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Silas Talbot

Journals of Congress, 11 October 1777

That Captain Silas Talbot of the State of Rhode Island be promoted to the Rank and have the Pay of Major in the Army of the United States, in Consideration of his Merit and Services in, a spirited Attempt to set Fire to a Man of War, supposed to be the Asia in the North River last Year, and that he be recommended to General Washington for Employment agreeable to his Rank.

That Captain Silas Talbot make an Estimate of the Expence and Loss incurred by him in that Attempt to destroy the said Ship of War, to be laid before the Treasury Board for their consideration.

Journals of Congress, 14 November 1778

The Marine Committee, to whom was referred the letter from Major Silas Talbot, brought in a report; Whereupon,

Resolved, That Congress have a high sense of the bravery and good conduct of Major Silas Talbot, of the State of Rhode Island, and the officers and men under his command, in boarding and taking the armed schooner Pigot of eight twelve pounders and forty five men, in the east passage between Rhode Island and the main; and that he, as a reward of merit and for the encouragement of a spirit of enterprize, be presented with the commission of lieutenant colonel in the army of the United States.

Henry Laurens to Silas Talbot, 17 November 1778

I feel a very high degree of pleasure in obeying the Orders of Congress by transmitting an Act of the 14th Instant for expressing the sense of the House of the bravery and good conduct of yourself and of the Officers and Men under your Command in taking the Armed Schooner Pigot, and for granting you a Commission of Lieutenant Colonel in the Army of the United States in acknowledgment of your Merit. You will receive Sir within the present inclosure the Commission annexed to the Act, and will be pleased to signify to your Officers and Men the applause due to them on this occasion.

Henry Marchant to Silas Talbot, Philadelphia, 9 August 1779

I recd. your agreeable Favor of the 13th of July, inclosing a Letter for the President; which I thought proper to deliver him altho' one very similar to it had been enclosed from Genl. Gates being one you had wrote to Him. Your Exploits keep Congress constantly in remembrance of you. I have seen in others as well as felt in myself a singular Pleasure in the frequent mention of your Name. Your Letters were referred to the Marine Comee—And it is not want of Inclination that you have not a Command given to You either in the Land or Sea Service.* All the Land Forces are under certain Commanders which cannot with propriety be removed. We cannot create Men. Nor will Our Circumstances permit us to build Ships for those Captains in the Navy who hang on Us for Command who are already in Our Pay, & who for want of Ships are eating the Bread of Idleness much against their own as well as Our Inclination. The Marine Comee. will however pay due Consideration to Your Letters & wishing as they do, to avail Themselves of Your Activity, Spirit, Bravery and Prudence, will do it, if in their Power. But I would not wish you to be unmindful

of what has been done. Your Promotions have been rapid, Had you continued in a steady Command of Men you might perhaps have been only a Captn. Still. Congress could not without manifest Injury to Rule & Order, promote You & at the same Time give you immediate Command. Nor would You have had those Opportunities for Enterprize by which You have so much honored yourself & in some good Measure added to your Fortune; if You had been in steady Command at Camp.

Every Thing has been done for You proper for me to Ask, or Congress to grant, considering the Situation of our Affairs. Upon this last Occasion I did not fail to do myself the Pleasure of speaking to your Merits upon the Floor of Congress, nor of interesting myself in your Favour with the Marine Comee. where I can again assure you, you have no need of Advocates—Nor of any Thing but want of Men or Ships to meet with all the Gratification you could wish for. I would not wish to stand in your way, or dissuade you from a Pursuit of your Real Interest & Honor by an Acceptance of Private Employ—& quitting your Expectations in the Continental Road to Honor & Fortune.

But I would wish you well to Consider, before you quit a Service you have been honorably advanced in, & in which you still stand most Fair for further Accessions of Glory & Honor, and perhaps Fortune too. Genl. Gates is a Father to the Brave—take his Advice. I wish you to follow his Fortune.

*In his letters to Congress delivered by Gates and Marchant, Lt. Col. Talbot had sought a naval commission and a suitable ship to command. While in temporary command of the 12gun armed sloop Argo, Talbot had led several successful cruises climaxed by the recent capture of the 14-gun privateer brig King George, commanded by the notorious Rhode Island loyalist Stanton Hazard. The previous year he had led the boarding party that captured H.M. Schooner Pigot. As a result of these achievements, Congress on September 17 appointed Talbot a captain in the navy and directed the Marine Committee to find him a more suitable ship, but efforts to do so failed and Talbot returned to the command of the Argo, in which he remained even after it was returned to private ownership in 1780.

John Jay to Silas Talbot, Philadelphia, 18 September 1779

The bravery & spirit of Enterprise You have on frequent Occasions displayed in the Service of your Country justly entitle You to the honor done You by the enclosed Act of Congress of the 17th Instant. I am persuaded You will consider it as an additional Motive to continue those Exertions from which you have derived Reputation & your Country received Benefit.

Marine Committee to the Eastern Navy Board, 12 October 1779

We enclose you a Resolve of Congress of the 17th Ultimo appointing Colonel Silas Talbot a Captain in the Navy of the United States, and we have determined that should you purchase the Thorne he shall command her.

John Jay to Benjamin Franklin, Madrid, 9 July 1781

You will also find herewith enclosed a copy of a letter I have received from Silas Talbot, a prisoner at Plymouth, requesting aid.

This gentleman gives a true description of himself. He has on various occasions acted like a very brave and enterprising officer, and the journals of Congress contain ample evidence of it. . . . He has served his country zealously, and has a right to her care; gratitude as well as policy dictates it.

Benjamin Stoddert to Alexander Hamilton, Navy Department, 3 May 1799

I trouble you with this view of the Navy prospects in the hope that you will influence Talbot to serve. He is a man of too much merit to be lost to the service; & I see not how it is possible to retain him on his own terms without losing Truxtun—but what is of more consequence, without violating principles, to do injustice to Truxtun.

Benjamin Tallmadge

Joseph Webb to Samuel Blachley Webb, Wethersfield, Conn., 16 May 1783

I know Tallmadge has much low cunning. He is persevering. He is cool—He is guarded—He has too much influence—he is thought too much of—

William Tatham

Timothy Pickering to Joseph M. Yznardi, 30 July 1796

I should conjecture that whatever geographical information of the united States he is possessed of, he meant to communicate to the Spanish Government, for such reward as he can persuade that Government to give him. . . . He is an adventurer, a projector, who failing in his schemes in this Country, where he was well known, might hope for some success where he was a stranger.

John Temple

John Adams to James Warren, Auteuil near Paris, 26 April 1785

But to something in which it is more proper for me to intermeddle. Temple your Friend is appointed Consul General, but whether he has yet embarked for N. York where I Suppose his Residence will be, I know not. As much depends upon his Character and Conduct, both to Great Britain and America, it is a matter of importance that he should be well advised, and I believe that no American has more regard for him than You have or more Influence with him. He is not without Knowledge in General and has had peculiar Opportunities for knowing the Commerce of America and has numerous Acquaintances, Some Friends and powerful Connections in America. I believe him to be in general a Well meaning Man, and if his Office depended upon a genteel Behaviour he would be very well qualified. But, he values himself much upon a Knowledge of Courts which he has not, and he looses himself too much in Ceremonies and Forms to be a great Master of Substance & Essence. He is not a prudent Man, and has the most confused Conceptions of the public Opinion and of the Reasonings upon which it is founded and of the real Springs and motives of Events of any Man of so much sense & Experience I ever saw.

Such a Character therefore in my Opinion if his Friends do not advise him, will be in danger of doing much Mischief to the publick altho he may be sure of making his own Career very short.— If he goes on with those Airs of Mystery, and suffers his own Conduct to be equivocal or liable to two Interpretations, if he enters into personal Disputes without a manifest necessity, or brings on needless questions with Congress or its Members, or the states or Governors, with French or Dutch or other foreign Consulls or Ministers, or subjects or Starts and presses too hastily, indiscreet Claims for his Master, he will soon destroy himself altho he may previously do great harm. He is now an Englishman, and a servant of his King. Let him then make no Pretensions as an American, because they will only expose him. He must proceed slowly Softly and smoothly. He must support the Rights of his Master and the English Nation, but he must allow the Rights of all others. He is now in the right Road. He was the servant of the King and should have always looked to him and him alone for Service unless he had renounced his Service more decidedly and engaged more clearly than he did against him.

John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Grosvenor Square, London, 11 September 1785

They discover Judgment in Nothing.—Their Sending out a Consul, and not a Minister is a miserable Blunder.—What little Trick, what pretty Piece of Craft can there be in this? Can it be to Signify to their own People, to ours, or to Europe, that they look upon their Consul upon a footing with your Minister Plenipotentiary? Or is it a Miff, because you did not propose to them to send a Minister, when you complied with their Proposal in Sending one? Why Should they do a Thing which they know will raise a dispute, when by Sending a Minister they might avoid it? Their Choice of a Man is equally injurious. I have a regard for Mr. Temple and wish him well. I wish they had given him a Still better office in England which I believe would have been as agreeable to him and more so to his Family. But when you consider the mysterious Part he has acted and the Suspicions he has brought upon himself in America you cannot think him So Suitable a Character as many other plain Englishmen of fair and unsuspected Characters. His Deafness besides renders it extreamly difficult to converse with him, and makes him very apt to misunderstand you or comprehend you by the Halves. It is the Curse of England that Office are always sought for Men, not Men for Offices.

George Thatcher

Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Philadelphia, 28 June 1787

A compromise was made [in electing a delegate to Congress] by introducing G. Thacher, who was known only as author of certain publications in the *Cumberland Gazette*, in favor of County Conventions, under the signature of Scribble Scrabble. One Wycherly, a noted pettifogger from the Eastern part of the State [i.e., Maine] brought him forward, to reward his merits as a writer. If due attention is paid to his first adoption of political principles in Congress, he may be a serviceable—but sure I am, his oddities, his speculative modes of thinking & conversing, & his want of acquaintance with mankind & practical politics, render him at best an uncertain man. I greatly doubt whether it be an object of Joy or sorrow to a real patriot—Notwithstanding this, I love him as a good man and I respect him as a man of understanding.

George Thatcher to Mrs. George Thatcher, New York, 22 August 1788

I have nothing particular to communicate concerning myself—I am in good health—but more averse from walking than ever; I don't know what ails me but the bottoms of my feet feel always as if they were weary—

My Lodgings are a quarter of a mile from the Hall, & when I return from thence my feet are as weary as they used to be when I lived at Yarmouth, after walking to Barnstable & back again—which was equal to six or eight miles—

George Thatcher to Sarah Thatcher, New York, 29 March 1789

In the first [letter] you ask me what I shall say on hearing of your going abroad so much, and whether I shall not call you a Gadder since you visit so much—I assure you, my dear, that very different feeling than those of censure arise in my mind on hearing you frequently visit our friends in my absence—I wish you to make your time, that at best, I am sensible will run heavily, to glide as pleasingly as possible—This is what I do—and to effect it more completely, I am never without a book, or my pen in my hands—And there not being a Congress I spend about ten & twelve hours a day in writing & reading—Visiting, walking, riding &c. the common diversions and amusements of this City, are tedious to me—I rarely walk twenty rods a day—And as I live not more than two Rods from federal Hall I need not walk unless it be of choice.

George Thatcher to Sarah Thatcher, New York, 10 May 1789

I am sorry you were so disappointed on the day you wrote last, in not receiving a Line from me—I rather think you had anticipated the post that usually brings you my Letters—for I never fail writing once a week, & generally on Sundays—Tho' I sometimes write you twice a week you must not make such dependence thereon, as to admit of uneasiness when this is not the case. Writing is become very hurtful to me; I cannot set down & write as heretofore; I am obliged to stand up when I write—But don't let this alarm you. I am otherwise as well as is usual for me to be this time of the year—The spring, you will recollect, is unfavorable to my lungs—I breath with more difficulty in the spring than in Summer, Autumn or Winter.

George Thatcher to Robert Southgate, New York, 1 July 1789

That some Gentlemen have made their observations upon my corresponding with the persons you mention has not been unknown to me—but, my friend, none of those Gentlemen, some of whom have been very uncandid in their observations, ever asked, or even hinted to me that it would be agreeable to them to receive Letters from me while at New York—While I have made it a rule, from which, if my memory serves me, I have not deviated, to correspond freely with every person who desired it, or asked me to write to them—ought I to do more?

As to gaining the favor of Feds or Antifeds it never, as I believe you know, has been an object with me any further than it has been the effect of an independence & rectitude of Conduct—and so far as this has a tendency to conciliate and engage the good will of either party, I trust these Gentlemen themselves, will say is no way blamable—And I believe that all who know me will acquit me of being what is commonly called a *people-pleaser*—Indeed my sentiments upon almost every subject is different from people in general—and it is well known I have in no instance made use of disguise—but in all cases spoke as I thought—whether my notions & Ideas were agreeable, or disagreeable to others.

Thomas B. Wait to George Thatcher, Portland, Maine, 7 July 1789

Mr. [James] Lunt, our Collector, a few days since told me “he heard, that you resented his voting for Josiah, and would therefore make interest against him. If that should be the case” continued he, “I shall think myself unfortunate, but never can think myself to blame—I was acquainted with Jos. Thatcher—thought him a capable and knew him [to] be an honest man; but with Geo. T. I was totally unacquainted—he might, or he might not be a suitable person—to me the character of the latter was doubtful, while that of the former was certain—I therefore acted then, as I hope I ever shall, from principles of duty. And now,” concluded he, “I am willing to abide by the consequences—if Mr. Geo. T—— is that good man his friends represent him to be, I have nothing to fear.” *He is that good man*, I replied—and *I know you have nothing to fear*. More was said, but I have not time to write more.

Samuel Nasson to George Thatcher, Sanford, Maine, 9 July 1789

Suffer me to tell you in few words what is now Spreading in this Country—you know that I am in friendship with almost all the Revd. Clergy in this Country [i.e., Maine] or at least they pretend friendship for me although it may be for Nothing more than they can turn it to advantage that when they travel they may know where to Call for a Dinner or lodging thus much for the Prologue.

Now for the Play that is acting they praise your President to me for all his Virtues but none more than for his attendance to Publick Worship for this they almost Adore him and I Joyn with them and Could almost fill a Volume with his Virtues but why Should I attempt to paint the Sun. I Stop—and again Come to the point I now get my Share of their tongues or at least their Slander (for after Saying how good the Great Washington is for his regards to their order and say they this is the most Esential Matter without this their Cannot be any Government) it is otherways with your Mr. Thatcher he never goes to Meeting more then twice in one year nay he opposed having a Chaplainer this you know is horrid for then down Comes their Dagor we Shall loose our influences among the lower Clase if the Congress dont fall down and Worship and pay due regards to our Great merite.

George Thatcher to Sally Barrell, New York, 8 April 1790

My friends shall always have access to my Library; & I hope the pleasure you promise yourself in reading some of the Books will equal your expectation; And tho you are pleased to compliment me on account of my good taste in the choice of books; I assure you, in this, you are almost alone—but I am, sometimes, so odd as to estimate a departure from the common road of thinking, a mark of accuracy in judgment.

Daniel Cony to George Thatcher, Hallowell, Maine, 24 April 1790

A number of the *good Orthodox People* in Gorham, Portland and else where [in Maine] will vote for him [Josiah Thatcher], at the Next Election to go to Congress, for tho’ they do not Call in question either your Integrity or Ability yet tis to be feared (Say they) that you are not Sound in the faith, that is you are a little heterodoxical—I hope however that you will by a watchful & Exemplary Life convince them that you are a real believer, and in a genuine Scriptural Sense, a *religious Man*, and a *liberal Politician*.

John Thomas

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 6 July 1775

I rejoice to hear of the great military Virtues and Abilities of General Thomas.

Ebenezer Thompson

William Plumer to Samuel Plumer, Jr., Londonderry, N.H., 6 June 1786

Joseph Pearson Esq. is Secretary [of State], vice Ebenezer Thompson Esq. The change is thought to be for the better! The fact is the former is but a few removes from an idiot, and the latter is a shrewd, cunning man.

Edward Thompson

Jabez Bowen to George Washington, Providence, R.I., post-14 June 1790

Mr. E. Thompson—present Collector of Providence was formerly much esteemed in this place—He has been a friend to the late measures of the State to the surprize of all his former acquaintances tho he has not been known in any instance to have availed himself of their paper money tender.—He is not agreeable to the people of Providence, being an austere churlish man.

William Thompson

George Lux to Nathanael Greene, Baltimore, Md., 26 May 1778

We hear that Genl. Thompson is to be exchanged for Genl. Hamilton of Burgoyne's Army, which I am glad of as he will make an excellent *Exexcutive Officer*. He is too violent in his Passions and his Abilities are not brilliant, but I have the most exalted Opinion of the Goodness of his Heart.

Charles Thomson

John Adams: Diary, 30 August 1776

Called at Mr. Mifflin's—a grand, spacious, and elegant House. Here We had much Conversation with Mr. Charles Thompson, who is it seems about marrying a Lady a Relation of Mr. Dickinson's with 5000^œ sterling. This Charles Thompson is the Sam. Adams of Philadelphia—the Life of the Cause of Liberty, they say.

Richard Henry Lee to Henry Laurens, Chester, Pa., 27 May 1779

I understand by Mr. [Jonathan Dickinson] Sergeant that Mr. Secretary Thomson has been long acquainted with Dr. [Joseph] Kendall's evidence, and having concealed it, and acted the part he has done renders him as unfit to be the Secretary of Congress as any other Wh—e [Whore] in Philadelphia.

Henry Laurens to a Committee of Congress, 1 September 1779

Gentlemen: My complaint against the Secretary of Congress for disrespectful behavior to a Member of that Assembly probably would not have been made on the circumstance of Yesterday, had not his behavior upon that occasion been an unprovoked repetition of insults which the Secretary had at divers preceding times offered to delegates of Congress and to myself in particular. I shall confine myself to a few of the many instances which I have experienced in my own Person.

At York Town on the —— late in the afternoon the Honorable Mr. Duer with Monsr. Lanuville called upon me as President to enquire what was the result of the deliberations of Congress respecting Monsr. Lanuville the preceding Morning. I replied I could not precisely inform them, because the Secretary had not sent me a Copy of the Resolution, but that as he lived within a few doors I would send to him for it, accordingly I sent the Young Man who acted as my Secretary—the following is a very candid recital of what passed on that occasion.

Mr. Custer, go to Mr. Thomson, give my Compliments to him, desire him to send me the Resolution of Congress of this Morning respecting Monsr. Lanuville.

Mr. Thomson's Answer—It is not yet entered on the Journal.

Go back to Mr. Thomson, give my Compliments and tell him Mr. Duer and Mr. Lanuville are now here, and that Mr. Duer is desirous of seeing it as it is.

Mr. Thomson's answer—I can't and will not send it—I have it only scabbled on a Piece of Paper.

Mr. Duer expressed great surprise at Mr. Thomson's behaviour and at my patience, and then retired.

I then sent Mr. Custer with the following Message—Go back to Mr. Thomson, give my Compliments to him, tell him I am much obliged, and I must submit to him.

Mr. T's Answer—Well, tell him I am very glad he must submit.

Mr. Custer assured me, that Mr. Thomson had in every instance abovementioned expressed himself with great anger and haughtiness.

Mr. Thaxter, one of Mr. Thomson's Clerks who was present at the delivery of the Messages and answers abovementioned related the circumstances to Major Young, and expressed his astonishment at Mr. Thomson's extraordinary behaviour.

When the Honorable John Adams was appointed a Commissioner at the Court of Versailles, the Secretary produced to me, as President of Congress, a Commission to sign for that Gentleman. I observed to him that the writing was on a single Piece of Paper, much crowded, blotted and interlined, and that he should consider the Commission was to make its appearance before the Court of Versailles, and probably before the King of France, therefore I requested him to have a more decent and correct Copy made; he replied very abruptly—I can't do it over again, I then in the mildest terms said, Mr. Thomson, I will have it copied over fairly in a good hand, and will sign it and you will have nothing to do but to attest it—he imperiously answered, I won't.

After Congress returned to Philadelphia I had frequent occasions to send my Secretary for attested Copies of Resolves of Congress in order to forward them agreeable to the order of the House, in several instances Mr. Thomson returned me for answer, that he had not the Key of the Office, that it was with one of the Clerks, and he did not know where they lodge—these answers were brought to me by my Secretary Major Young, who avers that in many instances which he never reported to me the answers were given abruptly and unmannerly.

To mark these facts as being barely disrespectful, is dealing tenderly with Mr. Thomson, because I must otherwise charge him with having entrusted all the Public Records in the hands of strangers whose very abode he was ignorant of.

Some time in May last I went into the Secretary's Office and intimated to Mr. Thomson that I was desirous of taking out an old Printed Bill of the British House of Commons, commonly called the Fishery Bill, in order to extract a part of it. Mr. Thomson replied, I cannot let any Paper go out of this Office without an order of Congress. I said, Mr. Thomson this is not an Office Paper, 'tis an old Parliamentary Bill of no use to Congress and besides here's a duplicate of it in the Desk, I will give you a receipt for this, and will return it in half an hour. Mr. Thomson answered, I can't help it, I will not let any Paper go out of the Office without an Order of Congress; a receipt will not do—well Sir, said I, this is very extraordinary; however there is another way of answering my purpose. I then sat down in the Office and copied the clause or Section of the Bill which I wanted, wished Mr. Thomson a good morning and thanked him for his politeness.

Every Gentleman will admit this to have been a mark of great and unnecessary disrespectfulness—possibly the Committee may affix another epithet, when I inform them that the Secretary has since that time suffered Papers to be taken even out of the secret depository and carried away without permission of Congress.

I could recite other instances of gross partiality and arbitrary conduct of the Secretary, but if these are not sufficient to convince the Committee that the Secretary has treated a Delegate of a State with wanton and unprovoked disrespect, nothing else will be so. The particular complaint made Yesterday, is of Mr. Thomson's affrontive answers when I requested him to let me have only two Copies of the Journal for my State which I had an immediate use for. His first answer was—I won't. I replied, you won't Mr. Thomson, what language is this? I tell you I want them for my State—to which he again answered, I won't, but added, till I have given every Member present one; Mr. Thomson then descended from the Platform; I reached out my hand to take another Copy, he snatched from me and said, you shan't have it—this repeated insult brought instantly to my mind his former conduct & provoked me to say, he was a most impudent fellow, that I had a good mind to kick him; he turned about, doubled his fist and said you dare not, I recollected the time and place and let him pass on. When he had humoured himself he returned with many spare Journals in his hands and gave me one. I barely asked him if he might not as well have done this at first.

From the number of Members on the Floor compared with the number of Journals he must have known there were enough for my State I had a right to at least three, according to a Rule established

by himself without any authority that I know of. Admitting I had no right to demand, which cannot justly be admitted, or that I had been too peremptory in the demand which I certainly was not; the Secretary ought to have given decent answers, not insulting and irritating denials.

I consider these affronts of the Secretary though offered to a Delegate, and however Mr. Secretary might have intended them, as abuses of power in Office, and affronts to that Assembly of which I have the honor of being one, and I trust the Committee will view them in the same light, and honor the Body by doing justice to its Members.

**Conciliatory statement drafted by John Dickinson and signed by Charles Thomson,
8 September 1779**

I am sorry that any Difference has arisen between Mr. — [Laurens] & Me. I declare, that it was not my Intention to give him any Offense the Day on which he made his Complaints and that it has been & is my wish on all Occasions to treat him with Respect.

**Conciliatory statement drafted by John Dickinson and signed by Henry Laurens,
8 September 1779**

I shall at all Times treat Mr. — [Thomson] with Respect—and am as much concerned as he can be, that any Difference has arisen between Us. I am willing, that the Committee should obtain Leave of Congress to be discharged from making a report.

John Jay to Charles Thomson, Madrid, 23 April 1781

I wish in my heart that you was not only secretary of Congress, but secretary also for foreign affairs. I should then have better sources of intelligence than gazettes and reports.

Chevalier de la Luzerne to Comte de Vergennes, Philadelphia, 5 January 1782

Mr. Thomson, an unemotional, sensible man who has constantly fulfilled the functions of Secretary [of Congress] since 1774.

Marquis de Chastellux: Travels in North-America, in the Years 1780, 1781, and 1782

I conversed some time, but less than I could have wished with Mr. Charles Thomson, Secretary of Congress. He passes, with reason, for one of the best informed men in the country, and though he be a man of the cabinet, and mixing little with society, his manners are polite and amiable.

Charles Thomson to Hannah Thomson, Princeton, N.J., 30 July 1783

For my own part I am determined to continue [in office]. I have contributed as much as in my power to erect the building & it shall tumble about my ears before I quit it.

M. Barbé-Marbois to Comte de Vergennes, New York, 25 February 1785

Besides the public journal, the secretary of Congress keeps private minutes of all secret affairs, reports of negotiations, and conferences with foreign ministers. He has also been charged with the custody of all the papers of foreign affairs down to the epoch when Mr. Jay entered upon the

functions of that office. He has told me that he had taken advantage of the circumstance to prepare secret historical memoirs of everything which has not been inserted in the published journals; that his work had already more than a thousand pages in folio; and that it would complete the history of the Revolution; but that, in thus preserving a great number of facts important as well to the confederation as to the alliance, he had taken measures to prevent them from being published before the death of those who have taken part in these great events.

Mr. Thomson is the oldest servant of Congress, and there has been no one more constant in all the revolutions which have agitated this assembly. He is a man wise, uniform, and full of moderation. The confidence of Congress in him has no limits; and, although he has not the right to speak in the debates of this assembly, he has often been consulted, because he has been present for the last ten years at everything which took place there, and he can contribute to maintain a uniform system better than the delegates who are continually changing, and who sometimes know nothing of the doings of their predecessors.

Luigi Castiglioni: Sketches of American Statesmen, 1787

I do not know whether he was born in Philadelphia or in some other city of the United States, or perhaps in Europe; nor whether he held public office before the war. It was natural, however, for his talents to be recognized, since he was made Secretary of Congress from its very beginning. He filled this difficult office, and still fills it, with the universal approval both of his fellow countrymen and foreigners who are capable of a proper appreciation of his talents.

William Bingham to Tench Coxe, Philadelphia, 23 February 1789

Can you inform me, whether Mr. Thomson means to be a Candidate for the Secretaryship of the Senate,—I have lately heard it Surmised, that he has this Intention.

His long & faithfull Services, entitle him to Something of a higher Caste.

From Charles Thomson, c. 30 April 1789

Having seen, to my inexpressible satisfaction, the rights & liberty of this country asserted and vindicated; its independence acknowledged and secured; peace restored and the national government amended so as to give a pleasing prospect of cementing & strengthening the union of the states, & of ensuring the enjoyment of those blessings which have been purchased with so much blood and treasure, I resolved to return to private life. To this cause which is now brought to so happy an issue a great part of my life has been devoted, without any other motive than an ardent love of liberty. When the dispute was fast verging to the decision of Arms, I took the station to which I was called, Without any solicitation on my part, by the unanimous choice of the Congress which met in 1774, and continued therein through all the trying scenes of the war down to this happy period. But after executing the duties of my station to the utmost of my abilities with integrity & fidelity for almost 15 years under the immediate eyes of the delegates from the several states & experiencing from them and from my country continual & constant proofs of their approbation & confidence; and after being honored, by the concurrence of both houses of this present Congress, with an appointment of the Senate to wait upon his Ex[cellenc]y gen Washington with the information of his being elected to the Office of President of the United States of America, & ordered to deliver him the despatches committed to my care containing the certificate of his election & to accompany him to this place; and this under an idea suggested to me that this was required of me

as being still in the service of the United States & the fittest to perform this duty, I cannot conceal that I was struck with surprize at being passed by unnoticed in the arrangement made by a comee. who I understand were appointed to take order respecting the ceremonial for his inauguration, while some other officers under the late government were invited to attend that solemn occasion. To what cause this has been owing I am altogether a stranger. I have heard it said that the comee. did not consider me in Office. But how does this accord with the conduct of the members of both houses who induced me to undertake the late journey? Or by what authority could the comee. undertake to determine who are in or who [are] out of office? Is the custody of the records of the late Congress & the keeping of the great Seal no Office? Or am I discharged from my Oath of office & these still left with me? No other reason that I have heard being assigned for this arbitrary arrangement of the comee. it is some consolation that it was not an act of the two houses—that, if I am rightly informed, it gave general dissatisfaction and that the circumstance of the houses not knowing it in time alone prevented its being rectified. But as these circumstances are not generally known and the act of the comee was public, may I not hope that something will be done to guard against its effects & that it may not lessen that esteem of my fellow citizens which I have so long enjoyed and which by a faithful & conscientious discharge of the duties enjoined me I have endeavoured to preserve as my chief reward? For with regard to the emoluments of office, they have had little weight with me, nor have I derived advantages from them. In my private fortune I have not only suffered in common with my fellow citizens by the casualties of the times & the calamities of the war, but have almost wholly neglected it to attend to the duties of my office. My necessary expences while in the public employ have considerably exceeded my salary so that after now almost fifteen years' service my private fortune is lessened from what it was at the beginning of that period. But of this I do not complain, nor do I mention it with a view to any compensation. All I ask is that Justice may be done to my public character and that as soon as convenient I may be honorably released from the charge of the books, records, papers & archives of the late Congress which are still in my custody—from that of the Great Seal, the keeping of which was one of the duties of my Office—And the seal of the Admiralty which was committed to my care when that board was dissolved. Thus standing fair in the esteem and confidence of my fellow citizens which I highly prize, I shall return to private life with only an anxious wish for the prosperity of my country and a fervent prayer that the measures of the present government may be planned with wisdom and so conducted as to prove effectual to secure the tranquility & promote the happiness and glory of the United States.

Fisher Ames to George R. Minot, 18 May 1789

I am sitting very lazily in the House, who are debating about the manner of enrolling the acts of Congress, which I care little about. I suppose the object is to have a clerk of enrollments, with a view of providing a good warm office for. . . . Fame is as flattering as other painters, and as seldom draws likenesses. I thought . . . *Thomson* another Seneca or Plato, before I saw him. Now, I think him an *old woman*. He is smooth, plausible Irishman, but superficial, arrogant, and rapacious. Whether I know enough of him to support this opinion consequence for I write to you only.

Samuel A. Otis to Jonathan Dayton, New York, 19 May 1789

I have conversed with E——r upon the politics of N.J.—He is cautious & reserved—On my own affairs he is frank & explicit Declaring he never will be found needlessly multiplying offices

or creating them for men—How Charles [Thomson] will succeed in the home department [I] am not able to say—He is artful industrious & ambitious & will have no Stone unturned.*

*When Otis defeated Thomson as the secretary of the U.S. Senate, Thomson hoped to be appointed secretary of a Department of Interior that was not then created.

George Washington to Charles Thomson, New York, 24 July 1789

I have contemplated your Note, wherein after Mentioning your having served in quality of Secretary of Congress from the first meeting of that Body in 1774 to the present time, through an eventful period of almost fifteen years, you announce your wish to return to private life: and I have to regret that the period of my coming again into public life, should be exactly that, in which you are about to retire from it.

The present age does so much justice to the unsullied reputation with which you have always conducted yourself in the execution of the duties of your Office, and Posterity will find your Name so honorably connected with the verification of such a Multitude of astonishing facts, that my single suffrage would add little to the illustration of your Merits. Yet I cannot withhold any just testimonial, in favor of so old, so faithful and so able a public officer, which might tend to sooth his mind in the shade of retirement. Accept, then, this serious Declaration, that your services have been important, as your patriotism was distinguished; and enjoy that best of all rewards, the consciousness of having done your duty Well.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

A man of great learning and general knowledge, at all times a genuine Republican, and in the evening of his life a sincere Christian. He was the intimate friend of John Dickinson. He was once told in my presence that he ought to write a history of the Revolution. “No,” said he, “I ought not, for I should contradict all the histories of the great events of the Revolution, and show by my account of men, motives and measures, that we are wholly indebted to the agency of providence for its successful issue. Let the world admire the supposed wisdom and valor of our great men. Perhaps they may adopt the qualities that have been ascribed to them, and thus good may be done. I shall not undeceive future generations.”

Charles Thomson

The Iroquois and Delaware called him “The Man of Truth.”

Benjamin Rush: Commonplace Book, 30 April 1790

Met Mr. Chas. Thomson this morning who said “that he had enjoyed more health, peace and happiness within nine months on his farm than he had enjoyed in the last 20 years of life.”

Charles Thomson to George Washington, Harriton, Pa., 31 January 1793

[In response to a request that Thomson serve as a commissioner to meet with the Indians at the Lower Sandusky in the Northwest Territory.] Short as the time is I can be at no loss to return you a direct and positive answer in regard to myself whom you have been pleased to think of nominating one of the commissioners for this business. Neither my age nor my health will admit of my undertaking it.

Founders on the Founders

You are sensible of the confinement to which I have for many years been subjected. My constitution is delicate & unfit to encounter difficulties; and though by a strict regimen and constant care I at present, through the blessing of God, enjoy a tolerable share of health, yet with such a constitution and at this advanced age, being in my 64th year, I dare not undertake so long a journey notwithstanding I have no doubt of every measure being taken to render it as easy safe and agreeable as circumstances will admit.

Charles Thomson to John Adams, Harriton, Pa., 17 March 1795

I have now the pleasure to inform you that I have at length compleated The Translation of what is commonly called the Old testament from the Septuagint version. Since withdrawing from publick affairs I have gone over it three times, as if I was making a new translation availing myself of my former attempts only as helps. In the last which I have just finished, I have so far satisfied myself that I believe I shall here rest. It has been a work of labour but it had amply rewarded me by the satisfaction & pleasure it has given me.

I have gone over The New Testament now in the same manner but have not yet satisfied myself. Whether I shall live to compleat it is uncertain. But I think it is high time that we had another translation of that invaluable book.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 2 October 1810

While writing the above, the venerable Chas: Thompson called to take a family dinner with me. He is now in his 81st year. He walks erect—is animated & full of anecdote in his conversation, and speaks of the affairs of his country & of the world as if he did not belong to either of them. He mentioned the name of your excellent lady with uncommon respect. On the characters & conduct of public men he was silent. While dining, he looked around him & said, he had supped in the room in which we sat 60 years ago with Ed: Shippen the first owner of the house. How few men can say the same thing of meals in houses not their own?—

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 12 February 1812

The venerable Charles Thomson now above 80 years of Age, now and then calls to see me. I once suggested to him to write secret Memoirs of the American Revolution. “No—No said he I will not.—I could not tell the truth without giving great offence. Let the World admire our patriots and heroes. Thier supposed talents and Virtues (where they were so) by commanding invitation will serve the Cause of patriotism, and of Our Country.”

Charles Thomson to Thomas Jefferson, Lower Merion, near Philadelphia, 16 May 1816

Nothing but your earnest desire could induce me to trouble you with a detail of what I experience and feel. Though I have reached and am near closing, my 87th year, my constitution was naturally not of the robust, but of a weak and delicate kind, subject to bilious complaints and fevers by which I have been several times brought to the gates of death and have (I may say miraculously) recoverd and with returning strength have found the powers of the mind restored. But that is not the case now. I find as I advance in life that disorders of any kind make more lasting impressions. They dull the senses and stupefy the mind so as to render it incapable of exercising its powers. I have parted with most of my teeth and the few stumps that remain are unfit for mastication. My Eyes indeed (though in 1778 I almost lost the use of them by what the French call a Coup de Soleil)

have been so far restored that I write and read without spectacles and use them only occasionally to ease the Eyes when tired or when the print is too small. My hearing is so dull that I can take no share in common conversation So that when my friends visit me and wish to communicate any thing or ask me a question they must sit near me and bawl. My memory is like a riddle—

But why should I proceed with this detail of weaknesses. How few at my age enjoy greater comforts. I am free from gout or stone or any acute disorder. My sleep is sweet, and when tired, whether by day or night I can, by laying head on a pillow, enjoy that comfort. I read the news papers for amusement and glance over the debates of sages and am sorry to say I find more to disgust than to please. . . .

I ought to have informed you that from an early period of life I have continued the constant use of the flesh brush, always in the morning and sometimes at night just before going to bed. This serves instead of riding and I have the benefit of an air bathe instead of a water bathe.

Charles Thomson to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 7 January 1817

I received your letter of January last when I was under a paralytic stroke but not Sensible of it. I felt no acute pain, and my Sight was as usual. I could read without spectacles but could not comprehend what I read, nor its connexion with what preceded or followed. I read your letter and was pleased. I made sundry attempts to answer it but in vain, and what at last I sent as an answer, I do not now recollect.

The powers of my mind were weakened to such a degree that I forgot the names not only of my neighbours but even of my family and even of what I myself had said or done but a few minutes before. After this stroke fell suddenly another on the powers of the body (excepting the eye which still continued as usual). One night (at what distance of time from the first stroke I do not recollect) I went to bed in usual health and in the morning I found I was struck dumb. I could not utter a sound from my mouth. When I attempted to speak a strange rumbling sound seemed to come out at the ear, but not a word could I utter from the mouth. My Appetite for food now failed and all my bodily powers (except the eye) became weaker and weaker till the first or second week in November, at the end of the 87th and beginning of the 88 year of my Age. The beginning of my recovery was as Sudden as the strokes I had received. One morning being unusually refreshed with sleep I awoke as from a transe and found a wonderful change in my whole System. From that time to this I have been gradually but slowly recovering the due exercise of the powers both of mind and body except the hearing which continues dull as it was.

Thomas Jefferson to Charles Thomson, Monticello, 29 January 1817

I learnt from your last letter, with much affliction, the severe and singular attack your health has lately sustained; but its equally singular and sudden restoration confirms my confidence in the strength of your constitution of body and mind, and my conclusion that neither has received hurt, and that you are still ours for a long time to come. We have both much to be thankful for in the soundness of our physical organisation, and something for self-approbation in the order and regularity of life which it has been preserved.

William Short to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 5 December 1821

I avail myself of your enquiries as to Charles Thompson. . . . [from information indirectly obtained from Norris family who] found that his bodily faculties were in much better preservation

than his mental—he ate well, slept well & was erect in his posture—had yet several teeth & sound ones—but his memory quite gone; insomuch that he had no recollection of Mr. Norris, who was well & intimately known to him—& during Mr. Norris's visit which lasted a few hours only, he told him the same story four times.

Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, Monticello, 1 June 1822

Charles Thomson still lives at about the same age, cheerful, slender as a grasshopper, and so much without memory that he scarcely recognizes the members of his household. An intimate friend of his called on him not long since: it was difficult to make him recollect who he was, and sitting one hour, he told him the same story 4 times over.

William Short to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 2 July 1822

It was on the 5th of Decr. in acknowledgement of your kind & friendly favor of the 24th Novr. I there agreeably to your request gave you some account of your old friend Charles Thompson. I have accidentally within a few days spoken with a gentleman who went to pass a day with him, & I availed myself of this to make further enquiry for your information.

A stranger who was here & who wished much to have a sight of this historical personage, prevailed on Colo. Pickering to accompany & introduce him. They went & dined & passed the day, & I learn from Colo. Pickering that although he found him in excellent bodily health & good spirits, & evidently happy, yet his mind is so completely gone that he, Pickering, is not certain that he was recollected & could not discover whether he was really known to him, during the whole of the visit. He talked a great deal & with a loud & firm voice—but with a total loss of memory, so that he would repeat the same story again & again without the least recollection of having told it before. The group which the visitors found there was the Patriarch in his ninety second year, a maiden sister above eighty & perfectly deaf, with a baptist preacher totally blind, who had come there on a visit also—As the visit lasted only a certain number of hours Colo. Pickering says they found it interesting—but that the mind of Charles Thompson is too far gone to admit of any resource from it.

On the whole I think the lot of this venerable man an enviable one, considering he is deprived of what we are told is the greatest solace of age, children to continue us after our death. He has good bodily health, is free from that gloom so generally attendant on years, & probably with no anxiety as to the future. There is nothing, as I understood, either peevish or fretful in his deportment, & his life is a kind of gentle & regular vegetation, which, if without many charms, is at the same time free from many pains.

Lydia Huntley Sigourney to Thomas Jefferson, Hartford, Conn., 30 June 1824

During the past year, I have been indulged in a personal interview with the venerable John Adams,—and still more venerable Charles Thompson,—who having almost completed a century, finds the traces of the past blotted from his memory,—but the future, vivid with a hope which conquers death.

Matthew Thornton

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Baltimore, Md., 15 February 1777

We have from New Hampshire a Coll. Thornton, a Physician by Profession, a Man of Honour. He has a large Budget of droll Stories with which he entertains Company perpetually.

William Thornton

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 15 March 1777

Coll. Thornton, as droll and funny as Tristram Shandy.

Horatio G. Spafford to Thomas Jefferson, Albany, N.Y., 9 January 1816

I should be glad—but whenever the law of the land shall secure to original inventors the safe possession of their rights, & extend the period to 30 years, I will ask nothing more of the government. Then couldst do much, by thy opinion, toward promoting this great object, as just as necessary for the public good. I am perfectly astonished that Dr. Thornton should be retained in the Patent Office, when there are so many complaints against him. For myself, I can only say that I would not entrust any important invention to him. If ever so anxious to secure a right by Patent. He is, in my opinion, (but thou must know him much better than I can,) a very dishonest man, & dishonorable; & I know that he is a deadly foe to Co. Monroe, & the President, & in short the whole Administration.

William Thornton to Thomas Jefferson, Washington, 22 March 1816

I expected long before now to have returned the fine painting of Stewart & the Drawing of West that you were so obliging as to send to me and for which I am very much obliged, but I have been disappointed in getting the Head modelled, which I wished to have got done by an Italian artist who promised to do it, but has since expressed a wish to do after the original: his name is Valaperta. He is now engaged in the Public works.—I was at different times disappointed also in making the Copies, by sickness by numerous public Duties, by confinement to my Bed, by an accident in consequence of the falling of my Horse; & among other dire complaints by *laziness*—all these put together will apologize I hope for my keeping them a little longer, under a promise of better behavior. In the mean time, they are kept with the greatest care, & never exposed, but when while shewn to my Friends.

Buckner Thruston

Harry Innes to John Adams, Frankfurt, Ky., 30 April 1800

Mr. Buckner Thruston who is now a District Judge for this State will in *many* instances be superior to either of the other gentlemen—His integrity is equal to either, his education equal to Mr. Murray's & greatly superior to that of Mr. McDowell—His legal knowledge, if not equal to Mr. Murrays, is not far inferior & greatly exceeds Mr. McDowell's. He is a younger man than either, capable of application, possessing great sobriety & as a Judge rising in the estimation of his country.

Candor requires that I should conceal nothing from you respecting the character of Mr. Thruston as it is my intention to recommend him to your attention. Some years since he was addicted to *Gambling*—But upon minute enquiry I am informed he has entirely abandoned that destructive vice and now is considered as free from it as any man in the Union.

You now sir have my sentiments respecting the three gentlemen; Mr. Thruston is a stranger to my addressing you, yet if circumstances shall require an additional Judge I take the liberty of recommending him to you for nomination, pledging myself for his acceptance should he be appointed.

John Brown to John Adams, Washington, 19 February 1801

In the expectation that you will think it expedient to appoint a Judge for the sixth Circuit from among the Citizens of Kentucky I take the liberty to recommend to your notice Buckner Thruston Esqr., long a resident of that State as a Gentleman who in my opinion is well qualified to fill that Office. Mr Thruston is now of middle age, has had the advantage of a good education, & possesses an independant mind & a sound Judgement. He practiced the Law in that state with reputation & success, untill appointed a Judge of the District Courts, & General Court which Station he has filled for several years with ability impartiality, & integrity, to the intire approbation of all concerned. He stands distinguished for his political moderation belongs to no party, & I do believe that he or any of his Connections are in any manner interested in the Land Disputes of that Country which will probably constitute the chief business of the Court for that District. In short I do not think there is in the State of Kentucky among those who would accept the Appointment an other man qualified to fill this important office, with equal respectability, & advantage—

Thomas Tillotson

Gouverneur Morris to Robert R. Livingston, Philadelphia, 6 September 1778

This will be transmitted to you if not delivered to you by my Friend Jones. I have made every Enquiry relative to Doctor Tillotson which was within my Line of Ability.* I have asked every of the Representatives from the State of Maryland. I am sorry to add that I can learn Nothing. I then asked negatively and find that he is of Maryland but not of any distinguished Family not of great and Distinguished Abilities and the like. I enquired his Professional Knowledge and I learn that he is not eminent in that Line. To all this I must add of my own that I think I have met him in my

Walks thro Life tho at which of the Stages or odd Corners I know not that he appeared to me neither above or below the common Mass of Men Brilliant in Nothing and yet of that Kind of Being calculated to take Care of his own Menage, cure the Fever and Ague, superintend his Farm and kiss his Wife and his Children and the like. After all quis quis Artifer suae Fortunae.** I may not have met with those who know this young Gentleman or I may have met with those who envy him or I may be much mistaken in him. Should you wish any further Inquisition let me know and I will persist in endeavoring to discover such Particulars may still lie behind.

*Livingston was apparently interested in Tillotson, who would marry Livingston's sister Margaret in 1779.

**Who is the master of his own fate.

Thomas Tredwell

Alexander Hamilton to Robert Morris, Albany, N.Y., 13 August 1782

Tredwell is esteemed a sensible and an honest man.

Robert Troup

Robert Troop to John Jay, Boston, 23 November 1778

I still retain my Fondness for the Law, and am in Hopes that your Instructions, joined to a close Application, will enable me to practice it with some small Share of Eminence.

Richard Harison to Alexander Hamilton, Albany, N.Y., 21 June 1793

I have no doubt that Troup will do on my Behalf every Thing that is proper. He is a true Man, and has correct Ideas upon the Subject of our national Government and Interests.

Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, New York, 10 November 1796

The Legislature having appointed Mr. Laurance district Judge—a succession will of course be to be provided. A conviction of his competency, a high opinion of his worth, and a long established personal friendship induce me to take the liberty of *precipitating* a recommendation to you of Mr. *Troup*, the present Clerk of the District and Circuit court (the *Attorney* of the District being known to be disinclined to the Office). Mr. Troup is a lawyer, professionally very respectable, so that his practice is inferior in productiveness to no other—but he has by the most unexceptionable means acquired a property sufficient to make it reasonable in him to withdraw from practice upon a salary such as that of the District Judge & latterly his health has somewhat suffered from a long course of *excessive application*. His moral character is without an imputation of any sort—indeed no man in the state is better esteemed than this Gentleman. So that, I believe, the appointment would be considered as altogether fit. I trust however that in expressing myself thus strongly it will not occasion to you a moment's embarrassment, if any candidate more agreeable to you shall occur.

John Trumbull

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 8 December 1785

My Father, though possessed of an Estate considered as independant in Connecticut, was never disposed to lessen his Inventory for the sake of my happiness: and I have ever been nearly as dependent on my profession for a support, as though I had no future expectations. A violent attack on my constitution about Six years ago, has left me ever since subject to nervous complaints— from which though I have been gradually recovering, I fear I shall verify the observation, that an Hypochondriac, tho' he may live till himself & all his friends are tired of his existence, can never regain a competent share of health or spirits.

Abigail Adams 2d to John Quincy Adams, London, 24 January 1786

Mr. Trumble, who has finished his battle of Bunkers Hill, and I assure you it is a most terrible thing if the expression may be allowed to express, a good performance. I went to see it the other Morning and I was frozen, it is enough to make one's hair to stand on End. The moment of the Piece is when General Warren is slain and the scene, is dreadfully beautiful, or rather dreadfully expressive. It is to be engraved, and will secure to him immortal reputation.

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

Mr. Trumble has made a painting of the battle at Charlestown and the Death of General Warren. To speak of its merit, I can only say; that in looking at it, my whole frame contracted, my Blood Shivered and I felt a faintness at my Heart. He is the first painter who has undertaken to immortalize by his Pencil those great actions; that gave Birth to our Nation. By this means he will not only secure his own fame, but transmit to Posterity Characters and actions which will command the admiration of future ages and prevent the period which gave birth to them from ever passing away into the dark abyss of time whilst he teaches, mankind, that it is not rank, or titles, but Character alone which interest Posterity.

Abigail Adams 2d to John Quincy Adams, London, 25 April 1786

Mr. Jefferson left London. . . . He has given Mr. Trumble an invitation to go to Paris and keep at His House, where he intends to have his pictures engraved. He is acquiring great reputation by the subjects he has taken up.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, London, 23 July 1786

Mr. Trumble will have the honor of delivering this to you, the knowledge you have of him, and his own merit will ensure him a favorable reception. He has requested a Letter from me, and I would not refuse him.

Thomas Jefferson to Ezra Stiles, Paris, 1 September 1786

Another countryman of yours, Mr. Trumbull, has paid us a visit here, and brought with him two pictures which are the admiration of the Connoisseurs. His natural talents for this art seem almost unparalleled.

John Trumbull to Thomas Jefferson, London, 11 June 1789

The most powerful motive I had or have for engaging in, or continuing the study of painting has been, the wish of commemorating the great Events of our Country's Revolution:—I am fully sensible that the profession as it is generally practiced, is frivolous, little useful to Society, and unworthy the attention of a Man who possesses talents for more serious occupations—but, to diffuse the knowledge and preserve the Memory of the noblest series of Actions which have ever dignified the History of Man:—to give to the present and the future Sons of Oppression and Misfortune such glorious Lessons of their rights and of the Spirit with which they should assert and support them:—and even to transmit to their descendants the personal resemblances of those who have been the great actors in these illustrious scenes, were objects which gave a dignity to the profession, peculiar to my situation: and some superiority also arose from my having borne personally, an humble part in the great Events which I was to describe:—no one lives possessing with me this advantage, and none can come after me to divide the Honor of Truth and Authenticity, however easily I may be exceeded in Elegance:—Vanity was thus on the side of Duty, and while I felt some honest pride in the prospect of performing a work such as had never been done before, and in which it was not easy to see that I should ever have a successful Rival:—I flattered myself that, in devoting a few Years of my Life to this Object, I did not make an absolute waste of Time, or squander uselessly, talents from which my Country might justly have demanded more valuable Services.

With how much Assiduity, and with what degree of success I have pursued the studies necessarily preparatory to this purpose, the World will decide in the Judgment it passes on the picture which I now exhibit to them:—and this I need not fear will deceive me. For it will be biassed to a favorable decision, by no partiality for me, or for my Country.

But while I have done all what depended upon my personal exertions, I have been tempted by the advice of friends to a foolish and pernicious confidence in the exertion of another:—the Two pictures which you saw at Paris three years ago, I had then put into the hands of a printseller, to have engraved and published, and as the prospect of Profit to him was considerable, I relied upon his using the utmost Dispatch: instead of which the foolish imprudent creature has suffered three years to elapse without having made almost the smallest progress: instead therefore of having a Work already advanced to show to my Countrymen and the World, I am but where I was Three Years since, with the Deduction from my Ways and Means, of three Year's expense, in place of any advantage: with prospects blighted, and the hopes of the future damped by the Experience of past misconduct:—add to which the enthusiastic Memory of Actions however great, daily fades from the Mind:—The warm attention which the Nations of Europe once paid to us, is diverted to Objects more immediately interesting to themselves—and even France, from whom I entertained particular Hopes, is probably too much occupied by her own revolution, to think so much of ours, as formerly.

This circumstanced I foresee the utter impossibility of proceeding, without the warm patronage of my Countrymen.—three or four Years must still pass before I can reap any considerable advantage even from what I have been doing here:—and as I am very far from rich, those Years must

not be employed in prosecuting a plan, which without the patronage of my Country, will only involve new certainties of great and immediate Expense, with little probability even of distant reward:—I do not aim at Opulence:—but I must not knowingly run into Embarrassment and Ruin.

. . . You now see that my future movements depend entirely upon my reception in America, and as that shall be cordial or cold, I am to decide whether to abandon my Country or my Profession:—I think I shall not Hesitate:—for, though I am secure of a kind reception in any quarter of the Globe, if I will follow the general example of my profession, in flattering Vanity, or apologizing for the Vices of Men, yet the Ease and perhaps Elegance which would follow such a conduct would be but a poor compensation for the contempt which I should feel for myself:—and for the necessity which it would impose upon me, of submitting to a voluntary sentence of perpetual Exile.

I hope for better things. Monuments have been repeatedly voted to her Heroes. Why then should I doubt the readiness of our Country to encourage me in producing monuments not of Heroes or patriots only, but of the Events on which their Title to their Country's Gratitude is founded:—monuments which by being multiplied and little expensive, may be diffused over the World, instead of being confined to one narrow Spot.—Immediately therefore upon my arrival in America, I shall propose a subscription for prints to be published from such a series of Pictures as I intend, with the Condition of returning their money to Subscribers, if the Sum received shall not be sufficient to justify my proceeding, and I shall first solicit the public protection of the Congress:—

I have been told it is a Custom for the King of France to be a Subscriber for 100 Copies of all the Elegant works engraved by his subjects. These are deposited in the Bibliotheque du Roy, and distributed in presents to Foreigners of Taste as specimens of the state of the Arts:—Would it be improper in the United States to adopt this method, not of boasting of their Artists, but of diffusing a Knowledge of their Origin, and a lesson of the Rights of Men, through other Nations? And since the Example of past greatness is a powerful incentive to emulation, would such prints be an improper present to some of their servants? The Expense would be small, and the purpose of Medals and Monuments as motives to Virtue, and confirmations of History would receive a valuable support—perhaps it may be the fate of Prints to outlast either Marble or Bronze.

Should a subscription of this sort fill in such a manner as to justify me, I shall go on with all possible diligence, and must of course pass some years in Europe, and as I have acquired that knowledge in this Country which has been my only object and shall have many reasons to prefer Paris to London as the place of my principal residence.

Thomas Jefferson to John Trumbull, Paris, 18 June 1789

I think you undervalue too much your art, which is a most noble one when possessed so eminently as it is by you. I fear much that our country is not yet rich enough to encourage you as you deserve.

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

Your letter found me on my return from the session of our Superior Court at Haddam—since which, I have attended a three weeks session of our County Court here. So that I have had little leisure to prepare for my defence in a capital Trial.

To your charge of *reading myself to death*, I now propose to plead double by leave of the Court. My first Plea is that I am yet alive. Lord Hale advises Courts to be cautious of condemning any Person for Murther, unless it be clearly proved, that the man, supposed to be murdered is actually

dead—I have looked over my Books & cannot find a single precedent of any man, indicted & hanged for Self murder.

In the next place, I shall plead not guilty *infra ser annos*—It is hard if there is no act of limitation in the case. From the year 1777 to the year 80, I resided in my native town in a part of the country, where I could have no more Society than a Hermit, & had no other amusement but my Books. I injured my health gradually by continual reading & writing—for I determined to be the most learned Man in America; But hurt my constitution still more by attending all the Courts in two adjacent Counties, thro' the storms & snows of the severe winter of 80—In the spring of that year I found my nerves relaxed to the utmost degree of debility. I had a shock of an uncommon kind, which I scarcely survived. It came on with a coldness, & loss of pulsation, tho' not of feeling in all my limbs, which gradually extended itself nearly to the trunk of my body, attended with violent headach & palpitation of the heart—It left me subject to faintness, vertigo, loss of appetite, frequent turns of sick-headach, & every symptom of nervous decay. Before the close of that year my physicians pronounced me in the last stage of a consumption—I discarded them, & undertook to prescribe for myself. I removed to Hartford in 81, by way of experiment, as Yorick went to France, to run away from death. Since that time I have been gradually regaining health, & tho' sufficiently an Invalid, am able to transact more business in my profession, than any Lawyer in the County. Nor do I attend more to my studies, than is necessary to preserve the reputation I have gained in my profession, & do justice to the Causes in which I am engaged. Besides the want of health, I have had many disadvantages to combat in attempting to rise to eminence as a Lawyer. No man can be a judge of his own manner of speaking—but my friends have early been careful to inform me, that except a tolerable fluency, with some degree of animation, I possessed no one talent of a public speaker; that my voice was harsh & disagreeable, my gestures stiff, my pronunciation naturally thick & inarticulate, & my style void of that sonorous pomp, which captivates the ears of a vulgar audience—That no genius can excell in more ways than one, that I must be content with my literary reputation, & give up all hope of excellence at the Bar. I was not willing to be so content, but what could be done. I had only two resources left—*Learning & Fidelity* to my Clients—I have tried them & they have availed me. Nor have I any rival in my business in my own County. In the last Superior Court, I argued every cause tried before them, during a fortnight's session, except one—At our County Court just now closed, I lost only three causes—I argued more than twenty—It is alledged that I have too great influence with the Courts, especially the County Court—But the secret is, that I judge my causes before I try them, & will try none that I think desperate. So much for boasting—I observe the alternative penance you propose me—I own myself too indolent for the five miles walk a day, & had rather submit to the seat in a house of Representatives—But I have little inclination for either—Many of my friends have urged me to attempt promotion in the political line—I have as yet purposely avoided it & avoided it with great ease—as I have not one popular talent in my whole composition, & would not give up my right of speaking & writing my sentiments on men & measures, and of personally attacking all, whom I have viewed, as enemies to the Public, for any office or honour, I could expect in the States. And I firmly beleive that I have been of more service, in that way, to my country, than I could have been, if courting popularity, I had been able to act in any official character. I have by these means made myself many enemies—but I hug myself in the independence of my situation; & laugh at the storm, that rattles on my roof. I hope however, that the Stability of the new Government, will supersede the necessity of political Satirists.—If the public find they want me in any other way, they will call for me, but I shall never solicit their votes, which I consider as conferring burthens & not favors.

George Washington to the Marquis de Lafayette, Philadelphia, 21 November 1791

I should not, however, do justice to Mr. Trumbull's talents & merits were I barely to mention his views & wishes on this occasion. His pieces, so far as they are executed, meet the warm applause of all who have seen them. The greatness of the design, and the masterly execution of the Work equally interest the man of a capacious mind and the approving eye of the Connoisseur; He has spared no pains in obtaining from the life the likenesses of those characters French as well as Americans—who bore a conspicuous part in our Revolution; and the success with which his efforts have been crowned will form no small part of the value of his pieces.

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 27 April 1793

I have been very much out of health for several weeks, from turns of a bilious Cholic, attended by a low, irregular fever, which for a great part of the time, has confined me to my house. But I have no right to complain of being an Invalid. A Boy who had no more sense than to learn to read at two years of age, began to make rhymes at four, Study Virgil, Tully, Horace, Homer, the Greek testament, & enter as a Member of the University at seven, & spend all his days afterwards in a studious & sedentary way, employing all the intervals from his professions business in reading and scribbling Poetry & Politics, must expect to be an Old Man at Forty.

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

You tell me you rejoice that I am a Judge of the Supreme Judiciary in Connecticut—but wish that I had been something more & higher. Connecticut has nothing more or higher to give—for as to the parade & insignificance of a Connecticut Governor, they would be the last objects of my ambition. I could have had my appointment, if I would have accepted it, fourteen years ago—for the Bar then wished me out of their way. This is the fifth year, in which I have held the office. None ever doubted my qualifications in respect to legal science; and the world have had sufficient opportunity to see whether I possess the other talents, necessary to render a man respectable in that office. Considering the fatigues &c of the duty, & the low salary annexed, it is a matter of great doubt with me how much longer I will hold it voluntarily, & I should not care a sixpence, if by the prevalence of any party I should be turned out of it.

The *more* & the *higher* must have come from another quarter. My feelings prompt me to put the question, Why was I totally neglected at the first organization of the general Government? On this subject my lips have been sealed in a silence of fifteen years. I have now opened a vent and am in a humour to let it run, once for all.

Washington had a right certainly, if he pleased, "To scorn the humble Poet of his praise." Indeed his character was too high, to want the aid of eulogies. But he knew me well & was under personal obligations to me—I will mention the principal one. It was wholly owing to me, that his last circular address, on quitting the army, had not been a mere schoolboy declamation, & in some parts absolutely contemptible. (This must be kept to ourselves, & especially from one of my best friends, Col. H.) I happened to be at the Camp, when the thing, such as it was, had been composed by the person hinted at, & was ready for signing. Washington, who had too much good sense to be pleased with it, & too little scholarship to write one for himself, directed it to be submitted to my inspection. I struck out at least half, caused many other passages to be written anew, corrected the whole, & inserted a few sentences of my own, which I leave you to discover by your critical sagacity. All this was sorely against the will of the Draughtsman, who really thought he had produced a perfect model of sublime eloquence. But the General approved of every alteration I proposed, & certainly

did not at that time appear to be the ungrateful, insensible being, since described by *Tom Paine*—This is *E Pluribus Unum*.

Having now told part of my story, & given vent to what you will perhaps think the “*Odium in longum jacens*”^{*} of Tacitus, I will proceed to answer my own question. Were I to tell more, I should only prove myself a Great Dupe.

Washington on his first appointment to the Presidency thought it absolutely necessary to render the new Government popular by appointing to all offices the men, whom he supposed to be the favorites of the people. From this principle he departed in one or two instances only, & that from necessity—He was one of those rare Men, who perfectly know their own talents, & are always ready to supply any deficiency, by calling to aid the talents of others. Of the pains he took to employ confidential emissaries in every State, to find out what men the Public expected to receive an appointment, I probably know more than you: But the farce was truly ridiculous. Besides, he expected that every man who wished an office, should apply for it, & humbly signify that he wanted the office, was perfectly qualified for it, & “as in duty bound should ever pray.”—In consequence all his appointments were made of Men, whom he supposed influential by their popularity or formidable by their party-connections—of some of the best & some of the worst men in the community.

Then & afterwards, to certain independent characters, whose assistance in some departments he wanted, he recommended by this emissaries to seek popularity, & gain offices in their own States, that he might be able to promote them without censure. I leave you to guess what effect a hint of this kind would have on my feelings.—“This much shall suffice at present.”

^{*}An old grudge.

John Adams to John Trumbull, Quincy, Mass., 27 July 1805

Connecticut has indeed no office more useful, honorable or desirable to give than that which you have held for five years, with an universal acknowledgement, as far as I have heard, not only of your legal Science, but of your integrity and all other Virtues and accomplishments necessary to the discharge of the Duties of it. It is my humble advice, and earnest request that you would hold it, as long as you can make it tolerable to yourself.

Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, Monticello, 10 January 1817

It would seem mighty idle for me to inform you formally of the merits of Colo. Trumbull as a painter or as a man. Yet he asks my notice of him to my friends, as if his talents had not already distinguished him in their notice. On the continent of Europe his genius was placed much above [Benjamin] West’s. Baron Grimm, the arbiter of taste at Paris in my day, expressed to me often his decided & high preference. Not so in London, where all follow suit to the taste of the king, good or bad.

Thomas Jefferson to James Barbour, Monticello, 19 January 1817

I have been very long and intimately acquainted with Colo. Trumbull, have had the best opportunities of knowing him thoroughly, and can therefore bear witness of my own knowledge to his high degree of worth as a man, for his merit as a painter I can quote higher authorities, and assure you that on the continent of Europe, when I was there, he was mconsidered as superior to West. Baron Grimm, who was the oracle of taste at Paris, in sculpture, painting and the other fine arts

generally, gave him the decided preference, and came often to my house in Paris, while Colo. Trumbull was with me, to see his paintings. I pretend not to be a Connoisseur in the art myself, but comparing him with others of that day I thought him superior to any historical painter of the time except David: It is in the historical line only that I am acquainted with his painting. In England West was preferred by the king, to whom all others followed suit. The subjects on which Colo. Trumbull has employed his pencil are honorable to us. And it would be extremely desirable that they should be retained in this country as monuments of the taste, as well as of the reign of revolutionary scenes of our country.

You know how averse I am to be quoted on any occasion, yet as far as my testimony to Colo. Trumbull's worth & talent can be of any avail, by using it in private circles, you are entirely free to do so, as a just tribute to truth and worth.

Thomas Jefferson to Maria Cosway, Monticello, 27 December 1820

Our friend Trumbull is well, & profitable & honorably employed by his country in commemorating with his pencil some of its revolutionary honors.

Jonathan Trumbull, Jr.

Roger Sherman to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., Philadelphia, 24 November 1778

The appointment of Jonth. Trumbull Junr. Esqr. to the Office of Comptroller of the Treasury was unanimous. His acceptance of the Trust, and speedy entry upon the execution of it, would, I apprehend, be much for the Public good.

Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz: *Travels through America*, 12 July 1798

At one o'clock we arrived at the hamlet of Lebanon where Mr. Trumbull, the *governor* of the whole state of Connecticut, lives. His brother, whom I had known in London, had given me a letter of introduction. His house does not differ in any respect from the others. He came out himself to greet us in simple attire and gray hose. His bearing was open, gracious and pleasant. He greeted me and my driver most cordially. The whole retinue of the chief magistrate of the state consisted of one girl servant. A stew of meat and eggs was prepared in haste. The talk was of the simplicity of manners and the frugality of the inhabitants. The *Governor* sitting before me:—I had evidence of it before my eyes.

Jonathan Trumbull, Sr.

Eliphalet Dyer to Governor Jonathan Trumbull, Sr.

I heartily rejoice *Sir* that in the laborious part you have taken in your advanced Years, in the Important Station in which Providence has assigned you, that through Unremitted Diligence &

fidelity in which with Unwearied application you have exerted your Utmost Abilities, with Patience, hope and Perseverance in the Cause & Service of your Country, and in the greatest Trials & darkest hours of our Conflict with a firm & Unshaken reliance on Divine Providence, that God has Supported and continued your Valuable life at length to see the Joyful day of her Deliverance.

Eliphalet Dyer to Jeremiah Wadsworth, York, Pa., 10 February 1778

I can give the strongest assurance that there is no Governor or President on the Continent who has the Esteem of Congress equal to Governor Trumbull. He stands with them in the highest point of light as does the late Commissary General & Pay master General in the Northern department. There has Indeed been in time past sometimes & unhappy party or faction in Congress arising from two or three persons. Some of Governor Trumbull family have it is true had their rubbers, but in General highly Valued & Esteemed in whatever department they have Acted. They have now & then had a Squibb from Individuals but I think they lay too great Stress upon them. There is now no party in Congress. Mr. [Joseph] Trumbull had the Vote of every Individual in Congress in his Appointment to the board of War, they greatly regret his Non attendance. Nothing but his Indisposition excuses him in the opinion of his best Friends, hope he may yet come forward.

Jonathan Trumbull: Address to the Connecticut General Assembly, 9 October 1783

[Trumbull announces his retirement after] . . . a life, worn out almost in the constant cares of office.

Tristram Dalton to John Adams, Newburyport, Mass., 5 December 1783

I am sorry to have the occasion to tell you that Governor Trumbull has asked leave to Resign his Office next Spring—having in an elegant and affectionate Address, left his wholesome Advice—and ardent prayers—He assigns, as the Cause of his Wishes to retire, the infirmities of Age, being 74 years old—perhaps, Washington Like—he pants for a private Life—having filled *his Station* with a proportionable Eclat—it is said however that the public confusions with which the State of Connecticut is threatend, from the Power which the lower Orders of People have possessed themselves of, blindly led by groveling ambition, is the real Cause of this worthy Magistrate's resignation—and that, from the same reasons, will follow that of a Number of his best Councilors—

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 27 December 1783

I enclose to you a paper containing Governor Trumbull's farewell, which would do honour to an old Roman.

George Washington to John Trumbull, Mount Vernon, 1 October 1785

You know too well the sincere respect and regard I entertained for your venerable father's public and private character to require assurances of the concern I felt for his death, or of that sympathy in your feelings for the loss of him which is prompted by friendship. Under it, however, great as your pangs may have been at the first shock, you have everything to console you. A long and well-spent life in the service of his country justly entitled him to the first place among patriots. In the social duties he yielded to none; and his lamp, from the common course of nature, being nearly

extinguished and worn down with age and cares, but retaining his mental faculties in full vigor, are blessings which rarely attend advanced life; all these combining have secured to him universal respect and love here, and no doubt immeasurable happiness hereafter.

Joseph Trumbull

Eliphalet Dyer to Joseph Trumbull, York, Pa., 15 December 1777

You have been repeatedly Assured that Congress in general & believe may say now Universally entertain a high opinion of your Abilities & Integrity in your whole Conduct in that Department. They have given you the Strongest Evidence of it by a Unanimous unsolicited Vote even of every Individual in Appointing you one of a Board* the most honourable As well as Interesting to your Country.

*The Board of War was a special standing committee created by the Second Continental Congress to oversee the Continental Army's administration and to make recommendations regarding the army to Congress.

John Tucker

Fisher Ames to John Jay, Boston, 10 November 1789

[Recommending Tucker for clerk of the U.S. Supreme Court] John Tucker Esq, Clerk of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts, possesses so much worth, and is so eminently qualified for the office, that I feel myself authorized to recommend him to your notice. Being a gentleman in his manners as well as principles, and bred to the law, it was natural to expect from him fidelity assiduity and accuracy in the performance of his duty. And, accordingly, he has given uncommon satisfaction to the court, to the bar, and to the suitors. Mr. Cushing, your honorable associate, is well acquainted with Mr. Tucker's character and pretensions, and will furnish any further necessary information.

St. George Tucker

James Madison to James Monroe, Richmond, Va., 22 January 1786

St. George Tucker . . . is sensible, federal and skilled in Commerce.

William Wirt to James Madison, 11 January 1813

I understand that we have lost Judge Tyler and that his place is to be immediately filled, will you give me leave to bring to your recollection for the appointment St Geo Tucker, late judge of our court of appeals. I do this without the privity of Judge Tucker much less without his authority; but I am under the impression that he will probably accept & I know of no one who would do more

justice or honor to the appointment. I need not speak to you who know him so well, of Mr. Tuckers intellectual vigor, of his extensive legal science, or his most extraordinary habits of application to business. It may be proper tho' to observe to you that Mr. T's resignation of his office in the court of appeals arose from causes very different & remote from either aversion or incapacity for business—his faculties are still in their zenith & he may long be highly useful to his country. It may be proper also to state to you that Mr. T is & has ever been a warm & undeviating friend & supporter of the administration: & is one of the few remaining soldiers of the Revolution.

Richard Rush to John Adams, Washington, 24 August 1813

Mr St George Tucker is, I believe, a native of one of the West India islands. He was brought to Virginia quite a boy before the revolution, fought with reputation at Camden as a militia major, was next a lawyer, and has held several civil stations in Virginia, where, as I understand, he has always been greatly esteemed for his virtues and learning. He is now, on the late appointment of President Madison, United States Judge for that district. He was once Professor of law in the college of William and Mary, and has published an edition of Blackstone's commentaries with notes and a full appendix expounding our American constitutions and jurisprudence. Whatever may be thought of this work in other respects, it proves his research and talents as a fine writer. His "Days of my youth" is, indeed, a most beautiful little thing. I thought so when first I read it, and that I had never seen any thing of the same extent so fine. This opinion I will now dare express since your letter, which establishes its correctness. Whenever, Sir, I may have the good fortune to meet with its equal in any antient or modern poet I will again know the pleasure of affording you half an hour's entertainment.

Thomas Tudor Tucker

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 28 February 1801

In justice to Dr. Tucker, I say with pleasure, that I have always regarded him as a man of the greatest moral & political probity, truly attached to republican principles, of a very ingenious mind, extensive information, & great exactitude in his ideas & habits of business; and consequently well fitted for public service.

William Tudor

John Adams to George Washington, Philadelphia, [19 or 20] June 1775

Mr. [Robert Treat] Paine was pleased to mention to you Mr. William Tudor, a young gentleman of the law, for a secretary to the General. And all the rest of my brothers, you may remember, very cheerfully concurred with him. His abilities and virtues are such, as must recommend him to every man who loves modesty, ingenuity, or fidelity. . . . I only beg to say, that Mr. Tudor is an exile from a good employment and fair prospects, in the town of Boston, driven by that very tyranny against which we are all contending.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Boston, 21 September 1790

Mr. Tudor is an ingenious, amiable, indolent man, who will always make a respectable figure in society, but who has not activity or application enough ever to arrive to the foremost rank of eminence in his profession. Your personal acquaintance with him has made his character better known to you than it is to me; my opinion of him has been formed from the information of persons more conversant with him, and confirmed in some measure by my own observation.

Cotton Tufts

Abigail Adams to John Quincy Adams, East Chester, N.Y., 3 November 1797

Without any disparagement to your Brother Whom I doubt not, will do the best he can with your property I would advise you to employ our old tried and Faithful Friend Dr. Tufts whose experience and judgment, will not permit him to run any risks. As I know what money you have must be saved by a rigid oeconomy.

Abigail Adams to Harriet Welsh, Quincy, Mass., 8 December 1815

I have lost my dear venerable second Father and ancient Friend, the upright Christian, the noblest work of God, an honest Man—I heard he was unwell on wednesday the P and I went to visit him. he was in his parlour appeared to have a violent cold, raised freely, but I observed spoke very faintly; and appeared to me at the time, like a Lamp just expiring. I left him, dubious whether I should ever see him again. but mrs Tufts said he was better than he had been for several Days and did not appear to me to think him dangerous. he was better last Evening went to Bed and Slept till midnight, when he waked in great distress, and at two oclock expired—the funeral will be on monday if your Father and Mother came up they will lodge with us—

John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Quincy, Mass., 19 December 1815

The Death of my most ancient venerable and most beloved Friend Dr Tufts whose funeral We attended on Monday, as it will increase my difficulty in Writing, ought to diminish my reluctance to confess it.

The loss of this prop of my advanced age has deeply affected me. I never knew a better Man. Mr Norton gave a faithful Portrait of him to a crowded and simpathizing Audience. But I must waive this Subject.

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

By mr. Tarbel, who left here the last of Nov'br I wrote to you, and to mrs Adams, introducing him to you, as the Grandson of our Ancient, and beloved Friend, dr. Tufts, who then enjoyed his faculties and was active in buisness—but upon the 8th of this month, closed a Life of virtuous usefulness. having finishd the works assignd him, he fell asleep—for his death was not preeceded by any Sickness or allarming Symptoms. he was not confined to his Room, or Bed a Single day. hearing that he was unwell, your Father, and I went to visit him, as we had more frequently practised, for the year past. we found him in his parlour, Social and cheerfull, altho I perceived that he

conversed with more difficulty than usual. he had taken a bad cold, and coughd much. when I took leave of him, he gave me a pressure of the hand, and an earnest expression in his countenance which sunk deep to my heart, and I said to your Father, He is going. altho I did not consider the event so near at hand, he survived only one day.

untill you arrive at old Age, you can not realize the Sensation caused, by the removal of a Friend, of many years growth,—so ripened by our Side, So endeard to us by every virtue

The death of Such a man, who through Life has sustained, in every Relation, and character a pure and unspotted Reputation, and who filled every hour with Some active Service to his fellow creatures—causes a universal Shock, and Electric Stroke

who of us would not wish thus to live, and thus to die? his death has imprest upon my mind, with increasing force, the little Time, which in the course of Nature, is allotted to your Parents, the Suddenness with which we may drop into the Grave, and it has determined me to write to you, and say, that which ever of us may be first taken, the other will survive but a Short period, and Should Such an event take place in your absence, the Survivor will need all your filial consolation, and Support. I therefore request you would immediatly return or as Soon as you could obtain permission, to your Native Country.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Ealing, England, 24 February 1816

The account of the decease of Dr Tufts, has deeply affected me; as my attachment to him and my veneration for him, is coeval with the earliest consciousness of my own existence; and as I know what a breach the loss of him has made in your social comforts and enjoyments—His Sphere of action, during life, has been filled with deeds of usefulness and benevolence, and I trust that his removal to another world has only been to receive the reward of a good and faithful Servant in this.

Royall Tyler

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 9 August 1786

Pass'd the afternoon at my uncle Adams's. There was some conversation concerning Mr. T—r. He has not many friends I believe in Braintree. I believe him at best a very imprudent man, or as Horace says of a character something like him

Nil fuit unquam, sic impar sibi.*

*“Never was a creature so inconsistent,” Horace, *Satires*, Bk. I, Satire 3, lines 18–19 (*Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*).

Tyler of Rhode Island

Jabez Bowen to George Washington, Providence, R.I., post-14 June 1790

Mr. — Tyler the present Surveyor of Providence is spoken of as a man who does not stand very high for integrity—

Pierre Van Cortlandt

Alexander Hamilton to Robert Morris, Albany, N.Y., 13 August 1782

I omitted speaking of the Lt. Governor in his place. I shall only say he is an honest man, without pretensions.

Nicholas Van Dyke

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 17 August 1777

We have many new Members of Congress, among whom are Mr. Vandyke of Delaware. . . . Vandyke is a Lawyer, and a very worthy Man, his Abilities very good and his Intentions very sincere.

James Mitchell Varnum

John Adams to Daniel Hitchcock, Philadelphia, 24 August 1776

You mention the Delicacy of appointing an officer of the Same State over another—and you put the Case of Colonel Varnum and yourself. I have been a long Time puzzled to account for Varnum's Standing on the List of Colonels before you, whom I know to be many Years older than that Gentleman has been represented to me to be. I have heard this young Gentleman Spoken of in Raptures as a Genius, and from all I have heard I believe his Abilities and Accomplishments to be very good. But his Years are tender in Comparison of your, and his Education is but equal at best, how happened it then that in Arranging of Colonels, you was placed after him, I am sure this has made a Puzzle in some Minds here which will continue. It may possibly prevent either of you from rising so soon, as one of you would have done, if this obstruction had not been in the way.

Gouverneur Morris to George Washington, York, Pa., 23 May 1778

I wrote you a few days ago by Colo. Johnson; as he is not yet gone, I will now add two Things I forgot to mention then. The first is that if you send any General to Rhode Island you will probably find it most convenient to get rid of Varnom, whose Temper and Manners are by no Means calculated to teach Patience, Discipline & Subordination.

James M. Varnum to Nathanael Greene, Philadelphia, 10 February 1781

You know I am not much elated at good News or depressed at bad.

Thomas Rodney's Characters of Some Members of Congress, post-8 March 1781

General Varnum of Rhode Island is a Man about Thirty, of florid habits—he has read Some little in books, is fond of Speaking & Spouting out every thing that his reading has furnished him With Whether apt or not to the purpose—his Temper & Councils are very precipitate and but little calculated to be useful in Such an Assembly, he is very desirous of enlarging its powers.

Elkanah Watson: Memoirs, 1822

James Mitchell Varnum was appointed a Brigadier-General in the Rhode Island line, at an early period of the Revolution. He resided in East Greenwich, and was one of the most eminent lawyers and distinguished orators in the colonies.

I first saw this learned and amiable man in 1774, when I heard him deliver a Masonic oration. Until that moment I had formed no conception of the power and charms of oratory. I was so deeply impressed, that the effect of his splendid exhibition has remained for forty-eight years indelibly fixed upon my mind. I then compared his mind to a beautiful parterre, from which he was enabled to pluck the most gorgeous and fanciful flowers, in his progress, to enrich and embellish his subject. [Johann Kaspar] Lavater would have pronounced him an orator, from the vivid flashing of his eye, and the delicate beauty of his classic mouth.

He marched into Providence, with his company, on the evening of the 20th of April, '75, on his way to Lexington. Green and Varnum were both soon after appointed brigadiers, and attached to the army besieging Boston. Varnum continued several years in the army, and saw some service: he was a good disciplinarian, and invaluable in council. He held an excellent pen, commanding a rich flow of eloquence and beauty; embellished by all the ornaments and grace of rhetoric. . . .

At the close of his military career, he resumed his professional attitude, and often came into conflict with Henry Goodwin, his great rival in eloquence, but of a totally distinct school. While Varnum's oratory was mild and conciliatory, and flowing in majestic and persuasive eloquence, Goodwin's was wrapt in fire and energy, mingled with the most burning sarcasm.

In the year 1785, General Varnum formed the project of establishing a colony on the north branch of the Ohio River, and erecting a city at the mouth of the Muskingum. He urged me to unite in the adventure. He carried out his design, and founded Marietta, which he named in honor of the Queen of France.

Joseph Bradley Varnum

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., post-28 January 1795

Varnum is said to be a shallow Man, a great prater. The Antis have exerted themselves for him, merely to revenge themselves for Mr. Ames Election.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 30 April 1796

Our Varnum who is as cross a Goat as any from Virginia not excepting [Robert] Rutherford was out of the Way*. . . . Varnum is an Obstinate fool.

*Referring to the vote in the U.S. House of Representatives to appropriate funds to implement the Jay Treaty.

John Vining

Francisco de Miranda: *Travels in the United States, 1783–1784*

Mr. John Vining (a young man about twenty-four years old who practices law and does not lack mental power and acuteness).

Dyre Kearney to Nicholas Gilman, 5 May 1789

Mr. Vining left us last Thursday for New York. You have frequently heard me speak of him; you will find him as I represented him, a man of wit, and when he fully understands his subject a handsome Speaker; I think him polished and frequently brilliant, tho' by no means a man of deep research; he is without question tho' amiable and polite, and possesses the most lively and conversable talents. As such I will recommend him to your Acquaintance.