than see his country enslaved. The survivors in such a war, though few (he said), would propagate a nation of freemen.” He abhorred a standing army, and used to say that they were the “shoeblocks of Society.” He dreaded the undue influence of an individual in a Republic, and once said to me “Let us beware of continental and State great men.” He loved simplicity and economy in the administration of government, and despised the appeals which are made to the eyes and ears of the common people in order to govern them. He considered national happiness and the public patronage of religion as inseparably connected; and so great was his regard for public worship, as the means of promoting religion, that he constantly attended divine service in the German church in York town [Pa.,] while the Congress sat there, when there was no service in their chapel, although he was ignorant of the German language. His morals were irreproachable, and even ambition and avarice, the usual vices of politicians, seemed to have no place in his breast. He seldom spoke in Congress, but was active in preparing and doing business out of doors. In some parts of his conduct I have thought he discovered more of the prejudices of a Massachusetts man than the liberal sentiments of a citizen of the United States. His abilities were considerable, and his knowledge extensive and correct upon Revolutionary subjects, and both friends and enemies agree in viewing him as one of the most active instruments of the American Revolution.

Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Adams, Philadelphia, 26 February 1800

Your principles have been tested in the crucible of time, and have come out pure. You have proved that it was monarchy, and not merely British monarchy, you opposed.

Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Adams, Washington, 29 March 1801

I addressed a letter to you, my very dear and ancient friend, on the 4th of March; not indeed to you by name, but through the medium of some of my fellow-citizens, whom occasion called on me to address. In mediating the matter of that address, I often asked myself, is this exactly in the spirit of the patriarch, Samuel Adams? Is it as he would express it? Will he approve of it? I have felt a great deal for our country in the times we have seen. But individually for no one so much as yourself. When I have been told that you were avoided, insulted, frowned on, I could but ejaculate, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." I confess I felt an indignation for you, which for myself I have been able, under every trial, to keep entirely passive. . . . How much I lament that time has deprived me of your aid! It would have been a day of glory which should have called you to the first office of the administration. But give us your counsel, my friend, and give us your blessing; and be assured that there exists not in the heart of man a more faithful esteem than mine to you, and that I shall ever bear you the most affectionate veneration and respect.

Mercy Otis Warren, History of the American Revolution, 1805

Mr. Adams was a gentleman of a good education, a decent family, but no fortune. Early nurtured in the principles of civil and religious liberty, he possessed a quick understanding, a cool head, stern manners, a smooth address, and a Roman-like firmness, united with that sagacity and penetration that would have made a figure in a conclave. He was at the same time liberal in opinion, and uniformly devout; social with men of all denominations, grave in deportment; placid, yet severe; sober and indefatigable; calm in seasons of difficulty, tranquil and unruffled in the vortex of political altercation; too firm to be intimidated, too haughty for condescension, his mind was replete with resources that dissipated fear, and extricated in the greatest emergencies. Thus qualified, he stood forth early, and continued firm, through the great struggle, and may justly claim a large share of honor, due to that spirit of energy which opposed the measures of administration, and produced the independence of America. Through a long life he exhibited on all occasions, an example of patriotism, religion, and virtue honorary to the human character.

John Quincy Adams to Skelton Jones, Boston, 17 April 1809

Samuel Adams was many years older than my father. He received his degree of Master of Arts at Harvard College in 1743. It was then the custom of that college, that the candidates for this degree should each of them propose a question having relation to any of the sciences, in which they had been instructed, and assuming the affirmative or negative side of the proposition, profess to be prepared to defend the principle contained in it at the public Commencement against all opponents.

The question proposed by Samuel Adams was, "whether the people have a just right of resistance, when oppressed by their rulers," and the side that he asserted was the affirmative.

John Adams to William Tudor, Sr., Quincy, Mass., 5 June 1813

You “never profoundly admired Mr. S. A.” I have promised you an apology for him. You may think it a weak one; for I have no talent at panegyric or apology. ‘There are all sorts of men in the world.’ This observation, you may say, is self-evident and futile; yet Mr. Locke thought it not unworthy of him to make it; and if we reflect upon it, there is more meaning in it than meets the eye at the first blush. You say Mr. S. A. “had too much sternness and pious bigotry.” A man in his situation and circumstances must possess a large fund of sternness of stuff, or he will soon be annihilated. His piety ought not to be objected to him or any other man. His bigotry, if he had any, was a fault; but he certainly had not more than governor Hutchinson and secretary Oliver, who I know, from personal conversations, were as stanch Trinitarians and Calvinists as he was, and treated all Arians and Arminians with more contempt and scorn, than he ever did. Mr. Adams lived and conversed freely with all sectarians in philosophy and divinity. He never imposed his creed on any one, nor endeavored to make proselytes to his religious opinions. He was as far from sentencing any man to perdition who differed from him, as Mr. Holley, Dr. Kirkland, or Dr. Freeman. If he was a Calvinist, a Calvinist he had been educated, and so had been all his ancestors for two hundred years. He had been from his childhood too much devoted to politics to be a profound student in metaphysics and theology, or to make extensive researches or deep investigations into such subjects. Nor had any other man attempted it in this nation in that age, if any one has attempted it since. Mr. Adams was an original. *Sui generis, sui juris*.* The variety of human characters is infinite. Nature seems to delight in showing the inexhaustibility of her resources. There never were two men alike, from the first man to the last, any more than two pebbles or two peas.

“Mr. Adams was born and tempered a wedge of steel, to split the knot of *lignum vitæ*** which tied North America to Great Britain. Blunderheaded as were the British ministry, they had sagacity enough to discriminate from all others, for inexorable vengeance, the two men the most to be dreaded *by* them, Samuel Adams and John Hancock; and had not James Otis been then dead, or worse than dead, his name would have been at the head of The Triumvirate.

“James Otis, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock, were the three most essential characters; and Great Britain knew it, though America does not. Great and important and excellent characters, aroused and excited by these, arose in Pennsylvania, Virginia, New York, South Carolina, and in all the other States; but these three were the first movers, the most constant, steady, persevering springs, agents, and most disinterested sufferers and firmest pillars of the whole Revolution.

“I shall not attempt even to draw the outlines of the biography of Mr. Samuel Adams. Who can attempt it?

“But if I had time, eyes and fingers at my command, where should I find documents and memorials? Without the character of Samuel Adams, the true history of the American Revolution can never be written. For fifty years his pen, his tongue, his activity were constantly exerted for his country, without fee or reward. During all that time he was an almost incessant writer. But where are his writings? Who can collect them? And if collected, who will ever read them? The letters he wrote and received, where are they? I have seen him at Mrs. Yard’s in Philadelphia, when he was about to leave Congress, cut up with his scissors whole bundles of letters, into atoms that could never be reunited, and throw them out at the window, to be scattered by the winds. This was in summer, when he had no fire. In winter he threw whole handfuls into the fire. As we were on terms of perfect intimacy, I have joked him, perhaps rudely, upon his anxious caution. His answer was, ‘Whatever becomes of me, my friends shall never suffer by my negligence.’

“This may be thought a less significant anecdote than another. Mr. Adams left the letters he had received and preserved, in possession of his widow. This lady, as was natural, lent them to a confidential friend of her husband, Mr. Avery, who then was and had been Secretary of the Commonwealth under the administrations of Mr. Adams and Mr. Hancock. Mr. Avery informed me that ‘he had them, and that they were a complete history of the Revolution.’ I will not say into whose hands they fell after Mr. Avery’s death, and I cannot say where they are now. But I have heard that a gentleman in Charlestown, Mr. Austin, undertook to write the Life of Mr. Adams; but finding his papers had been so garbled that the truth could not be discovered, he abandoned his design. Never will those letters which secretary Avery possessed ever be brought together again, nor will they ever be found. So much for Mr. Adams, at present.

*A one of a kind.

**A strong hard wood.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 16 July 1814

I am sometimes afraid that my “Machine” will not “surcease motion” soon enough; for I dread nothing so much as “dying at top” and expiring like Dean Swift “a driveller and a Show” or like Sam. Adams, a Grief and distress to his Family, a weeping helpless Object of Compassion for Years.

John Adams to Dr. J. Morse, Quincy, Mass., 1 January 1816

[Immediately after the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770.] Samuel Adams appeared in his true character. His caution, his discretion, his ingenuity, his sagacity, his self-command, his presence of mind, and his intrepidity, commanded the admiration and loud applauses of both parties. The troops were ordered to the Castle, and Lord North called them from this time, “Sam Adams’s two regiments.”

John Adams to William Tudor, Quincy, Mass., 5 June 1817

You say, Mr. S. Adams “had too much sternness and pious bigotry.” A man in his situation and circumstances must possess a large fund of sternness of stuff, or he will soon be annihilated. His piety ought not to be objected to him, or any other man. His bigotry, if he had any, was a fault; but he certainly had not more than Governor Thomas Hutchinson and Secretary Oliver, who, I know from personal conversation, were as staunch Trinitarians and Calvinists as he was, and treated all Arians and Arminians with more contempt and scorn than he ever did. Mr. Adams lived and conversed freely with all sectarians, in philosophy and divinity. He never imposed his creed on any one, or endeavored to make proselytes to his religious opinions. He was as far from sentencing any man to perdition, who differed from him, as Mr. Holley, Dr. Kirkland, or Dr. Freeman. If he was a Catholic, a Calvinist he had been educated, and so had been all his ancestors for two hundred years. He had been, from his childhood, too much devoted to politics to be a profound student in metaphysics and theology, or to make extensive researches or deep investigations into such subjects. Nor had any other man attempted it, in this nation, in that age, if any one has attempted it since. Mr. Adams was an original—*sui generis, sui juris*.* The variety of human characters is infinite. Nature seems in delight in showing the inexhaustibility of her resources. There never were two men alike, from the first man to the last, any more than two pebbles or two peas.

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“Quoe ante conditam condendamve urbem, poeticis magis decora fabulis, quam incorruptis rerum gestarum monumentis traduntur, ea nec possum refellere. Quia non tempus, nec oculos, nec manus habeo.”** But, if I had time, eyes, and fingers at my command, where should I find documents and memorials? Without the character of Samuel Adams, the true history of the American Revolution can never be written. For fifty years, his pen, his tongue, his activity, were constantly exerted for his country without fee or reward. During that time, he was an almost incessant writer. But where are his writings? Who can collect them? And, if collected, who will ever read them? The letters he wrote and received, where are they? I have seen him, at Mrs. Yard’s in Philadelphia, when he was about to leave Congress, cut up with his scissors whole bundles of letters into atoms that could never be reunited, and throw them out of the window, to be scattered by the winds. This was in summer, when he had no fire; in winter he threw whole handfuls into the fire. As we were on terms of perfect intimacy, I have joked him, perhaps rudely, upon his anxious caution. His answer was, “Whatever becomes of me, my friends shall never suffer by my negligence.” This may be thought a less significant anecdote than another. Mr. Adams left the letters he had received and preserved in possession of his widow. This lady, as was natural, lent them to a confidential friend of her husband, Mr. Avery, who then was, and had been secretary of the commonwealth under the administration of Mr. Adams and Mr. Hancock. Mr. Avery informed me, that he “had them, and that they were a complete history of the Revolution.” I will not say into whose hands they fell, after Mr. Avery’s death, and I cannot say where they are now; but I have heard that a gentleman in Charlestown, Mr. Austin, undertook to write the life of Mr. Adams; but, finding his papers had been so garbled that the truth could not be discovered, he abandoned his design. Never will those letters, which Secretary Avery possessed, be brought together again; nor will they ever be found.

*Unique, one of a kind; in his own right.

**Quoted from Livy.

Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Delaplaine, Monticello, 1 April 1818

Your letter of Mar. 11, was Recd. on the 24th but it is not in my power to give you any information as to Mr. Samuel Adams. I knew him only as serving with him in the old Congress. The disparity of our ages prevented any particular intimacy being myself the youngest but one in Congress and he I believe the oldest. He was a very operative member a sensible speaker but entirely without eloquence, but of all this there must be a thousand persons in Massachusetts who know more about him than I do.

Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Waterhouse, Monticello, 31 January 1819

I was the youngest man but one in the old Congress, and he the oldest but one; as I believe. His only senior, I suppose, was Stephen Hopkins. . . . Although my high reverence for Samuel Adams was returned by habitual notices from him which highly flattered me, yet the disparity of age prevented intimate and confidential Communications. I always considered him as more than any other member [in Congress] the fountain of our important measures. And although he was neither an

eloquent nor easy speaker, whatever he said was sound, and commanded the profound attention of the House. In the discussions on the floor of Congress, he commanded the profound attention of the House. In the discussions on the floor of Congress he reposed himself on our main pillar in debate. Mr. John Debates. These two gentlemen were verily a host in our councils. Comparisons with their associates, Northern or Southern, would answer no profitable purpose, but they would suffer by comparison with none.

John Adams to William Tudor, Quincy, Mass., 9 February 1819

Samuel Adams, to my certain knowledge, from 1758 to 1775, that is, for seventeen years, made it his constant rule to watch the rise of every brilliant genius, to seek his acquaintance, to court his friendship, to cultivate his natural feelings in favor of his native country, to warn him against the hostile designs of Great Britain, and to fix his affections and reflections on the side of his native country. I could enumerate a list, but I will confine myself to a few. [Adams lists John Hancock, Joseph Warren, Benjamin Church, and Josiah Quincy] . . . If Samuel Adams was not a Demosthenes in oratory, nor had the learning of a Mansfield in law, or the universal history of a Burke, he had the art of commanding the learning, the oratory, the talents, the diamonds of the first order that his country afforded, without anybody's knowing or suspecting he had it, but himself, and a very few friends.

Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Adams Wells, Monticello, 12 May 1819

I can say that he was truly a great man, wise in council, fertile in resources, immovable in his purposes, and had, I think, a greater share than any other member, in advising and directing our measures, in the northern war especially. As a speaker he could not be compared with his living colleague and namesake, whose deep conceptions, nervous style, and undaunted firmness, made him truly our bulwark in debate, But Mr. Samuel Adams, although not of fluent elocution, was so rigorously logical, so clear in his views, abundant in good sense, and master always of his subject, that he commanded the most profound attention whenever he rose in an assembly by which the froth of declamation was heard with the most sovereign contempt. I sincerely rejoice that the record of his worth is to be undertaken by one so much disposed as you will be to hand him down fairly to that posterity for whose liberty and happiness he was so zealous a laborer.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 27 May 1819

His . . . character however will never be accurately known to posterity, as it never was sufficiently known to its own age: his merit in the Revolution, if there was any merit in it, was and is beyond all calculation. I know but one superior to it, and that was James Otis.

Thomas Jefferson: Conversation with Daniel Webster, 1824

For depth of purpose, zeal, & sagacity, no man in Congress *exceeded*, if any equalled Sam Adams; & none did more than he, to originate & sustain revolutionary measures in Congress. But he could not speak, he had a hesitating grunting manner.

In this volume,* Hutchinson gives the characters of the most distinguished popular leaders, in that Controversy. Those of the two Adamses are conspicuous. Of Samuel Adams, the Governor [i.e., Hutchinson] says—"He was for near twenty years, a writer against government, in the publick news papers; at first but an indifferent one: long practice caused him to arrive at great perfection,

and to acquire a talent of artfully & fallaciously insinuating into the minds of his readers a prejudice against the characters of all whom he attacked, beyond any other man I ever knew. This talent he employed in the messages, remonstrances, and resolves of the house of representatives, most of which were of his composition; and he made more converts to his cause by calumniating governors, and other servants of the crown, than by strength of reasoning.”

*A reference to colonial governor of Massachusetts Thomas Hutchinson’s *The History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, from 1749 to 1774* (3 vol., London, 1828). The third volume was compiled and editor by John Hutchinson, the governor’s grandson.

Thomas Boylston Adams

Thomas Boylston Adams to John Adams, The Hague, 17 March 1797

I am not only desirous but anxious to revisit my native land, for the longer my absence from it is, the more difficult & tedious will be the establishment I should wish to make upon my return. The re-cultivation of my own language, and that of my profession, and the formation of connections for future benefit in the exercise of them, must be a business of time and labor, and the age of 25 seems to me quite late enough to commence the undertaking.

Thomas Boylston Adams to William Shaw, Philadelphia, 20 September 1801

Since my return, I have been more occupied with my profession than I had been, for a long time before, though with little immediate profit. My ambition does not aspire to any thing out of the pale of Bar promotion, but it is by no means an easy task to attain eminence in this Sphere. The number of competitors added to the difficult and laborious duties in the exercise of our profession, make it a perfect lottery as to success & profit. Every opportunity I get of holding forth, at the Bar, invigorates zeal, but I have not yet vanquished the terrors & palpitations incident to inexperienced speakers.

John Quincy Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 November 1801

My brother is in very good health, and fattening upon celibacy—I wish his estate were fattening as much as his person; but he preserves at least an Independence, and I hope will ere long do something better.

Thomas Boylston Adams to William Smith Shaw, Philadelphia, 13 June 1802

My destiny is hard & somewhat peculiar. If constancy & perseverance ever deserved to triumph, I think mine one of those cases, which has strong claims to favor and victory. God only knows *when*. *Nil desperandum*,* is a good motto, in *some* cases, but *nil sperandum*** is the destiny of a galley-slave. I know not which motto is most appropriate to me.

*Do not despair.

**Do not hope.

Jacob Adgate

Alexander Hamilton to Robert Livingston, 25 April 1785

The truth is that the state is now governed by a couple of New England adventurers—Ford and Adgate; who make tools of the Yates and their Associates. A number of attempts have been made by this junto to subvert the constitution and destroy the rights of private property; which but for the Council of Revision would have had the most serious effects.

Robert Aitken

Thomas Paine to Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia, 4 March 1775

. . . a Printer and Bookseller here, a Man of Reputation, and Property (Robt. Aitken) has lately attempted a Magazine, but having little or no turn that Way himself has applied to me for assistance. He had not above 600 Subscribers when I first assisted him. We have now upwards of 1500, and daily increasing.

Mathew Carey: Memoirs, June 1829

Robert Aitken: This was an ultra puritan—a printer and Bookseller of Phila during Revolutionary times, who at a great expense published a school Bible towards the close of the war, which while the war lasted had sold at a handsome profit, as he had no rival. But as soon as peace took place Bibles were imported on a large Scale, somewhat superior in quality and at a far lower price, So that he lost the sale of his, or if he sold, it was at a considerable loss. This crippled him in his business to an extent that he was never able to recover from. A certain Christopher Talbot a Roman Catholic, called on him to engage him to print the Doway Catechism. Aitken in a holy fit of zeal, and indignation, told Talbot that he would rather print the Woman of pleasure, than such a pestiferous, idolatrous book—and taking from his shelf a copy of his Bible told Talbot that he w[oul]d print his Catechism if he indemnified him for the heavy Losses he had lost by that Book.

William Alexander (Lord Stirling)

John Adams to James Warren, 18 February 1776

Schuyler is to command in N. York, with Lord Stirling under him who is a very good officer.

John Adams to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 4 August 1776

Lord Stirling was a person so distinguished by Fortune, Family, and the Rank and Employments he had held in civil Life, added to his Experience in military life, that it was thought no great uneasiness would be occasioned by his advancement.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

A learned sensible man, but somewhat vain, and like Charles II apt to tire his company by a repetition of the same stories. He was prudent and wise in council. and brave in the field. His manners were gentle and agreeable. His misfortunes before the war led him to seek relief in toddy, with which he sometimes impaired his judgment. Congress honoured him with a vote of approbation and praise after his death.

Marquis de Lafayette: Memoir of 1776

Lord Stirling, who was more courageous than judicious.

Aaron Burr to Joseph Alston, 15 November 1815

He [James Monroe] acted a short time as aide de camp to Lord Stirling who was regularly drunk from Morning to Morning—Monroe's whole duty was to fill his Lordship's Tankard and hear with indications of admiration his Lordship's long stories about himself—

Ethan Allen

John Thaxter to Abigail Adams, York, Pa., 22 May 1778

A few days since, I saw a Letter from Col. Ethan Allen; in which he informs "that the Enemy affected to treat him with humanity a day or two before his Exchange, that they talked of former friendships, Connections and harmony subsisting between the two Countries." . . .

Col. Allen's health is impaired, but his Spirits are high. He is ready to take the field and take vengeance on his Enemy.

Genl. Washington says "there is an *original something*" in that man. The observation is very just. He has an undaunted spirit. He will die a Christian infallibly if he does not make his Children take Hamilcar's Oath* Would he not be pardoned if he did it?

*Allen was allegedly an atheist. Hamilcar was a Carthaginian general who took his son Hannibal to the altar and swore him never to be a friend of Rome.

Ethan Allen, A Narrative of Col. Ethan Allen's Captivity, 1779

Ever since I arrived to a state of manhood, and acquainted myself with the general history of mankind, I have felt a sincere passion for liberty. . . .

My constitution was almost worn out by such a long and barbarous captivity. The enemy gave out that I was crazy, and wholly unmanned, but my vitals held sound (nor was I delirious any more than I have been from my youth up; but my extreme circumstances at certain times, rendered it political to act in some measure the madman) and in consequence of a regular diet and exercise, my blood recruited, and my nerves in great measure recovered their former tone, strength and usefulness, in the course of six months.

Luigi Castiglioni: Sketches of American Soldiers, 1787

When the war ended, he got it into his head to be an author and wrote a book that was printed in Vermont with the pompous title of *The Oracle of Reason*. In this book, following the ideas of the deists, he presumes to refute the doctrine of Christianity and inveighs strongly against the opinions of the latter, which he dares to call fanatic and ridiculous. In this work he followed, and in many places copied, whole passages from works of this type already published, which he stuck together, along with ideas of his own easily distinguishable for their extravagance and faulty reasoning. I did not have an opportunity to meet this curious fellow, who, living in the southern parts of the state, was not on the route that I took through this region. But from what I heard from those who had known him, he is one of those rustic men endowed with some talent and much presumption, who would be less harmful to humanity if they were more ignorant.

Paul Allen**Jabez Bowen to George Washington, Providence, R.I., 14 February 1791**

[Allen recommended for Federal Revenue Officers for Rhode Island] He is a Gentleman of Integrity and fully competent to the discharge of an Office of that Kind, he is in the Meridian of Life and a person of great Industry and Activity and can be warmly recommended for his early and decided Conduct in favour of the late Revolution as well as in favour of the New Federal Constitution, he has good connection here and has a large Family in Charge, and has uniformly supported a fair respectable Character in Life hitherto as a Merchant and good Citizen.

William Allen**John Adams to Charles Lee, Philadelphia, 17 February 1776**

Lieut. Col. Wm Allen you know undoubtedly; he is young and inexperienced, and can only be characterized at present by the rank and distinction of his family, the goodness of his own heart and temper. I hope ambition will prompt him to acquire and perform all the duty's of his station, and to gain all the knowledge a Soldier ought to possess, so far as the General can consistently shew attention to a young Field Officer, so far I hope he will experience your superintendency and profit by your lessons and example.

Samuel Chase to Horatio Gates, Philadelphia, 13 June 1776

Colonel Allen I know. His Vivacity & Spirit will be useful if properly directed. He will never turn his back on the Enemy.

Fisher Ames

Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Boston, 2 December 1788

Ames . . . is strictly federal, an honorable man & in the estimation of his friends wants nothing but age and experience to render him a very able supporter of his country's rights.

"Jeroboam," *Boston Herald of Freedom*, 18 December 1788

Mr. Ames, we with pleasure acknowledge, is a man of agreeable, amiable manners; is possessed of abilities and information; and in time, we doubt not, will make a good legislator.

Boston Independent Chronicle, 18 December 1788

A correspondent observes, that some of us know Fisher Ames, Esq., as a pretty Speaker . . .

Benjamin Lincoln to George Washington, Boston, 20 December 1788

Mr. Ames is probably chosen for [Congress from] this district. He was an active member in our Convention and has always distinguished himself as an honest good man.

Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Boston, 21 December 1788

. . . Ames—who is strictly Federal, an honorable man and, in the estimation of his friends, wants nothing but age and experience to render him a very able supporter of his country's rights.

Tristram Lowther to James Iredell, New York, 9 May 1789

The members [of Congress] all appear to be very able men, particularly a Mr. Ames, from Massachusetts, who, notwithstanding he is a very young man, delivers his sentiments with the greatest ease and propriety, and in the most elegant language of any man in the House.

Fisher Ames to George R. Minot, New York, 27 May 1789

A man who feels too much, which you justly observe, a public man should not, will represent things in a stronger manner than he feels them. The habit of feeling strongly produces that of expressing strongly, and I am not sure that strong expressions, *e converso*,* do not produce strong feelings. All this is my case. With a warm heart, and an hot head, I often dupe my friends and myself. I felt chagrined at the yawning listlessness of many here, in regard to the great objects of government; their liableness to the impression of arguments *ad populum*;** their State prejudices; their overrefining spirit in relation to trifles; their attachment to some very distressing formalities in doing business, and which will be a curse to all despatch and spirit in transacting it. I compared these with the idea I had brought here, of demi-gods and Roman senators, or at least, of the first [Continental] Congress.

I am less ambitious, and, upon my word, less distinguished than you think me. I am as silent as I can possibly be, and am not in a hurry to take consequence. I shall certainly have as much as I deserve, and if I should get more, I should soon lose it. I am resolved to apply closely to the

necessary means of knowledge, as I well know it is the only means of acquiring reputation. I have scarcely opened my mouth in the House these ten days, and if my restraining grace should hold out against the temptations I am exposed to, my judgment will lead me to decline any part in the tedious frivolity of the daily business. We are not in haste, or at least, have not learned to be in a hurry to advantage. I think it is the most dilatory assembly in the universe. Which do you most admire at this moment, my candor or my prudence? The latter is not offended by confiding the remark to you, and truth will prove the former clear. Thus endeth the first lesson. Amen.

*In return.

**Directed to the people, for popular consumption.

Fisher Ames to George R. Minot, New York, 29 May 1789

I enlarge, in that, upon my proneness to represent things too strongly. . . .

You may be assured that I was not betrayed into any warmth in the argument in the House [of Representatives], that I know of. There are certain bounds which my zeal arrives at, almost instantly. The habit of being in public assemblies has imposed sufficient restraint on my mind, and I seldom pass those bounds. You know what they are. You know my manner of reasoning in public, and I am sensible that the excess of that zeal would very much lessen me. Your caution is very necessary, however; for if I do not offend, it is a frailty to which I am constantly liable. I say many words, you see, about it.

William Tudor to John Adams, Boston, 9 July 1789

Mr. Ames & Mr. Minot are two excellent young Men, & very capable of serving their Country, in different Walks.

Letter from New York to Alexandria, Va., Boston *Herald of Freedom*, 28 July 1789

I congratulate you on the shining abilities, of your countrymen, Mr. AMES, who, though a very young man, is *second* only to the great MADISON—In oratorical powers he perhaps exceeds him—What I admire him for is the liberality of his politicks, and that freedom from local interests, or party views, which, it was apprehended, would not actuate every member of the National Assembly. But as yet, no local prejudice has been discovered at all.

Thomas B. Wait to George Thatcher, Biddeford, Maine, 9 August 1789

Mr. Ames I conceive to be an amiable man and he is undoubtedly a great man. Do tell the truth, my expectations from him are very great. God grant that I may not be disappointed. You will be pleased to understand that my . . . expectations are wholly of a publick nature—I never saw Mr. Ames nor is it probable that he will ever so much as hear of me.

Abigail Adams to Cotton Tufts, New York, 1 September 1789

Mr. Ames does credit to our State [in the U.S. Senate].

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 5 June 1790

Even Ames, who succeeded to [Rufus] King as the temporary Idol of Massachusetts, & whose praises were so much trumpeted forth in the last session [of Congress], seems to be losing part of his Votaries.

Bossinger Foster, Jr., to Andrew Craigie, Boston, 29 August 1790

In every question of importance that has been discussed in Congress & in which Mr. Ames has taken a part he appears to have discovered a laudable independence of sentiment the features of an improved understanding & strong indications of a rising Character.

Fisher Ames to Thomas Dwight, 12 December 1790

Old Mr. Edes's paper accused me of keeping aristocratic company in New York. I obey the admonition of my constituent. Instead of Sedgwick, Benson, and other bad company, I now lodge with Gerry, Ashe, Sevier, and Parker. Birds of a feather.

Walter Jones to James Madison, Kinsdale, Va., 10 January 1794

This Mr. Ames manifests in his debates Such full-blown arrogance & vanity, as makes him Signally exceptionable in the Eye of republican Decorum.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 9 November 1794

Every Body is anxious about Mr. Ames's Election and impatient to know the Decision: if he falls it will only be to rise the higher and the faster, for certainly a Man who has had so great a share in producing the present Prosperity of this Country cannot at his years be neglected. The Supposition is too dishonourable both to Government and People. Both must be neither generous nor even selfish with common sense, to overlook so useful and honourable an Instrument, of their own fame and their own good. To choose in his Place at such a time as this a Man who has Opposed and Obstructed that very Prosperity, and who would probably very often put it to a Hazard as far as his Vote would go, would be Such a Proof of Levity, Wantonness and Folly as I shall not believe till it is proved.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 January 1795

. . . on the opposite side Ames & Murry. But Ames alone was equal to an Hoste, his speech was of great length taking up six columns of the News paper.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 30 November 1795

Mr. Ames, I am sorry to inform You is in a very poor state of Health. He had a Billious fever in the summer which reduced him very low. He has been out of spirits occasioned by his ill health, and thinks he Cannot go to Congress. His absence will be a loss indeed, and the more So as Mr. [Samuel] Dexter lost his Election.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 30 April 1796*

Mr. Ames, the day before Yesterday in his feeble State, Scarcely able to stand upon his Legs and with much difficulty finding Breath to utter his Periods, made one of the best Speeches he ever produced to the most crowded Audience ever assembled—He was attended to with a silence and Interest never before known and he made an Impression that terrified the hardiest and will never be forgotten. Judge [James] Iredel and I happened to sit together—our feelings beat in Unison—My God! How great he is says Iredel? He is delightful Said I—presently gracious God! Says Iredel “how great he has been”? He has been noble, said I.—after some time Iredel breaks out Bless my stars I never heard any thing so great since I was born! It is divine Said I—and thus We went on with our Interjections not to say Tears till the End—Tears enough were shed—not a dry Eye I believe in the House, except Some of the Jack Asses who had occasioned the Necessity of the oratory—These attempted to laugh—but their Vissages grinn’d horrible ghastly smiles—They smiled like Foulon’s son in Law when they made him kiss his Father’s dead and bleeding Head.** Perhaps the Speech may not read as well—The situation of the Man excited Compassion and interested all Hearts in his favour. The Ladies wished his soul had a better Body.

*Ames spoke in the House of Representatives on April 28, 1796 defending the Jay Treaty.

**Joseph Francois Foulon was seized and killed by a Parisian mob on July 22, 1789. His severed head was placed on a pike. His son-in-law was seized by the same mob and forced to kiss the bloody head before he also was killed.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Philadelphia, 20 May 1796

Mr. Ames, tho in so low and weak a state, as not to have been able to speak once through the Session, was determined to devote his Life to the cause, and 2 Days before the vote was taken in Congress, rose and made, as is universally agreed, one of the ablest and most eloquent speeches ever deliverd in that House, to the most crowded Audience. Scarcely able to support himself he interested all hearts in his favour, and left an impression waterd with the Tears of his audience, tho not washed out, for it sunk too Deep. Scarcely were they restrained by the Rules of the House, from bursting forth what their full Hearts felt. Yet during the Time he was speaking near two Hours, Your Father who was present, and from whom I received the account, says that the lost perfect Silence reigned the Buz of a fly, might have been heard, such was the attention given.

Dr. [Joseph] Priestly too was present, and declared that tho he had heard a Chatham [William Pitt], and the first orators in G.B., he never heIspeach which exceeded this or a superiour Orator. Is the Speach may not read with So much interest. The feelings of the people were wrought up to a crisiss, and eloquence then is irresistable. Even [William Branch] Giles said, he forgot on which Side of the Question he was, and the Genevian [Albert Gallatin], pronounced him the only Orator in the House. I will send You the speach. it is to be printed in a pamphlet as soon as I can obtain it.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 June 1796

Two Days before the vote was taken, Mr. Ames whose Health has been so much on the Decline, as to oblige him to Silence During the whole session was finally compeld by the importance of the Subject, to hazard his Life: inlly Eloquent speach, which did honour both to his Head and his Heart, it was Heard with Silent attention, by a most crowded Audience. It flowed like a stream fed by an abundant spring, and produced the effect which Lord Bolinbrook says true Eloquence Does. It gives a Nobler superiority than power which every Dunce may use, or fraud that every Knave may employ. It contrasted with peculiar advantage with some of the Sophistical Harangues which

Sprouted forth like frothy water on some Gaudy Day, from some of the prateing Members of the opposition. Ames, like LIatham in his last speach, by his particular situation interested all Hearts in his favour, They lookt upon him as a Man Sacrificeing his last Breath, in support of the honour, Faith and dignity of his Country. So great was the power of his plain and Manly eloquence & Pathos, that he melted his audience into Tears, Io American can read the speach without feeling the passions it was designed to move, and the Spirit it was designed to raise. Even Giles confessed, that whilst he was listning to it he forgot the Side he had espoused & the cause he had advocated.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 17 December 1805

You have seen in the papers the choice of mr Ames as President of Harverd colledge. It was a surprize to every one, as he had never been mentiond; it is not thought, that he will accept. he will make a good president if he could be persuaded to take the Chair.*

*Due to ill health, Ames declined to accept the appointment of president of Harvard.

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 9 January 1806

Mr. Ames, I very much fear will not accept the appointment; some of his Friends flatterd themselves that he would, as the Nomination was universally approved, but last week he fell down, either in an apoplectic or an Epileptick fit. He has recoverd his senses again: but it will no doubt affect his spirits, and be considerd by him as an objection to entering upon So arduous an office—

John Quincy Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Washington, 20 January 1806

I must lament the prospect of losing Mr. Ames as President, and fear it will be very difficult for the College Government to make another choice so universally acceptable.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, September 1807

Ames miscarried. He was obnoxious to one party and, by placing all his hopes on Hamilton, lost the confidence of the soundest portion of the other party and is now dying, as I fear, under the gloomy feelings of his disappointments.

John Adams: To the *Boston Patriot*, Quincy, Mass., 29 May 1809

The morning after my inauguration, Mr. Fisher Ames made me a visit, to take leave. His period in Congress had expired, and the delicacy of his health, the despondency of his disposition, and despair of a re-election from the increase of the opposite party in his district, had induced him to decline to stand a candidate. I was no longer to have the assistance of his counsel and eloquence, though Mr. Hamilton continued to enjoy both till his death.

John Adams to Joseph Ward, Quincy, Mass., 14 November 1809

Poor Mr. Ames! I loved him living, and tenderly regard his memory since his decease. He had brilliant talents, amiable dispositions, and virtuous principles and habits. His mind, nevertheless, always appeared to me to be sicklied over with a pale cast of thought, unfavorable to every man who had been active in the Revolution, and very charitable to all who had been active in the opposition to it, or neutral or lukewarm in the course of it. I attributed this bias to several causes. 1.

His father and his mother, if I remember right, were both of this character. I may be mistaken in this; but, having been personally acquainted with both, this is the impression that remains upon my mind. 2. He married a daughter of Col. Worthington, who was never a Whig, but stood high in the esteem of all the ministerial people, and all their connexions and friends. This alliance recommended him to all that kind of men in all the states in the Union. 3. To my certain knowledge he was early adopted by that circle in Boston, and was expressly set up and cried up as a rival to Jarvis, and to prevent him from being sent to Congress in 1789; and to oppose Hancock and Adams in the government of Massachusetts. 4. All these causes contributed to endear him to Hamilton and Hamilton to him; for Hamilton owed his first rise, his continued support, and all his panegyrics, to this class of people and the speculators. Hamilton led him to support all his crude notions of finance, a science which neither of them ever understood. 5. The narrow circle in which Mr. Ames moved all his lifetime never afforded him an opportunity to know much of the world or the general character of mankind; and to speak impartial truth, he never was remarkable for sagacity or profound judgment. His fancy was the most thinking faculty of his mind, and his eloquence his most eminent talent. Thus circumstanced, he naturally and easily imbibed all that admiration, esteem, love, and almost devotion to England; all that hatred and horror of France, and all that contempt of his own countrymen which appear in his works, and which was common to him and all his connexions, and which you know was so conspicuous in Hutchinson, the Olivers, Tim Ruggles, and all the Tories of their time.

Joseph Ward to John Adams, Boston, 27 November 1809

I join, Sir, feelingly, with your lamentations for *Ames*. I admire your generous candor, in finding apologies for his errors. I believe Sir, you have assigned the causes of his deviations; and circumstanced as he was, few men would have had independence enough to have preserved a perpendicular position.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 27 December 1810

The pretty little warbling bird, Fisher Ames, sang of the *Dangers of American Liberty*. I had preached in "The Defence" and the "Discourses of Davila" and held up in a thousand mirrors all those dangers and more, twenty years before him. Ames had got my ideas and examples by heart. There was not a man in the world who read my books with more ardor or expressed so often an admiration of them. But Ames's misfortune was that the sordid avarice which he imputes to the whole body of the American people belongs chiefly if not exclusively to his own friends, The Aristocrats, or rather, The Oligarchs, who now rule the Federal Party.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 10 January 1811

I thank you for your son's pamphlet. Much as I loathe political discussions of all kinds, I was induced by your request and my great respect for the genius of its author to read it. I thank you for the pleasure I derived from it. It is a masterly performance, overflowing with argument and eloquence. He places Mr. Ames where he ought to have stood in the meridian of his political glory. He seems to have died if not *of*, certainly *with*, the same kind of monarchical mania which raged with so much violence in the year 1776 as to carry off many of our citizens to Nova Scotia, Canada, and other parts of the British empire.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., April 1812

Our dear Countrymen, “the most enlightened People upon Earth” you know; think themselves Masters of the Drama of Europe and its Actors and Actresses. Good Souls! They are as ignorant as Fisher Ames. How that Warbling Bob O’Lincoln affirms and denies, applauds and denounces upon Subjects of which he knew no more than the Master of his Piggery! Nor than one of his Old Apple Trees that he had Sense enough to know, would not bear transplanting from Dedham to Cambridge Common.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 3 September 1816

The Death of Mr. Ames excited a General Regret. His long Consumption, his amiable Character and respectable Talents had attracted a general Interest, and his Death a general Mourning. His Party made the most of it, by Processions, Orations and a Mock Funeral. And Why? To glorify the Torys, to abash the Whiggs, and maintain the Reputation of Funds, Banks and Speculation. And all this was done in honour of that insignificant Boy, by People who have let a Dana, a Gerry and a Dexter go to their Graves without Notice.

James Kent: Journal to His Son, 30 April 1833

He [Egbert Benson in 1833] said that Fisher Ames was the most perfect Man he ever knew, & that he had the Purity & Wisdom of a Seraph.

Nathaniel Ames

Fisher Ames to Timothy Dwight, 12 November 1798

. . . a political Quixote. . . .

John Armstrong, Jr.

John Armstrong to Horatio Gates, New York, 7 April 1789

The Morris junto were the real authors of the opposition given me. By refusing to be their Tool, I have made myself their enemy. But I have done with them & politics too—perhaps forever. My present views are averse from any public employment and like yours rec’d themselves only to domestic use. My motives for this grow out of many speculative opinions concerning the tendency of the New Govt., the character etc. of the men who will administer it—the Temper of the People etc. etc.

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 19 August 1798

I was glad to meet General Armstrong. His character was truly republican. Because of his intelligence, wit, grace and pleasantness, all combined, he is held in universal esteem. He is, because

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of the strength and beauty of his style, one of the best writers in this country. His wife, nee Livingston, is by her virtue and pleasantness, worthy of her husband.

Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 9 August 1800

There is no doubt that some honest Jacobin will be appointed to succeed Lawrence [as U.S. Senator]. Our Legislature now consists of the very essence of Jacobinism. It is not unlikely that Armstrong will be appointed, who being weary of waiting for federal honors has at length declared that he has discovered that he has long worn his political coat wrong side out, and that he now wears the right side out. He has lately published some of the most virulent and Jacobinical pieces against the administration of the government and particularly against General Washington, Hamilton, Jay, Gouverneur Morris, &c., that have made their appearance for a long time. I never have believed and I never shall believe, after his attempt to create a mutiny in the army at the close of the Revolutionary war [at Newburgh], that he has a heart fit to be trusted with any important interests of his country. I allude to his celebrated address to the Soldiers.

William Plumer Memorandum, 15 March 1806

Mr. Clinton said he had been well acquainted with John Armstrong, our minister at France, from his childhood. That he believed him an honest man. That in the revolutionary army, & since the peace, in the States of Pennsylvania & New York he had held many honorable and highly important offices—That he had discharged the duties of them with fidelity—That his reputation as an honest man was unblemished. That he had no avarice—that money was never an object with him. That while he was Governor of New York he appointed Mr. Armstrong as a senator of the United States to supply a vacancy. That he did this altho' Armstrong married the sister of Chancellor Livingston—a family with whom he (Mr. Clinton) was not on very friendly terms.

William Plumer Memorandum, 17 March 1806

He is a man of considerable genius—a good scholar & an eloquent writer. But not a man of business—not a practical man. I am strongly induced to believe that his misconduct in this case proceeded more from the wickedness of the heart than the error of the head.

John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Quincy, Mass., 16 January 1813

I very much fear, that the changes in the War and Navy departments are not much for the better. Armstrong has the Advantage of a military Reputation: but it is not doubtful, whether he has that patient and laborious Application to Business and Study which that Office requires. I have heard that his Sight is defective. He ought to be able to read, night and day.

Thomas Jefferson to John Wayles Eppes, Monticello, 9 September 1814

Armstrong . . . is presumptuous, obstinate, and injudicious.

John Armstrong, Sr.

John Adams to Samuel Osgood, 15 November 1775

I found an Interest making in private Circles in Favor of Colonel Armstrong of Pennsylvania [for promotion to general], a Gentleman of Character, and Experience in War, a Presbyterian in Religion, whose Name runs high for Piety, Virtue and Valor.

Benedict Arnold

Charles Carroll of Carrollton to Charles Carroll of Annapolis, Montreal, 30 April 1776

We were received very politely by Gen. Arnold, who now commands at this place: he came to the Shore to receive us as we landed, walked with us up to his house under the discharge of the cannon of the castle: a very polite, though not a numerous company consisting of ladies and gentlemen supped with us at the General's: in short the reception we met with gives me a very favorable opinion of Arnold's good taste & politeness: an officer bred up at Versailles could not have behaved with more delicacy, ease, and good breeding.

I have had a full account from General Arnold of his march from Cambridge to Boston: it does him great honor, and the manner of telling it almost as much: believe me, if this war continues, and Arnold should not be taken off pretty early, he will turn out a great man: he has great vivacity, perseverance, resources, & intrepidity, and a cool judgment he has truly, what was said of Marlborough a cool head & warm heart—he is still lame, but his lameness does not prevent him from stirring about, and he may in time get the better of it entirely—what think you of a man, who with 500 beaten & disheartened troops confined a victorious garrison consisting of 1500 men, & to confine them was obliged to divide his small body over an circuit of 15 miles.

Richard Henry Lee to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 3 November 1776

By every account from lake Champlain we had reason to think ourselves in no danger on that water for this Campaign. Nor did Gen. Arnold seem to apprehend any until he was defeated by an enemy four times as strong as himself. This Officer, fiery, hot and impetuous, but without discretion, never thought of informing himself how the enemy went on, and he had no idea of retiring when he saw them coming, tho so much superior to his force!

John Adams to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 9 May 1777

The Utility of Medals has ever been impressed Strongly upon my Mind. Pride, Ambition and indeed what a Philosopher would call Vanity, is the Strongest Passion in human Nature, and next to Religion, the most operative Motive to great Actions. Religion, or if the fine Gentlemen please, Superstition and Enthusiasm, is the greatest Incentive and wherever it has prevailed, has never failed to produce Heroism. If our N. Englandmen were alone, and could have their own way, a great deal of this would appear, But in their present Situation, I fear We have little to expect from this Principle, more than the Performance of the People in the Camp. We ought to avail our selves

then of even the Vanity of Men. For my own Part I wish We would make a Beginning, by Striking a Medal, with a Platone firing at General Arnold, on Horseback, His Horse falling dead under him, and He deliberately disentangling his feet from the Stirrups and taking his Pistolls out of his Holsters, before his Retreat. On the Reverse, He should be mounted on a Fresh Horse, receiving another Discharge of Musquetry, with a Wound in the Neck of his Horse. This Picture alone, which as I am informed is true History, if Arnold did not unfortunately belong to Connecticut, would be sufficient to make his Fortune for Life. I believe there have been few such Scenes in the world.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, 22 May 1777

I spent last Evening at the War-Office, with General Arnold. . . . He has been basely slandered and libelled. The Regulars say, “he fought like Julius Caesar.”

De Lisle (William Livingston), *New Jersey Gazette*, 31 December 1777

Arnold’s character is already known in Europe. He is said to possess what we call, in our country, the “rage militaire.”* His countrymen accuse him of too much impetuosity. This may be the case in the cabinet; but I do not think he is too impetuous in the field.

*Intense enthusiasm for military things.

Nathanael Greene to John Cadwalader, Fredericksburg, N.Y., 10 November 1778

I am told General Arnold is become very unpopular among you owing to his associating too much with the Tories. Pray how is the fact? At this distance it is difficult to get at the truth. I should be sorry to hear that he had done any thing to forfeit the good opinion of the truly deserving. But all men have their Friends and Enemies.

John Cadwalader to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 5 December 1778

Gen. Arnold is become very unpopular [among the] men in power in Congress, and among those of this state in general—Every Gentleman, every man who has a liberal way of thinking highly approve his conduct—He has been civil to every gentleman who has taken the oath, intimate with none—The Ladies, as well those who have *taken an active part* (as our lowlived fellows will call it) as those who are good approved whigs, have been visited and treated with the greatest civilities—These are charges too absurd to deserve a serious answer—They may serve the purposes of Party or Faction, but can never injure the character of a man to whom his Country is so much indebted.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

I lodges three weeks in the same family with this man in Philadelphia in the spring of 1777. His person was low but well made, and his face handsome. His conversation was uninteresting and sometimes indelicate. His language was ungrammatical and his pronunciation vulgar. I once heard him say “his courage was acquired, and that he was a coward till he was 15 years of age.” His character in his native State, Connecticut, was never respectable, and hence its vote alone was withheld from him when he was created a general by the Congress of the United States. His public vices are recorded in the printed histories of the American Revolution.

Robert R. Livingston to George Washington, Trenton, N.J., 22 June 1780

I might presume so far I should beg leave to submit it to your Excellency whether this post might not be most safely confided to General Arnold whose courage is undoubted—who is the favourite of our militia, & who will agree perfectly with our Governor.

Benedict Arnold to George Washington, On Board the *Vulture*, 25 September 1780

The Heart which is Conscious of its Own rectitude cannot attempt to palliate a Step, which the World may Censure as wrong; I have ever acted from a Principle of Love to my Country, since the Commencement of the present unhappy Contest between Great Britain and the Colonies. The same principle of Love to my Country Actuates my present Conduct, however it may appear Inconsistent to the World; who very Seldom Judge right of any Man's Actions.

Thomas Paine, "The Crisis Extraordinary," 4 October 1780

The true character of Arnold is that of a desperado. His whole life has been a life of jobs; and where either plunder or profit was the object, no danger deterred, no principle restrained him. In his person he was smart and active, somewhat diminutive, weak in his capacities and trifling in his conversation; and though gallant in the field, was defective in the talents necessary for command.

Virginia Delegates to Congress to Governor Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 5 October 1780

Arnold has wrote him [George Washington] a letter dated on Board the *Vulture* Sloop imploring his interposition in favor of his Wife whom he has left behind. His Papers have been seized in this City where he some time ago resided and lay open several Scene of Villainy transacted in the Commercial way while he had the Command here between him and other Miscreants, and have laid a train perhaps for further discoveries. Quid non mortalia pectora cogis Auri Sacra fames? Every Mark of horror and resentment has been expressed by the Army at such atrocious and Complicated Villainy, and the Mob in this City have burnt the traitor in Effigy after Exposing it through the streets with a long purse in one hand and a Mask in the other and labels descriptive of the Character thus consigned to public infamy and odium. Thus with ignominy have faded the laurels of a hero, and the appellation of Arnold must be everlastingly changed for one of the Blackest infamy.

*Virgil, *Aeneid* 3, 56–57: "What lengths is the heart of man driven to by this cursed craving for gold!"

Benedict Arnold to the Inhabitants of America, New York, 7 October 1780

. . . With the highest satisfaction I bear testimony to my old Fellow Soldiers and Citizens, that I find solid Ground to rely upon the Clemency of our Sovereign, and abundant Conviction that it is the generous Intention of Great Britain, not only to have the Rights and privileges of the Colonies unimpaired, together with their perpetual exemption from taxation, but to superadd such further benefits as may consist with the Common prosperity of the Empire. In short, I fought for much less than the Parent Country is as willing to grant to her Colonies, as they can be to receive or enjoy.

Some may think I continued in the struggle of those unhappy days too long, and others that I quitted it too soon. To the first I reply, that I did not see with their Eyes, nor perhaps had so

favorable a situation to look from, and that to one Common Master I am willing to stand or fall. In behalf of the Candid among the latter, some of whom I believe serve blindly but honestly in the Ranks I have left, I pray God to give them all the lights requisite to their Own Safety before it is too late; and with respect to that kind of Censurers whose Enmity to me Originates in their hatred to the Principles, by which I am now led to devote my life to the Reunion of the British Empire, as the best and only means to dry up the streams of misery that have deluged this country, they may be assured that, Conscious of the Rectitude of my Intentions, I shall treat their Malice and Calumnies with Contempt and neglect.

James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, Philadelphia, 10 October 1780

André was hung as a spy on the 2d. inst. [Sir Henry] Clinton made a frivolous attempt to save him by pleading the passport granted by Arnold. He submitted to his fate in a manner that showed him to be worthy of a better one. His coadjutor [Joshua Hett] Smith will soon follow him. The Hero of the Plot [i.e., Arnold] although he may for the present escape an ignominious death must lead an ignominious life which if any of his feelings remain will be a sorer punishment. It is *said* that he is to be made a Brigadier and employed in some predatory expedition against the Spaniards in which he may gratify his thirst for gold. It is said with more probability that his baseness in universally despised by those who have taken advantage of it, and that some degree of resentment is mixed with their contempt on account of the loss of their darling officer to which he was accessory.

Charles Thomson to John Jay, Philadelphia, 12 October 1780

To the honor of the American army Arnold is the first and I believe the only American officer Who has during this war entered into a conspiracy to betray his country. You know the character of the Man, he was brave but avaricious, fond of parade and not very scrupulous about the Means of acquiring Money to defray the expenses of it.

Nathanael Greene to Joseph Webb, West Point, N.Y., 15 October 1780

Are you not mortified as a New Englander, and as a Connecticut man, at the late shameful conduct of Arnold? I feel myself hurt in three capacities: as an American, as a New England Man, and as a General Officer of the American Army.

Was there ever such a fall since the fall of Lucifer? Once the Idol of America; but now the object of its horror and detestation. I thought he had been Ambitious, but I find I mistook his character. Avarice is his leading passion; and meanness his greatest crime. Such acts of little dirty villainy as he has been guilty of here, were they to be related would astonish you. For the honor of human Nature; as well as for the honor of America, I wish I could draw a veil over the horrid scene.

Poor America thou wast to have been the sacrifice. How base the heart that can involve the ruin of Millions to gratify its own pride.

John Adams to Edmund Jenings, Amsterdam, 1 December 1780

Arnold's Desertion is no loss to Us nor Gain to our Enemies. I am shocked and grieved however, as well as You, that such an Example should be exhibited to the World, of so much Bravery and so much Baseness, in the Character of a Native of America. He had forfeited the Esteem of

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his Country: he had incurred her Displeasure and her Censure, and then he sold himself to her Enemy, wounded, maimed and mutilated as he is. Much good may do them. I wish to God, that every such Plunderer, would go over after him. I expect that several others will. We shall be purified and strengthened by it.

John Sullivan to John Langdon, Philadelphia, 4 December 1780

Arnold has proved himself what I ever knew him.

Benjamin Franklin to Robert R. Livingston, Passy, France, 4 March 1782

Generals Cornwallis & Arnold are both arrived in England. It is reported that the former in all his Conversations discourages the Prosecution of the War in America; if so he will of Course be out of favor. We hear much of Audiences given the latter, and of his being present at Councils. He seems to mix as naturally with that polluted Court as Pitch with Tar. There is no Being in Nature too base for them to associate with, provided it may be thought capable of serving their Purposes.

John Jay to Silas Deane, Chaillot near Paris, 23 February 1784

I was told by more than one, on whose information I thought I could rely, that you received visits from, and was on terms of familiarity with General Arnold. Every American who gives his hand to that man, in my opinion, pollutes it.

Peleg Arnold

Hugh Williamson to James Iredell, New York, 23 August 1788

By Letters from sundry Correspondents it appears that North Carolina has at length thrown herself out of the Union, but she happily is not alone; The large upright and respectable State of Rhode Island is her associate. This circumstance however does not, I hope, render it necessary that the Delegates from NC should profess a particular affection for the Delegates from R.I. That State was some days ago represented by a Mr Arnold who keeps a little Tavern 10 miles out of Providence & a Mr Hazard the illiterate quondam Skipper of a small Coasting Vessel & now the very leader of the Know Ye Justices who officiates at County Courts & receives small Fees not as a Lawyer but Agent for Suitors. These two respectable Delegates with the innate Desire of promoting a bad measure lately voted on several Questions respecting the Organisation of the new Govt. in order to fix it in New York, a Corner of the Union.

Joshua Atherton

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 22 February 1788

[In the New Hampshire ratifying convention] Mr. Atherton, the leader of the opposition rose, and in a speech of more than an hour recapitulated every objection that he could invent against the Constitution. He observed that *confederation* was derived from the Latin word *foedus*; and that *consolidation* was a metaphorical expression borrowed from the operations of chemistry; these were two of his most ingenious ideas, and upon the whole I think he may candidly be pronounced a miserable speaker, and a worse reasoner.

Samuel Tenney to Nicholas Gilman, Exeter, N.H., 12 March 1788

[Speaking of the Antifederalist speakers in the New Hampshire Convention.] But the *Bull-dog* of the flock, or rather of the *herd* was a *poor puppy* of an *Atherton*. He had with infinite study stuff'd his pericranium with all the objections against the constitution that have been published between the St. Croix & St. Mary's. These, with as much labor, he whined out; & (I am ready to believe) did not know when they were complete obviated. So little was he esteem'd by those of his own party that it was no uncommon thing for many of them to leave the house in disgust when he commenced a wretched harangue.

Benjamin Austin

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 11 April 1794

Austin, I need not say what. He has the Mechanick Interest, and the art of making them believe that he has some Brains.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 22 April 1794

The Election of Mr. Austin is no Way unexpected to me. The Mechanicks who think he has Brains, in my Opinion are not wholly mistaken. I wish he had more liberal Connections and better informed Advisers. I wish he was a more Sincere Inquirer after Truth less under the Influence of Prejudices and less disposed to flatter the Prepossessions of others.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 April 1796

Our sage Bostonians in their Zeal for changing their Governour permitted themselves to be Duped by the Smugling party, and that Miserable disgrace to freemen, that poor Spirited wretch Honestus mounted into Senate, to the exclusion of the best Member in Boston J. Coffin Jones.

John Avery

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 20 November 1780

[Avery's] Connections have made him a Necessary Man. He is, I confess, one whom I have esteemed for his Honesty and easy good Humor.

William Aylet

Roger Sherman to Joseph Trumbull, Philadelphia, 2 April 1777

I suppose the President has informed you what was done in Virginia relative to the purchase of Flour & Indian Corn. William Aylet Esqr Deputy Commissary General (who is a very honest discreet man) is directed to purchase & store Sufficient quantities of those articles & have them ready to deliver to your order.

William Aylet Esqr Deputy Commissary General (who is a very honest discreet man) is directed to purchase & store Sufficient quantities of those articles & have them ready to deliver to your order. The highest price he had given for corn when he wrote was half a Dollar per Bushel. Much depends upon your employing none but persons of strict Integrity, and great prudence & discretion in your department.