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John Habersham

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18 April 1789**

Major Habersham is . . . a good Man in every respect.

Major Hale

William Gardner to Nicholas Gilman, Portsmouth, N.H., 14 June 1788

The former I think a very unfit person [to serve in the New Hampshire House of Representatives] for two reasons—being Anti-commercial & dogmatical.

Alexander Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton to Edward Stevens, St. Croix, 11 November 1769

. . . to confess my weakness, Ned, my Ambition is prevalent that I contemn the groveling and condition of a Clerk or the like, to which my Fortune &c. condemns me and would willingly risk my life though not my Character to exalt my Station. I'm confident, Ned, that my Youth excludes me from any hopes of immediate Preferment nor do I desire it, but I mean to prepare the way for futurity. I'm no Philosopher you see and may be justly said to Build Castles in the Air. My Folly makes me ashamed and beg you'll Conceal it, yet Neddy we have seen such Schemes successful when the Projector is Constant. I shall Conclude saying I wish there was a War.

Alexander Hamilton to John Jay, Head Quarters, Middlebrook, N.J., 14 March 1779

[AH endorses John Laurens' plan to raise two, three, or four black batallions] that I think their ~~stupidity~~ want of ~~knowledge~~ cultivation (for their natural faculties are ~~perhaps~~ probably as good as ours) joined to that habit of subordination which they acquire from a life of servitude, will make them sooner become soldiers than our White inhabitants.

Alexander Hamilton to John Laurens, Middlebrook, N.J., 22 May 1779

I hate money making men.

Alexander Hamilton to John Laurens, Morristown, N.J., 8 January 1780

I am a stranger in this country. I have no property here, no connections. If I have talents and integrity (as you say I have), these are justly deemed very spurious titles in these enlightened days, when unsupported by others more solid. . . .

I have strongly solicited leave to go to the Southward. It could not be refused; but arguments have been used to dissuade me from it, which however little weight they may have had in my judgment gave law to my feelings. I am chagrined and unhappy but I submit. In short Laurens I am disgusted with every thing in this world but yourself and *very* few more honest fellows and I have no other wish than as soon as possible to make a brilliant exit. 'Tis a weakness; but I feel I am not fit for this terrestrial Country.

Alexander Hamilton to John Laurens, Ramapo, N.J., 30 June 1780

Have you not heard that I am on the point of becoming a benedict? I confess I am guilty. Next fall completes my doom. I give up my liberty to Miss Schuyler. She is a good hearted girl who I am sure will never play the termagant; though not a genius she has good sense enough to be agreeable, and though not a beauty, she has fine black eyes—is rather handsome and has every other requisite of the exterior to make a lover happy. And believe me, I am lover in earnest, though I do not speak of the perfections of my Mistress in the enthusiasm of Chivalry.

Marquis de Lafayette to George Washington, Paramus, N.J., 28 November 1780

[On appointing an adjutant general for Washington's army] Unless, however you was to cast your Eye on a man who, I think, would suit better than any other in the world. Hamilton is, I confess, the officer whom I would like to see in that station. At equal advantages his services deserve from you the preference on any other. But his knowledge of Your opinions and intentions on Military arrangements, his love of discipline the advantages he would have on all the others principally when both armies will operate together, and his Uncommon Abilities would render him perfectly agreeable to you. The use of him would be increased by this preferment, and on other points he would render the same services. An Adjutant General ought always to be with the Commander in chief. Hamilton should therefore remain in your family, and his Great Industry for Business would render him perfectly serviceable in all circumstances. On every public or private account, My dear General, I would advise you to take him.

Marquis de Lafayette to Alexander Hamilton, Paramus, N.J., 28 November 1780

[Lafayette quoted and paraphrased his letter to Washington recommending Hamilton as his adjutant general.]

I know the general's friendship and gratitude for you, My Dear Hamilton, both are greater than you perhaps imagine. I am sure he needs only to be told that something will suit you and when he thinks he can do it he certainly will. Before this campaign I was your friend and very intimate friend, agreeable to the ideas of the World. Since my second voyage, my sentiment has increased

to such a point, the world knows nothing about. To show *both* from want and from scorn of expressions I shall only tell you. Adieu

Alexander Hamilton to John Laurens, New Windsor, N.Y., 4 February 1781

A politician My Dear friend must be at all times supple—he must often dissemble [. . .] and resentments.

George Washington to John Sullivan, New Windsor, N.Y., 4 February 1781

How far Colo. Hamilton, of whom you ask my opinion as a financier, has turned his thoughts to that particular study I am unable to answer because I never entered upon a discussion on this point with him; but this I can venture to advance from a thorough knowledge of him, that there are few men to be found, of his age, who has a more general knowledge than he possesses, and none whose Soul is more firmly engaged in the cause, or who exceeds him in probity and Sterling virtue.

Alexander Hamilton to James McHenry, New Windsor, N.Y., 18 February 1781

The Great man and I have come to an open rupture. Proposals of accommodation have been made on his part but rejected. I pledge my honor to you that he will find me inflexible. He shall for once at least repent his ill-humor. Without a shadow of reason and on the slightest ground, he charged me in the most affrontive manner with treating him with disrespect. I answered very decisively—“Sir I am not conscious of it but since you have thought it necessary to tell me so, we part.”

Philip Schuyler to Alexander Hamilton, Albany, N.Y., 25 February 1781

Long before I had the least Intimation that you intended that connection with my family, which is so very pleasing to me, and which affords me such entire satisfaction I had studied Your Character, and that of the other Gentlemen who composed the General’s family. I thought I discovered in all an attention to the duties of their station, in some a considerable degree of ability, but (without a compliment for I trust there is no necessity of that between us), in you only I found those qualifications so essentially necessary to the man who is to aid and council a commanding General, environed with difficulties of every kind, and these perhaps more, and of greater magnitude, than any other ever has had to encounter, whose correspondence must of necessity be extensive always interesting, and frequently so delicate as to require much Judgment and address to be properly managed. The public voice has confirmed the Idea I had formed of You, but what is more consoling to me and more honorable to you, men of genius, Observation and Judgment think as I do on the occasion. Your quitting your station must therefore be productive of very material Injuries to the public, and this consideration, exclusive of others, impels me to wish that the unhappy breach should be closed, and a mutual Confidence restored. You may both of you Imagine when you separate, that the cause will remain a secret, but I will venture to speak decidedly, and say It is impossible, and I fear the Effect, especially with the French Officers, with the French Minister, and even with the French Court; these already Observe so many divisions between us; they know and acknowledge your Abilities and how necessary you are to the General. Indeed how will the loss be replaced? He will if you leave him, have not one Gentleman left sufficiently versed in the French to convey his Ideas. And if he obtains one, it is more than probable that he will be a mere

interpreter, without being able to afford his General an Idea, and Incapable of conducting business with any competent degree of address propriety or delicacy.

It is evident my Dear Sir that the General conceived himself the Aggressor, and that he quickly repented of the Insult; "he wished to heal a difference which could not have happened but in a moment of passion." It falls to the lot of few men to pass through life without one of those unguarded moments which wound the feelings of a friend; let us then impute them to the frailty of human nature, and with [Laurance] Sterne's recording angel, drop a tear, and blot It out of the page of life. I do not mean to reprehend the maxims you have formed for your conduct; they are laudable, and though generally approved, yet times and circumstances sometimes render a deviation necessary and Justifiable. This necessity now exists in the distresses of Your country. Make the sacrifice, the greater it is, the more glorious to you, your services are wanted, they are wanted in that particular station which You have already filled so beneficially to the public, and with such extensive reputation. I am as incapable of wishing as you are of doing, any thing injurious to those principles of honor, which If I may use the expression, are the test of virtue; my wishes, which are very earnest for a reconciliation I am convinced you will impute to their true motives, public good and the best affections of the human heart.

John Sullivan to George Washington, Philadelphia, 6 March 1781

I am happy to find your Excellency Entertains the Same Sentiments of the virtues and abilities of Colo. Hamilton, as I have Ever Done myself. After I wrote your Excellency I found The Eyes of Congress Turned on Robert Morris of this City as Financier. I did not therefore nominate Colo. Hamilton as I foresaw that it would be but a vain attempt. I Shall this Day nominate him as Secretary of Foreign Affairs on which I Think I Shall meet the Approbation of most of the States.

Alexander Hamilton to Robert Morris, De Peyster's Point, N.Y., 30 April 1781

I pretend not to be an able financier, it is a part of administration, which has been least in my way and of course has least occupied my inquiries and reflections. Neither have I had leisure or materials to make accurate calculations. I have been obliged to depend on memory for important facts for want of the authorities from which they are drawn. With all these disadvantages, my plan must necessarily be crude and defective; but if it may be a basis for something more perfect, or if it contains any hints that may be of use to you, the trouble I have taken myself, or may give you, will not be misapplied.

Alexander Hamilton to Elizabeth Hamilton, Head of Elk, Md., 6 September 1781

Every day confirms me in the intention of renouncing public life, and devoting myself wholly to you. Let others waste their time and their tranquillity in a vain pursuit of power and glory; be it my object to be happy in a quiet retreat with my better angel.

Alexander Hamilton to the Marquis de Lafayette, Albany, N.Y., 3 November 1782

I have been employed for the last ten months in rocking the cradle and studying the art of fleecing my neighbors. I am now a Grave Counselor at law, and shall soon be a grand member of Congress. The Legislature at their last session took it into their heads to name me pretty unanimously one of their delegates. I am going to throw away a few months more in public life and then I retire a simple citizen and good paterfamilias. I set out for Philadelphia in a few days. You see

the disposition I am in. You are condemned to run the race of ambition all your life. I am already tired of the career and dare to leave it.

James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, Princeton, N.J., 22 October 1783

The homilies you delivered in Congress are still recollected with pleasure. The impressions they made are in favor of your integrity and no one but believes you a man of honor and republican principles. Were you ten years older and twenty thousand pounds richer, there is no doubt but that you might obtain the suffrages of Congress for the highest office in their gift. You are supposed to possess various knowledge, useful—substantial—and ornamental. Your very grave and your cautious—your men who measure others by the standard of their own creeping politics think you sometimes intemperate, but seldom visionary, and that were you to pursue your object with as much cold perseverance as you do with ardor and argument you would become irresistible. In a word, if you could submit to spend a whole life in dissecting a fly you would be in their opinion one of the greatest men in the world.

Hugh Knox to Alexander Hamilton, St. Croix, 28 July 1784

I have always had a just & secret pride in having Advised you to go to America, & in having recommended you to Some of my old friends there; Since you have not only Answered, but even far Exceeded, our most Sanguine hopes & Expectations. I am glad to find that your popularity increases, & that your fine talents are coming into play, in a way that Contributes so much to your own honor & Emolument, & to the Good of the public. Perhaps Camps & marches & the hardy deeds of War, may have a little fortified & Steeled your Constitution (which used to be rather delicate & frail). But beware you do not enfeeble & impair it again, by plunging into intense Studies, & the anxieties of the Bar: For I know your laudable Ambition to Excel, & that you will Strain Every Nerve to be among the first of your profession. And, great as your talent[s] are, I should imagine that the accurate Study of So Complex & Voluminous a Science as the law, & Acquiring all the habits of a pleader, would cost you a deal of Labor.

Your Matrimonial Connection, I should think, might Enable you to live at your ease (I do not mean the *Otium inglorisum* [inglorious leisure], but the *otium honestum* [honorable leisure]) As a Gentleman of Independent fortune, & to pursue Studies more pleasing to yourself & perhaps more profitable to the Commonwaelth, & to posterity. You guess at the meaning of this hint. But you are certainly a better Judge of the propriety & Expediency of your present pursuits, than I can possibly be.

Alexander Hamilton to Elizabeth Hamilton, Annapolis, Md., 8 September 1786

I wrote to you My beloved Betsey at Philadelphia; but through mistake brought off the letter with me; which I did not discover till my arrival here. I was not very well on the first part of the journey; but my health has been improved by travelling and is now as good as I could wish. Happy, however I cannot be, absent from you and my darling little ones. I feel that nothing can ever compensate for the loss of the enjoyments I leave at home, or can ever put my heart at tolerable ease. In the bosom of my family alone must my happiness be sought, and in that of my Betsey is every thing that is charming to me. Would to heaven I were there! Does not your heart re-echo the wish?

William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787

Colo. Hamilton is deservedly celebrated for his talents. He is a practitioner of the Law, and reputed to be a finished Scholar. To a clear and strong judgment he unites the ornaments of fancy, and whilst he is able, convincing, and engaging in his eloquence the Heart and Head sympathize in approving him. Yet there is something too feeble in his voice to be equal to the strains of oratory;—it is my opinion that he is rather a convincing Speaker, than a blazing Orator. Colo. Hamilton requires time to think—he enquires into every part of his subject with the searchings of philosophy, and when he comes forward he comes highly charged with interesting matter, there is no skimming over the surface of a subject with him, he must sink to the bottom to see what foundation it rests on.—His language is not always equal, sometimes didactic like Bolingbroke’s at others light and tripping like Stern’s. His eloquence is not so defusive as to trifle with the senses, but he rambles just enough to strike and keep up the attention. He is about 33 years old, of small stature, and lean. His manners are tinctured with stiffness, and sometimes with a degree of vanity that is highly disagreeable.

New York Journal, 20 September 1787

I have also known an upstart attorney, palm himself upon a great and good man, for a youth of extraordinary genius, and under the shadow of such a patronage make himself at once known and respected; but being sifted and bolted to the [brann?], he was, at length, found to be a superficial, self-concerted coxcomb, and was of course turned off, and disregarded by his patron.

**Hugh Hughes, “Interrogator” to Publius or the Pseudo-Federalist, December 1787
(unpublished manuscript in Library of Congress)**

You appear to be much bloated by a vain Opinion of a little Learning and Knowledge, and not infrequently to have written like a Person, who considered himself as the sole Proprietor of all common Sense, permit me to remind you of the Fable of the Ox and the Frog, who, ambitious to make as great an Appearance as the Former, kept straining its lanky Sides till it burst, which, must be the Fate of every Individual whatever, that attempts to put his scanty Knowledge or Acquirements in Competition with the Aggregate Knowledge of a Nation—Only reflect on how little you know of your own mental and corporal Composition, as well as of what daily and momentarily contributes to your Support and Existence or, that many of the most simple Plebeians, or Mechanics, can teach you some of the first Principles of Philosophy. Or how very little you know of any Thing, when compared with what is unknown to you and Thousands who are much wiser, & you will not find much Cause to value yourself an Omniscience.

New York Journal, 5 December 1787

What in nature, observes a correspondent, is more despicable than a FOP, — The Fop, says a modern poet, most resembles the gay mushroom;—as,

From his own dunghill lately sprung,
So buxom, debonair, and young;
Yet on his brow sits empty scorn,—
“He hates mechanics, meanly born.”
Stranger to merit—genius—sense—
He owes his rise to impudence,

Founders on the Founders

With strutting self-importance fraught,
 Free—from each particle of thought;
 He'll not debase himself to think,—
 “ 'Tis too damn'd low,”—but he will drink.
 From his own lips his praises flow,
 With—“Damme! I did so and so!—
 I've e'en in paths of honor trod;
 I'd soon, go to hell!—by God!—
 Than lose my honor!”—yet his genius
 Consists in blasphemy and meanness;
 In what true honor interdicts,
 And in diverting little tricks.
 He'll, all at once, start from his chair,
 Twirl his whip and sing an air,
 Dance, to show his grace and shape,
 Brisk and sprightly as an—Ape.
 To the glass he often goes,
 There adjusts his stock and clothes,
 Meets his image with a glance,
 Of the sweetest complaisance.
 He's first,—and oft the only one,—
 To laugh at his own jest or pun.
 Suppose it is wond'rous witty,
 But men of sense will—smile and pity.
 Such is the hero of my poem,
 Readers—you must surely know him.

Alexander Hamilton to Angelica Church, New York, 6 December 1787

I seldom write to a lady without fancying the relation of lover and mistress. It has a very inspiring effect. And in your case the dullest materials could not help feeling that propensity.

James Kent to Nathaniel Lawrence, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 21 December 1787

You may praise who you please & I will presume to say that I think Publius is a most admirable writer & wields the sword of Party dispute with justness, energy, & inconceivable dexterity. The Author *must be* Hamilton who I think in Genius & political Research is not inferior to Gibbon, Hume or Montesquieu.

Samuel Blachley Webb to Joseph Barrell, New York, 13 January 1788

We have in the Press a Pamphlet written by Colonel Hamilton under the Signature of Publius on the subject of a Federal Government, which I will send you by the first conveyance. He is undoubtedly one of the most sensible men in America, though yet not much more than Thirty years old.

Collin McGregor to Neil Jamieson, New York, 18 February 1788

I do most heartily approve of your writing a Complimentary letter to Colo. Hamilton. He is a worthy Character and has Considerable Interest in this State, which I am clear will every day increase. His unshaken integrity & Conspicuous Abilities will soon place him at the head of Affairs, and as you have so much property in this State, keeping or renewing friendship with a person of this distinction I think is of much Consequence to your Interest.

“A Citizen, and real Friend to Order and good Government,” New York *Daily Advertiser*, 21 March 1788

The publications of Col. Hamilton, in defense of the liberties of America previous to the late war, when a youth in the college of New York; his great military services, and the confidential line in which he stood with that good and great man General Washington, during that war, are indubitable proofs of his virtue. As a lawyer, a politician, and a statesman, Col. Hamilton is certainly great; as a public speaker he is clear, pointed and sententious; he excels most men in reply, being possessed of the powers of reasoning in an eminent degree, and he is endowed with a most benevolent and good heart.

David S. Bogart to Samuel Blachley Webb, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 14 June 1788

. . . Mr. Hamilton, the American Cicero. . . .

Charles Tillinghast to John Lamb, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 21 June 1788

You would be surprised, did you not know the Man, what an amazing Republican Hamilton wishes to make himself to be considered—*But he is known*—

Philip Schuyler to John Bradstreet Schuyler, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 26 June 1788

Though all [the Federalist speakers in the New York Convention] are eloquent, Hamilton ad his sentiments are so true, his judgment so correct, his elocution so pleasing, so smooth, and yet so [forcible] that he reaches the heart and carries conviction, where every avenue to conviction is shut up. I fear there are too many, who labor under this prejudice.

Samuel Blachley Webb to Catherine Hogeboom, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 27 June 1788

We have been entertained for upwards of two hours this morning by Colonel Hamilton in one of the most elegant speeches I ever heard. He is indeed one of the most remarkable genius's of the Age, his Political knowledge exceeds, I believe, any Man in our Country, and his Oratorical abilities has pleased his friends and surprised his Enemies.

Robert C. Johnson to William Samuel Johnson, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 28 June 1788

I am this moment returned [from the state ratifying Convention] from hearing Hamilton—warm, animated, clear, logical & convincing; attracting, nay, forcing universal admiration & applause. And he is at present an Enthusiast—

. . . I have heard Hamilton with rapture & admiration.

Melancton Smith to Nathan Dane, Poughkeepsie, N.Y., 28 June 1788

Hamilton is the champion, he speaks frequently, very long and very vehemently—has, like Publius, much to say not very applicable to the subject—

Melancton Smith's Notes of New York Convention Debates, 30 June 1788

The honorable Gentleman from New York [City] in particular who has so elaborately on two successive days argued in favour of the Clause has talents capable of reasoning plausibly on either side of any political question—his remarks are ingenuous, and his manner engaging—But still no reasoning Can change the nature of things or make truth falsehood.

Richard Platt to Winthrop Sargent, New York, 8 August 1788

Little Hamilton shines like a Star of the first magnitude. Think how great his Victory in our Convention when with only 19 Federalists opposed to 46 most violent Anti's with Clinton, Yates, Lansing, Smith & Jones at their head, after six or seven weeks, he triumphed & gave us the Constitution.

Edmund Randolph to James Madison, Richmond, Va., 3 September 1788

My dear friend I am much obliged to your for your favor of the 25th. ulto. Being in Wmsburg, when I received it, I imparted it to our friend, the president* who espouses with warmth an early convention. I sincerely wish, that the valuable parts of the constitution may suffer no ill from the temper, with which such a body will probably assemble. But is there no danger, that, if the respect, which the large minorities at present command should be effaced by delay, the spirit of amendment will hereafter be treated as heretical? I confess to you without reserve, that I feel great distrust of some of those who will certainly be influential agents in the government, and whom I suspect to be capable of making a wicked use of its defects. Do not charge me with undue suspicion; but indeed the management in some stages of the convention created a disgustful apprehension of the views of some particular characters. I reverence Hamilton, because he was honest and open in his views.

Perhaps the states may not concur in any particular correction of the new theory. But if dissensions in opinion should prevent an amendment, the constitution remains as it is. If on the other hand they should be in unison as to even one amendment, it will satisfy, and bear down all malcontents. . . .

*The Reverend James Madison, president of the College of William and Mary.

James Kent: Memoirs

Colonel Hamilton was indisputably pre-eminent [at the bar]. This was universally conceded. He rose at once to the loftiest heights of professional eminence by his profound penetration, his power of analysis, the comprehensive grasp and strength of his understanding, and the firmness, frankness, and integrity of his character.

He generally spoke with much animation and energy and with considerable gesture. His language was clear, nervous [i.e., strong, powerful], and classical. His investigations penetrated to the foundation and reason of every doctrine and principle which he examined, and he brought to the debate a mind filled with all the learning and precedents applicable to the subject. He never omitted

to meet, examine, and discover the strength or weakness, the truth or falsehood of every proposition with which he had to contend. His candor was magnanimous and rose to a level with his abilities. His temper was spirited but courteous, amiable and generous, and he frequently made pathetic [i.e., emotional] and powerful appeals to the moral sense and patriotism, the fears and hopes of the assembly, in order to give them a deep sense of the difficulties of the crisis and prepare their minds for the reception of the Constitution.

Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788

Great orator, intrepid in public debates. Zealous partisan, to an extreme over the new Constitution, and declared enemy of Governor Clinton, whom he had the courage to attack publicly in a newspaper without any provocation. He is one of those rare men who have distinguished themselves equally on the field of battle and at the bar. He owes everything to his talents. An indiscretion got him into trouble with General Washington for whom he served as confidential secretary; other indiscretions obliged him to leave Congress in 1783. He has a little too much pretension and too little prudence.

Here is what M. Luzerne said about him in 1780: "Mr. Hamilton, one of the aides de camp of General Washington who has the most influence with him, man of spirit, of a mediocre integrity; he left the English territory where he was born of low extraction . . . Also a favorite of M. de Lafayette. Mr. Conway thinks that Hamilton hates the French, that he is absolutely corrupted and that the connections that he will appear to have with us will never be anything but deceptive."

Mr. Hamilton has done nothing that could justify this last opinion; he is only too impetuous and because he wants to control everything, he fails in his intentions. His eloquence is often out of place in public debates, where precision and clarity are preferred to a brilliant imagination. It is believed that Mr. Hamilton is the author of the pamphlet entitled *The Federalist*. He has again missed his mark. This work is of no use to educated men and it is too learned and too long for the ignorant. It has, however, made him a great celebrity and a small frigate has been named *Hamilton* which was pulled through the streets of New York during the great federal procession. But these parades only make a momentary impression here and as the Antifederalist party is the largest in the state, Mr. Hamilton has lost more than he has gained by his zeal on this occasion.

A stranger in this state, where he rose by benevolence, Mr. Hamilton has found the means to run off with the daughter of General Schuyler,* a great proprietor and very influential. After being reconciled with the family, he now possesses the esteem of his father-in-law.

*Elopement is more common in America than in France; the parents are offended at first, they wait and are reconciled after a few months. Everyone is interested in these passionate marriages, since they seem to conform to the primitive natural impulses.

Brissot de Warville: New Travels in the United States of America, August 1788

Mr. Hamilton is Mr. Madison's worthy rival as well as his collaborator. He looks thirty-eight or forty years old, is not tall, and has a resolute, frank, soldierly appearance. He was aide-de-camp to General Washington, who had the greatest confidence in him, a confidence he deserved. Since the war he has resumed the practice of law and has devoted himself mainly to public life. Elected to Congress, he has distinguished himself by his eloquence and by the soundness of his reasoning. Among the works which have come from his pen the most distinguished are a large number of letters inserted in *The Federalist*, of which I shall speak hereafter, and the *Letters from Phocion*,

published in defense of the Loyalists. During the war Mr. Hamilton fought the Loyalists with success, but when peace came it was his opinion that they should not be driven to desperation by harsh persecution, and he was fortunate enough to win over to clemency his fellow citizens, who had been inspired by a justifiable resentment against the Loyalists because of the damage they had done. This young orator's moment of triumph came at the New York Convention. The Antifederalist party was strong in New York City,* and three-quarters of the members of the convention when they left for Poughkeepsie were opposed to the new Constitution. Mr. Hamilton, joining his efforts to those of the celebrated Mr. Jay, succeeded in convincing even the most obstinate among them that the refusal of New York would have disastrous consequences for the state and for the Confederation. Consequently they voted in favor of the Constitution. The celebration in New York following the ratification was magnificent. The ship *Federalist*, which took part in the festivities, was renamed *Hamilton* in honor of this eloquent orator.

Hamilton married General Schuyler's daughter, a delightful woman who combines both the charms and attractions and the candor and simplicity typical of American womanhood. . . . Mr. Hamilton had the determined appearance of a republican.

*Antifederalists were very weak in New York City, but did control two-thirds of the New York Convention at its outset.

“Evander to L.M.K.,” New York *Daily Gazette*, 21 January 1789

I coincide with you in your opinion, that our State is infinitely indebted to Mr. Hamilton, and regret with you that he is not a member of our present Legislature: His Ciceronian eloquence, for which he ever has been, and at present is so justly famous, might then again be exerted in promoting the interest of his country. Particularly pleasing would it be, should this honorable Gentleman be the instrument in the hands of Providence, of averting the evils impending on this State, from the party-spirited proceedings of her legislature.

I humbly confess, that my abilities are unequal to the task of giving a due encomium to the character of our American Cicero, ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

Thomas Lee Shippen to Thomas Jefferson, London, 3 February 1789

Mr. S. Morris son of General Morris of New York is just arrived from America. He gives me a very interesting account of the proceedings of the New York Convention in which Hamilton makes a godlike figure indeed.

Alexander Hamilton to Isaac Ledyard, Jamaica, N.Y., 18 February 1789

In Politics as in war the first blow is half the battle.

Abraham Clark to Jonathan Dayton, March 1789

I feel myself out of all patience with Col. Hamilton. He really appears to be, what I have some times thought him, a shim sham politician. He must needs soon run himself aground. His politics are such as will not stand the test. He will soon refine them to nothing.

“M.L.” to “P.T.,” New York, April 1789

In the practice of the law Mr. Hamilton is not surpassed either in his capacity—his uprightness—or his moderation in demanding fees. Though his opportunities of making money have been equally favourable with those enjoyed by any of the profession; yet he has been often known to forego part of the profit which his brethren in similar cases have justly received. . . . His humanity is above my praise. The suffering soldier—The widow—The orphan, and others who might be named bear conclusive testimony of his benevolent exertions and bountiful donations for their relief. As a friend Mr. Hamilton is warm—sincere—and constant: As an enemy he is frank and generous.

Tristram Lowther to James Iredell, New York, 9 May 1789

The popularity of Col. Hamilton has been hurt by his declining to represent this district in Congress; it is supposed he looks up to be Financier-General, for which he has been preparing himself, or to be appointed a foreign ambassador, for either of which he is extremely well qualified. He is said and believed to be a man of such extraordinary powers as to be able to render himself master of any subject in a week.

Letter from New York, Philadelphia *Independent Gazetteer*, 9 June 1789

[In talking about Hamilton as the third of three candidates who might be named Secretary of the Treasury] The third is certainly a man of considerable talents for his years and experience; but it is thought that his present qualifications are better adapted to the law department than that of the treasury. He has obtained a high degree of popularity in this city, and if he has skill to manage it properly, his consequence must increase. But when the pulse of party beats so high as it has lately done, the tide of popularity is liable to great change. At present the people of this city think no office too high for him, and hence he is the most talked of among us for the head of the treasury.

William Smith of Maryland to Otho H. Williams, New York, 7 July 1789

Colo. Hamilton is Spoke of here to fill the Secretary’s office to the treasury. He delivered a very elegant Panegyrick on Saturday last by order of the Cincinnati, to the memory of Genl. Greene in which he took occasion to compliment very highly some of the officers who were engaged in the Southern war Particularly [John Eager] Howard, & Colo. [William] Washington, but as his Eulogium did not extend to all who were active there, tis said he has offended many. I expect the Oration will be printed, if so I will Send it to Baltimore. I thought the composition elegant, & a good Narrative of Genl. Greene’s conduct throughout the war but especially to the Southward, was pretty well delivered to a very crowded audience, although Hamilton is by no means a good Speaker or orator. What his talents may be as a financier I know not.

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

I think so highly of Col. Hamilton’s moral & intellectual qualities that I consider his appointment to the head of the Treasury as an auspicious event.

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

I have no doubt that Mr. Hamilton genuinely wishes to fulfill the responsibilities of the United States toward His Majesty. He was born English and I do not believe him very well disposed toward France; he would like nothing better than to put it in closer relations with the Estates General of the Low Countries, current Allies of England. . . . to judge him by his association with well-known and brazen speculators and stock-jobbers.

Oliver Wolcott, Jr., to Elizabeth Stoughton Wolcott, New York, 24 September 1789

From the appearance of Col. Hamilton, I think him a very amiable, plain man, and one whom I expect to like on acquaintance.

James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, Baltimore, Md., 7 October 1789

Be assured I was not only made exceedingly happy by your appointment but shall always rejoice at every circumstance which can add either to your fame or fortune. Your office is vastly important, and you are worthy of it, and what is more, equal to its duties, but at the same time it is extremely hazardous. I cannot tell whether all the wisdom and justice and policy and politics you can put into your plans will procure them in all conjunctures a good reception in Congress; or rather, for how many ages these qualities will serve instead of the means which a British minister employs to ensure success to his.

John Fenno to Joseph Ward, 10 October 1789

Great things are anticipated from Hamilton. I think that he considers his fame as much at stake as ever a General of an Army did—and I think further, that he is one of those sort of men that consider wealth as less than nothing and vanity contrasted with Honor & reputation—These things being so—it appears to me that now is the time for a stroke—but your penetrating eye may see dangers in Ambush which escape me.

Alexander Hamilton to James Madison, 12 October 1789

The Question is very much What further taxes will be *least* unpopular?

John Trumbull to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Hartford, Conn., 9 December 1789

I almost envy you the friendship of Col. Hamilton, with whom I doubt not, you are in the closest habits of intimacy. However, till I have the honor of a personal acquaintance with him, I will not depose on oath that he is half so great or good a man as I think him.

Angelica Church to Alexander Hamilton, London, 4 February 1790

My father's [Philip Schuyler] letters have relieved me from the *dread* of having offended him. He speaks of you with so much pride and satisfaction, that if I did not love you as he does, I should be a little Jealous of his attachment.

Oliver Wolcott, Sr., to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., Litchfield, Conn., 8 February 1790

The gentleman at the head of the department, with whom I am most acquainted, I have always known to be a man of strict integrity and honor.

Samuel Johnston to James Iredell, New York, 24 February 1790

The House of Representatives have come to a Resolution to Fund the Foreign and Domestick Debts and are now Debating on the propriety of Funding all the State Debts, this last measure meets with considerable Opposition, but I am inclined to believe, as far as I am at present capable of Judging, that it will be ultimately adopted, the great difficulty seems to rest on the ways & means, but, your favorite, the Secretary of the Treasury, whose application is as indefatigable as his Genius is extensive, encourages us to hope that they may be found, I wish to God he may not be too sanguine, we cannot be too cautious of any future breach of Faith.

John Trumbull to John Adams, 30 March 1790

Is our Hamilton a great politician or only a theoretical genius. He has great abilities but I doubt his knowledge of mankind. I have never spoken my sentiments on his report but I really fear some parts of his plan are too complicated and perhaps at this period too impolitic as well as impracticable.

Thomas Hartley to Jasper Yeates, New York, 4 April 1790

He is a man of Spirit.

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

By the way is our Secretary H. a great Politician, or only a theoretical genius—He has great abilities [to] be sure—but I doubt his knowledge of mankind—I have never spoken my sentiments on his report [on public credit]—but I really fear some parts of his plan are too complicated—& perhaps at this period impolitic as well as impracticable.

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

Our Secretary [of the Treasury] has however I think good Abilities and certainly great Industry. He has high minded Ambition and great Penetration.—He may have too much disposition to intrigue.—If this is not indulged I know not where a better Minister for his Department could be found. But nothing is more dangerous, nothing will be more certainly destructive in our Situation than the Spirit of Intrigue. . . .

I thank you kindly for your anecdote about throwing away votes. Both H—n and W—b [Samuel Blachley Webb] were for me, and I really suspect that they had some real fears that I might have the greatest number of votes, yet in all supposition it was a corrupt intrigue and an insidious maneuver.

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn, 5 June 1790

I hope he has no inclination to intrigue. . . . Let him keep to his Fort—Sterling abilities & Independent Honesty, joined with indefatigable industry.

Founders on the Founders

William Maclay: Journal, 28 June 1790

Hamilton has a very boyish giddy Manner. Our Scotch Irish People would call him a Skite.

John Wheelock, Dartmouth College, 27 August 1790

The Trustees of this literary Institution have desired me to express their congratulations at the prosperous state of our national finances under your wise direction. They have desired me to communicate the high sense, which they retain of your talents, and political knowledge.

Influenced by an exalted Opinion of your merit, they make a tender of the highest Honors, that any University can confer. They beg, Sir, your acceptance of the *Degree of Doctor of the Laws of Nature and Nations*. It is a testimony unequal to their respect; but it is the best within their power to give. The Diploma will be completed, and forwarded to you by some safe conveyance, so soon as may be convenient.

Louis-Guillaume Otto to Comte de Montmorin, New York, 24 December 1790

At no time has Mr. Hamilton's reputation been so well established as since the publication of the report, which has been avidly read by all classes of citizens.

William Channing to Theodore Foster, Newport, R.I., 8 January 1791

Mr. Hamilton's Character stands high with us—He merits much from his Country. May he long be Victorious in the arduous conflict in which he is engaged. It is a painful reflection that A Man of his Virtues & abilities must finally be vanquish'd—I think his Advice on the subject of the assumption was salutary—I wish a further assumption—but I think it may be too hazardous to attempt it at the present moment.

James Sullivan to John Langdon, Boston, 8 January 1791

I conceive that the General Government has been hitherto managed in a most Masterly manner. the department of the treasury has mostly attracted the notice of the people, as well from its having been the most interesting part of the Government as from its being most operative. the Secretary of the Treasury Exhibits great ability as well as great assiduity in his business, and proves himself quite fitted for the important office assigned him. Should he prove unsuccessfull in some of his plans it would not alter my opinion of him and tho' I do not agree to all his measures yet I have still the opinion of him which I have expressed.

William Wetmore to Benjamin Goodhue, Boston, 9 January 1791

The Secys. plan of a bank &c. is universally approved—it will succeed here beyond his most sanguine expectations—and what astonishing effects have we not already experienced from his indefatigable industry, as well as abilities, in the restoration of public credit!

Thomas Russell to John Langdon, Boston, 10 January 1791

Every publication I see of the Secretary of the Treasury—does him honour—and proves the wisdom of the Choice, of so Excellent a Man, for that important Appointment.

Henry Van Schaak to Theodore Sedgwick, Pittsfield, Mass., 10 January 1791

I am anxious to see the fate of the Secretary's Report about the Establishment of A National Bank—I expect much locality in favor of the Bank in Philadelphia—The Secretary seems in all his Reports to possess talents to Investigate matters referred to him with equal ability and industry—and I do most sincerely hope to see his labours adopted in the whole. If we do not Manifest a great degree of faith in this great Man I fear our systems of Finance will come forward in a crippled condition.

Letter from Boston, *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), 19 January 1791

The Secretary's Report of the plan of a National Bank appears to be calculated for good national purposes, and, if adopted, will completely establish the credit of the United States. I think HAMILTON will rise to fame as a Financier. He has a fine field, and if Congress support him, as I think they will, (policy and experience being incontestibly in favor of the idea, and I may justly add, the public opinion too,) he will become a star of the first magnitude in our political hemisphere, and a luminary to the world.

John Adams to John Trumbull, Philadelphia, 23 January 1791

The Secretary of the Treasury is all that you think him. There is no office in the Government better filled. It is unhappy that New York, has taken away one of his Supporters.*

*The New York legislature replaced Hamilton's father-in-law Philip Schuyler with Aaron Burr as a U.S. Senator.

Henry Van Schaack to Theodore Sedgwick, Bennington, Vt., 25 January 1791

I wish I had it in my power to impeach all the members of your house on the ground of an intention to distroy the Secy. of the Treasury—The people among us and here find great fault with Congress to refer so many paltry matters to this truly great & valuable man, whose labors say they ought to be confined to the great and weighty objects of Government. He is considered as a jewel of great estimation in bringing our glorious Government to perfection. The loss of such a man wod. derange and Embarrass the Government exceedingly—

Edmund Pendleton to Samuel Griffin, Virginia, 29 January 1791

I thank you also for Mr. Secretary's report, as matter of Amusement. Tho' I am no Financier: indeed I generally differ in Sentiments from that Gentleman's Systems—I am a plain man, and wish to see a System of Taxation calculated to pay the annual Expence of Government, the Interest of our debt, and a proportion of the principal, pointing out some Period when we may emerge from that very disagreeable situation: this would make the progress of American consequences slower but surer, a conduct which in private life never fails of Success—the brilliant Genius of the Secretary can't be satisfied with this grovalling Progress; He is Soaring & Sanguine, that we ought to be, & therefore shall be suddenly great, & are to grow rich from debt, like the Mercht. who trusts ten times his Capital in trade, the success of which makes him Oppulent or a Bankrupt.

R.I. Governor Arthur Fenner to Theodore Foster, Providence, R.I., 31 January 1791

I believe him to be an Industrious Man a Man of great Abilities and fully competent to Answer the Wishes of his Friends and his own Interest.

Joseph Stanton, Jr., and Theodore Foster to Governor Arthur Fenner, Philadelphia, 17 February 1791

The Confidence of the Nation at large in the Secretary of the Treasury is deservedly great. Possessed of a contemplative, comprehensive, energetic, independent Mind, he Knots the strictest Integrity to the most Indefatigable Industry, which on all occasions he incessantly applies to the Service of the Public. Prudent, active yet deliberate, Studious, firm and candid he may be said to investigate the whole fiscal System of our Country. Ability, Foresight, Direction and a comprehensive View of the remotest Consequences, are so conspicuous in all his Reports respecting the Finances and National Arrangements which he recommends that they seem generally to carry conviction as they go. With a Fertile Invention, added to real Science and Patriotic Views, he has the Talent of bringing his Information into Action, with that Propensity, Method & Forcibleness of Reasoning that his Country Generally acquiesces in the Propriety of the Measure he recommends.

Henry Marchant to Vice President John Adams, Newport, R.I., 19 February 1791

The Secretary of the Treasury by his Ingenuity and astonishing Industry amazes all—I beg They will not destroy his Health. It was little conceived that such a Character existed among Us: But a kind Providence does every Thing for America.

Robert Troup to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 15 June 1791

There was every appearance of a passionate courtship between the Chancellor, Burr, Jefferson & Madison when the two latter were in Town. Delenda est Carthago [Carthage must be destroyed] I suppose is the Maxim adopted with respect to you. They had better be quiet, for if they succeed they will tumble the fabric of the government in ruins to the ground. Upon this subject however I cannot say that I have the smallest uneasiness. You are too well seated in the hearts of the citizens of the Northern & Middle States to be hunted down by them. That your foes may be confounded & that your administration may increase in success & luster is the cordial wish of . . .

Nathaniel Hazard to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 25 November 1791

I enclose for your Amusement, Trumbull's last letter to me. He communes with very few intensely. He is a Man of a very independent Spirit. He is avowedly the Friend of C. H——n [Colonel Hamilton]. Doctor [Samuel] Johnson is so likewise, as you shall presently judge. The Doctor spoke humbly of J——n [Jefferson] at [Pierpont] Edwards' Table. At his Lodgings, I asked him what he thought of M——n [Madison], as compared with H——n [Hamilton], "He (M——n) ought not to be mentioned in the same Day with H——n."

Alexander Hamilton to Edward Carrington, Philadelphia, 26 May 1792

As to my own political Creed, I give it to you with the utmost sincerity. I am affectionately attached to the Republican theory. I desire *above all things* to see the *equality* of political rights

exclusive of all hereditary distinction firmly established by a practical demonstration of its being consistent with the order and happiness of society.

As to State Governments, the prevailing bias of my judgment is that if they can be circumscribed within bounds consistent with the preservation of the National Government they will prove useful and salutary. If the States were all of the size of Connecticut, Maryland or New Jersey, I should decidedly regard the local Governments as both safe & useful. As the thing now is, however, I acknowledge the most serious apprehensions that the Government of the United States will not be able to maintain itself against their influence. I see that influence already penetrating into the National Councils & perverting their direction.

Hence a disposition on my part towards a liberal construction of the powers of the National Government and to erect every fence to guard it from depredations, which is, in my opinion, consistent with constitutional propriety.

As to any combination to prostrate the State Governments I disavow and deny it. From an apprehension lest the Judiciary should not work efficiently or harmoniously I have been desirous of seeing some rational scheme of connection adopted as an amendment to the Constitution, otherwise I am for maintaining things as they are, though I doubt much the possibility of it, from a tendency in the nature of things towards the preponderancy of the State Governments.

I said, that I was affectionately attached to the Republican theory. This is the real language of my heart which I open to you in the sincerity of friendship; & I add that I have strong hopes of the success of that theory; but in candor I ought also to add that I am far from being without doubts. I consider its success as yet a problem.

It is yet to be determined by experience whether it be consistent with that stability and order in Government which are essential to public strength & private security and happiness. On the whole, the only enemy which Republicanism has to fear in this Country is in the Spirit of faction and anarchy. If this will not permit the ends of Government to be attained under it—if it engenders disorders in the community, all regular & orderly minds will wish for a change—and the demagogues who have produced the disorder will make it for their own aggrandizement. This is the old Story.

If I were disposed to promote Monarchy & overthrow State Governments, I would mount the hobby horse of popularity—I would cry out usurpation—danger to liberty &c. &c.—I would endeavor to prostrate the National Government—raise a ferment—and then “ride in the Whirlwind and direct the Storm.” That there are men acting with Jefferson & Madison who have this in view I verily believe. I could lay my finger on some of them. That Madison does *not* mean it I also verily believe, and I rather believe the same of Jefferson; but I read him upon the whole thus—“A man of profound ambition & violent passions.”

Alexander Hamilton to Susanna Livingston, Philadelphia, 29 December 1792

Of all delinquencies, those towards the Ladies I think the most inexcusable. And hold myself bound by all the laws of chivalry to make the most ample reparation in any mode you shall prescribe. You will of course recollect that I am a married man!

Pierce Butler to Wade Hampton, Philadelphia, 28 January 1793

There is much heat in the house of Representatives. Dissatisfaction out of doors becomes more general. In short the government, in my belief is hurrying to a crisis. I think the Secretary of the

Treasury has much to blame himself for. If I do not greatly mistake the Man there is nothing of a republican in his composition.

John Bard to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 4 March 1793

I dined a few days ago with a large Company at Judge Duane's. In the course of the after noon, you became the Subject of general Conversation. It gave me the greatest pleasure to hear that Just and grateful applause which all the Company bestowed upon you. Your Friend General Gates declared when ever your Idea was present to his mind, he could not help applying to you the Beautiful Epitaph, Mr. Pope wrote to the memory of his Friend Mr. Secretary [James] Cragg.

Statesman yet Friend to truth, of Soul Sincere,
In Action Faithful, and in Honor Clear!
Who broke no Promise, Serv'd no Private end,
Who gained no Title, and who lost no Friend,

Ennobled by Himself, by all approved
Praised, wept, and Honored, by the Muse he loved.

It was Unanimously, & Heartily agreed by this Respectable Company, that these Lines exhibited an Exact and perfect portrait of Coll. Hamilton's Character; The delight I felt at this Just and grateful Ulogium has prompted me to Communicate it to the only Gentleman, who will probably feel less Sensibility on the Occasion, than any of his Numerous Friends Though I presume, a Just Tribute of praise, which flows from a grateful sense of those great and essential Benefits, a man derives to this Country, by Superior abilities, and unremitting devotion to its real Interests, cannot be Ungrateful to the Genuine Donor himself.

Alexander Hamilton to Jeremiah Olney, Philadelphia, 2 April 1793

[As secretary of the treasury Hamilton tells Providence, R.I., Customs Collector Olney not to be overly strict in collecting duties.] My own maxims of conduct are not favorable to much discretion, but cases do sometimes occur in which a little may be indispensable. The exercise of it must always be at the peril of the officer, and therefore ought to stand on manifest ground. But wherever it should appear to have been discreetly and prudently exercised, upon an *urgent* occasion, due allowances would be made for it.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 8 September 1793

Hamilton is ill of the fever as is said. He had two physicians out at his house the night before last. His family think him in danger, & he puts himself so by his excessive alarm. He had been miserable several days before from a firm persuasion he should catch it [i.e., yellow fever]. A man as timid as he is on the water, as timid on horseback, as timid in sickness, would be a ph'nomenon if the courage of which he has the reputation in military occasions were genuine.

DeWitt Clinton to Miss Cornelia Clinton, Albany, N.Y., 23 January 1794

. . . the two great financiers, i.e., the two great pests of the World—Hamilton and Pitt must now fall like Lucifer never to rise again.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 May 1794

I have ever thought with respect to that Man, “beware of that spair Cassius”—this might be done consistant with prudence, and without the illiberal abuse in many respects so plentifully cast upon him. The writers however discover too plainly that envy Pride and malice are the Sources from whence their opposition arrises, in staed of the publick good.

William Heth to Alexander Hamilton, Shillelah, Va., 6 July 1794

[After Treasury Secretary Hamilton successfully withstood a hostile congressional investigation of his department.] Accept, I pray you, my dear friend, of my sincerest congratulations, on your second, and complete triumph, over the invidious persecutions of a base faction. The report of the Committee of Congress, has turned out precisely, as your friends here, had predicted—“The more you *probe*, examine, & investigate Hamilton's conduct; rely upon it, the *greater* he will appear.” But it was a cruel thing in Congress, & some what unprecedented, I presume, to oblige

your *persecutor*, & *prosecutors*, to sit as your *Judges*, and, what was more ill-natured, to compel them to make a *Report*: by which, they were obliged—d——d mortification, surely—to *convict* you, of purity of conduct, & unshaken integrity, and a constant watchfulness over the public interest. This was cursed hard upon them, to be sure. And how one of them [William Branch Giles] who had *pledged himself* to convict you of nothing less than “*high crimes & misdemeanors*” can get the better of his chagrin, or meet some of his credulous, & deluded constituents without shame & confusion, I am at a loss to account. Nothing surely, can carry him through, but that consummate vanity and ambition, which first tempted him to make so unprovoked, & so unwarrantable an Attack. He has been completely mortified, at a public-meeting, in his own District, since his return. Instead of entertaining all companies, as heretofore, with declamations on the abuses in The Treasury Department; not a single syllable was uttered about Hamilton, or his conduct. He was “*as mute as a fish*.” No notice were taken of any of the toasts which *he* gave; while those given by Carrington were *huzzad* and *applauded*.

Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, Rostraver Township, Pa., 11 November 1794

[Hamilton was suppressing the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania.] It is long since I have learnt to hold popular opinion of no value. I hope to derive from the esteem of the discerning and in internal consciousness of zealous endeavors for the public good the reward of those endeavors.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 20 January 1795

Hamilton will do better [than Henry Knox in private life]. He is younger and has more Oeconomy. It is Said he refuses all public Employment and goes resolutely to the Bar at New York. He refuses to Stand Candidate for Governor.

George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 2 February 1795

After so long an experience of your public services, I am naturally led, at this moment of your departure from office—which it has always been my wish to prevent—to review them.

In every relation, which you have borne to me, I have found that my confidence in your talents, exertions and integrity, has been well placed. I the more freely render this testimony of my approbation, because I speak from opportunities of information which cannot deceive me, and which furnish satisfactory proof of your title to public regard.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 15 February 1795

It is pompously announced in the Newspapers, that poverty drives him back to the Bar for a livelihood.

James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, Near Baltimore, Md., 17 February 1795

The tempest weathered and landed on the same shore I may now congratulate you upon have established a system of credit and having conducted the affairs of our country upon principles and reasoning which ought to insure its immortality as it undoubtedly will your fame. Few public men have been so eminently fortunate as voluntarily to leave so high a station with so unsullied a character and so well-assured a reputation, and still fewer have so well deserved the gratitude of their

country and the eulogiums of history. Let this console you for past toils and pains, and reconcile you to humble pleasures and a private life. What remains for you having ensured fame but to ensure felicity. Seek for it in the moderate pursuit of your profession, or if public life still flatters in that office most congenial to it, and which will not withdraw you from those literary objects that require no violent waste of spirits, and those little plans that involve gentle exercise and which you can drop or indulge in without injury to your family.

I have built houses, I have cultivated fields, I have planned gardens, I have planted trees, I have written little essays, I have made poetry once a year to please my wife, at times got children and at all times thought myself happy. Why cannot you do the same, for after all if a man is only to acquire fame or distinctions by continued privations and abuse I would incline to prefer a life of privacy and little pleasures.

William Bradford to Alexander Hamilton, Philadelphia, 2 July 1795

It will always give me pleasure to hear from you: & I will endeavor to repay you with what you may consider “as a smack of the Whip.” Yet I hear that you have renounced every thing but your profession—that you will not even pick up money when it lies at your feet, unless it comes in the form of a fee! But it is in vain to kick against the pricks. You were made for a Statesman, & politics will never be out of your head.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Monticello, 21 September 1795

Hamilton is really a colossus to the antirepublican party. Without numbers, he is an host within himself. They have got themselves into a defile, where they might be finished; but too much security on the Republican part, will give time to his talents & indefatigableness to extricate them. We have had only middling performances to oppose him. In truth, when he comes forward, there is nobody but yourself who can meet him. His adversaries having begun the attack, he has the advantage of answering them, & remains unanswered himself. . . . For god’s sake take up your pen, and give a fundamental reply to Curtius & Camillus.

William Heth to Alexander Hamilton, Virginia, 11 January 1796

[Writing in the third person, Heth says] he does not blush to say, that he loves you as a private friend, admires you as an able & most faithful public servant; and venerates you as a Man of most superior talents.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 27 February 1796

Two great Political Questions have been agitated in the supreme Court. One about Virginia Debts paid into the Treasury—the other the Constitutionality of the Carriage Tax. Hamilton argued this last for three hours with his usual Splendor of Talents & Eloquence as they say. In the Course of his argument he said no Man was obliged to pay the Tax. This he knew by Experiment: for after having enjoyed the Pleasure of riding in his Carriage for six years he had been obliged to lay it down and was happy.

Alexander Hamilton to George Washington, New York, 5 September 1796

Had I had *health* enough, it was my intention to have written it [i.e., Washington's farewell Address] over, in which case I could both have improved & abridged. But this is not the case. I seem now to have regularly a period of ill health every summer.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 9 January 1797

Hamilton I know to be a proud Spirited, conceited, aspiring Mortal always pretending to Morality, with as debauched Morals as old Franklin who is more his Model than any one I know. As great an Hypocrite as any in the U.S. His Intrigues in the Election I despise. That he has Talents I admit. But I dread none of them. I shall take no notice of his Puppyhood but retain the same Opinion of him I always had and maintain the Same Conduct towards him I always did, that is keep him at a distance.

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

Mr. [Moses] Black told me the other Day on his return from Boston, that Col. H—— was loosing ground with his Friends in Boston. On what account I inquired. Why for the part he is Said to have acted in the late Election. Aya what was that? Why they say that he tried to keep out both Mr. A——s and J——n, and that he behaved with great Duplicity. He wanted to bring in Pinckney that he himself might be the Dictator—So you See according to the old adage, Murder will out. I despise a Janus tho I do not feel a disposition to rail at or condemn the conduct of those who did not vote for you, because it is my firm belief that if the people had not been imposed upon by false reports and misrepresentations, the vote would have been nearly unanimous—H——n dared not risk his popularity to come out openly in opposition, but he went Secretly cunningly as he thought to work, and as his influence is very great in the N England States, he imposed upon them. [Fisher] Ames you know has been his firm Friend. I do not believe he suspected him, nor [George] Cabot neither whom I believe he play'd upon—[William] Smith of S.C. was Duped by him I suspect.

Beware of that Spair Cassius, has always ocured to me when I have seen that cock Sparrow. O I have read his Heart in his Wicked Eyes many a time the very Devil is in them. They are laciviousness itself, or I have no Skill in Phisiognomy.

Abigail Adams to Charles Adams, Quincy, Mass., 5 February 1797

There is a Character in your state who with all his pretensions to Friendship, took a very ungenerous part in the late Elections. Tho he thought to conceal himself under that Mask, the covering has been Seen through, and his real views and Motives discovered. He may have superiour talents to Jefferson, but he has not half his disinterested Friendship—the Gentleman I mean was not a Candidate for either office. He is one however upon whom I placed my Eye very early, nor do I mean to withdraw it whilst I am an observer. “Beware of that Spair Cassius” this is between ourselves.—

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Philadelphia, 3 January 1798

There has been *one other* Book written by a Gentleman formerly in publick office,* but as I do not wish to circulate scandle, I shall not send it you. I dare Vouch for it, your Brother has had it, or accounts of it.

Some persons have given it the title of “whose’s the Dupe.” Others of a more profigate turn have quoted the old saw, of the greatest sin this side Hell, is first to kiss and then to tell; but confessions have not washd the Ethiopie white, nor at all cleared up the publick transactions, which stood fair and unshaken, by the disclosure of a private Amour, alas—alass—how weak is Humane Nature.

*Alexander Hamilton’s Observations . . . (1797) in which he responded to charges of “improper pecuniary speculation” claiming that he was blackmailed by the husband of his mistress.

Thomas Boylston Adams to Abigail Adams, Berlin, 12 February 1798

The *one other* book to which you allude, has, as you conjectured, already reached us. I hardly know what to say of it, though by the rules of gallantry I should pronounce the hero guilty of a notorious breach therein; for his awkward management and want of address. The *benefit* of telling one’s own story in these cases, is not much to be courted. The *ladies* never forgive *that* crime. It admits of no apology, and whoever is reduced to the extremity of confession must suffer all the consequences of such an offence.—But there are different grades in vice, and in the opinion of *every man*, the outrage of the ex-Secretary upon public decorum, bears no comparison with the behaviour of those who extorted it from him. Has not the man, who has published a book of 406 pages, betrayed confidence also, divulged secrets of State, infinitely momentous in comparison of a paltry amour? Has he not discovered upon every occasion since his return a malign spirit, a base temper, fit only for a Devil or one of the *Illuminati*? What sentiment of honor or morality can possess that man’s mind, that has not pride or generosity enough to sacrifice a resentment to a sense of public good but will rather expose to the enemies of his Country those sacred secrets deposited with him, while he was employed in its service? God be praised there are no more such Ministers from the United States in Europe, nor is there more than *one man* in our Government at home, liable to be seized with the distemper, so common among his neighbors & intimates, that of betraying their Country’s trust.

Timothy Pickering to George Washington, Philadelphia, 6 July 1798

[Considering the appointment of officers to lead the U.S. provisional army.] There is one man who will gladly be *Your Second*; but who will not, I presume, because I think he ought not to be, the Second to any other military commander in the U. States. You too well know Colo. Hamilton’s distinguished ability, energy and fidelity, to apply my remark to any other man. But to ensure his appointment, I apprehend the weight of your opinion may be necessary. From the conversation that I and others have had with the President, there appears to us to be a disinclination to place Colo. Hamilton in what we think is his proper station, and that alone in which we suppose he will serve—the *Second* to You—and the *Chief in your absence*. In any war, and especially in such a war as now impends, a Commander in Chief ought to know and have a confidence in the officers most essential to ensure success to his measures. In a late conversation with the president, I took the liberty to observe that the army in question not being yet raised, the only material object to be contemplated in the early appointment of the Commander in Chief, would be, that he might be consulted, because he ought to be satisfied, in the choice of the principal officers who serve under him.

If any considerations should prevent your taking the command of the army, I deceive myself extremely, if you will not think it should be conferred on Colo. Hamilton, and in this case, it might be equally important as in the former that you should intimate your opinion to the President. Even

Colo. Hamilton's political enemies, I believe, would repose more confidence in him than in any military character that can be placed in competition with him.

George Washington to President John Adams, Mount Vernon, 25 September 1798

It is an invidious task, at all times, to draw comparisons, and I shall avoid it as much as possible; but I have no hesitation in declaring, that if the Public is to be deprived of the Services of Colonel Hamilton in the Military line, that the Post he was destined to fill will not be easily supplied; and that this is the sentiment of the Public, I think I can venture to pronounce. Although Colonel Hamilton has never acted in the character of a General Officer, yet his opportunities, as the principal & most confidential aid of the Commander in chief, afforded him the means of viewing every thing on a larger scale than those whose attentions were confined to Divisions or Brigades; who knew nothing of the correspondences of the Commander in Chief, or of the various orders to, or transactions with, the General Staff of the Army. These advantages, and his having served with usefulness in the Old Congress; in the General Convention; and having filled one of the most important departments of Government with acknowledged abilities and integrity, has placed him on high ground; and made him a conspicuous character in the United States, and even in Europe. To these, as a matter of no small consideration may be added, that as a lucrative practice in the line of his Profession is his most certain dependence, the inducement to relinquish it, must, in some degree, be commensurate. By some he is considered as an ambitious man, and therefore a dangerous one. That he is ambitious I shall readily grant, but it is of that laudable kind which prompts a man to excel in whatever he takes in hand. He is enterprising, quick in his perceptions, and his judgment intuitively great; qualities essential to a great military character, and therefore I repeat, that his loss will be irreparable.

George Cabot to Timothy Pickering, Brookline, Mass., 17 November 1798

I lament with you the misfortune of Knox on his own account, and, I am sorry to add, on that of the public; for already he begins to intimate, though obscurely, that Hamilton is a man of insatiable ambition and not to be trusted.

Alexander Hamilton to Henry Knox, New York, 14 March 1799

. . . my heart advises otherwise and my heart has always been the Master of my Judgment.

James Wilkinson to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 16 August 1799

[Quoting a letter he wrote to James McHenry] "In the mean time permit me to refer you to Col. Hamilton, for his Opinion on the subject, as I consider Him the ablest military Judge of our Country; this opinion is not founded on any personal Intimacy with Col. H. but is the result of information on which I can rely."

John Beckley to Ephraim Kirby, 25 October 1799

The turbulent and intriguing spirit of Alexander Hamilton, has again manifested itself, in an insidious publication to defeat Mr. Adams's election, and in a labored effort to belittle the character of the president, he has in no small degree belittled his own. Vainly does he essay to seize the mantle of Washington, and cloak the moral atrocities of a life spent in wickedness and which must

terminate in shame and dishonor. His career of ambition is passed, and neither honor or empire will ever be his. As a political nullity, he has inflicted upon himself the sentence of “*Aut Caesar, aut Nullus.*”*

*Either Caesar or nothing; either first or nothing.

Alexander Hamilton to Elizabeth Hamilton, Albany, N.Y., 16 January 1800

It is absolutely necessary to me when absent to hear frequently of you and my dear Children. While all other passions decline in me, those of love and friendship gain new strength. It will be more and more my endeavor to abstract myself from all pursuits which interfere with those of Affection. Tis here only I can find true pleasure. In this I know your good and kind heart responses to mine.

Philadelphia *Aurora*, 1 March 1800

. . . after he became governor Mr. [Henry] Lee in his free suavid mode soon forgot his political enmity—Hamilton *never* forgets.

James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, War Department, Washington, 31 May 1800

[Recollections of a conversation between Secretary of War McHenry and President John Adams on May 5, 1800] President Adams: Hamilton is an intrigant—the greatest intrigant in the World—a man devoid of every moral principle—a Bastard, and as much a foreigner as Gallatin. Mr. Jefferson is an infinitely better man, a wiser one, I am sure, and, if President, will act wisely. I know it, and would rather be Vice President under him, or even Minister Resident at the Hague, than indebted to such a being as Hamilton for the Presidency.

William North to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 15 June 1800

To you, my dear General, all eyes, look, & on you, everything will depend in a great measure, & as you are amongst the saints, it will not be improper to cite a text of scripture, “Be wise as serpents harmless as doves.” Your head is always right, I would, your heart was a little less susceptible. I pray you, when it is about to carry you out of the direct path, you will, like the deacons & Select men, throw a cloak over your shoulders.

You will consider this as a letter, not from an adjutant General to his Commander in chief, but from a citizen, a plain, private Citizen, who is anxious for the welfare of his country, & for the personal happiness of the man who under heaven, he hopes will one day, save that country from ruin.

John Rutledge, Jr., to Alexander Hamilton, Newport, R.I., 17 July 1800

I find the people in general very much devoted to Mr. Adams, from the mere circumstance I believe of his being an eastern man, & at the same time jealous & suspicious of you in the extreme.

James McHenry to Alexander Hamilton, Baltimore, Md., 4 September 1800

I sincerely believe that there is not one of your friends who have paid the least attention to the insinuations attempted to be cast on the legitimacy of your birth, or who would care or respect you

less were all that your enemies say or impune on this head true. I think it will be most prudent and magnanimous to leave any explanation on the subject to your biographer, and the discretion of those friends to whom you have communicated the facts.

Jedidiah Morris to Oliver Wolcott, Jr., 27 October 1800

The division among the Federalists, occasioned by the unfortunate Mission to France, & greatly increased by subsequent & corresponding measures, is a most serious calamity; & what will be the issue cannot be foreseen. Gen. Hamilton's Letter on the conduct & character of the President, which is circulating (rather privately however) among us, I fear will not mitigate, but increase the evil. It will administer *oil* rather than *water* to the fire. I can only lament (as I do most sincerely) the conduct that provoked the publication, & the too great warmth that dictated some parts of it. Of the patriotism & integrity of Genl. H. I have never entertained a doubt. He has talents of which any country might well be proud—but of his *prudence* in a former publication, & in the present, many good men will have their doubts. . . . But in such cases, & concerning such a man, it will be a long time before the body of the people will form a correct judgment.

George Cabot to Alexander Hamilton, Brookline, Mass., 29 November 1800

I am *bound* to tell you that you are accused by respectable men of Egotism, & some very worthy & sensible men say you have exhibited the same *vanity* in your book which you charge as a dangerous quality & great weakness in Mr. Adams.

John Adams to Uzal Ogden, Washington, 3 December 1800

I have received this evening your favor of the 26 Nov. with the pamphlet inclosed. I have run it over in more haste, than it was written in, but am so far possessed of its purport, as to be better pleased that it was written in 20 hours, than if it had been the elaborate production of a week; because it shews the first impressions of the writer, upon reading the pamphlet it is an answer. This last pamphlet, I regret more on the account of its author, than on my own, because I am confident, it will do him more harm than me. I am not his enemy & never was. I have not adored him, like his idolators, & have had great cause to disapprove of some of his politicks. He has talents, if he would correct himself, which might be useful. There is more burnish however on the outside than standing silver in the substance. He threatened his Master Washington some times with pamphlets upon his character & conduct and Washington who had more regard to his reputation than I have, I say it with humility and mortification, might be restrained by his threats, but I dread neither his menaces of pamphlets nor the execution of them. It would take a large volume to answer him compleatly. I have not time & if I had, I would not employ it in such a work, while I am in public office. The public indignation he has excited is punishment enough. I thank you Sir for this valuable present. I shall preserve it for my children.

John Adams to William Tudor, Sr., Washington, 13 December 1800

The Election of Mr Jefferson is not So wonderfull to me, as that of Mr Burr. That he should have the Same Number of Votes with Mr Jefferson, Shews the astonishing force and Energy of Party Spirit. Mr Hamilton has carried his Eggs to a fine Markett. The very Man the very two Men, of all the World, that he was most jealous of, are now placed over him.

Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 31 December 1800

The current of public opinion still sets strongly against the discretion of Hamilton's late letter respecting the character and conduct of Mr. Adams. I do not believe it has altered a single vote in the late election. . . . The influence however of this letter upon Hamilton's character is extremely unfortunate. An opinion has grown out of it, which at present obtains almost universally, that his character is *radically deficient in discretion*, and therefore the Federalists ask, what avail the most preeminent talents—the most distinguished patriotism—without the all important quality of discretion? Hence he is considered as an unfit head of the party—and we are in fact without a rallying point.

Gouverneur Morris to Alexander Hamilton, Washington, 5 January 1801

You who are temperate in drinking have never perhaps noticed the awkward Situation of a Man who continues to be sober after the Company are drunk.

John Quincy Adams to William Vans Murray, Berlin, 27 January 1801

As for the man, I too have always had a very high opinion of his talents and of his services. His system of finance I did consider as more complicated than was necessary, and the purity of his principles from frailties of *ambition* as not absolutely unquestionable. The rancor and the baseness of the means exerted against him by his enemies and rivals gave his merit an additional value and a stronger claim to support. Perhaps these rivals hurt in a way even unexpected to themselves. Perhaps by using infamous weapons against him they habituated his mind to consider the employment of them as warrantable. This degradation of soul, which you so justly describe in one of your late letters as the too natural result of our newspaper electioneering altercations, is to such a character as Hamilton's a greater injury, than all the charges that envy or malice under the mask of public spirit were ever able to conjure against him.

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 22 April 1801

I see the little General has been spouting in NYork, but notwithstanding his proffers he will mar the cause he wishes to defend, in vain may he strive to tread back the path he has wandered from; he and his associates have merritted all they feel and all they fear.

Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 9 April 1802

Hamilton is closely pursuing the law, and I have at length succeeded in making him somewhat mercenary. I have known him latterly to dun his clients for money, and in settling an account with me the other day, he reminded me that I had received a fee for him in settling a question referred to him and me jointly. These indications of regard to property give me hopes that we shall not be obliged to raise a subscription to pay for his funeral expenses.

Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 6 June 1802

The fatigue occasioned by the constant sitting of our courts exhausted us all very much. I find that Hamilton's health, notwithstanding the quickness and enormous strength of his mind, is impairing, as well as mine. This man's mind, by the by, seems to be progressing to greater and greater

maturity; such is the common opinion of our bar; and I may say with truth that his powers are now enormous! and the only chance we have of success is now and then when he happens to be on the weaker side: and yet he is always complaining that he does not get his share of judgments and decrees!

Robert Troup to Rufus King, New York, 24 August 1802

No mortal can yet calculate the present state of public opinion. Federalism is looking up. At the last 4th of July the toasts everywhere given prove that Hamilton is regaining that general esteem and confidence, which he seems to have lost, and his standing is very much our political thermometer.

Rufus King to Christopher Gore, New York, 20 November 1803

Hamilton is at the head of his profession, and in the annual receipt of a handsome income. He lives wholly at his house 9 miles from town so that on an average he must spend three hours a day on the road going and returning between his house and town, which he performs four or five days each week. I don't perceive that he meddles or feels much concerning Politics. He has formed very decided opinions of our System as well as of our administration, and as the one and the other has the voice of the country, he has nothing to do but to prophecy!

Benjamin Rush: Commonplace Book, 12 July 1804

Died of a wound received in a duel the day before from Col. Burr, Alexander Hamilton, Esq., the Aid of Washington in the field and his principal councillor in the Cabinet while President of the United States. He was learned, ingenious, and eloquent, and the object of universal admiration and attachment of one party, and of hatred of the other party which then constituted the American people. He was greatly and universally lamented. Funeral orations were delivered in honor of him in New York and Boston, and funeral sermons were preached upon his death in many churches. Mourning was worn for him by many of the citizens of the principal cities and towns in the United States.

George Cabot to John Lowell, Boston, 18 July 1804

Newspapers of the day . . . will announce and explain to you the public misfortune experienced here by the untimely death of Hamilton. You know how well his friends loved him, and all esteemed him. You can therefore judge of the general sensibility at his death. I have always thought his virtues surpassed those of other men almost as his talents. His errors, unfortunately for the country, were conspicuous, and diminished his influence, which otherwise would have been irresistible, and was always directed to the noblest purposes. All reflecting men seem now to be sensible that he was our *hope* in the crisis to which our affairs necessarily drive us.

John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 19 July 1804

We have now seen the correspondence between Mr: Burr, and General Hamilton, which led to their fatal meeting, and I am fully confirmed in the opinion I had entertained of the transaction before—Mr: Burr began by making a demand of General Hamilton, which he must have known Hamilton could not, and ought not to answer—To make the matter more sure, he couched the

demand in terms at which a much cooler man than Hamilton must have spurned—The substance was so vague and indefinite, as to render impossible the very avowal or disavowal it affected to require—The form was studied to provoke and insult, by an assumption of superiority, which a man of Spirit could not submit to. Hamilton saw through the artifice, and yet had not a sufficient controul over his own passions, or a sufficient elevation over the prejudices of the world to parry it—Had he omitted half a line in his first answer, which must be considered as inviting a challenge, I see nothing on his part of the correspondence, against which any reasonable objection can be raised—

Hannah Cushing to Abigail Adams, Scituate, Mass., 29 August 1804

How shall we be able to get along since H—— is dead? & some say died as a Fool dieth.

Abigail Adams to Hannah Cushing, Quincy, Mass., 1 September 1804

Altho I do not wear crape I rejoice not in the fall of a Man who possest talents & was capable of rendering himself highly serviceable to the Country—He had merrited their praise and their gratitude—God only knows whether it was in Mercy or in judgement that he is taken away—but I believe the sun will rise as bright and benign and diffuse its Blessing as equally now as before—I believe the Seasons will perform their annual round tho Hamilton Sleeps in the grave and that should pressing occasion call for Heroes & Statesmen & patriots, we shall find them springing into Life and activity as we have before—there is more danger to our Country from the divisions and parties into which it is split, and the innovations which are made upon the constitution, than from the death of any one Man however Brilliant his tallents or distinguishd his abilities—I hope after assumeing to ourselves the Epithet of most *Enlightned Country*, it will not be intirely shorn of its beams because one Star has fallen Surely we must have had very small pretentions if shrowded with darkness visible, and coverd over with Gloom and despair we Sink under the weighty fall of one Man If there was much to praise—their was also much to pardon and forgive Why then Idolize a man, who showd on many occasions that he was a frail weak man subdued by his passions, against his solemn vows and obligations, that he was a vain ambitious Man aspiring to Govern where it was his duty to submit, that he dareingly insulted the Authority whose station he knew forbid him to reply or Retaliate—

Why deceive the public and give that which is more than due, and leave nothing to bestow upon fairer and purer Characters? but he was the Idol of a party, a party who have injured their cause and their Country more than Hamilton ever served it. By some these opinions would be calld un-candid and resentfull—I am willing to allow him all he deserved, but you Madam know that my opinion is founded upon facts, and has truth for its basis.

John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 2 September 1804

Your observation that all resentments ought to be buried in the grave, are at once indicative of a good heart and a sound understanding—I am so far from extending any animosities further than this life, that I cannot harbour them for any length of time against the living—But the estimate of a man's character and temper is one thing—forming such an estimate upon grounds of hatred or malice is another—The man who has injured me, I can sincerely and heartily forgive—But if he has injured me without provocation, and without atonement, I can never view him as deserving marks of *honour*, *esteem*, or *affection*, living or dead—To join in any such marks would be a

species of hypocrisy to which I cannot descend.—The inky cloak, and customary suits of solemn black, says Hamlet do but *seem*—for they are what a man may put upon—Now I think that these ought not to be assumed, when a man has not that within which passes Show—Upon this principle I refused to wear crape last Winter, for S. Adams, and old Pendleton—Upon the same principle I would neither wear crape nor join in a funereal procession for Hamilton—I had no respect for the man—Of old Pendleton I knew very little, and that little was not to his honour—Adams and Hamilton neither of them had ever personally offended me, but one of them had betrayed a sacred trust of my father, and the other had slandered him in a lying pamphlet, besides innumerable other injuries to another near connection—Could *I* have united in testimonials of *reverence*, of *admiration*, of *gratitude* to such men without being myself a traitor and a liar?—In my opinion I could not.

In saying this I hope you will not consider me as intolerant.—I have great respect for many of the characters who have gone the farthest in this posthumous idolatry of Hamilton—To mention only Mr. Ames, whose eulogy you have doubtless seen, and admired; there are few men in the world whom I more truly esteem, and respect than Ames—I am persuaded he firmly believed in all the hyperboles he has lavished upon his memory—But if Ames will believe in political transubstantiation I have no objection—I must only decline adopting his creed—My belief of Hamilton is that he was a man of considerable, but overrated abilities, openly and scandalously vicious in his private character, and of views and projects worse than equivocal as a public man—This opinion of mine, as he says of that he entertained of Burr, may be erroneous, but is not taken up on light grounds—I could produce glaring facts for every word of it—His tragical end, I lament as much as any man—The distress of his family, I feel for in common with the warmest of his friends; But in very deed I do not think he was either a demi-god or a Saint.

John Adams: Autobiography

Of Hamilton, when he came into the General's Family I need say nothing. For my Part I never heard of him till after the Peace, and the Evacuation of the City of New York. The World has heard enough of him since. His Petulance, Impertinence and Impudence, will make too great a figure in these memories hereafter. . . .

Here again the Honesty of Hamilton appears. The Articles of War and the Institution of the Army during the War, were all my Work, and yet he represents me as an Enemy to a regular Army. Although I have long since forgiven this Arch Enemy, yet Vice, Folly and Villainy are not to be forgotten, because the guilty Wretch repented, in his dying Moments. Although David repented, We are no where commanded to forget the Affair of Uriah: though the Magdalene reformed, We are not obliged to forget her former *Vocation*: though the Thief on the cross was converted, his Felony is still upon Record. The Prodigal Son repented and was forgiven, yet his Harlots and riotous living, and even the Swine and the husks that brought him to consideration, cannot be forgotten. Nor am I obliged by any Principles of Morality or Religion to suffer my Character to lie under infamous Calumnies, because the Author of them, with a Pistol Bullet through his Spinal Marrow, died a Penitent. Charity requires that We should hope and believe that his humiliation was sincere, and I hope he was forgiven: but I will not conceal his former Character at the Expense of so much Injustice to my own, as this Scottish Creolian Bolingbroke in the days of his disappointed Ambition and unbridled Malice and revenge, was pleased falsely to attempt against it. Born on a Speck more obscure than Corsica, from an Original not only contemptible but infamous, with infinitely less courage and Capacity than Bonaparte, he would in my Opinion, if I had not controlled the fury of his Vanity, instead of relieving this Country from Confusion as Bonaparte

did France, he would have involved it in all the Bloodshed and distractions of foreign and civil War at once.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 7 July 1805

Every state in the union has a party . . . who are still Englishmen in their hearts and will afford a mere American no support. These factions . . . have made it a fixed principle all along to hunt down every true American and every revolutionary character as soon as they possibly could and get them out of their way. They were all, in one of these parties, taught to turn their eyes for this purpose upon that Scottish Creole, Alexander Hamilton, as their head, and what he was to do with them or what they were to do with him I will not at present conjecture; but I have an opinion which may one day be developed. Probably it went no further than an alliance with England and an alienation from France, without well considering what must have been the necessary effect of such a plan.

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

You have revealed a Secret, in your letter which will unriddle the whole Mystery. I never knew nor suspected a Fact you mention. It was always represented and insinuated that Hamilton composed the Address to the Governors. He had the Credit of it, most certainly. He was reported to have often threatened Washington to expose his Character and Conduct in Pamphlets: and to have said that Washington would do well to take care, for the most popular of his productions was not his own. By this insinuation it was always understood by me and all others, that Hamilton himself had been the Author of all his most popular measures. Where was Hamilton, when the address of Newburgh was composed? If that vain intriguing Scotchman knew that you and Humphreys were concerned in that Composition, he must have dreaded you, as the most dangerous Rival, and this is enough to answer your question why you was neglected the whole eight years of Washington's Administration. For never did there exist a little Turk, so intollerant of every brother near the throne. To every Man who stood in his way, in his furious pursuit of his Object, which was to be perpetual dictator in [—] States he was a mortal Enemy. Of me, he was so jealous, that he began his intrigues to supplant and undermine me as early as 1788 or 1789, as I have since learned, though to my face he pretended a warm friendship, and ever in public he often expressed great respect. I could give a curious History in detail, in relation to this Subject. He was jealous of North, jealous of Humphreys, jealous of Smith, and now I am convinced jealous of you. His Jealousy of Burr cost him his life, and I wonder as Hamilton and Burr were both proficient Duelists, that he did not fall a Sacrifice much sooner to his immeasurable Calumnies against Burr for fifteen years. I have closed by lips has you have done: but I will not always. I know his intrigues against Burr and his slanders of him, better than Burr himself does. And if you desire to know more of them I may hereafter relate them to you.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 23 August 1805

You rank Colonel Hamilton among the Revolutionary characters. But why? The Revolution had its beginning, its middle, and its end before he had anything to do in public affairs. Col. Reed, Col. Harrison, and Mr. Edmund Randolph were secretaries to general Washington before Hamilton was in his family. . . . I never knew that such a man or boy was in his suite, nor did I ever hear the

name of Hamilton till after the evacuation of New York [November 1783]; this boy came forward a bawling advocate for the Tories. . . .

You say that Washington and Hamilton are idolized by the Tories. Hamilton is; Washington is not. To speak the truth, they puffed Washington like an air balloon to raise Hamilton into the air. Their preachers, their orators, their pamphlets and newspapers have spoken out and avowed publicly since Hamilton's death what I very well knew to be in their hearts for many years before, viz: that Hamilton was everything and Washington but a name. . . .

Hamilton's talents have been greatly exaggerated. His knowledge of the great subjects of coin and commerce and their intimate connections with all departments of every government, especially such as are so elective as ours, was very superficial and imperfect. He had derived most of his information from [William] Duer, who was a brother-in-law of Mr. Rose, the deputy secretary of the treasury under Mr. Pitt. Duer had long been secretary to the board of treasury. [Arthur] Lee, [Samuel] Osgood, and [Walter] Livingston were all men of abilities and kept the books of the treasury in good order. . . . [Oliver] Wolcott's indefatigable industry with a seven year's experience at the Connecticut pay table came in aid of Hamilton and Duer, so that I see no extraordinary reason for so much exclusive glory to Hamilton.

Gouverneur Morris to Aaron Ogden, 28 December 1805

Our poor friend Hamilton bestrode his hobby [i.e., a monarchical government], to the great annoyance of his friends and not without injury to himself. More a theoretic than a practical man, he was not sufficiently convinced that a system may be good in itself and bad in relation to particular circumstances. He well knew that his favorite form was inadmissible, unless as the result of civil war, and I suspect that his belief in that which he called an approaching crisis arose from a conviction that the kind of government most suitable, in his opinion, to this extensive country, could be established in no other way.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 25 January 1806

Although I read with tranquility and suffered to pass without Animadversion, in silent contempt, the base insinuations of Vanity, and a hundred lies besides published in a Pamphlet against me, by an insolent Coxcomb, who rarely dined in good Company where there was good wine, without getting silly, and vapouring about his Administration, like a young Girl about her brilliants and trinkets: Yet I lose all Patience, when I think of a bastard brat of a Scotch Pedler, daring to threaten to undeceive the World in their Judgment of Washington, by writing a history of his battles and Campaigns. This Creature was in a delirium of Ambition; he had been blown up with Vanity by the Tories, had fixed his Eye on the highest station in America, and he hated every Man young or old, who stood in his Way, or could in any manner eclipse his laurels or rival his Pretensions, Col Smith Coll Burr Mr Jay, Mr Madison Mr Jefferson Adams and Washington were but a part of those who were envied by him.

William Plumer Memorandum, 15 March 1806

That Hamilton was a great man—a great lawyer—a man of integrity—very ambitious—& was very anxious to effect, that ruinous measure, a *consolidation of the States*.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, Quincy, Mass., 11 November 1806

The very same principle that influences a bully, to break the Windows of a whore that has jilted him, naturally stirs up a great Prince to raise mighty Armies, and dream of nothing but sieges, battles and Victories. In this plan I cannot avoid introducing a reflection by Way of digression. What a pity it is that our Congress had not known this discovery, and that Alexander Hamilton's project of raising an Army of fifty thousand Men, ten thousand of them to be Cavalry and his projectes of Sedition Laws and Alien Laws and of new Taxes to support his army, all arose from a superabundance of secretions which he could not find Whores enough to draw off? and that the same Vapours produced his Lyes and Slanders by which he totally destroyed his party forever and finally lost his Life in the field of honor.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, September 1807

Hamilton had great disadvantages. His origin was infamous; his place of birth and education were foreign countries; his fortune was poverty itself; the profligacy of his life—his fornications, adulteries, and his incests—were propagated far and wide. Nevertheless, he “affich'd” disinterestedness as boldly as Washington. His myrmidons asserted it with as little shame, though not a man of them believed it. All the rest of the world ridiculed and despised the pretext. He had not, therefore, the same success. Yet he found means to fascinate some and intimidate others. You and I know him also to have been an intriguer.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 25 February 1808

At the time of Hamilton's death, the Federal papers avowed that Hamilton was the soul and Washington the body, or in other words that Washington was the painted wooden head of the ship and Hamilton the pilot and steersman.

Benjamin Rush to John Adams, Philadelphia, 13 July 1808

I have lately heard that a life of General Hamilton is preparing for the press. It will consist of many documents which will throw light upon the councils of the army and government of the United States during the time Mr. Hamilton acted as aide-de-camp and secretary of the treasury under General Washington. One of Hamilton's friends said in my presence a few days ago, “the intended publication would show General W. to be a *good* man but General Hamilton to be a *great* man.” Let this work end as it will, I shall continue to believe that “great men are a lie, and mean men vanity,”* and that there is very little difference in that superstition which leads us to believe in what the world call “great men” and in that which leads us to believe in witches and conjurors.

*Psalms 62:9.

William Cunningham to John Adams, Fitchburg, Mass., 31 March 1809

Should you object to my opinion the splenetic ebullitions of the “Libeller,” Hamilton, I should not be disposed to retract nor even to retrench it. I have no disposition to depreciate the talents of Hamilton—had they been greater, the invectives in his “Letter” could not have been sharpened by them. They so evidently originated in disappointment and chagrin, and were so palpably dictated by pride and pique, that they rather excite the sorrow which is felt on hearing the ravings of the

disordered, than set in the judgment the doubts which can be made to spring from an ingenuous and sober disquisition.

John Adams: To the *Boston Patriot*, Quincy, Mass., 29 May 1809

Mr. Hamilton's imagination was always haunted by that hedious monster or phantom, so often called a *Crisis* and which so often produces imprudent measures. . . . Mr. Hamilton knew no more of the sentiments and feelings of the people of America, than he did of those of the inhabitants of one of the planets.

William Cunningham to John Adams, Fitchburg, Mass., 30 June 1809

Soon after Governour Jay's return from his last embassy to Europe, I dined with him, at his house in New-York, with a large party, of whom Hamilton was one. The Gov. when Mr. Hamilton withdrew, spoke of the estimation in which he was held in Europe, and said, that he was the first in fame there of the Americans; and he gave his opinion, very freely, that the talents of Hamilton were not overrated.

Henry Guest to John Adams, New Brunswick, N.J., 25 August 1809

I have seen some restrictions on your notice of Hamilton but, in my opinion, it would take your keenest pen to come up to the conduct of that designing, crafty, and wicked man, and, although I am no advocate for dwelling, I thought it a happy matter for our country that half an ounce of lead had given him his Quietus—

John Adams to Henry Guest, Quincy, Mass., 5 September 1809

I agree with you that before the "half ounce of Lead pierced his Spine" as far as I know, he was "a crafty designing and wicked Man." After that the Clergy tell Us he was converted. God grant it may be true. I hope he repented and was pardoned. But Saint Paul himself never thought proper to conceal his Character before his Conversion.—

Hamilton had great Activity in Intrigue, and was capable of close Application to Study and to Business for a time. But his Plans were ill digested and his Designs were very far from being directed to the Publick Good of this Country. At least this is the Sincere opinion of your good Friend.

William Cunningham to John Adams, Fitchburg, Mass., 9 September 1809

"Integrity," as I used the term in application to Hamilton, was not to be understood in the common acceptation. In that acceptation it barely rises to a virtue, for it is wholly equivocal, whether it be the effect of any innate goodness, or produced by the restraints of law, and by calculations of advantage; considerations which keep many knaves from the crimes of "theft, burglary, robbery and housebreaking," and which give to such a suspicious anxiety to shine in the varnish of an opposite reputation. But of all the qualities of a virtuous soul, pure *integrity* is the brightest—it takes no counsel from human law, nor from even the common propensities of our nature; the perfection from which it emanated, is its sole example and security—of this divine virtue, you have shewed me that Hamilton was totally destitute.

John Adams to Joseph Ward, Quincy, Mass., 27 September 1809

Hamilton was indeed a most fortunate and a most unfortunate Man. He had Talents and insinuating qualities; but he was a crafty designing Man with more Ambition than Principle, more Enterprize than Judgment.

Benjamin Stoddert to John Adams, Bladensburg, Md., 12 October 1809

As to Genl. Hamilton—I scarcely knew him—and perhaps my crime as to him, was, that thō believing highly of the brilliancy of his talents, & of his sincere Patriotism, and honorable principles, I never entertained a very exalted opinion of his discretion, or the solidity of his Judgment—and always thought it an unfortunate circumstance, for the Federal party, & of course, for the Country, (for I believe the views of that party have always been directed to the best Interests of the Country) that the opinions of this gentleman were deemed so Oracular.

Joseph Ward to John Adams, Boston, 27 November 1809

Hamilton’s political error, was ambition, and nothing blinds the mind like that passion, when it is strong; and it was fanned in his breast by the excessive flattery of too many who perhaps expected to rise by elevating him. But he is no more; and his pamphlet, which you have publickly noticed, is wrote down; and perhaps farther notice of it, might be viewed as a stoop; or serve to establish an exaggerated opinion of his potency.

Thomas Jefferson to Joel Barlow, Monticello, 24 January 1810

The dissensions between two members of the Cabinet are to be lamented. But why should these force Mr. Gallatin to withdraw? They cannot be greater than between Hamilton and myself, and yet we served together four years in that way. We had indeed no personal dissensions. Each of us, perhaps, thought well of the other as a man, but as politicians it was impossible for two men to be of more opposite principles.

Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Rush, Monticello, 16 January 1811

I received a letter from President Washington, then at Mount Vernon, desiring me to call together the Heads of departments, and to invite Mr. Adams to join us in order to determine on some measure which required despatch; and he desired me to act on it, as decided, without again recurring to him. I invited them to dine with me, and after dinner, sitting at our wine, having settled our question, other conversation came on, in which a collision of opinion arose between Mr. Adams and Colonel Hamilton, on the merits of the British constitution, Mr. Adams giving it as his opinion, that, if some of its defects and abuses were corrected, it would be the most perfect constitution of government ever devised by man. Hamilton, on the contrary, asserted, that with its existing vices, it was the most perfect model of government that could be formed; and that the correction of its vices would render it an impracticable government. And this you may be assured was the real line of difference between the political principles of these two gentlemen. Another incident took place on the same occasion, which will further delineate Mr. Hamilton’s political principles. The room being hung around with a collection of the portraits of remarkable men, among them were those of Bacon, Newton and Locke, Hamilton asked me who they were. I told him they were my trinity of the three greatest men the world had ever produced, naming them. He paused for some time:

“the greatest man,” said he, “that ever lived, was Julius Caesar.” Mr. Adams was honest as a politician, as well as a man; Hamilton honest as a man, but, as a politician, believing in the necessity of either force or corruption to govern man.

Gouverneur Morris to Robert Walsh, 5 February 1811

Speaking of General Hamilton, he had little share in forming the Constitution. He disliked it, believing all republican government to be radically defective. He admired, nevertheless, the British constitution, which I consider as an aristocracy in fact, though a monarchy in name. General Hamilton hated republican government; and he detested the latter, because he believed it must end in despotism, and, be in the mean time, destructive to public morality. He believed that our administration would be enfeebled progressively at every new election, and become at last contemptible. He apprehended that the minions of faction would sell themselves and their country as soon as foreign powers should think it worth while to make the purchase. In short, his study of ancient history impressed on his mind a conviction that democracy, ending in tyranny, is, while it lasts, a cruel and oppressing domination. One marked trait of the General’s character was the pertinacious adherence to opinions he had once formed. From his situation in early life, it was not to be expected that he should have a fellow-feeling with those who idly supposed themselves to be the natural aristocracy of this country. In maturer age, his observation and good sense demonstrated that the materials for an aristocracy do not exist in America; wherefore, taking the people as a mass in which there was nothing of family, wealth, prejudice, or habit to raise a permanent mound of distinction. . . .

. . . General Hamilton was of that kind of man which may most safely be trusted; for he was more covetous of glory than of wealth or power. But he was of all men the most indiscreet. He knew that a limited monarchy, even if established, could not preserve itself in this country. He knew, also, that it could not be established, because there is not the regular gradation of ranks among our citizens which is essential to that species of government, and he very well knew that no monarchy whatever could be established but by the mob. When a multitude of indigent, profligate people can be collected and organized, their envy of wealth, talents, and reputation will induce them to give themselves a master, provided that, in so doing, they can mortify and humble their superiors. But there is no instance to prove, and it is, indeed, flatly absurd to suppose, that the upper ranks of society will, by setting up a king, put down themselves. Fortunately for us, no such mass of people can be collected in America. None such exists. But although General Hamilton knew these things, from the study of history, he never failed, on every occasion, to advocate the excellence of and avow his attachment to monarchical government. By this course he not only cut himself off from the views of his opponents, who, with the fondness for wealth and power which he had not, affected a love for the people which he had and which they had not. Thus, meaning very well, he acted very ill, and approached the evils he apprehended by his very solicitude to keep them at a distance.

James McHenry to Timothy Pickering, Near Baltimore, Md., 23 February 1811

Mr. Adams, for reasons best known to himself, endeavors to represent General Hamilton as a man without fair pretensions to sound judgments or useful talents, a visionary politician consumed by indelicate pleasures and a censurable ambition. . . . As to their minds abstractly considered, Hamilton’s was profound, penetrating, and invariably sound, and his genius of that rare kind which enlightens the judgment without misleading it; the mind of Mr. Adams, like the last glimmering

of a lamp, feeble, wavering, and unsteady, with occasionally a strong flash of light, his genius little, and that little insufficient to irradiate his judgment.

Benjamin Waterhouse to John Adams, Cambridge, Mass., 8 July 1811

What I long to see, above all things is an exposition of what I call the *Hamiltonian conspiracy*. Whether I am perfectly correct I know not, but my general idea is this. The British party, or Tories, have long contemplated a separation of the States, & a formation of a *Northern confederacy*, the end and aim of which was to be opposition to France & to the Southern States, and a sort of alliance with England. Old England was to hold one end of the *golden chain* of commerce, & Newfoundland the other, while the Devil and Bonaparte were to take our Southern brethren. Fisher Ames gave a toast in a certain assemblage several years ago indicating Hamilton as the military leader of this Kingdom of the North. His sentiment was to this effect.—Alexr. H——. may we not speedily want his great military & political talents, but when we do, *may we have them*. When Burr shot Hamilton, it was not Brutus killing Caesar in the Senate-house; but it was killing him before he passed the Rubicon. Hence the anguish, the deep anguish of Geo. C——t & company at their Caesar's death. Whether his plan of 50,000 foot & 10,000 horse was not a part of the scheme is a question I am not able to answer; but certain I am that their extreme disappointment at his death, which amounted to an agony could not have arisen from a mere personal feeling, nor for the loss of his financeering talents. This intriguing West Indian saw in the same city one man who watched his motions, & who was capable of counteracting his plans, & the designs of his party; and this man he tried to destroy by the poisoned arrows of calumny, but (providentially for us) was destroyed himself, and with him fell, for that time, the hope of the *Northern Confederacy*.—Hence we may account for his bust staring us in the face in the entries of some of our professors & clergymen! Washington himself is not spoken of in such terms of deep respect as is this New York lawyer! and your animadversions upon him in your printed correspondence created more disagreeable sensations than if you had spoken as much against Washington. How is all this to be accounted for, if it were not for the loss of their contemplated military leader?

John Adams to Benjamin Waterhouse, Quincy, Mass., 12 July 1811

If there ever was an “Hamiltonian Conspiracy” as you call it; and as you seem to suppose: I have reason to think its object was not “a Northern Confederation.” Hamiltons Ambition was too large for so small an Aim. He aimed at commanding the whole Union, and He did not like to be Shackled even with an Alliance with G. Britain. I know that Pickering was disappointed in not finding Hamilton zealous for an Alliance with England, when We were at Swords Points with France; and I have information, which I believe, but could not legally prove perhaps, that Pickering was mortified to find that neither Hamilton nor King would adopt the Plan that he carried from Boston, in his Way to Congress after he was first chosen into the Senate, of a division of the States and a Northern Confederacy. No! H. had wider Views! If he could have made a Tool of Adams as he did of Washington, he hoped to erect such a Government as he pleased over the whole Union, and enter Alliance with France or England as would Suit his Convenience.

H. and Burr, in point of Ambition were equal. In Principle equal. In Talents different: H. superior in Litterary Talents: B. in military. H. a Nevis Adventurer. B. descended from the earliest, most learned Pious and virtuous of our American Nation, and buoyed up by the Prejudices of half the Nation. He found himself thwarted, persecuted, calumniated by a wandering Stranger. The deep Malice of H. against Bur, and his indefatigable Exertions to defame him are little known. I

know so much of it for a Course of Years, that I wondered a Duel had not taken Place Seven Years before it did. I could have produced such a Duel at any Moment for Seven Years. I kept the Secrets Sacred and inviolable: and have kept them to this day.

John Adams to Benjamin Rush, 28 August 1811

If I should inculcate fidelity to the marriage bed, it would be said, that it proceeded from resentment to General Hamilton and a malicious desire to hold up to posterity his libertinism.

John Adams to the Printers of the *Boston Patriot*, June 1812

The Truth is, that Hamilton's soul was corroded by that mordant sublimated Spirit of Ambition, that subjugates every Thing to its own Interest; and considers every Man of superior Age and merit, or who had the reputation of superior merit, as its Enemy. . . .

. . . But it seems my "Personal Friends" "disparaged" his "motives" from another Topic, namely by calling him a "Factious Spirit," a "versatile Spirit," who could not be long satisfied with any Chief however meritorious.

Really, if I should believe this to be true, I must take Mr. Hamilton's Word for it. I never knew that I had such "personal Friends." I never knew that I had any Friends who had so much sagacity as to penetrate this Truth, or so much fortitude as to declare it. I will say nothing of the "factious Spirit." Let Posterity judge. Let the World judge. But "a versatile Spirit" he cannot be called, unless in an hypocritical sense. His invariable object was the head of this Nation, whether as President, as Monarch, or as Despot with an Army of Conscripts at his heels. "Empire! Empire! Empire! Let that Word make sacred all I do or can attempt." This was his whole creed, theological, philosophical, moral, political and civil. From this Principle, which in my opinion was his only Principle, he scorned and defamed Washington, whenever Washington would not be his Tool, from this Principle he calumniated Burr, with a cool deliberate, insidious, persevering malice, the parallel of which I never knew, and which finally cost him his life. From this Principle, he libeled Adams. From this Principle he calumniated every Man who stood before him, every Man who stood on equal ground with him, and every Man who was after him near enough, to have a probability or possibility of coming up with him. From this Principle he gave the go by to Mr. Jay, by propagating the Idea that he was a "degraded Character" and became a religious "Fanatick." He could not surely be called "a versatile Spirit." My "personal Friends" were in an error; quite mistaken, if they called him a "versatile Spirit." His object was invariable, not versatile, viz. Supreme Power; his means were invariably the same, viz. Libels, lies and slanders, therefore certainly not versatile. . . .

. . . This was so precisely the Character of Hamilton, that every Man above him, every man on a line with him, and every man below him, who could be suspected by him of a possibility of a competition with him for the highest Power, was sure to be blasphemed blasted and persecuted by himself and his Friends. . . .

. . . Hamilton had no more gratitude than a Cat. If you give a hungry famished Cat a slice of meat, she will not accept it as a Gift; she will snatch at it by Force, and express in her countenance and air, that she is under no obligation to you; that she got it by her own cunning and activity, and that you are a fool for giving it to her.

. . . this West Indian Boy just from Scotland. . . .

. . . After the War broke out this Scotch Creolian Boy crept into the Army as a something, I know not what, whether a volunteer, an ensign, an Aide de Camp, a scribbler or a Secretary, or a

Colonel I neither know nor care, as an Adventurer, a hungry wolf who had no other way to subsist himself or prowl for prey I believe.

John Adams to John Adams Smith, Quincy, Mass., 1 February 1813

As to your Father's [i.e., William Stephens Smith] offer of his services; I will give an anecdote of a similar offer to the administration preceding Mr Jefferson's. When our Quasi war with France commenced, I received a letter from General Peter Muhlenburg then and many years before a representative in Congress from the State of Pennsylvania; offering his services in the Army then about to be raised and officered; and expressly stating that he would make no Conditions relative to rank. I was pleased with the frankness and candour of this overture and very desirous of embracing it: but I had a master in the Senate to consult and what was still worse, a blind popularity had imposed upon me, three other masters in Washington, Hamilton and Pinckney. Washington after dining with me one day spent some hours with me alone. I proposed to him General Muhlenburg for a Brigadier General in the new army. Washington said "Muhlenburg is a good officer," and I doubt not but he would have readily consented to his appointment: but he had a master to consult, and that master was Hamilton. Muhlenburg was neglected addressed the Electors in Pennsylvania in the German language, and turned half the votes of that state, in the Election of 1800.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 12 July 1813

. . . a bastard Bratt of a Scotch Pedlar . . .

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 3 September 1816

The Death of Hamilton, under all its circumstances, produced a General Grief. His most determined Enemies did not like to get rid of him, in that Way. They pitied too his Widow and Children. His Party seized the moment of public Feeling to come forward with Funeral Orations and Printed Panegyrics reinforced with mock Funerals and solemn Grimaces, and all this by People who have buried Otis, Sam. Adams, Hancock and Gerry in Comparative Obscurity. . . .

Hamilton was indeed a singular character. Of acute understanding, disinterested, honest, and honorable in all private transactions, amiable in society, and duly valuing virtue in private life, yet so bewitched & perverted by the British example, as to be under thorough conviction that corruption was essential to the government of a nation.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 21 December 1819

The Missouri question I hope will follow the other Waves under the Ship and do no harm. I know it is high treason to express a doubt of the perpetual duration of our vast American Empire, and our free Institutions, and I say as devoutly as Father Paul, esto perpetua [be thou everlasting], but I am sometimes Cassandra enough to dream that another Hamilton, another Burr might rend this mighty Fabric in twain, or perhaps into a leash, and a few more choice Spirits of the same Stamp, might produce as many Nations in North America as there are in Europe.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 15 October 1822

Hamilton's hobby was the Army.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 10 February 1823

Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Paine. The two most extraordinary men, that this Country, this age or this World, ever produced.

“Ridendo dicere verum quid vetat?”*

*“What is to prevent one from telling truth as he laughs.”

Martin Van Buren’s Account of Visit to Monticello, c. 23 May 1824

Observing that in describing party movements he [i.e., Thomas Jefferson] almost always said “The republicans” pursued this course, and “Hamilton” that—not naming the federalists as a party, except by the designation of a sole representative, I brought this peculiarity to his attention. He said it was a habit that he had fallen into at an early period from regarding almost every party demonstration during the administrations preceding his own, as coming directly or indirectly from Hamilton. He spoke of him frequently and always without prejudice or ill-will, regarding him as a man of generous feelings and sincere in his political opinions. In answer to my question whether Hamilton participated in some step that he condemned, he replied—“No! He was above such things!” His political principles Mr. Jefferson condemned without reserve, save only their sincerity, regarding them in their tendency and effects as more anti-republican than those of any of his cotemporaries.

James Kent to Elizabeth Hamilton, New York, 10 December 1832

I knew General Hamilton’s character well. His life and actions, for the course of twenty-two years, had engaged and fixed my attention. They were often passing under my eye and observation. For the last six years of his life he was arguing causes before me. I have been sensibly struck, in a thousand instances, with his habitual reverence for truth, his candor, his ardent attachment to civil liberty, his indignation at oppression of every kind, his abhorrence of every semblance of fraud, his reverence for justice, and his sound legal principles drawn by a clear and logical deduction from the purest Christian ethics, and from the very foundations of all rational and practical jurisprudence. He was blessed with a very amiable, generous, tender, and charitable disposition, and he had the most artless simplicity of any man I ever knew. It was impossible not to love as well as respect and admire him. He was perfectly disinterested. The selfish principle, that infirmity too often of great as well as of little minds, seemed never to have reached him. It was entirely incompatible with the purity of his taste and the grandeur of his ambition. Everything appeared to be at once extinguished, when it came in competition with his devotion to his country’s welfare and glory. He was a most faithful friend to the cause of civil liberty throughout the world, but he was a still greater friend to truth and justice.

James Kent: Journal, 1833

[Egbert Benson] says when Gen. Washington came on to assume the Government in 1789 he asked Robert Morris *what was to be done with the national Debt*, & Mr. Morris replied that he was glad the subject was mentioned, since he could not undertake the Office of Financier if it was offered to him, & that there was but one man who was competent to answer the question that man was *Alexander Hamilton*.

Martin Van Buren to John Church Hamilton, Lindenwald, N. Y., 28 October 1851

. . . he [i.e., Jefferson] had regarded your Father as the master spirit of his Party.

Dorothy (Dolley) Hancock**John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 17 September 1775**

Be it known to you then that two of the most unlikely Things, within the whole Compass of Possibility, have really, and actually happened. The first is the sudden Marriage of our President, whose agreeable Lady honours us with her Presence and contributes much to our good Humour, as well as to the Happiness of the President.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 4 November 1775

Two Pair of Colours belonging to the Seventh Regiment, were brought here last night from Chambly, and hung up in Mrs. Hancocks Chamber with great Splendor and Elegance. That Lady sends her Compliments and good Wishes. Among an hundred Men, almost at this House she lives and behaves with Modesty, Decency, Dignity and Discretion I assure you. Her Behaviour is easy and genteel. She avoids talking upon Politicks. In large and mixed Companies she is totally silent, as a Lady ought to be—but whether her Eyes are so penetrating and her Attention so quick, to the Words, Looks, Gestures, sentiments &c. of the Company, as yours would be, saucy as you are this Way, I wont say.

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

The News of the day is that Mrs. Hancock is going to take Captain [James] Scot into her Employ. In plain words that she is going to marry him—an able bodied Rough sea Captain.

Frailty thy Name is woman
We cannot call it Love; for at her age
The hey day in the Blood is tame, its humble
And waits upon the Judgment, and what Judgment
Would step so low?*

Alas Dorethy I never thought the[e] very wise, but I thought the[e] proud and ambitious.—do you say I am censorious. It may be so, but I cannot but wonder.

*Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 1, scene 2, line 146; Act III, scene 4, lines 68–71.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 16 December 1794

As Dorothy has hitherto had only a peevish, fretful feeble Child for an Husband, I congratulate her on her opening Prospects of Advancement in the World, to the Arms of a generous, cheerful, good humoured, and able bodied Man. As the service of the People, according to modern Principles is no honour, Hopkintonianism in Politicks being the orthodox creed there can be no *distinction* between a Governor of a State and a Commander of a ship, except such as The Nerves confer. I suppose he has Property, which Added to hers will make their old Age comfortable and that is

Founders on the Founders

enough. Literary Taste, intellectual Joys, Delicacy of the Sense of honour, and Reputation are about equal. I am not censorious. Not I. As Governor's Wife, like her Husband, she has been an unprofitable servant and has no Merit—Why then should she have any Pride or Ambition?—

Abigail Adams to Thomas Boylston Adams, Quincy, Mass., 10 January 1795

I wrote to you by Captain Scott who sailed in December—and who when he returns is to Marry Mrs. Hancock! Liberty and Equality are her Mottos.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 3 April 1797

Dolly I really think acted wisely. She is certainly a Philosopherss.—Ambition in her was completely Mortified and Subdued. Comfort was her Object.

John Hancock

John Adams: Autobiography, June 1775

Mr. Hancock himself had an Ambition to be appointed Commander in Chief. Whether he thought, an election, a Compliment due to him and intended to have the honor of declining it or whether he would have accepted I know not. To the Compliment he had some Pretensions, for at that time his Exertions, Sacrifices and general Merit in the Cause of his Country, had been incomparably greater than those of Colonel Washington. But the Delicacy of his health, and his entire Want of Experience in actual Service, though an excellent Militia Officer, were decisive Objections to him in my Mind. In canvassing this Subject out of Doors, I found too that even among the Delegates of Virginia there were difficulties. The Apostolical Reasonings among themselves which should be greatest were not less energetic Among the Saints of the Ancient dominion, than they were among Us of New England. In several Conversations I found more than one very cool about the Appointment of Washington, and particularly Mr. Pendleton was very clear and full against. Full of Anxieties concerning these Confusions, and apprehending daily that We should hear very distressing News from Boston, I walked with Mr. Samuel Adams in the State house Yard, for a little Exercise and fresh Air, before the hour of Congress, and there represented to him the various dangers that surrounded Us. He agreed to them all, but said what shall We do? I answered him, that he knew I had taken great pains to get our Colleagues to agree upon some plan that We might be unanimous: but he knew that they would pledge themselves to nothing: but I was determined to take a Step, which should compel them and all the other Members of Congress, to declare themselves for or against something. I am determined this Morning to make a direct Motion that Congress should adopt the Army before Boston and appoint Colonel Washington Commander of it. Mr. Adams seemed to think very seriously of it, but said Nothing.—Accordingly When Congress had assembled I rose in my place and in as short a Speech as the Subject would admit, represented the State of the Colonies, the Uncertainty in the Minds of the People, their great Expectations and Anxiety, the distresses of the Army, the danger of its dissolution, the difficulty of collecting another, and the probability that the British Army would take Advantage of our delays, march out of Boston and spread desolation as far as they could go. I concluded with a Motion in form that Congress would Adopt the Army at Cambridge and appoint a General, that though

this was not the proper time to nominate a General, yet as I had reason to believe this was a point of the greatest difficulty, I had no hesitation to declare that I had but one Gentleman in my Mind for that important command, and that was a Gentleman from Virginia who was among Us and very well known to all of Us, a Gentleman whose Skill and Experience as an Officer, whose independent fortune, great Talents and excellent universal Character, would command the Approbation of all America, and unite the cordial Exertions of all the Colonies better than any other Person in the Union. Mr. Washington, who happened to sit near the Door, as soon as he heard me allude to him, from his Usual Modesty darted into the Library Room. Mr. Hancock, who was our President, which gave me an Opportunity to observe his Countenance, while I was speaking on the State of the Colonies, the Army at Cambridge and the Enemy, heard me with visible pleasure, but when I came to describe Washington for the Commander, I never remarked a more sudden and sinking Change of Countenance. Mortification and resentment were expressed as his Face could exhibit them. Mr. Samuel Adams Seconded the Motion, and that did not soften the President's Physiognomy at all.

Benjamin Harrison to George Washington, Philadelphia, 21 July 1775

I do not know what to think of some of these Men, they seem exceeding hearty in the Cause, but still wish to keep every thing among themselves. Our President is quite of a different Cast, Noble, Disinterested & Generous to a very great Degree.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton to Charles Carroll of Annapolis, 15 March 1776

I dine this day with the Massachusetts Deputies—Mrs. Hancock will be of the party: she is not very handsome, yet handsome enough, and appears to be a most affectionate wife, of an easy & amiable temper. Hancock is well behaved, and generally liked, a proof of a good disposition.

John Hancock to Robert Morris, Baltimore, Md., 14 January 1777

I have got to Housekeeping, but really my Friend, in a very poor house, & but just Furniture sufficient to live tolerably decent, tho' when I Tell you I give £25 this Currency per mo. you would Judge it to be amply furnish'd. I have only two Rooms below, & one of them [I was] oblig'd to let my Servants occupy. In point of Convenience I wish to Return to Philada.

John Adams: Diary, 17 February 1777

Mr. H. told C.W. [Colonel Whipple] Yesterday, that he had determined to go to Boston in April. Mrs. H. was not willing to go till May, but Mr. H. was determined upon April. Perhaps the Choice of a Governor, may come on in May. What aspiring little Creatures we are! how subtle, sagacious and judicious this Passion is! how clearly it sees its Object, how constantly it pursues it, and what wise Plans it devises for obtaining it!

Charles Carroll of Annapolis to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, 27 March 1777

Charley Steuart told us He heard Mr. Hancock had cast some Reflections on General Washington & said He was once a good Subject to the King & wish to be so again. Upon which Mr. Fitz-Simons of Philadelphia called Him a rascal & shook His fist in His face.

Charles Carroll of Carrollton to Charles Carroll of Annapolis, 28 March 1777

Do not credit the idle stories told you by Charles Stuart—I have not heard a syllable of the story about Hancock—and I believe it to be an absolute fiction, invented & propagated by some Tory.

John Hancock to Dorothy Hancock, York, Pa., 1 October 1777

I am exceedingly well Scituated with respect to a House & Lodgings, the Lady with whom I am is a most agreeable, pleasant woman. Mr. Chace lodges in the same house & no others. I find my Carpets very convenient. I got all my things safe here. I have had since your Departure a Touch of the Cholick, which worried me much, I Rode in the Rain & was much wet, which beleive brought it on; and I have been sadly Afflicted with my old disorder, it has not yet left me, I am still unwell, but hope soon to be better.

John Hancock to Dorothy Hancock, York, Pa., 8 October 1777

I am so hurried & Engag'd that I have no time left for Relaxation. We have adopted a new mode of meeting in Congress, we begin at 10 oClock, set till one, then adjourn to 4 oClock, then meet again; but I dislike it, as we continue to Sit in the Eveng. I sat in the Chair yesterday & Conducted the Business Eight hours, which is too much, & after that had the Business of my office to attend to as usual. I cannot Stand it much longer in this way. I have been very unwell since you left me, but Thank God, I am much better, my appetite is return'd, & I do tolerably well. I am exceedingly happy in my Lodgings, I have the best in the place, & the Lady of the House very Agreeable, which makes my Scituation pleasant, she is vastly Obliging, & I am in hopes I shall prevail on her to Consent that I shall Dine at her Table (for I now only Breakfast with her) which will be more agreeable than dining every day at the Tavern.

Jacob Duche to George Washington, Philadelphia, 8 October 1777

[In denigrating the character of members of Congress.] From the New-England provinces, can you find one, that as a gentleman, you could wish to associate with? unless the soft & mild address of Mr. Hancock, can atone for his want of every other qualification necessary for the Station he fills.

Henry Laurens to John Lewis Gervais, York, Pa., 16 October 1777

Our President gave notice yesterday of his purpose to quit the Chair & Congress next week. I moved the House to entreat & solicit his continuance, to my surprise I was seconded & *no more*.

Henry Laurens to John Laurens, York, Pa., 8 January 1778

We are tottering, & without the immediate exertions of wisdom & fortitude we must fall flat down. Among the Causes of this melancholy state are to be found some Men in whom your friend [Hancock] reposed an implicit confidence. I do not mean in the Army—did not I intimate to you some distress I was under in answering a Letter soon after I was called to the Presidency, because I could not flatter? The Man I alluded to, against whom I can have no prejudice, for we always in our short acquaintance sat & drank together in great cordiality has contributed largely to the promotion of *party*. His fawning mild address & obsequiousness procured him toleration from great

Men on both sides, a sort of favoritism from some. His Idleness, duplicity & criminal partialities in a certain Circle laid the foundation of our present deplorable state. If your friend knew these things as well as I do, he would see as clearly as I do, how his honest heart has been deceived but enough of this till we meet.

Abigail Adams to John Thaxter, Braintree, Mass., 21 May 1778

Our Great Man designs soon for Congress it has been said for more than a month, tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. Was there ever any thing decisive in him?

Samuel Adams to James Warren, York, Pa., 1 June 1778

The Arts you mention as being practiced by the Tories in Boston, to prejudice the People against our new Connection [i.e., the alliance with France], are similar to those which I find on reading a late Philadelphia Paper, are practiced there. The Danger of Popery is particularly held up by the Partisans of that King, who would wish to drain Ireland of Catholicks to carry on his bloody Purposes in America. I do not wonder that a certain Gentleman, though of the Character you have described, should join in such an objection. He may think it will give him Popularity among a particular Class of Men, & serve *one* Purpose which I believe he has constantly in View; but I am satisfied that such a Suggestion will have a different Effect.

Abigail Adams to John Thaxter, Braintree, Mass., 23 July 1778

Tis reported here that Mr. H——k is returning out of Health. Is it really or politically so? Did he expect an offer, which he never made himself. I fancy he did, and his Disease is mortification. A little of it will do no injury.

Samuel Adams to Samuel P. Savage, Philadelphia, 11 August 1778

You ask me what occasioned the very sudden Return of Mr. H. I answer in his own Words to me “His own want of Health & the dangerous Illness of his Lady”—You say he arrived quite unexpected—You must surely be mistaken, for he publickly said he had Leave of Absence from his Constituents. You add, various are the Conjectures of the true Cause. It is the Lot of a great Man, to have every Movement he makes critically scanned, and oftentimes the strangest Constructions are put upon those Parts of his Conduct which are the most easily explained. You have so many Twistings in your Typography, and my Eyes are grown so dim with Age, that I cannot well discern whether you inform me that his Friends say the *Air* or the *Airs* of Philadelphia *doth* not suit him, tho I must conclude the former from your usual Correctness in grammar, for there would be an evident false Concord in admitting the Latter. Pray let me know whether the Newspapers did not do him Injustice in announcing that he made his Entrance into Boston upon Sunday. I should think so, because a well bred Man will carefully avoid counter acting the *vulgar Prejudices* & injuring the Feelings of the People where he may happen to be.

James Warren to Samuel Adams, Boston, 18 August 1778

You can hardly Conceive with how much pleasure this, and indeed every other Story to your disadvantage is received and propagated here by a Party who are determined at all Events to ruin your Interest. I stopped their Career in this by reading and telling a paragraph in your Letter relating

to that matter. I shall always oppose the measures of this Party, for if I have no partiality for you, I have a prejudice against many of them. I can't bare the Influence of Men who were so hid in Holes and Corners a few Years ago that it was difficult to find them; and when found dared not tell you which side they belonged to. Especially when that Influence is directed against the Capital and most Staunch Friends this Country ever had. Those men must have an Idol. They most of them worshipped Hutchinson; they all now worship another who, if he has not H's Abilities, certainly equals him in Ambition and Exceeds him in Vanity. I wish I could give you a few Anecdotes. They would Excite your Indignation and perhaps ridicule. The servility and flattery I am daily a Witness of is disgusting enough.

Marquis de Lafayette to the Comte d'Estaing, Rhode Island, 24 August 1778

It is so much the greater a pleasure for me, Monsieur le Comte, to present Mr. Hancock to you through this letter, as I know how eager you are to make his acquaintance. We in the eighteenth century are very glad to see a Brutus in the flesh, and this one's role in the revolution should make him as interesting to persons in the present age as he will be to posterity.

Mr. Hancock is leaving for Boston. Here is a Jesuitical twist: the man has only the wit necessary to get him out of difficulty wherever he goes, and his vanity equals the reputation that has so readily been given him in Europe; yet he is all-powerful in Boston. His zeal for France, combined with the lack of eagerness he displays for English bullets, compelled him to go and offer you his services. I am giving him a letter of recommendation that flatters his self-esteem and may persuade him to give us some proof of that popularity which he has obtained and which he delights in showing off. Fear of English vengeance will make him a loyal ally of our country; he is a man to be treated entirely with respect in the town whose assistance is unfortunately essential to you.

Henry Laurens to Rawlins Lowndes, Philadelphia, 6 September 1778

The Major's [Lewis Morris'] words in a whisper to me were "I do assure you Sir, we are indebted to that good Man General Washington for our escape [from the Rhode Island campaign], he gave us notice and pressed again our Retreat." The day following 5000 Men [British] landed from New York at Newport—Sir Henry Clinton said to be at the head of them—when General Sullivan had determined to retreat he covered his design by a strategem which completely deceived the Enemy and happily effected his purpose. The Enemy were then at least equal in number Man for Man with himself—the retreat of Major General Hancock and his Volunteers and of the Militia &c who had followed his example had nearly ruined our cause, or to say the least reduced America to extreme distress—we have cause to be thankful for an almost unparalled escape.

Samuel P. Savage to Samuel Adams, October 1778

I most sincerely value you as my Friend, but as I value you my Country lies nearer my heart, and I greatly fear the differences now subsisting between you and your worthy Friend Mr. H may greatly hurt her interest: the Effects are already visible; the enemies of America triumph in the Strife and are taking every measure to increase the Flame.

James Warren to John Adams, Boston, 7 October 1778

Genl. Hancock went [to Congress] last June, after he had taken Care of the public here at Election. He returned very soon finding the Climate did not agree with him. He was not gone but about

Founders on the Founders

six weeks. It used to agree with him better than with any of you. Perhaps the Air in the President's Seat is purer than it is in more humble Stations. After his return he went on the Rhode Island Expedition and there stayed Just long enough to gain among the Multitude the popular Eclat, and then left it so soon as to make the more discerning laugh. He is making great Entertainments and figuring away in a most Magnificent Manner. The Eyes of many People are open and see his views and Motives, and some of the Judicious think Nothing Necessary but to veer away rope.

Samuel Adams to Samuel P. Savage, Philadelphia, 1 November 1778

Can a difference between Mr. —— [Hancock] & me, either real or imaginary, be of any consequence to the World? I think not. Tories you say triumph. They may make Sport of it; but indeed my Friend, it is too unimportant a Matter for a sensible Whig to weep and break his Heart about. I am desirous of making you easy. And I do assure you, that so far from brooding in my Heart an unfriendly Disposition towards that Man, I seldom think of him unless I happen to take up a Boston Newspaper, or hear his Name mentioned in Chit Chat Conversation. You call upon me by all that is sacred to forgive him. Do you then think *he* has injured *me*? If he has, Should not *he* ask for forgiveness? No man ever found me inexorable. I do not wish him to ask me to forgive him. This would be too humiliating. If he is conscious of having done or designed me Injury, let him do so no more, and I will promise to forgive & forget him too. Or, I would add, to do him all the Service in my Power; but this is needless. It is not in my Power to serve him. *He* is above it.

If you wish to know the Foundation of this wonderful Collision, ask my friend J. W., or another whom you properly call my "closest" Friend. To them I have related the trifling Tale, & they can repeat it to you.

John Jay to John Hancock, Philadelphia, 26 December 1778

The Respect & Esteem I have long had for your private as well as public Character renders the commencement of a Correspondence with You very agreeable, and will always lead me to every mark of Attention due to a Patriot, and a Gentleman.

James Warren to John Adams, Boston, 13 June 1779

He tarried at Congress but about 2 weeks. The air of Philadelphia did not suit him on a Common Seat, he returned for better Health. He is now Speaker of our House, and a sinecure delegate to Congress. The last serves as a feather among others in his cap, to decorate an Illustrious Speaker.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, 5 July 1780

The Man [James Bowdoin] who from Merit, fortune and abilities ought to be our *Chief* is not *popular*, and tho he will have the votes of the sensible judicious part of the State, he will be more than out Numbered by the Lovers of the tinkling cymbal.

James Warren to John Adams, Boston, 11 July 1780

The Election of Governor, Lt. Governor and Senate to be made on the beginning of September. Mr. B. has again come into public Life that he may with greater Advantage stand as a candidate, in competition with H. for the highest honor and rank in this State. Who will carry the Election is very uncertain. I don't envy either of them their feelings. The Vanity of one of them will Sting like

an Adder if it is disappointed, and the Advancements made by the other if they don't succeed will hurt his *Modest* pride. the upper counties will be for H., the Interest of the other will lay in the lower ones.

William Gordon to John Adams, Jamaica Plain, Mass., 22 July 1780

We begin to think of the ensuing elections. It is thought that Mr. Bowdoin or Mr. Hancock will be chosen governor. Heavens grant that it may be the former and not the latter, who is one of the most egregious triflers I know! He hath not yet settled his accounts as treasurer of the college—and probably never will by *fair* means. The corporation and overseers have the comfort to infer, that he means not any particular affront to them, from his serving every one else in the like manner. A hint has been given me, that he would serve as Lieut. Govr. under Mr. Bowdoin, but no one else; and this is not a little stoop for his ambition. I would have him kept out of the chair. He can't as Lt. Govr. do much hurt. I mean therefore to propagate the hint that has been given me; and probably some may by that be taken off from voting for him as Govr. The most knowing and sensible I apprehend will not be for him, unless any of them should be induced by sinister views; but the common people who are ignorant of his character—his *true* character—and have had his name so often ding'd in their ears will be likely to pitch upon him.

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 3 September 1780

This is a Great and important day in the political System of this State. Mr. B[owdoi]n has merit and integrity, all the judicious people will vote for him, but popular Clamour will elect another, who ought to forfeit every vote, by the low mean Arts he has taken to procure them. I could tell you many, if prudence did not restrain me, yet nothing that would surprise you, for you know every Avenue of his vain Heart. Give an extension cord, and you know the adage.

Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 3 October 1780

I expect soon to see it announced in the Papers that Mr. Hancock is elected Governor of the Common Wealth of Massachusetts. I confess I did not foresee that Boston would have been so united as I find they were, when two such Candidates as he and Mr. Bowdoin were set up. Their respective Characters, Abilities and Merit were well-known to the Electors, who therefore acted with their Eyes open. It is to be presumed they have been influenced to this Choice by the pure Motives of publick Affection. A due Attention to the Administration of Government I fancy, will soon determine whether they have acted with Wisdom or not.

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 3 October 1780

Why will you upbraid me, my Friend, with the Votes of “my *beloved* Town,” in Favor of a Man, whom neither you nor I would set up for the Governor of the Common Wealth? It is true, I love the People of Boston. I have spent much of my Time in their Service, and have labored to promote their Reputation and true Interest. I confess, I feel chagrined and disappointed at the Preference they have given. But is an honest & virtuous People incapable of Error? They acted, you will say, with their Eyes open. They knew the different Characters, Abilities and Merit of the Candidates. But may they not have been deceived with false Appearances for the Moment? A due Attention to the Administration of Government, will enable them to measure the Capacity of him

whom they have made the Object of Their present Choice. That Watchfulness and Jealousy which I still hold to be the best Securities of the publick Liberty will guard them against future Mistakes.

James Warren to John Adams, Boston, 12 October 1780

The New Government is the Principal Topic of Conversation. The General Court [i.e., the state legislature] meets under the New Constitution the Week after next. Hancock is undoubtedly chosen Governor by a very great Majority. His Popularity is greater than ever. No Body was set in Competition with him but Mr. Bowdoin and he stood no Chance. Frequent and brilliant Entertainments strengthen his popularity, and whether it will End in Absolute Adoration, or in the Exhaustion of the Sources of profusion I can't say. He this day feasts the French Minister (who came to Town last Evening) and the Council as the Castle.

Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 17 October 1780

You was mistaken when you supposed that I had heard who were chosen into the highest Places under our new Constitution. We are not so well informed. I had Reason to believe that Mr. Hancock would be the Governor. I am disposed to think, that my Fellow Citizens had upright Views in giving him their Suffrages. Many Circumstances have combined to make this Election appear to be politically necessary; and if the People, who are now blessed with so great a Privilege, will exercise that Watchfulness over Men whom they exalt to Places of Power, which their Duty & Interest should lead them to, I flatter myself that his will prove a happy Choice. You may wonder at my saying so; but I think I am not misguided in my Judgment in this Instance. If they have now chosen a wise & virtuous governor, a few only will be disappointed; if otherwise, Many will see their Error, and will be induced to greater Vigilance for the future. I am far from being an Enemy to that Gentleman, tho' he has been prevailed upon to mark me as such. I have so much Friendship for him, as to wish with all my Heart, that in the most critical Circumstances, he may distinguish between his real Friends & his flattering Enemies. Or, rather between the real Friends of the Country & those who will be ready to offer the Incense of Flattery to him who is the first Man in it. This will require an accurate Knowledge of Men. I therefore again wish that he may have the most able faithful Councillors to assist him in the Administration of Affairs. Can I say more? If, with the best Advice he is able to hold the Reins of Government with Dignity, I wish him a Continuance of the Honor. If he renders our Country secure in a flourishing Condition, I will never be so partial & unjust as to withhold my Tribute of Applause.

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 24 October 1780

It ill becomes you, my Friend, to think of retiring into private Life, who can lay your hand on your heart and say, that in your publick Conduct you have in no Instance deviated from virtuous Principles. If ever the Time shall come, when vain and aspiring Men shall possess the highest Seats of Government, our Country will stand in Need of its experienced Patriots, to prevent its Ruin. There may be more Danger of this, than some, even of our well disposed Citizens may imagine. If the People should grant their Suffrages to Men, only because they conceive them to have been Friends to the Country, without Regard to the necessary Qualifications for the Places they are to fill, the Administration of Government will become a mere Farce, and our publick Affairs will never be put on a Footing of solid Security. We should mark the Tempers as well as the Abilities

of Men, if we would form a Judgment in what Manner the Trusts to be reposed in them will probably be executed. You know the character of Pisistratus. He was a Citizen of Athens, supposed to have many excellent Qualities; but he had an insatiable Lust of Preeminence. Solon would discover his Vanity, but the People were blinded by a false Glare of Virtues, and he was their Idol. Under Pretense of his having escaped imminent Danger from a violent Faction, and the further Insecurity of his Person, he artfully obtained a Guard of Soldiers, by which Means he possessed himself of the Citadel and usurped the Government. But though he made himself Sovereign, and thus far overthrew the popular Election, the Historian tells us, that he made no Change in the Magistracy or the Laws. He was content that others should hold their Places according to the Rules of the Constitution, so that he might continue himself *Archon*, independent of the Suffrages of the People. This he effected; for though several Attempts were made to deprive him of the Sovereignty which he had with equal Art & Violence obtained, he held it till his Death and left it to his Children. Such was the Ambition of a Man, who indeed assumed Authority, and such were the Effects of it. Power is intoxicating, and Men who have been legally vested with it, have too often discovered the same dangerous Disposition. How different a Man was Pisistratus from the Roman Hero and Patriot Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, who, though vested with the Authority of Dictator, was so moderate in his Desires of a Continuance of Power, that having in six Weeks fulfilled the Purpose of his Appointment, he resigned the dangerous office which he might have held till the Expiration of Six Months. When we formerly had weak & corrupt Governors, it was our Misfortune; but for the future, while we enjoy and exercise the inestimable Right of choosing them ourselves, it will be our *Disgrace*. I hope our Countrymen will always keep a watchful Eye over the publick Conduct of those whom they exalt to Power, making at the same Time, every just Allowance for the Imperfections of human Nature. And I pray God, we may never see Men, filling the sacred Seats of Government, who are wanting in adequate Abilities, or influenced by any Motives or Feelings separate from the publick Welfare.

Samuel Adams to Elizabeth Adams, Philadelphia, 13 November 1780

By the next we expect to receive Accounts of the Organization of our government under the new Constitution, in all its Splendor—to see the Speech from the Chair, the Answers from the several Branches of the Legislature—Congratulatory Addresses &c, &c. I have been anxious lest our Countrymen should misjudge in the Choice of their first Governor. They are grateful; and I was afraid that from the goodness of their Hearts they might be induced to give their Suffrages for a Man, who, they might conceive, had done them eminent Services, in other Stations, without a due Consideration whether he possesses those excellent Qualities which should characterize and dignify their chief Magistrate. Our present Governors may probably stamp the moral as well as political Character of the People. I shall most heartily rejoice, if the “*Abilities and disinterested Zeal*” of the Gentleman called to fill the Chair prove adequate to the strong Expectations of my fellow Citizens in Boston expressed in their late Vote of Thanks. But why do I trouble you with a Subject of this Nature?

Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Boston, 15 November 1780

The Arrangement of officers under the New Constitution you will have from other hands, and a Detail of the administration, as well as operation, of a system, so complete in all its parts, that the Wishes of all parties are centered in one Great Object, and Whigs and Tories, Infidel and Religionists all agree that some portion of Idolatry is Necessary for the support of the political

Machine. Of course the Daily Incense is offered in the Capital, and the Guilded puppet placed on the public Theater a few years ago (for certain purposes) is Become the Idol to whom the supple Homage of Adulation is paid, by a people once Disinterested, Firm, Discerning, and Tenacious of their Rights.

That tincture of Enthusiasm which is perhaps characteristic of the North American is now heated with the Emulation of Exhibiting the Highest Instances of Worship. Yet the Image whose Feet are of Clay, may in a short time become as the Chaff of the summer Threshing Floor, unless like another *Pisastratus*,* for the sake of prolonging his power, he should Govern according to the Minutest Forms of the Constitution.

*Twice a tyrant of Athens (561–556 and 546–527 B.C.), Pisastratus was noted for his long rules while keeping the letter of the constitution.

John Sullivan to John Hancock, Philadelphia, 18 November 1780

Permit me my Dear Sir with the most unfeigned Sincerity to Congratulate Your Excellency on Your Advancement to the Chair of Government in the State of the Massachusetts Bay. It affords me inexpressible Pleasure to find that the Freemen of Your State have been guided by their Judgment, Their Gratitude and regard for Publick Virtue to give their Suffrages to a Gentleman who not only Possesses sufficient Skill to regulate the Political Wheels of Government but has the Abilities and Disposition to Draw forth all the resources of that Important State in time of Publick Danger and lead its Forces against the Common Enemy with that Judgment and Bravery which must insure Success.

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 20 November 1780

Your Friend [Samuel Adams, himself] makes no Claim on his Country, nor does he set himself in Competition with Mr. — whose Connections have made him a necessary Man. He is, I confess, one whom I have esteemed for his Honesty and easy good Humour. We have been entertained with the Speeches both before and after putting on the Regalias, and we expect to see Congratulatory Addresses from various Orders, civil and ecclesiastick. I shall pity the Governor if he is apt to be discomposed with the high Complimentary Stile. I could wish, if we must have abundant Addresses to see the manly Simplicity of Barckly the Quaker in his Dedication to Charles the 2d of England. Excepting that Instance, I do not recollect ever to have seen an Address to a Great Man, that was not more or less, and very often deeply, tinctured with Flattery.

James Warren to John Adams, Boston, 22 November 1780

. . . our New Government has taken place. The Papers will tell you, who are the Governing Powers, that Compose the Administration, it is only necessary for me to tell you that it is now perfectly Systematic. The Influence here is as Uniform and Extensive as in England, and the Criterion to determine the Qualifications for Office much the same as in the most Arbitrary Governments, or in the most servile Nations. How long this will last I don't know. Whether Pisistratus will be able to Establish himself Perpetual Archon, or whether he will be able to Convey that Honor and rank to his Family by hereditary right Time must determine. He has no Guards, yet Established, but he has unbounded Adulation, and Submission and that may Effect here all the purposes for which Guards were necessary at Athens. It is certain there is a greater Influence and

a more unlimited Confidence here than is Consistent with a Republican Government. That Influence has already Effected here what [Governor Thomas] Hutchinson was never Able to do, it has not only removed S.A. [Samuel Adams] from all Share on the Govt. but taken from him his Bread and given all Secretaryship to Mr. [John] Avery Son in Law to the Lieut. Govr. [Thomas Cushing]. Your Friend Gerry is the next Object and who among you that at Congress Committed the unpardonable Sin, of opposing or not submitting to his Measure, is uncertain. Perhaps the Extent of the Atlantic may secure you and Mr. [Francis] Dana for a while.

John Adams to Arthur Lee, Amsterdam, 6 December 1780

Yours from Lebanon [Conn.] 28 Sept. is just come to hand. I wish Massachusetts happy in their Governor. It would not have been otherwise, as you Suggest, had an Absent Citizen been at home.* Popularity is a Witch. The Gentleman chosen has long been So, to a great degree. The Absent one could Scarcely ever be Said to be so.

So it has ever been. Objects must be set up for popular Admiration, Confidence, and Affection, and when the Habit is formed, it is impossible to wean it, tho it may become dangerous, or even pernicious. It is So in the freest Governments, and even in the most virtuous. I hope however, in this Instance, We shall do well—and have no Reason to think otherwise. More Penetration, Knowledge, and Steadiness might have been found, perhaps. But the Meaning is good, as I believe.

*In his 28 September letter, Lee wrote that “Mr. Hancock is chosen Governor, much owing to your absence and the in-attention of those who wish well to their Country and will probably repent of their inactivity.”

Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Plymouth, Mass., 28 December 1780

The political situation, the state of Commerce, and the Military operations, of Your Country is a Field I dare not Enter. They are subjects too much above the Delineation of my pen. The state of parties, the Rapid Growth of Idolatry, the Worship of the pageant, the Mimic Greatness of Monarchy in Embrio, are too much below Its Exertions to describe.

Peter Oliver: The Rise & Progress of the American Rebellion, 1781

Here I am almost necessarily led into a Digression upon Mr. *Hancock's* Character, who was as closely attached to the hindermost Part of Mr. *Adams* as the Rattles are affixed to the Tail of the Rattle Snake. Mr. *Hancock* was the Son of a dissenting Clergyman, whose Circumstances in Life were not above Mediocrity, but he had a rich uncle. He was educated at *Harvard College*, was introduced into his uncle's Warehouses as a Merchant, & upon his Death was the residuary Legatee of £60,000 Sterling. His Understanding was of the Dwarf Size; but his Ambition, upon the Accession to so great an Estate, was upon the Gigantick. He was free from Immoralities, & Objects of Charity often felt the Effects of his Riches. His Mind was a mere *Tabula Rosa*. & had he met with a good Artist he would have enstamped upon it such Character as would have made him a most useful Member of Society. Nut Mr. *Adams* who was restless in endeavors to disturb the Peace of Society, & who was ever going about seeking whom he might devour, seized upon him as his prey, & stamped such Lessons upon his Mind, as have not as yet been erased. Sometimes, indeed, by certain Efforts of Nature, which he was insensible of the Causes of his self, he would almost disengage himself from his assailant; but *Adams*, like the Cuddlefish, would discharge his muddy Liquid, & darken the Water to such an Hue, that the other was lost to his Way, & by his Tergiver-sation in the Cloudy Vortex would again be seized, & at last secured. Mr. *Hancock*, in Order to

figure away as a Merchant, entered deeply into Trade; but having no Genius for it, (by monopolizing & other Misfortunes, together with his Ambition for being a Politician for which he was as little qualified as for a Merchant) he very soon reduced his Finances to a very low Ebb, & rendered it difficult for a Creditor to procure from him a small Balance of Debt; & some Things he did, by reason of his distressed Circumstances, which were not compatible with the Rules of strict Justice. Mr. *Adams*, after bringing him into such a Situation, could do no less than shove him up to the last Round of the Ladder, & he was president of the *american Congress*. Here he was at the Summit of his Ambition; but he has descended so far as to be the Governor of *Massachusetts* Province; & if the British Government should succeed in subduing the Rebellion, it requires no second Sight to foresee, that whereas he was once vain, that he would then be less than nothing & Vanity itself.

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

The G[overno]r as has been heretofore predicted, when any thing not quite popular is in agitation, has the Gout and is confined to his Bed.

Samuel Cooper to Benjamin Franklin, Boston, 1 February 1781

The popular Interest of Governor Hancock in this Common Wealth is great. He is a warm Friend to you and your Friends in the civil Line and in the Army: Some are opposed to him but the Body of the People are staunch to the Men and Measures that began the Revolution.

Artemas Ward to Samuel Osgood, 13 March 1781

Measures ought to be taken by the States to inform Congress of everything they have done in consequence of their requisitions for men & money. Since Novr. last the Governor gives no more information than if he was at the East Indies, notwithstanding it is his duty. If he don't know his duty I wish his Council would advise him; if they don't know it to be his duty, do let some body be appointed to teach them.

Mercy Otis Warren to Elbridge Gerry, Tremont, Mass., 6 June 1783

Caesar had talents,—he had valour, intrepidity, activity, and magnanimity as well as ambition,—he had the capacity and inclination for the dispatch of business—thus qualified, it was easy to deceive by intrigue, while he captivated by generosity. But modern times exhibit more wonderful phenomenons;—we have seen a man without abilities idolized by the multitude, and fame on the wing to crown the head of imbecility;—we have seen a people trifling with the privilege of *election*, and throwing away the glorious opportunity of establishing liberty and independence on the everlasting basis of virtue, we have heard them trumpet the praises of their idol of straw, and sing of sacrifices he never had the courage to make. You very well know, Sir, he was first brought into political existence, and supported, on the shoulders of men of less fortune, but infinitely more merit than himself. We have seen this state *baby* of Massachusetts repeatedly chosen the first magistrate of this Commonwealth;—we see him triumph in the zenith of popularity, though so debilitated, as literally to be borne about on the shoulders of his sycophants. Much artifice has been necessary for this general deception, but nothing has had a more powerful effect, than squandering gratuities among the weak and the worthless.

Stephen Higginson to Elbridge Gerry, Boston, 6 October 1783

His Excellency [Governor Hancock] has treated me very coolly & indeed rather Cavalierly, he told me when I first met him, as I was going to the Council Chamber to pay him my respects, that he was happy he had by meeting me saved me the trouble of going there. This I considered as an intimation that he wished for no Conversation with me. I have therefore kept clear of him since & shall not put myself out of the way to show *him* any respect.

James Warren to Elbridge Gerry, Milton, Mass., 17 December 1783

We have Nothing new here, tho' we have been threatened with a very Extraordinary Event, the Resignation of our Governor. He declared before very large and respectable Companies, among which were at one time the Supreme Court, and at another the Governors of the College that the Last thing he Intended to do as Governor was to Nominate a Person to fill the Supreme Bench, and that he would absolutely resign on the 26th of November. That Time is past without a resignation, and there are those who do not despise him secretly, nor ridicule him openly. However singular his good Luck is, if you ask what determined him to make such a declaration, I can only say that opinions are various. Some say it arose from disappointment and Chagrin that his Speech was not Echoed Back in the usual style of fulsome address, and the late publications of some of his small Fools Justify this Opinion, while others say that it happened at a Certain time, that an Idea of the dignity of General Washington in retiring to private Life happened to float across his Pericranium, and to make such an Impression as Induced him to think he should be a great Man too, if he followed the Example. But alas, his Fortitude did not support his resolution, and enable him to do this wise and prudent thing. But it is a matter of very trifling Consequence and so I dismiss it.

Elbridge Gerry, Annapolis, Md., 20 December 1783

Your Information respecting the Governor is curious, & there is not the least probability in my Mind, that he is sincere in his Declaration. I cannot account for the Manoeuvre on any other principles, than that his Excellency has experienced less Flattery of late, than was formerly paid him, & the Love of this, being his master passion, he is determined to recover the Loss by intimating an Intention to give up the Reins, & leave an ungrateful people to their own Destruction. Such a proposition must naturally produce in the Minds of his Constituents, a Conviction of their Error; & an increased Exertion to do Justice to his Merits, & to regain his Favour, without which, what will become of the unfortunate Commonwealth of Massachusetts?

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

The present Gentleman's [i.e., Governor's] Health is much upon the decline. He has been confined more than half of the last year and unable to do any business on account of the Gout.

James Warren to Elbridge Gerry, Milton, Mass., 25 February 1784

My last was principally on the subject of an Intended resignation or at least a pretended one, but for your Comfort and Consolation I have the pleasure to Inform you, that we hear no more of it. We may still be happy in the possession of a Chief Magistrate, whose Merits are of such an Extraordinary kind that no Conduct on his own can sully them with ridicule or Contempt.

James Warren to Elbridge Gerry, Milton, Mass., 31 January 1785

Every thing here has gone on in the Usual way till last Saturday, when a great political Phenomenon made its Unexpected Appearance. Our first Magistrate made his resignation in form. This I am well Informed is the Fact. I am not Philosopher enough to Account for this strange Event, whether the *Gas* that has so long supported this political Balloon is Expended, or whatever other Cause has produced this singular Event, must be left to the Sagas of the airy regions of Caprice and Vanity to determine. For my part, I am satisfied with a Conviction that no Change can be for the worse.

Tristram Dalton to John Adams, Boston, 19 April 1785

Our late Governor You will see, notwithstanding his indisposition, was at the head of the Body, on Friday, and on Saturday.—He avoids no opportunity to continue and to increase his popularity—He is to be one of the Representatives of this Town, the coming Year—and it is supposed looks to the Speaker’s Chair—

Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 27 April 1785

A late Resignation [Hancock from the governorship] you have doubtless heard of. And had you been with us when the period of annual Election Revolved, it is probable your Country would have manifested some tokens of Gratitude by giving you their Suffrages for the first office of State. Yet there is no dependence on the popular Voice. There would have been a maneuvering against it, lest you should have held it too long for the convenience of another [Hancock] who means to come in again the next year.

there is such a blind Attachment to this man of *straw* that I have little doubt he will have the opportunity of establishing himself for life—perhaps the power of Entailing an Hereditary succession. If that should be the Case many would cry “*Come over into Macedonia & help us,*”^{*} for I cannot suppose you think we are *yet* ripe for Monarchic Government.

*Acts 16:9.

William Gordon to John Adams, New York, 13 August 1785

Mr. Hancock you will know before this can reach you, is chosen one of our delegates [to Congress]. Politicians conjecture, he is laying out for the President’s chair, that there will be all the apparatus of his coming on, & that if chosen during absence he will answer to appearances; but that if not chosen, illness real or feigned will prevent it.

James Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 4 September 1785

We have got through the Bustle of a new Election, & after much Difficulty, the Choice fell where probably you would have plac’d it. Mr. Bowdoin was chose by the two Houses, & all is Peace, Tranquillity, & Satisfaction.—Mr. Hancock’s Influence which was great was in favour of [Thomas] Cushing, more probably to keep a Door open for Himself at another Election, & by that means retrieve the Mistake he made in his Resignation, than from any other Principle. All other Parties were oblig’d to unite, to defeat his Purposes, & he at last in Despair of his main Design, gave out that he did care who was chose if it was not the Man on Milton-Hill.—If Ambition was my ruling Principle & I was a Politician, I should have shaken Hands with this *mighty* Man, but as

it is I will still be honest, & continue to despise his Caprice, Incapacity, & Indolence, & do every Thing I can to prevent his again having it in his Power, to disgrace this Government by an Administration of Imbecility & Weakness.—and if I enjoy none of the Honours & Emoluments of a Government, my vigorous Zeal and Steadiness for many Years, had some Share in obtaining, I will be satisfied, if the Man on Bacon-Hill does not. However he has gain'd tho' at a second, or third Voting, a Choice of a Delegate, & has now in View the Presidency of Congress, he may get it, my Fears make me think it probable, while my Hopes blast his Expectations.

James Warren to Elbridge Gerry, Milton, Mass., 4 October 1785

H—— has got the Gout; whether it is a political, or natural fit, I don't know. If the former, he may have some reason to despair of the Presidency, and may wrap up in Baize, as a preparatory when the [General] Court meets. If every Body loved him as I do, they would save him that trouble, and excuse without the Expense of a single piece of Baize.

Elbridge Gerry to James Monroe, Marblehead, Mass., 28 May 1786

Mr. Hancock's Indisposition must prevent him from serving the U. States as their president. He is very ill of the Gout, & his Constitution is too much shattered for any great Exertions.

Luigi Castiglioni: Sketches of American Statesmen, 1787

There is perhaps no name more celebrated, and perhaps with less reason, than that of Hancock. He was a moderately wealthy Boston businessman, of a fiery temperament, one of the first to take a firm stand against the English, and one of the three proscribed when proposals of peace were made to the Americans. He was repaid for this proscription with the lofty office of President of Congress, which he held for a number of years in a row. A lover of festivity and amusements, in which he spent the greater part of his fortune, he made himself greatly beloved by the people, who are satisfied with appearances, and although he is of limited talents, he was for many consecutive years elected and confirmed as governor of the State of Massachusetts.

James Sullivan to James Duane, Boston, 16 April 1787

Perhaps Sir you may wonder at the change of opinion evinced by our Election of Governor for the insuing year, while so many are applauding the Measures of Mr. Bowdoin. that the Town of Boston should in September 1786 pledge their lives, and property, to support him, and address the other Towns in the Commonwealth to do the same, and yet in April 1787 give a majority of Votes for another, Seems Strange to you. but such is the unusual popularity of Mr. Hancock, that nothing can place another in the chair but his declining it: and if that confidence is properly improved, as I trust it will be, much good may be done by it.

James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, New York, 22 April 1787

Governor Bowdoin is already displaced in favor of Mr. Hancock, whose acknowledged merits are not a little tainted by a dishonorable obsequiousness to popular follies.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, New York, 23 April 1787

Mr. Hancock takes the place of Mr. Bowdoin. His general character forbids a suspicion of his patriotic principles; but as he is an idolater of popularity, it is to be feared that he may be seduced by this foible into dishonorable compliances.

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Braintree, Mass., 30 June 1787

Mr. Hancock was again elected governor this year, and out of 18,000 votes he had more than 13,000. This plainly shows that the people in general are displeased with some part of Mr. Bowdoin's conduct; but it is the caprice of an ungrateful populace, for which it must ever be impossible to account. Mr. Hancock is very much involved in debt, if common report be true. It is even confidently asserted that his present estate would not by any means do justice to his creditors. It is therefore concluded that he would favor tender acts, paper currencies, and all those measures which would give the sanction of the law to private fraud and villainy.

The salaries of all civil officers, which are now too small, will infallibly be reduced still lower. Mr. Hancock, who has a peculiar talent of pleasing the multitude, has compounded this matter by offering to make a present to the public of 300£.

Rufus King to James Madison, Boston, 30 January 1788

This day for the first our President Mr. Hancock took his Seat in [the Massachusetts ratifying] convention, and we shall probably terminate our business on Saturday or Tuesday next. I cannot predict the issue, but our Hopes are increasing—if Mr. Hancock does not disappoint our present Expectations our wishes will be gratified, But his character is not entirely free from a portion of caprice—this however is confidential.

William Gordon to George Washington, London, 3 April 1788

Expect the pleasure of having to congratulate your Excellency before the year is out upon being chosen President to the American parliament. I know of no one whom I could wish so heartily to fill that place as yourself. But I do not wish you to have Mr. Hancock for your vice-president; there are many I think much better qualified, on one of whom I hope the choice will fall.

William Cranch to His Sister Lucy Cranch, Boston, 2 June 1788

. . . High *Tillery* today.—All the town is running into the Common to see his Gouty *Excellency set in his Chair*. A Wonderful sight! that a man with his legs wrapt in Baize should be able to set in Chair!—

I hate to see that antirepublican spirit which is shown whenever his Excellency appears in public. I do not believe any Monarch in Europe or Asia is more idolized than this same Governor—or is more fond of it—

Brissot de Warville: New Travels in the United States of America, 30 July 1788

Samuel Adams is one of the strongest supporters of Governor Hancock's party in this state. You are familiar with the prodigious sacrifices Hancock made during the Revolution and you know how courageously he declared his position in the early days of the insurrection. The same patriotic

spirit still inspires him. His character is a mixture of great generosity and lofty ambition. He possesses the virtues and the talents of the population; that is to say, without any effort he makes himself every man's friend and equal. I supped at his home in the company of a hatter who seemed to be an intimate friend. Mr. Hancock is amiable and polite when he wishes to be, but he is accused of not always having this wish. At such times, he develops a miraculous case of gout which protects him against all visitors and bars the door of his house. Mr. Hancock is not as highly educated as his rival, Mr. Bowdoin, and seems even to scorn learning. Bowdoin is more esteemed by men of education; Hancock is more loved by the people.

Christopher Gore to Rufus King, Boston, 30 August 1788

It is said the Governor aims at the Presidency, and disdains a second seat. How far this is true you can determine as well as myself.

Christopher Gore to Theodore Sedgwick, Boston, 31 August 1788

The other character acts with such encreasing capriciousness that every man of reason and virtue is afraid of him—He is intending a journey in the ensuing week to Providence—probably from thence will go to Connecticut—and I think there can be little doubt but his flatterers have persuaded him of his election as president being more probable than Washington's—

Benjamin Rush to Jeremy Belknap, Philadelphia, 7 October 1788

Mr. Jno Adams will probably have all the votes of our State for the Vice Presidents Chair. Mr. Hancocks frequent indispositions *alone* will preclude him from that mark of respect from Pennsylvania.

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

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

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 17 October 1788

Hancock is weak, ambitious, a courtier of popularity given to low intrigue and lately reunited by a factious friendship with S. Adams.

James Madison to Edmund Randolph, New York, 28 October 1788

The public mind seems not to be yet settled on the Vice President. The question has been supposed to lie between Hancock & Adams. The former is far the more popular man in N. England but he has declared to his lady, *it is said*, that she had once been the first in America, & he would never make her the second.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

He was a man of plain understanding, and good education. He was fond of the ceremonies of public life, but wanted industry and punctuality in business. His conversation was desultory, and his manners much influenced by frequent attacks of the gout, which gave a hypochondriacal peevishness to his temper. With all these infirmities he was a disinterested patriot, and made large sacrifices of an ample estate to the liberties and independence of his country.

James Warren to Elbridge Gerry, Plymouth, Mass., 1 February 1789

Hancock has been supported by a Coincidence of Strange Circumstances, and lately by an Influence that he should before now have suspected. The Object of their views was to delay his fall till their own purposes were Completed and then to pitch him down into the Mud with the rest of us. The Time of Execution is arrived, and he must have an Accession of Strength from a natural resource, or Share the same fate with the rest of us.

Tobias Lear to Benjamin Lincoln, Mount Vernon, 5 February 1789

An idea has been held up here, & I believe has been pretty current through the States, that Mr. H—— would not accept of the *second* post in the Government if he should be chosen to it;—he has gained no credit by this—and indeed he seems not to be in that high estimation at present that he was a few years ago—several circumstances have tended to lessen his popularity—

William Tudor to John Adams, Boston, 21 June 1789

This Silliness [i.e., Senate debate over titles] pleases Mr. Han., Mr. S. A. & Dr. J. [Hancock, Samuel Adams, and Charles Jarvis] I most heartily wish all the Fools of the same Stamp throughout the Union would unite & colonize. There is Land enough upon the Banks of the Ohio for all the democratic Simpletons in the united States. There let them found a Utopia & crack Acorns with the *equal* Commoners of the Woods. It is owing to Envy & a contemptible Pride, that our chief Magistyrates are to be denied those Titles which would be expressive of their Posts, because two only can possess them, and because thirteen Excellencies would be then out titled.

Benjamin Lincoln to John Adams, Hingham, Mass., 14 July 1789

The conduct of our great man is no less painful to us than alarming to you. He is not, from any thing which appears, an enemy to monarchical powers—He has, I think, in frequent instances exercised those powers, and is daily pursuing a line of conduct which will enable him to carry them to a much greater length. The very message to which you refer, is in my opinion, a proof in point, however paradoxical it may seem—By his frequent addresses to the people, through their representatives, and by the trumpeters of his fame they are taught to believe that he is, almost, the only guardian of their rights now remaining in the commonwealth. With these impressions and under the idea, equally erroneous, that it is the fixed design of others to enslave them the first hour they shall have the power of doing it. Mr. H—— may sport with the rights of the people and trample upon our constitution with impunity. When ever his conduct is arraigned, it is enough for him and his friend, to give out that the aristocratical junto, as those are stiled who are for a firm energetic government, want his removal that they may be in the saddle themselves the more easily to execute their nefarious purposes with success. Many of the people, not the class with which you

have been much connected, seem to consider Mr. H—— as the only man in the commonwealth who can preserve the state in peace and order in freedom and happiness strange delusion! Such however are the facts and he may now go almost any lengths in acts of monarchy not limited by any other principle than his policy, that may suggest to him, (or his friends may do it) the propriety of his keeping within some bounds.—

Samuel A. Otis to Theodore Sedgwick, New York, 13 October 1789

[After discussing the likelihood of Hancock or John Adams being elected the first Vice President, Otis concludes that] After all a glare of popularity dazzles all eyes & Mr. H will probably as usual prevail.

Fisher Ames to Thomas Dwight, Boston, 21 October 1789

I am in Boston, which is busy with preparation and expectation. The President is to appear on a triumphal arch. The Governor begins to take a part in the affair. The gout came so opportunely last Saturday, that it has been doubtful whether his humility would be gratified with the sight of his *superior*. Is it credible that doubts should have existed, whether *he* or the *President* should first visit? that so much honor to one should be supposed to degrade the other? This *inter nos*. Some of his folks have thrown cold water on the ardor of the town, to no purpose.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Hartford, Conn., 24 November 1789

Governor H. has been here and made a Dinner for the Gentlemen of this Town. One asked after the V.P. “The Governor has not Spoken to the V.P. this year. He was not one of the Well born.” A Gentleman remarked upon it afterwards What would Mr. H. have been if he had not been well born the Nephew of the rich Uncle Thomas? In short his Silly Envy of the V.P. is perceived and ridiculed by all the World out of Massachusetts. He is considered as a mere rich Man prodigal of his Wealth to obtain an empty Bubble of Popularity.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 28 December 1789

I am Surprized to find to find how little Popularity Mr. Hancock has in any of the States out of Mass[achusetts].

John Quincy Adams to John Adams, Newburyport, Mass., 19 March 1790

The internal politics of the State are in a state of tranquility, very unusual at this season. The opposers of the Governor [John Hancock], discouraged I presume by the ill success which they have always experienced, seem determined to leave him in quiet possession. He has been confined as usual all winter with the gout, and his judicial appointments have been the only public circumstances which have for some time past been the subject of animadversion. The appointment of [Robert Treat] Paine was rather popular. That of Mr. Cushing was far otherwise. The friends of the Governor only insist upon the disinterested magnanimity of nominating a man who it is said has been invariably opposed to his measures, while his enemies are so far from acknowledging his disinterestedness, that they censure him very highly for nominating to one of the most important offices in the State, a man totally unqualified to sustain it, merely to be freed from his troublesome opposition as a councillor.

John Trumbull to John Adams, Hartford, Conn., 30 March 1790

I agree that the strongest *Envy* against you lies in the Breasts of the two Men you mentioned, who could not bear your elevation above them—Each of them probably flattered his own vanity with an expectation of the Rank of V.P.—Hancock particularly, after his grand manoeuvre of limping forth. “With all his imperfections on his heels,” to propose nonsensical amendments to the Convention of Massachusetts, supposed himself almost sure of the appointment—not knowing that the whole affair was planned & conducted as a political measure by men of more discernment than himself.

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

The first man in the nation must not be worse accommodated and make a meaner appearance than ordinary gentlemen of fortune do in our separate States and Capital towns—This would be evidence not only of a sordid character in the Nation but of a false, affected and hypocritical policy. There is therefore a medium to be observed. I do however know that magnificence imposes on this people as much as on any other. It has been one great cause of the influence and popularity of Washington, Hancock and others. The Number who worship splendor are greater than that of those who despise it.

Stephen Higginson to Alexander Hamilton, Boston, 24 August 1793

. . . there are but a few who advocate the French Claims [of fitting out privateers], & these are made up of inveterate Antifederalists & men desperate in their circumstances. The former will join any party, & pursue any measures to embarrass the union; & among these are Our Governor, Lt. Governor & some others in public Life.

Henry Marchant to John Adams, Newport, R.I., 10 February 1794

In Massts.—Govr. H——k is no more, may all the good He ever did follow Him;—And may it be forgot, or forgiven, that He was no friend of Yours.—This I more particularly discovered in a Conversation I had with Him when He was here.—

Remarks by Jeremy Belknap on cover of Peter Thacher’s Sermon, On the Death of Governor Hancock, 1793 (Annotation dated 1796)

This sermon contains the best part of Gov. H’s Character honestly drawn by a friend who knew his failings but kept them out of sight—there was no need of reciting them at his funeral.

George Cabot to Christopher Gore, 9 June 1799

It has been a part of the cant of Democratic writers to ascribe to kings exclusively an undue love of praise, and to *subjects* the disgrace of giving it, however unmerited. Few kings I believe could be named, who swallowed grosser flattery than our Governor Hancock daily required and received from servile citizens. You recollect how entirely men of dignity and worth were excluded from his confidence, because they could not yield the adulation he desired. It must be unhappy for our country if ever a man of such character should be raised to the head of the Union.

Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the American Revolution*, 1805

Mr. Hancock was a young gentleman of fortune, of more external accomplishments than real abilities. He was polite in manners, easy in address, affable, civil, and liberal. With these accomplishments, he was capricious, sanguine, and implacable: naturally generous, he was profuse in expense; he scattered largesses without discretion, and purchased favors by the waste of wealth, until he reached the ultimatum of his wishes, which centered in the focus of popular applause. He enlisted early in the cause of his country, at the instigation of some gentlemen of penetration, who thought his ample fortune might give consideration, while his fickleness could not injure, so long as he was under the influence of men of superior judgment. They complimented him by nominations to committees of importance, till he plunged too far to recede; and flattered by ideas of his own consequence, he had taken a decided part before the battle of Lexington, and was president of the provincial congress, when that event took place.

By the appearance of zeal, added to a certain alacrity of engaging in any public department, Mr. Hancock was influential in keeping up the tide of opposition; and by a concurrence of fortuitous circumstances, among which this proscription was the most capital, he reached the summit of popularity, which raised him afterwards to the most elevated stations, and very fortunately he had the honor of affixing his signature as president, to many of the subsequent proceedings of the continental congress, which will ever hold an illustrious rank in the page of history. . . .

Mr. Hancock retained his popularity to the end of his life. His death did not take place until 1793. He was chosen governor of Massachusetts in 1780, and though a remarkable debilitation of body rendered him to appearance little able to discharge the duties of the first magistrate, yet the suffrages of the people kept him long in the chair, after he was reduced to such a state of weakness as to be lifted by his servants into his carriage, and thence into the state house, to deliver his public speeches. In this he acquitted himself with a degree of elocution, pleasing and popular, though his health did not admit of his writing them previously, seldom had he strength to add his signature to the acts of the legislature. But his mental faculties were not much impaired by the infirmities of his bodily constitution; they were not indeed composed of those elementary sparks of genius that soon burn themselves out; nor were the energies of his mind blunted by industry and application. . . .

An ample measure of gratitude was repaid to Mr. Hancock, both for public services and private benefits; a mantle of love was thrown over his foibles by his countrymen, and his memory was embalmed in the affections of his townsmen.

Fisher Ames to Timothy Pickering, Dedham, Mass., 10 March 1806

It is a mark of a little mind in a great man, to get such people about him for favorites as our chief [President Jefferson] is said to prefer. Hancock thought himself a Jupiter, and filled his Olympus with buffoons, sots, and blockheads.

John Adams to Richard Rush, Quincy, Mass., 31 July 1812

The Anecdotes of Hancock and Gadsden excited more sensibility than you can conceive. Names that I never hear or read but with Tenderness and Reverence. When will the Character of Hancock be understood? Never. I could melt into Tears when I hear his Name. The Property he possessed when his Country called him, would purchase Washington and Franklin both. If Benevolence, Charity Generosity were ever personified in North America, they were in John Hancock. What shall I say of his Education? his literary Acquisitions, his Travels, his military civil and political

services? His sufferings and sacrifices? I dare not say even to you, at this time what I think and what I know.

John Adams to Elkanah Watson, Quincy, Mass., 10 August 1812

[In comparing British and Revolutionary figures with each other.] Hancock [could be compared] with nobody—he never had his equal in generosity: but in political Stability [compared] with Dickenson, James Otis and Sam. Adams with Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee &c &c.

John Adams to William Tudor, Quincy, Mass., 1 June 1817

You “never profoundly admired Mr. Hancock. He had vanity and caprice.” I can say, with truth, that I profoundly admired him, and more profoundly loved him. If he had vanity and caprice, so had I. And if his vanity and caprice made me sometimes sputter, as you know they often did, mine, I well know, had often a similar effect upon him. But these little flickerings of little passions determine nothing concerning essential characters. I knew Mr. Hancock from his cradle to his grave. He was radically generous and benevolent. He was born in this town, half way between this house and our congregational temple, son of a clergyman of this parish, and grandson of a clergyman of Lexington, both of excellent characters. We were at the same school together, as soon as we were out of petticoats. His father died when he was very young. His uncle, the most opulent merchant in Boston, who had no children, adopted him, placed him in Mr. Lovell’s school, educated him at Harvard college, and then took him into his store. And what a school was this! Four large ships constantly plying between Boston and London, and other business in proportion. This was in 1755. He became an example to all the young men in the town. Wholly devoted to business, he was as regular and punctual at his store as the sun in his course. His uncle sent him to London, from whence, after a residence of about a year, he returned to his store, with the same habits of business, unaltered in manners or deportment, and pursued his employments with the same punctuality and assiduity, till the death of his uncle, who left him his business, his credit, his capital, and his fortune; who did more—he left him the protector of his widow. This lady, though her husband left her a handsome independence, would have sunk into oblivion, like so many other most excellent widows, had not the public attention been fastened upon her by the fame of her nephew. Never was a nephew to an aunt more affectionate, dutiful, or respectful. No alteration appeared in Mr. Hancock, either from his travels in England, or from his accession to the fortune of his uncle. The same steady, regular, punctual, industrious, indefatigable man of business; and, to complete the character with the ladies, always genteelly dressed, according to the fashions of those days.

What shall I say of his fortune, his ships? His commerce was a great one. Your honored father told me, at that time, that not less than a thousand families were, every day in the year, dependent on Mr. Hancock for their daily bread. Consider his real estate in Boston, in the country, in Connecticut, and the rest of New England. Had Mr. Hancock fallen asleep to this day, he would now awake one of the richest men. Had he persevered in business as a private merchant, he might have erected a house of Medicis. Providence, however, did not intend or permit, in this instance, such a calamity to mankind. Mr. Hancock was the delight of the eyes of the whole town. There can be no doubt that he might have had his choice, and he had his choice of a companion; and that choice was very natural, a granddaughter of the great patron and most revered friend of his father. Beauty, politeness, and every domestic virtue justified his predilection.

At the time of this prosperity, I was one day walking in the mall, and, accidentally, met Samuel Adams. In taking a few turns together, we came in full view of Mr. Hancock's house. Mr. Adams, pointing to the stone building, said, "This town has done a wise thing today." "What?" "They have made that young man's fortune their own." His prophecy was literally fulfilled; for no man's property, was ever more entirely devoted to the public. The town had, that day, chosen Mr. Hancock into the legislature of the province. The quivering anxiety of the public, under the fearful looking for of the vengeance of king, ministry, and parliament, compelled him to a constant attendance in the House; his mind was soon engrossed by public cares, alarms, and terrors; his business was left to subalterns; his private affairs neglected, and continued to be so to the end of his life. If his fortune had not been very large, he must have died as poor as Mr. S. Adams or Mr. Gerry.

I am not writing the life of Mr. Hancock; his biography would fill as many volumes as Marshall's *Washington*, and be quite as instructive and entertaining. Though I never injured or justly offended him, and though I spent much of my time, and suffered unknown anxiety, in defending his property, reputation, and liberty from persecution, I cannot but reflect upon myself for not paying him more respect than I did in his lifetime. His life will, however, not ever be written. But if statues, obelisks, pyramids, or divine honors were ever merited by men, of cities or nations, James Otis, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock, deserved these from the town of Boston and the United States. Such adulations, however, are monopolized by profligate libelers, by cringing flatterers, by unprincipled ambition, by sordid avarice, by griping usurers, by scheming speculators, by plundering bankers, by blind enthusiasts, by superstitious bigots, by puppies and butterflies, and by every thing but honor and virtue. Hence the universal slavery of the human species. Hence a commentary on the well known and most expressive figure of rhetoric, "It grieved the Almighty, at his heart. that he had made man." Nevertheless, this is a good world, and I thank the Almighty that he has made man.

Mr. Hancock had a delicate constitution. He was very infirm; a great part of his life was passed in acute pain. He inherited from his father, though one of the most amiable and beloved of men, a certain sensibility. a keenness of feeling, or, in more familiar language, a peevishness of temper, that sometimes disgusted and afflicted his friends. Yet it was astonishing with what patience, perseverance, and punctuality he attended to business to the last. Nor were his talents or attainments inconsiderable. They were far superior to many who have been much more celebrated. He had a great deal of political sagacity and penetration into men. He was by no means a contemptible scholar or orator. Compared with Washington, Lincoln, or Knox, he was learned.

Seth Harding

Henry Laurens to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., Philadelphia, 26 September 1778

Yesterday Congress took under consideration a Report from the Marine Committee, and thereupon Resolved that the new frigate at Norwich be called the Confederacy, and that Seth Harding Esquire be appointed to the Command of the said frigate, the vote for Captain Harding was unanimous. I declared it accordingly, but I perceive the Secretary has omitted to insert it in the Act of Congress which your Honor will find within this Cover. Captain Harding is a Man of more dispatch than vanity, and will not wait the necessary time which an amendment will require, I commend him.

Samuel Hardy

William Grayson to James Madison, New York, 14 October 1785

Since your departure, we have been under great anxiety for the fate of Mr. Hardy; On a party to Haerlem heights about ten days ago, he unfortunately bursted a blood vessel, and from frequent hemorrhages, has been in extreme danger till about three days ago, when matters have taken rather a more favorable turn. He has requested me to inform you of his desire to get a seat in the executive Council if practicable, as he thinks the climate of his own country will be more suitable to the situation of his health. He is the more anxious to have this done, as it is not only his own opinion but that of his Physicians, that he will never from the nature of the complaint, be proper for the bar; or indeed for any kind of violent public speaking.

Hardy of Virginia

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 4 November 1785

Reading over the Salem paper to day, I found an account of the death, and funeral of Mr. Hardy, a delegate in Congress from the State of Virginia, a gentleman, from whom I received the politest treatment while I was in New York, but what is of Consequence, a firm and steady friend to his Country, a mild Republican, and a worthy man. . . . Mr. Hardy died October 17th. and in him these States have lost, a patriot, from whose virtues, they would I doubt not, have derived great advantages, had the all wise ruler of Events, thought proper to continue him longer in the world. The respect shown him, after his death by the august body, of which he was a member, proves how much he was esteemed and beloved by them.

Josiah Harmer

Arthur Lee to John Adams, In Congress, 14 January 1783

Col. Harmar (who is sent with the Ratification) is a gentleman of very approv'd integrity, & on whom you may rely should you want a person of such a character.

Cornelius Harnett

Joseph Hewes to Richard Caswell, Edenton, N.C., 30 March 1777

Hooper commended Harnett to Morris as "a judicious man, and a sensible agreeable companion. He has acquired a fortune and is somewhat conversant with trade. He will be useful on some

of your Mercantile committees. I beg your notice of him. He has a high opinion of our friend S. Adams and my Countrymen in general having been formerly acquainted in Boston.”

Robert Goodloe Harper

Abigail Adams to John Adams, Quincy, Mass., 6 February 1797

[Concerning a direct tax on tax proposed in Congress] I am astonished that so sensible a Man as Mr. Harper Should know so little of the temper and disposition of his Countrymen.

Mary Cranch to Abigail Adams, Quincy, Mass., 1 April 1798

Mr. Otis & Harpers Speeches are much admir'd by one party & their Wit & Satire felt by the other.

Benjamin Harrison

Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, Philadelphia, 10 September 1774

Col. Harrison may be Fifty an uncommonly large Man, and appears rather rough in his address, & speech.

John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 26 September 1775

Coll. Harrison of Virginia, whose Taste in Madeira, I know, and in Girls I believe, and in Salt Petre I hope to be much Superiour to his Judgment in Men, is very confident that they are making large Quantities from Tobacco House Earth, in his Colony.

Samuel Ward to Henry Ward, Philadelphia, 30 September 1775

Colonel Harrison . . . is a Virginian, a Friend of Liberty, a Man of Sense & Spirit but not at all Times so wise & judicious as some from that glorious Colony.

John Adams to William Heath, Philadelphia, 5 October 1775

Mr. Lynch is from S. Carolina, Coll. Harrison from Virginia, both Gentlemen of great Fortune, and respectable Characters, Men of Abilities and very staunch Americans.

John Adams: Autobiography, February 1776

But there were about [George Washington's] head Quarters some who were as weak and wavering as our Members and the General himself had chosen for his private confidential Correspondent a Member from Virginia, Harrison, who was still counted among the cold Party. This was an indolent, luxurious, heavy Gentleman, of no Use in Congress or Committees, but a great

Embarrassment to both. He was represented to be a kind of Nexus utriusque Mundi, a corner Stone in which the two Walls of Party met in Virginia. He was descended from one of the most ancient, wealthy and respectable Families in the ancient dominion, and seemed to be set up in Opposition to Mr. Richard Henry Lee.

John Adams: Autobiography, March 1776

This is the first Appearance of Mr. Harrison as Chairman of the Committee of the whole [in Congress]. . . . Although Mr. Harrison was another Sir John Falstaff, excepting in his Larcenies and Robberies, his Conversation disgusting to every Man of Delicacy or decorum. Obscene, profane, impious, perpetually ridiculing the Bible, calling it the Worst Book in the World, yet as I saw he was to be often nominated with Us in Business, I took no notice of his Vices or Follies, but treated him and Mr. Hancock too with uniform Politeness.

William Hooper to Robert Morris, Baltimore, Md., 1 February 1777

Harrison is still ill & unless he is more attentive to Exercise & Regimen I fear the consequences will be serious.

Benjamin Rush: Sketches

He was well acquainted with the forms of public business. He had strong State prejudices, and was very hostile to the leading characters from the New England States. In private life he preferred pleasure and convivial company to business of all kinds. His taste in this respect was discovered in a letter to General Washington which was intercepted and published in Boston. He was upon the whole a useful member of Congress and sincerely devoted to the welfare of his country.

Edmund Randolph: History of Virginia

Another favorite of the day was Benjamin Harrison. With strong sense and a temper not disposed to compromise with ministerial power, he scrupled not to utter any truth. During a long service in the House of Burgesses, his frankness, though sometimes tinctured with bitterness, was the source of considerable attachment.

John Adams: Autobiography, 8 March 1805

[February 1776] But there were about head Quarters some who were as weak and wavering as our Members and the General himself had chosen for his private confidential Correspondent a Member from Virginia, Harrison, who was still counted among the cold Party. This was an indolent, luxurious, heavy Gentleman, of no Use in Congress or Committees, but a great Embarrassment to both. He was represented to be a kind of Nexus utriusque Mundi, a corner Stone in which the two Walls of Party met in Virginia. He was descended from one of the most ancient, wealthy and respectable Families in the ancient dominion, and seemed to be set up in Opposition to Mr. Richard Henry Lee. Jealousies and divisions appeared among the Delegates of no State more remarkably than among those of Virginia. Mr. Wythe told me, that Thomas Lee the elder Brother of Richard Henry was the delight of the Eyes of Virginia and by far the most popular Man they had. But Richard Henry was not. I asked the reason, for Mr. Lee appeared a Scholar, a Gentleman, a Man of uncommon Eloquence, and an agreeable Man. Mr. Wythe said this was all true but Mr.

Lee had when he was very young and when he first came into the House of Burgesses moved and urged on an Inquiry into the State of the Treasury which was found deficient in a large Sum, which had been lent by the Treasurer to many of the most influential Families of the Country, who found themselves exposed, and had never forgiven Mr. Lee. This he said had made him so many Enemies, that he never had recovered his Reputation, but was still heartily hated by great Numbers. These feelings among the Virginia Delegates, were a great Injury to Us. Mr. Samuel Adams and myself were very intimate with Mr. Lee, and he agreed perfectly with Us in the great System of our Policy, and by his means We kept a Majority of the Delegates of Virginia with Us, but [Benjamin] Harrison, [Edmund] Pendleton, and some others, showed their Jealousy of this Intimacy plainly enough at times. Harrison consequently courted Mr. Hancock and some others of our Colleagues: but We had now a Majority, and gave ourselves no trouble about their little Intrigues.

[March 1776] Although Harrison was another Sir John Falstaff, excepting in his Larcenies and Robberies, his Conversation disgusting to every Man of Delicacy or decorum, Obscene, profane, impious, perpetually ridiculing the Bible, calling it the Worst Book in the World, yet as I saw he was to be often nominated with Us in Business, I took no notice of his Vices or Follies, but treated him and Mr. Hancock too with uniform Politeness. I was however, too intimate with Mr. Lee, Mr. Adams, Mr. Ward &c. to escape the Jealousy and Malignity of their Adversaries.

Thomas Hartley

John Armstrong, Jr., to Robert McPherson, Manor of Livingston, 26 November 1788

Hartley has a good deal of the temper and manners of the deliberative character—that is he is mild and decent—but he wants sense to support and apply them. He wants knowledge too.

William Maclay: Journal, 21 April 1790

I find in some Conversation which I have had with the Speaker That Hartley is very dependent in his circumstances. a mere Borrower and Discounter of Notes at the Philada. bank. It is much against him in point of prudence, that he should be the most extravagant, Member of the Pennsylvania Delegation.

Thomas Boylston Adams to John Adams, Lancaster, Pa., 14 May 1794

At York Town I met with great civility from Col. Hartley & his Family—they are the principal people in the County, & his influence as a political character far beyond any man in it.

Benjamin Hawkins

Archibald Maclaine to James Iredell, Wilmington, N.C., 18 November 1790

Mr. Hawkins, I am informed, is wholly out of favor with the Assembly—They have not the least confidence in him—How he comes to be in a worse plight than Mr. Johnston, I do not know, unless more pliancy was expected from him, than from the integrity of the other.

Edmund Randolph to George Washington, Philadelphia, 28 February 1793

I determined last night, not to communicate with Mr. H——s; because I suspected his own opinion to have a wrong tendency; and I have not been always satisfied, that his conduct has not savoured of management or perhaps cunning.

Andrew Ellicott to James Madison, Lancaster, Pa., 20 January 1813

In several of our publick prints, I have observed the conduct and character of Col. Hawkins, one of our agents of indian affairs, ungenerously attacked. Having been acquainted with Col. Hawkins for more than 20 years, I can say with truth, that during the whole of that period, I have not known a more humane, and benevolent character, nor a firmer friend to the interest, and liberty of his country.

While I was in the Carolinas, and Georgia about a year ago, it was not uncommon to hear the Col. censured with great severity; but this opposition to him originated in the worst of motives. The Col. in his agency has been careful to protect the indians in their rights, which has given great offence to a numerous band of speculators, who have for years past had their attention directed to the best lands in the Creek country, and had it not been for the firmness, and integrity of the Col. the Creeks over whom he presides, would either have been exterminated, or driven over the Mississippi before this time.

Believing as I do, that improper attempts have been made, and are still making to injure the Col. in the estimation of his fellow citizens, I should be wanting in a duty which I owe to my own conscience, did I not come forward and bear my testimony in his favour, and which I request may be considered a sufficient apology for addressing this note to you.

Elizabeth Trist to Thomas Jefferson, Birdwood, Albemarle County, Va., 11 July 1816

The newspaper of last week announces the Death of our friend Hawkins. I was not surprised for his life has been prolong'd beyond my expectation, but the loss of a friend can not but excite emotions. I believe he has done a great deal of good in melioration of the Savage life—tho I believe he made many enemies among the white Settlers in establishing the Rights of the Indians but time will do justice to his memory and acknowledge his Philanthropy.

Joseph Hawley

Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, 4 November 1775

Major H——y has as much of the Stern Virtue and Spirit of a Roman Censor as any Gentleman I ever conversd with.

Udny Hay

Nathanael Greene to Udny Hay, Valley Forge, Pa., 17 June 1778

There is no Man of whose Activity and Industry I have a better Opinion, and I persuade myself we Cannot fail to preserve a good Understanding. I am happy to hear your Conduct is Satisfactory to the Army and pleasing to the Country.

Ebenezer Hazard

John Adams: Diary, 23 August 1774

Mr. Ebenezer Hazard waited on me with a Letter requesting my assistance in making his Collection of American State Papers. I recommended him to Mr. S. Adams, and Dr. Samuel Mather. I advised him to publish from Hackluyt, the Voyage of Sebastian Cabot, in this Collection. He thought it good Advice.

Hazard is certainly very capable of the Business he has undertaken—he is a Genius.

Ebenezer Hazard to Jeremy Belknap, New York, 21 June 1789

My gout is not “of the worst kind”; but I assure you candidly it is so bad that I would never wish for even such a fit merely for the sake of enjoying the “pleasure of recovery.” The pain at times made me quite *spiteful*, and that is much for a man of my philosophy; especially one who studies to be *free from vexation*, like a true disciple of Cadogan.* I never have tried the beefsteak poultice. All I do for the gout, as yet, is to have *quantum sufficit*** of well-carded wool wrapped loosely round the foot, and then add a decent integument of flannel, so as to keep the foot in a constant perspiration, and then as patiently as possible wait the issue. If I find the pain intolerable, I take about 25 drops of Warner’s anodyne elixir. *Apropos*, have you ever read Warner “On the Gout”?*** He writes well from *experience*, and, though a divine, exceeds all writers on the gout. He is my magnus Apollo; and, having followed his directions, I am now in a convalescent state. I have this day put on shoes for the first time; but they have been bravely enlarged by scarifying all the upper leather. The short slits in alternate rows look very well over a piece of clean bright-red flannel.

*Of Welsh origin meaning “battle glory.”

**Latin meaning a sufficient amount.

***Ferdinando Warner, *A Full and Plain Account of the Gout* . . . (2nd ed., London, 1768).

Jonathan J. Hazard

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

By Letters from sundry Correspondents it appears that North Carolina has at length thrown herself out of the Union, but she happily is not alone; The large upright and respectable State of Rhode Island is her associate. This circumstance however does not, I hope, render it necessary that the Delegates from NC should profess a particular affection for the Delegates from R.I. That State was some days ago represented by a Mr Arnold who keeps a little Tavern 10 miles out of Providence & a Mr Hazard the illiterate quondam Skipper of a small Coasting Vessel & now the very leader of the Know Ye Justices who officiates at County Courts & receives small Fees not as a Lawyer but Agent for Suitors. These two respectable Delegates with the innate Desire of promoting a bad measure lately voted on several Questions respecting the Organisation of the new Govt. in order to fix it in New York, a Corner of the Union.

William Heath

Benjamin Lincoln to Theodore Sedgwick, Boston, 8 April 1790

It is said that General Heath, who if it was not for his merit in war would have I think little of which to boast, for he is a strange politician, is in the plan of discriminating [in funding the public debt to the original holders as well as the current owners] and I am very apprehensive will encourage some of the officers to petition Congress for a compensation for their losses by the depreciation of their public securities and the want of payment in time by Congress.

Patrick Henry

William Wirt: Account of the Parson's Cause Trial, November 1763

The courthouse was crowded with an overwhelming multitude, and surrounded with an immense and anxious throng, who, not finding room to enter were endeavoring to listen without, in the deepest attention. But there was something still more awfully disconcerting than all this; for in the chair of the presiding magistrate sat no other than his own father. . . . And now came on the first trial of Patrick Henry's strength. No one had ever heard him speak, and curiosity was on tiptoe. He rose very awkwardly, and faltered much in his exordium. The people hung their heads at so unpromising a commencement; the clergy were observed to exchange sly looks with each other; and his father is described as having almost sunk with confusion from his seat. But these feelings were of short duration, and soon gave place to others, of a very different character. For now were those wonderful faculties which he possessed, for the first time, developed; and now

was first witnessed that mysterious and almost supernatural transformation of appearance, which the fire of his own eloquence never failed to work in him. For as his mind rolled along, and began to glow from its own action, all the *exuviae* of the clown seemed to shed themselves spontaneously. His attitude, by degrees, became erect and lofty. The spirit of his genius awakened all his features. His countenance shone with a nobleness and grandeur which it had never before exhibited. There was a lightning in his eyes which seemed to rive the spectator. His action became graceful, bold, and commanding; and in this tone of his voice, but more especially in his emphasis, there was a peculiar charm, a magic, of which anyone who ever heard him will speak as soon as he is named, but of which no one can give any adequate description. They can only say that it struck upon the ear and upon the heart, *in a manner which language cannot tell*. Add to all these, his wonder-working fancy, and the peculiar phraseology in which he clothed its images; for he painted to the heart with a force that almost petrified it. In the language of those who heard him on this occasion, “he made their blood run cold, and their hair to rise on end.” . . .

I have tried much to procure a sketch of this celebrated speech. But those of Mr. Henry’s hearers who survive, seem to have been bereft of their senses. They can only tell you, in general, that they were taken captive; and so delighted with their captivity, that they followed implicitly, whithersoever he led them: that, at his bidding, their tears flowed from pity, and their cheeks flushed with indignation: that when it was over, they felt as if they had just awakened from some ecstatic dream, of which they were unable to recall or connect the particulars. It was such a speech as they believe had never before fallen from the lips of man; and to this day, the old people of that county cannot conceive that a higher compliment can be paid to a speaker, than to say of him, in their own homey phrase:—“*He is almost equal to Patrick, when he plead against the parsons.*”

George Mason to Martin Cockburn, Williamsburg, Va., 26 May 1774

At the request of the gentlemen concerned, I have spent an evening with them upon the subject, where I had an opportunity of conversing with Mr. Henry, and knowing his sentiments; as well as hearing him speak in the house since, on different occasions. He is by far the most powerful speaker I ever heard. Every word he says not only engages but commands the attention; and your passions are no longer your own when he addresses them. But his eloquence is the smallest part of his merit. He is in my opinion the first man upon this continent, as well in abilities as public virtues, and had he lived in Rome about the time of the first Punic war, when the Roman people had arrived at their meridian glory, and their virtue not tarnished, Mr. Henry’s talents must have put him at the head of that glorious Commonwealth.

John Adams: Diary, 28 August 1774

He [Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant] says the Virginians speak in raptures about Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry—one the Cicero and the other the Demosthenes of the Age.

Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, Philadelphia, 10 September 1774

Mr. Henry is also a Lawyer, and the completest Speaker I ever heard. If his future Speeches, are equal to the small Samples he had hitherto given Us, they will be worth preserving, but in a Letter I can give You no Idea of the Music of his Voice, or the highwrought, yet Natural elegance of his Style, & Manner.

John Adams: Diary, Philadelphia, 10 October 1774

Lee, Henry, and Hooper are the orators [in Congress].

John Adams: Diary, 11 October 1774

Spent the Evening with Mr. Henry at his Lodgings consulting about a Petition to the King.

Henry said he had no public Education. At fifteen he read Virgil and Livy, and has not looked into a Latin Book since. His father left him at that Age, and he has been struggling thro Life ever since. He has high Notions. Talks about exalted Minds, &c. He has a horrid Opinion of Galloway, Jay, and the Rutledges. Their System he says would ruin the Cause of America. He is very impatient to see such Fellows, and not be at Liberty to describe them in their true Colours.

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 13 February 1776

In the Beginning of a War, in Colonies like this and Virginia, where the martial Spirit is but just awakened and the People are unaccustomed to Arms, it may be proper and necessary for such popular Orators as Henry and Dickinson to assume a military Character. But I really think them both, better Statesmen than Soldiers, though I cannot say they are not very good in the Latter Character. Henry's Principles, and Systems, are much more conformable to mine than the other's however.

George Lux to John Sullivan, 22 August 1776

Our Friend Pat: Henry Esqr. is now Governor of Virginia. . . . I have the Pleasure to inform you, that he discharges his Office with the Integrity & Ability natural to him—

Benjamin Rush: Autobiography

Patrick Henry from Virginia was my patient under the inoculation for the small pox. He was amiable in his manners, and a zealous advocate of the claims of his country. I never heard him speak in public, but his private opinions upon men and things, showed a deep and correct knowledge of human nature.

Thomas Jefferson to Isaac Zane, Richmond, Va., 24 December 1781

The trifling body [George Nicholas] who moved this matter was below contempt; he was more an object of pity. His natural ill-temper was the tool worked with by another hand [Patrick Henry]. He was like the minners [i.e., minnows] which go in and out of the fundament of the whale. But the whale himself was discoverable enough by the turbulence of the water under which he moved.

Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, 26 November 1782

I was not a little surprised however to find one person hostile to you as far as he has personal courage to show hostility to any man. Who he is you will probably have heard, or may know him by this description as being all tongue without either head or heart. In the variety of his crooked [i.e., devious or tortured] schemes however, his interests may probably veer about so as to put it in your power to be useful to him; in which case he certainly will be your friend again if you want him.

George Mason to Patrick Henry, Gunston Hall, Va., 6 May 1783

It is in your Power, my dear Sir, to do more Good, and prevent more Mischief than any Man in this State; and I doubt not that you will exert the great Talents with which God has blessed you, in promoting the public Happiness & Prosperity.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Tuckahoe, Va., 7 May 1783

Henry as usual is involved in mystery. Should the popular tide run strongly in either direction, he will fall in with it. Should it not he will have a struggle between his enmity to the Lees & his enmity to every thing which may give influence to Congress.

Edmund Randolph to James Madison, Pettus's, Va., 21 June 1783

Mr. Henry left the assembly last Saturday, and at the same time the field open to his adversary [i.e., Richard Henry Lee]. He can always recover himself in interest by an exertion, but his sighs for home expose him to a daily loss of his popularity.

John Marshall to James Monroe, Richmond, Va., 12 December 1783

Henry retorted with a good deal of tartness but with much temper; 'tis his peculiar excellence when he altercates to appear to be drawn unwillingly into the contest & to throw in the eyes of others the whole blame on his adversary. His influence is immense.

Edward Bancroft to William Frazer, Philadelphia, 28 May 1784

Mr. Jefferson is just now informed, as he tells me, that the great leader of the Virginians, Mr. Patrick Henry, who has been violently opposed to every idea of increasing the powers of Congress, is convinced of his error, and has within these few days pledged himself to Mr. Madison, Mr. Jones, and others, to support a plan which they are to prepare and propose to the legislature of Virginia, for amending the confederation by a further concession of powers to Congress.

Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, Paris, 8 December 1784

The proposition for a Convention has had the result I expected. If one could be obtained I do not know whether it would not do more harm than good. While Mr. Henry lives another bad [Virginia] constitution would be formed, & saddled forever on us. What we have to do I think is devoutly to pray for his death, in the mean time to keep alive the idea that the present is but an ordinance & to prepare the minds of the young men.

Beverly Randolph to James Monroe, Richmond, Va., 6 March 1785

Mr. Henry entered on the Duties of his Office a little before Christmas. He is not fond of works of supererogation. You will understand me rightly.

Luigi Castiglioni: Sketches of American Statesmen, 1787

His knowledge extends not only to politics and government but also to literature and the sciences, the study of which he still pursues in hours free of affairs.

He is a man of about 50 years of age, and his features, fine but not too noble, show the liveliness of his talent.

James Madison to George Washington, New York, 18 March 1787

I hear from Richmond with much concern that Mr. Henry has positively declined his mission to Philadelphia [to the Constitutional Convention]. Besides the loss of his services on that theatre, there is danger I fear that this step has proceeded from a wish to leave his conduct unfettered on another theatre where the result of the Convention will receive its destiny from his omnipotence.

Henry Lee to James Madison, Stratford, Va., 7 December 1787

[On a vote in the House of Delegates on an issue collateral to the Constitution.] Henry whose art is equal to his talents for declamation, conducted this business & gained a majority on the vote of sixteen.

Edward Carrington to James Madison, Manchester, Va., 10 February 1788

My Route has been pretty much within the Neighborhood of Mr. Henry, and I find his politics to have been so industriously propagated, that the people are much disposed to be his blind followers. As an evidence of it the demagogues in the opposition [to the Constitution] suppose that their popularity is increased in proportion to the loudness of their clamors, whilst the Friends to the Constitution think it prudent to suppress their opinions, or at least to advance them with Caution

Cyrus Griffin to James Madison, New York, 14 April 1788

Henry is weighty and powerful but too interested

Edward Carrington to Thomas Jefferson, New York, 24 April 1788

Mr. H—— does not openly declare for a dismemberment of the union, but his Arguments in support of his opposition to the Constitution, go directly to that issue. He says that three confederacies would be practicable & better suited to the good of America, than one.

George Washington to John Jay, Mount Vernon, 8 June 1788

Upon the whole, the following inferences seem to have been drawn . . .

Mr. Henry and Colonel Mason took different and awkward ground, and by no means equalled the public expectations in their speeches [in the Virginia ratifying Convention]; the former has, probably, receded somewhat from his violent measures to coalesce with the latter, and the leaders of the opposition appear rather chagrined and hardly to be decided as to their mode of opposition.

Gouverneur Morris to Alexander Hamilton, Richmond, Va., 13 June 1788

Matters are not going so well in this State as the Friends of America could wish. If indeed the Debates in Convention were alone attended to a contrary Inference would be drawn for although Mr. Henry is most warm and powerful in Declamation being perfectly Master of Action, Utterance and the Power of Speech to stir Men's Blood yet the Weight of Argument is so strong on the Side

of Truth as wholly to destroy even on weak Minds the Effects of his Eloquence but there are as you well know certain dark Modes of operating on the Minds of Members which like contagious Diseases are only known by their Effects on the Frame and unfortunately our moral like our physical Doctors are often mistaken in their Judgment from Diagnostics.

Henry Knox to Rufus King, New York, 19 June 1788

I fear that overwhelming torrent, Patrick Henry. I would it were well over and the parchment [i.e., Virginia's ratification of the Constitution] lodged in the Secretary's office.

Otto's Biographies, Fall 1788

Man of the people, whom nature has given an amazing facility in a spirited manner. His eloquence astonishes and condemns even the most skillful adversaries to silence. He is the head of the plebeian party.

Edmund Randolph to James Madison, Richmond, Va., 23 October 1788

Mr. Henry, I learn, has been urged to take a seat in the [U.S.] Senate. But he refuses, being unwilling to submit to the oath.

Richard Bland Lee to James Madison, 29 October 1788

Our Assembly is *weak*. Mr. Henry is the only orator we have amongst us—and the friends to the new government, being all young & inexperienced—form but a feeble band against him.

Edmund Randolph to James Madison, Richmond, Va., 5 November 1788

H——y is . . . all powerful.

George Lee Turberville to James Madison, Richmond, Va., 13 November 1788

The man who leads a mob majority in such a govern[men]t is the most cruelly oppressive of all possible Tyrants.

George Washington to James Madison, Mount Vernon, 17 November 1788

The Accounts from Richmond are indeed, very unpropitious to foederal measures. The whole proceedings of the Assembly, it is said may be summed up in one word—to wit—that the Edicts of Mr. H—— are enregistered with less opposition by the Majority of that body, than those of the Grand Monarch are in the Parliaments of France. He has only to say let this be Law—and it is Law.

Henry Lee to James Madison, Alexandria, Va., 19 November 1788

Mr. H is absolute, & every measure succeeds, which menaces the existence of the government.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 8 December 1788

Mr. Henry . . . is omnipotent in the present legislature.

Henry Lee to James Madison, Alexandria, Va., 8 December 1788

[Reference to] Henry's influence & venom.

George Lee Turberville to James Madison, Richmond, Va., 14 December 1788

The violence of the Antifederals has begun to arouse suspicion—& so soon as the people become acquainted with the Conduct of their *great high priest* I have no doubt, but that they will take that direction which reason & moderation point out to them.

Philadelphia *Federal Gazette*, 20 December 1788

The contest will be between the FIRST BENEFACTOR of the United States [i.e., George Washington], and an ambitious demagogue in Virginia, who has placed himself at the head of the debtors and speculators of that state, and who sees that the establishment of the federal government must forever make him a contemptible state bawler; for he well knows he has not talents to influence a federal assembly of the pitched characters of the United States.

Tobias Lear to John Langdon, Mount Vernon, 31 January 1789

In plain English, he ruled a majority of the Assembly and his edicts were registered by that body with less opposition than those of the Grand Monarque have met with from his Parliaments.

William Grayson to Patrick Henry, New York, 12 June 1789

Your agreeable favor was handed to me about a week ago. With respect to the unmerited attacks on your character I think they deserve nothing but contempt on your part: you have certainly adopted the dignified line of conduct, and I trust & hope you will persevere in it: nothing would please the author so well as to enter into a literary altercation with you: he would expect to aggrandize himself from the character of his competition: In my opinion such ill founded bad digested calumny ought to give you no manner of uneasiness: such kind of attacks on characters that are high in the public estimation have been so frequent & are so well understood as not to deserve a moment's attention—Envy & detraction says Mr. Addison is a tax which every man of merit pays for being eminent & conspicuous.

Thomas Jefferson to William Short, Eppington, 14 December 1789

Antifederalism is not yet dead in this country. The gentlemen who opposed it retain a good deal of malevolence towards the new government. Henry is its avowed foe. He stands higher in public estimation than he ever did. Yet he was so often in the minority in the present assembly that he has quitted it, never more to return, unless an opportunity offers to overturn the new constitution.

Henry Lee to James Madison, Berry Hill, Stafford County, Va., 3 April 1790

Henry already is considered a prophet, his predictions are daily verifying—His declaration with respect to the division of interest which would exist under the constitution and predominate in all the doings of the govt. already has been undeniably proved.

William Madison to James Madison, Richmond, Va., 3 December 1791

I wish to suggest to you the renewal of a correspondence with Col. Henry. I am authorized, by a particular and intimate acquaintance of his, to say that such an intercourse will not only be extremely acceptable but its decline is a subject of regret to Col. Henry and his Lady. For my part I do not see any impropriety but on the other hand great advantage probably resulting from the communication as it is in his power to give you more information of the disposition of the different parts of the State than perhaps any other Man in it. I wish to know your sentiments on the subject and if you do not see any greater obstacle than I do I hope you will gratify the old gentleman.

John Beckley to James Madison, Philadelphia, 17 October 1792

A jealous eye is cast toward Virginia in her impending choice of a Senator and the most marked anxiety for the reelection of R: H. L. [Richard Henry Lee]—*perhaps* an attentive observer on the spot, might mark the secret workings of Mr. H. *even in the Virginia Legislature*, through the agency of one or more of those closeted *friends* of his, of whom I wrote you during the summer—it would be wise to be watchful; there is no inferior degree of sagacity in the combinations of this *extraordinary* Man, with a comprehensive Eye, a subtle and contriving mind, and a Soul devoted to his object, all his measures are promptly and aptly designed, and like the links of a chain, dependent on each other, acquire additional strength by their union & concert.

James Iredell to Hannah Iredell, Richmond, Va., 27 May 1793

. . . We began on the great British Causes the second day of the Court, and are now in the midst of them. The great P. Henry is to speak today. I never was more agreeably disappointed than in my acquaintance with him. I have been much in his company, and his manners are very pleasing and his mind I am persuaded highly liberal.

Rufus King to Alexander Hamilton, New York, 4 May 1796

I am entirely of opinion that P.H. [Patrick Henry] declining [to be the Federalists candidate for President], Mr. P[inckney] ought to be our man. It is even an idea of which I am fond in various lights. Indeed on latter reflection, I rather wish to be rid of P.H., that we may be at full liberty to take up Pinckney.

John Taylor to James Madison, Caroline, Va., 4 March 1799

Yesterday I received a letter from the southward of this state, written by a gentleman [Creed Taylor] upon whom I can rely, containing the following sentence. “Mr. Henry has certainly declared for the next [Virginia] Assembly, in obedience to the call from General Washington, who has called on him to step forward and save his country—this is laughable; after the abuse formerly lavished upon that character, they now look up to as the savior of his country—I hope to see you

in the next assembly, and pray exert your influence to prevail on Mr. Madison, to come forward—now is the time when all the friends to our free government should exert themselves.”

Shall I write to my correspondent, that all your friends are in a state of grief and dejection, from a despair of prevailing with you to come forward, and save them and yourself; or will any considerations overset a resolution, so baleful to your country?

Fathom Mr. Henry’s motives, and consider your personal situation. When I recollect his conduct respecting Mr. Jefferson . . . his apostasy is capable of a solution, only by considering it as the issue of a personal enmity to Mr. Jefferson and yourself, to gratify which he has sacrificed his principles to a party, determined on your destruction.

**Ralph Wormeley, Jr., to George Washington, Rosegill, Middlesex County, Va.,
12 May 1799**

Report (too well founded I fear) announces the death of Mr. Patrick Henry; he died ’tis said the day after he was elected a delegate to the Assembly: alarmed and indignant at the measures of the majority of the late assembly he offered himself and was elected, and intended to exert all the force of his eloquence to endeavor to change the Temper of the Delegates should that of the present members be similar to that of their predecessors. He is surely a great loss; at *this crisis* and with *this* disposition, what mighty good, would not such a man, with his great powers of Oratory and his known character of integrity, have wrought! by alas! he is gone, leaving behind him few who excel him as an Orator, or, as a Patriot.

George Washington to John Marshall, Mount Vernon, 16 June 1799

In the Death of Mr. Henry (of which I fear there is little doubt) not only Virginia, but our Country at large has sustained a very serious loss. I sincerely lament his death as a friend; and the loss of his eminent talents as a Patriot I consider as peculiarly unfortunate at this critical juncture of our affairs.

Archibald Blair to George Washington, Richmond, Va., 19 June 1799

It is much to be lamented that a Man of Mr. Henry’s merits should be so little personally known in the world—I remember at the commencement of the revolution he was dreaded as the Cromwell of America, and since, he has been counted upon by the opposition Party as a rival to you, and the Destroyer of our happy & most valuable Constitution. I had the honor of qualifying to my present office* when Mr. Henry commenced the Administration of our revolutionary Government, from which period to the day of his death, I have been upon the most intimate, and I believe, friendly terms with him; And I can with truth say that I never saw any thing tyrannical in his Disposition, nor otherwise ambitious than to be serviceable to Mankind. With regard to you sir, I may say as he said of Marshall—that he *loved you*—and for the same reason—*because you felt & acted as a republican—as an American*.

*Blair had been clerk of the Virginia Council of State since its inception in July 1776.

William Heth to Alexander Hamilton, Petersburg, Va., 20 June 1799

You must have heard ere this, of the death of our great HENRY. In the loss of this wonderful man, AMERICA itself, hath received a deep wound. But, Virginia, unfortunate, distracted Virginia! hath received a blow, which she will long feel. The good, the virtuous, and the liberal minded

of all classes, seem truly sensible of the severe stroke & show much, & deep affliction; while some few of the Jacobin tribe, are found so lost to every sense of decency & humanity, as openly to express their pleasure at an event, melancholy in the extreme, & which at this crisis of American affairs, may truly be called a *national misfortune*. But, what are not such degenerate, & contemptible wretches capable of? You have our last paper, to show how this misfortune has been mentioned here & in Richmond. . . . I should like to see this published in one of your papers, *embellished* by you—in order to get into ours. If you approve of this, send me your paper.

Edmund Randolph: History of Virginia

He was respectable in his parentage, but the patrimony of his ancestors and of himself was too scanty to feed ostentation or luxury. From education he derived those manners which belonged to the real Virginia planter and which were his ornament, in no less disdaining an abridgment of personal independence than in observing every decorum interwoven with the comfort of society. With his years the unbought means of popularity increased. Identified with the people, they clothed him with the confidence of a favorite son. Until his resolutions on the Stamp Act, he had been unknown, except to those with whom he had associated in the hardy sports of the field and the avowed neglect of literature. Still he did not escape notice, as occasionally retiring within himself in silent reflection, and sometimes descanting with peculiar emphasis on the martyrs in the cause of liberty. This enthusiasm was nourished by his partiality for the dissenters from the Established Church. He often listened to them while they were waging their steady and finally effectual war against the burdens of that church, and from a repetition of his sympathy with the history of their sufferings, he unlocked the human heart and transferred into civil discussions many of the bold licenses which prevailed in the religions. If he was not a constant hearer and admirer of that stupendous master of the human passions, George Whitefield, he was a follower, a devotee of some of his most powerful disciples at least.

All these advantages he employed by a demeanor inoffensive, conciliating, and abounding in good humor. For a short time he practiced the law in an humble sphere, too humble for the real height of his powers. He then took a seat at the bar of the General Court, the supreme tribunal of Virginia, among a constellation of eminent lawyers and scholar and was in great request even on questions for which he had not been prepared by much previous erudition. Upon the theater of legislation, he entered regardless of that criticism which was profusely bestowed on his language, pronunciation, and gesture. Nor was he absolutely exempt from an irregularity in his language, a certain homespun pronunciation, and a degree of awkwardness in the cold commencement of his gesture. But the corresponding looks and emotions of those whom he addressed speedily announced that language may be sometimes peculiar and even quaint, while it is at the same time expressive and appropriate; that a pronunciation which might disgust in a drawing room may yet find access to the hearts of a popular assembly; and that a gesture at first too much the effect of indolence may expand itself in the progress of delivery into forms which would be above the rule and compass but strictly within the prompting of nature. Compared with any of his more refined contemporaries and rivals, he by his imagination, which painted to the soul, eclipsed the sparklings of art, and knowing what cord of the heart would sound in unison with his immediate purpose, and with what strength or peculiarity it ought to be touched, he had scarcely ever languished in a minority at the time up to which his character is now brought. Contrasted with the most renowned of British orators, the older William Pitt, he was not inferior to him in the intrepidity of metaphor. Like him, he possessed a vein of sportive ridicule, but without arrogance or dictatorial malignity. In Henry's exordium there was a simplicity and even carelessness, which to a stranger, who had

never before heard him, promised little. A formal division of his intended discourse he never made; but even the first distance, which he took from his main ground, was not so remote as to obscure it, or to require any distortion of his course to reach it. With an eye which possessed neither positive beauty nor acuteness, and which he fixed upon the moderator of the assembly addressed without straying in quest of applause, he contrived to be the focus to which every person present was directed, even at the moment of the apparent languor of his opening. He transfused into the breast of others the earnestness depicted in his own features, which ever forbade a doubt of sincerity. In others rhetorical artifice and unmeaning expletives have been often employed as scouts to seize the wandering attention of the audience; in him the absence of trick constituted the triumph of nature. His was the only monotony which I ever heard reconcilable with true eloquence; its chief note was melodious, but the sameness was diversified by a mixture of sensations which a dramatic versatility of action and of countenance produced. His pauses, which for their length might sometimes be feared to dispel the attention, riveted it the more by raising the expectation of renewed brilliancy. In pure reasoning, he encountered many successful competitors; in the wisdom of looks, many superiors; but although he might be inconclusive, he was never frivolous; and arguments which at first seemed strange were afterwards discovered to be select in their kind, because adapted to some peculiarity in his audience. His style of oratory was vehement, without transporting him beyond the power of self-command or wounding his opponents by deliberate offense: after a debate had ceased, he was surrounded by them on the first occasion with pleasantry on some of its incidents. His figures of speech, when borrowed, were often borrowed from the Scriptures. The prototypes of others were the sublime scenes and objects of nature; and an occurrence at the same instant he never failed to employ with all the energy of which it was capable. His lightning consisted in quick successive flashes, which rested only to alarm the more. His ability as a writer cannot be insisted on, nor was he fond of a length of details; but for grand impressions in the defense of liberty, the Western world has not yet been able to exhibit a rival. His nature had probably denied to him, under any circumstances, the capacity of becoming Pitt, while Pitt himself would have been but a defective instrument in a revolution the essence of which was deep and pervading popular sentiment.

In this embryo state of the Revolution, deep research into the ancient treasures of political learning might well be dispensed with. It was enough to feel, to remember some general maxims coeval with the colony and inculcated frequently afterwards. With principles like these, Mr. Henry need not dread to encounter the usurpation threatened by Parliament, for although even his powerful eloquence could not create public sentiment, he could apply the torch of opposition so as fortunately to perceive that in every vicissitude of event, he concurred with his country.

Thomas Jefferson to William Wirt, Monticello, 12 April 1812

Mr. Henry's ravenous avarice [was] the only passion paramount to his love of popularity.

In ordinary business [in the House of Burgesses] he was a very inefficient member. He could not draw a bill on the most simple subject which would bear legal criticism, or even the ordinary criticism which looks to correctness of style & ideas, for indeed there was no accuracy of idea in his head. His imagination was copious, poetical, sublime, but vague also. He said the strongest things in the finest language, but without logic, without arrangement, desultorily.

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, Quincy, Mass., 12 November 1813

In the Congress of 1774 there was not one member, except Patrick Henry, who appeared to me sensible of the Precipice or rather the Pinnacle on which he stood, and had candour and courage enough to acknowledge it.

Thomas Jefferson to William Wirt, Monticello, 5 August 1815

You ask some account of Mr. Henry's mind, information and manners in 175–60, when I first became acquainted with him. We met at Nathan Dandridge's, in Hanover, about the Christmas of that winter, and passed perhaps a fortnight together at the revelries of the neighborhood and season. His manners had something of the coarseness of the society he had frequented; his passion was fiddling, dancing and pleasantry. He excelled in the last, and it attached every one to him. The occasion perhaps, as much as his idle disposition, prevented his engaging in any conversation which might give the measure either of his mind or information. Opportunity was not wanting, because Mr. John Campbell was there, who had married Mrs. Spotswood, the sister of Colonel Dandridge. He was a man of science, and often introduced conversations on scientific subjects. Mr. Henry had a little before broke up his store, or rather it had broken him up, and within three months after he came to Williamsburg for his license, and told me, I think, he had read law not more than six weeks.

Archibald Stuart to William Wirt, 1816

I was with Mr. H. in the [Virginia ratifying] Convention, when a storm rose in the midst of his speech, I sat too far from him to hear distinctly, but it was said he seemed to rise on the wings of the Tempest to seize upon the Artillery of Heaven and direct it against his adversaries.

Thomas Jefferson: Notes on William Wirt's Biography of Patrick Henry, c. 29 September 1816

That Mr. Henry wanted personal courage was the very general belief of all his acquaintances, strengthened perhaps by inference from the fact that his brother William, and half brother Syme were notorious cowards. But I know nothing of the facts on which this opinion of Mr. Henry was founded; nor do I recollect having heard except a single one related to me by Govr. Page, then a member of the Committee of safety. This was that while Mr. Henry's corps was encamped near Williamsburg, a nocturnal alarm took place on a false report that the enemy had landed, I believe, at Burwell's ferry: and were on their march to the city. Mr. Henry was so panic struck as to be incapable of giving an order, and the next in command was obliged to array the men, and take the necessary measures for defence. The belief therefore that Mr. Henry was no souldier, which prevailed with the Committee of safety, and also with our own members of Congress, might justify them in not confiding to him the military destinies of the state

William Wirt to Thomas Jefferson, Richmond, Va., 23 October 1816

You will perceive that I have borne very lightly on the errors of Mr. Henry's declining years. He did us much good in his better days and no evils have resulted from his later aberrations. Will not his biographer then be excused in drawing the veil over them and holding up the brighter side of his character, only, to imitation.*

*Jefferson responded on 12 November: "You have certainly practised rigorously the precept of 'de mortuis nil nisi bonum.'** This presents a very difficult question, whether one only, or both sides of the medal should be presented. It constitutes perhaps the distinction between panegyric and history. On this opinions are much divided, and perhaps may be so on this feature of your work. On the whole however you have nothing to fear, at least if my views are not very different from the common."

**Speaking no ill of the dead.

William Wirt: Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry, 1817

In criminal cases Mr. Henry was perfectly irresistible. He adapted himself, without effort, to the character of the cause; seized, with the quickness of intuition, its defensible point, and never permitted the jury to lose sight of it. Sir Joshua Reynolds has said of Titian, that, by a few strokes of his pencil, he knew how to mark the image and character of whatever object he attempted; and produced by this means a truer representation than any of his predecessors, *who finished every hair*. In like manner, Mr. Henry, by a few master-strokes upon the evidence, could in general stamp upon the cause whatever image or character he pleased; and convert it into tragedy or comedy, at his sovereign will, and with a power which no efforts of his adversary could counteract. He never wearied the jury by a dry and minute analysis of the evidence; he did not expend his strength in *finishing the hairs*; he produced all his high effect by those rare master-touches, and by the resistless skill with which, in a very few words, he could mold and color the prominent facts of a cause to his purpose. He had wonderful address, too, in leading off the minds of his hearers from the contemplation of unfavorable points, if at any time they were too stubborn to yield to his power of transformation. He beguiled the hearer so far from them, as to diminish them by distance, and soften, if not entirely cast into shade, their too strong natural colors. At this distance, too, he had a better opportunity of throwing upon them a false light, by an apparently casual ray of refraction from other points in the evidence, whose powers no man better knew how to array and concentrate, in order to disguise or eclipse an obnoxious fact. It required a mind of uncommon vigilance, and most intractable temper, to resist this charm with which he decoyed away his hearers; it demanded a rapidity of penetration which is rarely, if ever, to be found in a jury-box, to detect the intellectual juggle by which he spread his nets around them; it called for a stubbornness and obduracy of soul which does not exist, to sit unmoved under the pictures of horror or of pity which started from his canvass. They might resolve, if they pleased, to decide the cause against him, and to disregard every thing which he could urge in the defense of his client. But it was all in vain. Some feint, in an unexpected direction, threw them off their guard, and they were gone; some happy phrase, burning from the soul, beautiful and genuine impress, struck them with delightful surprise, and melted them into conciliation; and conciliation toward Mr. Henry, was victory inevitable. In short, he understood the human character so perfectly; knew so well all its strength and all its weaknesses, together with every path and by-way which winds around to the citadel of the best fortified heart and mind, that he never failed to take them, either by stratagem or storm. Hence he was, beyond doubt, the ablest defender of criminals in Virginia, and will probably never be equalled again.

The lax habits of his early life had implanted in him an insuperable aversion to the drudgery of details. He could not endure confinement of any sort, nor the labor of close and solitary thinking. His habits were all social, and his mind delighted in unlimited range. His conclusions were never reached by an elaborate deduction of thought; he gained them as it were *per saltum*; yet with a certainty not less infallible than that of the driest and severest logician.

Spencer Roane's Memorandum, post-1817

It is to be also observed that although his language was plain, and free from unusual or high-flown words, his ideas were remarkably bold, strong, and striking. By the joint effect of these two faculties, I mean of the power of his tone of voice and the grandness of his conceptions, he had a wonderful effect upon the feelings of his audience.

John Adams to William Wirt, Quincy, Mass., 23 January 1818

From a personal acquaintance, perhaps I might say a friendship, with Mr. Henry of more than forty years, and from all that I have heard or read of him, I have always considered him as a gentleman of deep reflection, keen sagacity, clear foresight, daring enterprise, inflexible intrepidity, and untainted integrity; with an ardent zeal for the liberties, the honor, and felicity of his country, and his species. All this you justly, as I believe, represent him to have been.

Thomas Jefferson: Autobiography, 1821

Mr. Pendleton, . . . who, taken all in all, was the ablest man in debate I have ever met with. He had not indeed the poetical fancy of Mr. Henry, his sublime imagination, his lofty and overwhelming diction. . . .

When the famous Resolutions of 1765, against the Stamp-act, were proposed, I was yet a student of law in Williamsburg. I attended the debate, however, at the door of the lobby of the House of Burgesses, and heard the splendid display of Mr. Henry's talents as a popular orator. They were great indeed; such as I have never heard from any other man. He appeared to me to speak as Homer wrote.

Thomas Jefferson: Autobiography, 6 January 1821

. . . he was the laziest man in reading I ever knew.

Thomas Jefferson: Conversation with Daniel Webster, 1824

Patrick Henry was originally a bar-keeper. He was married very young, & going into some business on his own account, was a bankrupt before the year was out. . . .

He was as well suited to the times as any man ever was, & it is not now easy to say, what we should have done without Patrick Henry. He was far before all, in maintaining the spirit of the Revolution. His influence was most extensive, with the Members from the Upper Counties, & *his* boldness & their votes overawed & controlled the more cool, or the more timid Aristocratic gentlemen of the lower part of the State. His eloquence was peculiar; if indeed it should be called eloquence, for it was impressive & sublime beyond what can be imagined. Although it was difficult when he had spoken, to tell what he had said, yet while he was speaking, it always seemed directly to the point. When he had spoken in opposition to *my* opinion, had produced a great effect, & I myself been highly delighted & moved, I have asked myself when he ceased, "What the devil has he said," & could never answer the enquiry.

His person was of full size, & his manner & voice free & manly. His utterance neither very fast nor very slow. His speeches generally short from a quarter to an half hour. His pronunciation, was vulgar & vicious, but it was forgotten while he was speaking.

He was a man of very little knowledge of any sort, he read nothing & had no books. Returning one November from Albemarle Court, he borrowed of me Hume's Essays, in two vols. saying he should have leisure in the winter for reading. In the Spring he returned them, & declared he had not been able to go farther than twenty or thirty pages, in the first volume. He wrote almost nothing, he *could not* write. The resolutions of '75 which have been ascribed to him, have by many, been supposed to have been written by Mr. [Thomas] Johnson, who acted as his second, on that occasion. But if they were written by Henry himself, they are not such as to prove any power of composition. Neither in politicks nor in his profession was he a man of business, he was a man for debate only. His biographer [William Wirt] says, that he read Plutarch every year,—I doubt whether he ever read a volume of it in his life. His temper was excellent, & he generally observed decorum in debate.

On one or two occasions I have seen him *angry*—and his anger was terrible. Those who witnessed it, were not disposed to rouse it again. In his opinions he was yielding & practicable, & not disposed to differ from his friends. In private conversation he was agreeable, & facetious & while in genteel society appeared to understand all the decencies & proprieties of it; but in his *heart*, he preferred low society, & sought it as often as possible. He would hunt in the pine woods of Fluvannah, with overseers, & people of that description, living in a camp for a fortnight at a time without a change of raiment. I have often been astonished at his command of proper language; how he obtained the knowledge of it, I never could find out, as he read so little & conversed little with educated men.

After all, it must be allowed that he was our leader, in the measures of the Revolution, in Virginia. In that respect more is due to HIM than to any other person. If we had not had *him*, we probably have got on pretty well, as you did by a number of men or nearly equal talents, but he left us all far behind.

John Finch's Account of a Visit to Monticello, before 5 April 1824

On returning to the drawing-room, we had a conversation which continued three hours, and the following were some of the sentiments Mr. Jefferson expressed: . . .

"Henry spoke wonderfully—call it oratory or what you please, but I never heard any thing like it. He had more command over the passions than any man I ever knew; I heard all the celebrated orators of the National Assembly of France, but there was none equal to Patrick Henry. It was his profound knowledge of human nature, and his manner of speaking, more than the matter of his orations. After listening with the utmost attention, I sometimes endeavoured to recollect what he had been saying, but never could succeed."

Nicholas P. Trist's Record of Thomas Jefferson's Conversations, 11 October 1824

His great delight was to put on his hunting shirt, collect a parcel of overseers & such like people, and spend weeks together hunting in the piny woods, camping at night, & cracking jokes round a light woods fire.

Timothy Pickering to John Marshall, Salem, Mass., 26 December 1828

May I venture to fill the vacant space, in this miscellaneous letter, with some notice of Patrick Henry? From Mr. Wirt's Life of that distinguished man (tho' the biographer deals too much in hyperboles) I infer that he was truly a virtuous & religious man. Of his *eloquence*, Mr. Jefferson

once told me, that it surpassed that of any man he had ever heard speak. But his speeches in the Virginia Convention, on the Constitution, (two or three of which I have read) appear more declamatory than solid. He seems to have been terrified and he strove to excite the like terror in others with apprehensions of the eventual overthrow of the public liberty, if it should be adopted: seeming to have over-looked the simple fact, that the legislators & all the officers provided for in the Constitution, derived, directly or indirectly, their appointments, like those of the several State governments, in which he reposed entire confidence, from the *People*; and could be displaced in like manner, if they proved unfaithful to their trusts.

Joseph Hewes

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 11 July 1777

Hewes has a sharp Eye and keen, penetrating Sense, but what is of much more Value is a Man of Honour and Integrity. If he should call upon you, and you should be about, I hope you will treat him with all the Complaisance that is due to his Character. I almost envy him his Journey, altho he travells for his Health, which at present is infirm.

Stephen Higginson

James Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 27 October 1783

Holton & Higginson two very good & uncorrupt Men [were appointed by the Massachusetts legislature to serve in the Confederation Congress].

William Hill

John Baptista Ashe to George Washington, Philadelphia, 16 December 1790

Shou'd Mr. Sitgreaves meet your approbation [for federal district judge] Sir, I beg further, to mention William Hill esquire as the dist. Atty. he is a Gentleman, who at this time makes the law his profession, and has Merit & Abilities.

Enos Hitchcock

John Jay: Circuit Court Diary, 5 December 1790

Heard Dr. Hitchcock this mornng. . . . passd. The Evg. With Dr. Hitchcock—an amiable man.

John Sloss Hobart

Nathaniel Hazard to Mathew Carey, New York, 28 July 1788

The Governor, Chancellor and our three Judges of the Supreme Court, sit every winter with the Legislature, as a Council of Revision, and have the same negative on their Acts, as our President General has under the new Constitution. The Hon[ora]ble Judge Hobart I am well acquainted with. Tho' just, liberal and firm in his political Sentiments yet possessing a great share of Moderation & Equanimity he has great Influence with all Parties. Your Museum* is in his Style; he is a Man of Reading and Taste, but his Stipend is small, and from mere Oeconomy he is I dare say, often obliged to deny himself—I know of no Man in this State more capable of serving you, or more likely to do it than him. If you have not already been *too liberal in that way*, a Compliment of the Museum from January last, and to be continued, would be well received & I doubt not, produce ample Repayment in Time.

*A reference to Mathew Carey's *American Museum*, a monthly magazine published in Philadelphia from 1787 through 1792. Hazard was suggesting that Hobart might subscribe to the magazine and perhaps obtain other subscribers.

James Hogg

Archibald Maclaine to James Iredell, Wilmington, N.C., 17 November 1788

Though a man of sense, Mr. Hogg is, I think, a very bad politician, and so credulous that he is as ready to swallow what he fears as what he hopes.

Samuel Holton

James Warren to John Adams, Milton, Mass., 27 October 1783

Holton & Higginson two very good & uncorrupt Men [were appointed by the Massachusetts legislature to serve in the Confederation Congress].

“An Observer,” Boston *Independent Chronicle*, 22 January 1789

[Holten] has, from the beginning, been practiced in public and national affairs, and his acknowledged abilities, and acquaintance with the general principles of politics and legislation, gave him great advantage, and were of much benefit to the state.

William Hooper

Silas Deane to Elizabeth Deane, Philadelphia, 23 September 1774

the North Carolina being now arrived I will fill up the space by telling You there are Three of Them, Mr. Hooper, Mr. Caswell, & Mr. [Hewes]. The first is a Bostonian bred & Educated at Cambridge College, Class mate with Jos. Trumbull: a Lawyer by profession, ingenious, polite, spirited, & tolerably eloquent.

John Adams: Diary, 10 October 1774

Lee, Henry, and Hooper [are] the orators.

Samuel Tenney to Nicholas Gilman, Exeter, N.H., 12 March 1788 [speaking of the Antifederalist speakers in the New Hampshire Convention]

The debates were conducted with much candor & good nature. . . . The best speaker in the opposition was a baptist Parson Hooper. He may be a good *Divine & Shoemaker*; but he is ignorant in politics, & so *emmail'd* (if I may be allow'd to use a word unauthorized by *Johnson*) in self-conceit as to be unassailable by the force of reason.

Stephen Hopkins

Jabez Bowen to John Adams, Providence, R.I., 27 July 1785

Your Old Friend Govr. Hopkins Departed this Life on the 13th of this Instant in the 79th Year of his Age. He Dy'd as he Liv'd The Firm Zealous Patriot, and Friend to the Liberties of Mankind.

John Adams: Autobiography, post-October 1802

[In the First Continental Congress 1775] Governor Hopkins of Rhode Island, above seventy Years of Age kept us all alive. Upon Business his Experience and Judgment were very Usefull. But when the Business of the Evening was over, he kept Us in Conversation till Eleven and sometimes twelve O'Clock. His Custom was to drink nothing all day nor till Eight O'Clock, in the Evening, and then his Beveredge was Jamaica Spirit and Water. It gave him Wit, Humour, Anecdotes, Science and Leasrning. He had read Greek, Roman and British History: and was familiar with English Poetry particularly Pope, Tompson and Milton. And the flow of his Soul made all his reading our own, and seemed to bring to recollection in all of Us all We had ever read. I could neither eat n or drink in those days. The other Gentlemen were very temperate. Hopkins never drank to excess, but all he drank was immediately not only converted into Wit, Sense, Knowledge and good humour, but inspired Us all with similar qualities.

Francis Hopkinson

John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, 21 August 1776

At this shop I met Mr. Francis Hopkinson, late a Mandamus Councillor of New Jersey, now a Member of the Continental Congress, who it seems is a Native of Philadelphia, a son of a Prothonotary of this County who was a Person much respected. The son was liberally educated, and is a Painter and a Poet.

I have a Curiosity to penetrate a little deeper into the Bosom of this curious Gentleman, and may possibly give you some more particulars concerning him. He is one of your pretty little, curious, ingenious Men. His Head is not bigger, than a large Apple-less than our Friend Pemberton or Dr. Simon Tufts. I have not met with any Thing in natural History much more amusing and entertaining, than his personal Appearance. Yet he is genteel and well bred, and is very social. . . . Hopkinson has taken in Crayons, with his own Hand, a Picture of Miss Keys, a famous New Jersey Beauty. He talks of bringing it to Town, and in that Case I shall see it, I hope.

John Houstoun

Edmund Randolph to George Washington, Philadelphia, 18 February 1793

Mr. Houston is not so absolutely within the scope of my researches. But if he exceeds the rank of a good country-court lawyer, I have been greatly misinformed.

William Houstoun

Thomas Jefferson: Diary, 15 September 1775

Houstoun is a young Gentleman, by Profession a Lawyer, educated under a gentleman of Eminence in South Carolina. He seems to be sensible and spirited, but rather inexperienced.

Thomas Jefferson: Diary, 24 September 1775

In the Evening Mr. Bullock and Mr. Houstoun, two Gentlemen from Georgia, came into our Room and smoked and chatted, the whole Evening. Houstoun and [Samuel] Adams disputed the whole Time in good Humor. They are both Dabbs* at Disputation I think. H. a Lawyer by Trade is one of Course, and Adams is not a Whit less addicted to it than the Lawyers.

*According to Noah Webster's 1806 *Dictionary*, a dab was an artist.

James Monroe to Thomas Jefferson, Trenton, N.J., 1 November 1784

Georgia has a Houston and Gibbons here, the former has been to Europe to leave behind him what little wit he had; and the latter I believe never had any, or very little.

William Pierce: Sketches of Delegates to the Constitutional Convention, c. September 1787

Mr. Houstoun is an Attorney at Law, and has been Member of Congress for the State of Georgia. He is a Gentleman of Family, and was educated in England. As to his legal or political knowledge he has very little to boast of.—Nature seems to have done more for his corporeal than mental powers.—His Person is striking, but his mind very little improved with useful or elegant knowledge.—He has none of the talents requisite for the Orator, but in public debate is confused and irregular.—Mr. Houstoun is about 30 years of age of an amiable and sweet temper, and of good and honorable principles.

John Eager Howard

“Memnon,” *Maryland Journal*, 25 November 1788

I congratulate the State on the appointment of a worthy and truly federal Chief Magistrate, who served his country with high reputation, during the whole war, as an officer in the army; who distinguished himself at Guildford, Camden, Eutaw, and Ninety-Six, and was the chief instrument in routing Col. Tarleton, (who commanded 1150 chosen regular troops) with only 600 militia, and 200 regulars, by ordering a lucky and critical charge of the bayonet—I am pleased, when I see a free government evince their gratitude for meritorious services.

David Howell

David Howell to Moses Brown, Philadelphia, 6 August 1782

My mind is at times deeply oppressed with the weight of public affairs. You know I always was subject to be low Spirited. I feel so much of it at times now as utterly disqualifies me for all business. The vanity to which I am subject when in full spirits, adds poignancy to my reflections at such times, and having no particular friend here to whom my difficulties are known to converse freely with, I am the more overcome. Never did tears flow more freely from my eyes than since I have been in this City.

Elias Boudinot to John Lowell, Philadelphia, 19 March 1783

The Conduct of Mr. H—— is all of a piece—many People suspect the harshest Things of him. I had entertained the best Ideas of his Integrity, but I confess his late Conduct has stumbled me much—especially the publishing certain Extracts of public Letters which he gave his word should not be made publick by him. Let his Integrity be ever so great, he has been the means of giving these united States a Shock, she will feel for years to come, and which indeed I think threatens our Union more than all the Arms of G B.

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

Howell Esqr.—Was a Judge when the paper money became a tender, & was deposed on account of his refusing to acknowledge the validity of the Law respecting a tender of paper money—He has been a member of Congress—but is not considered as a uniform steady character.

Henry Marchant to Alexander Hamilton, Newport, R.I., 9 December 1793

Mr. Howell I have been many years acquainted with, and ever on good Terms. . . . There is no Doubt of His Learning and Abilities sufficient for the Exercise of the Office of an Atty. of the U.S.—nor has His Integrity, to my Knowledge, ever been questioned. It has been frequently lamented that His political Conduct has been unsteady, and supposed to be too much lead by Motives of perfect Applaudits: And He has accordingly never been so happy as to retain them long in any Plan or Station. He does not appear to me possessed of those easy and accomodating Manners, which consistant with Integrity and Justice to Our own Opinions, are essential to gain and preserve Esteem and Confidence. Sanguine and persevering at the Moment, He yet wants Steadiness and Prudence. I wish He was of a Temper more pleasing to the Courts and at the Bar; and more acceptable at large than I conceive Him to be. But who is there without His Foibles and Faults?

William Hull

David Jones to James Madison, Wheeling, 25 August 1812

The Common appellation given him in ohio State is granny Hull. For gods sake Sir, look out [for] an officer fit to command & send him on to suppercede the present Cyfer. Now I have done my Duty to you & my Country, and as I said before, I will not answer for the truth of these facts.

William Ketelas to James Madison, New York, 12 September 1812

Genl Hulls private Character as informed years past, was as black as stains, could Make it. He has acted himself out, and is a Traitor, or a Coward their is not a doubt, or Shadow of doubt. As a general rule, a m an not honest in private life, ought never to be trusted by the government. In a word, a Man Morally bad, Cannot be politically Good, so Much for the Conduct of Gnl. Hull.

David Humphreys

George Washington to Benjamin Franklin, 2 June 1784

Congress having been pleased to appoint Colo. Humphrys Secretary to the Commissioners, for forming Commercial Treaties in Europe, I take the liberty of introducing him to you.

This Gentleman was several years in my family as an Aid de Camp. His zeal in the cause of his Country, his good sense, prudence, and attachment to me, rendered him dear to me; and I persuade myself you will find no confidence wch you may think proper to repose in him, misplaced. He

possesses an excellent heart, good natural & acquired abilities, and sterling integrity—to which may be added sobriety, & an obliging disposition.

A full conviction of his possessing all these good qualities, makes me less scrupulous of recommending him to your patronage and friendship.

John Trumbull to John Adams, 14 June 1784

. . . that the virtues of his heart are in no respect inferior to his abilities and reputation.

John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Auteuil near Paris, 9 September 1784

Humphreys is an Accomplished Secretary, and a well bred Man.

Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 30 September 1784

Col. H. is I don't know what—a sensible man I believe—but his address is not very agreeable; he is I believe a very worthy character.

Abigail Adams (Nabby): Journal in France, 27 January 1785

Col. H. has taken the most effectual means of gaining my good opinion; no more reflections upon the stiffness of his manners must proceed from me; he presented me today with a copy of a poem written by himself, and addressed to the army, which he has had printed since he came to Paris. I confess I had not formed an idea of his being a poet. This was no doubt owing to my want of penetration. It is well written, and the verse is easy.

John Adams to William Gordon, Auteuil near Paris, 27 April 1785

Mr. Humphreys our Secretary, is an accomplished Man, and when he ripens a little with years, & wears off a few Notions contracted in the Army, will make a Figure to a higher Sphere.

John Adams to Ezra Stiles, Auteuil near Paris, 27 April 1785

I received with Pleasure, your Letter by Col. Humphreys whom I have found in all respects the Man of Merit and Taste whom you describe, well qualified for the Office to which Congress has appointed him.

John Adams to John Trumbull, Auteuil near Paris, 27 April 1785

I received your Letter by Mr. Humphreys, in whom I have found all those valuable qualities, you led me to expect.

John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Auteuil near Paris, 28 April 1785

Humphreys has all the qualifications for his Office which can be expected from an Aid de Camp & a Knight of Cincinnatus. His Genius, Taste, and Knowledge are distinguished and his heart is excellent.

John Quincy Adams: Diary, 20 May 1786

Cranch went to Boston this day, and brought me back, another large packet from my Sister, inclosing a Poem written, by Coll. Humphreys, on the happiness of America, addressed to the Citizens of the States.* There is a great brilliancy of Imagination, I think display'd in it, and he is somewhat poetical, in describing the happiness, that reigns in this Country; but the poem I take to be a very fine one.

*A Poem, On the Happiness of America; Addressed to the Citizens of the United States, London, 1786.

Samuel Phillips, Jr., to Benjamin Goodhue, Andover, Mass., 5 May 1790

[After the Assumption bill was defeated in the U.S. House of Representatives] Our Friend Sedgwick, in my humble opinion, was sudden, warm & imprudent.

John Quincy Adams to Louisa Catherine Adams, Quincy, Mass., 16 September 1804

Mr: Short is on a visit at Boston, and came out here yesterday morning, with Coll: Humphreys—The latter appears to enjoy himself very well; though discarded from the pomp of Courts and the pageantry of greatness—He has lately collected and published a volume of his *miscellaneous works*. Not like the *oeuvres mêlées de Madame du Chatelet*; his labours are of a different kind. His picture, a very good likeness, flourishes before the title page—His writings are prefaced by numerous commendatory poems and prosings, and his dedications are all to kings or Prince Regent's to say the least—In this fastidious Country, these things all contribute to sharpen the scalping knives of criticism; but after all, his poems are some of the best that ever have been written in this Country—The excellency of his character too ought to soften down the temper most inclined to censure; for at least if it be impossible to say of him that

not sweeter, his own Homer sings,
there can be no question but the other line
Yet is his life the more endearing song
is perfectly applicable to him.

Benjamin Huntington

Benjamin Huntington to Anne Huntington, New York, 17 July 1789

I am in good Health and can Buckle my Shoes with less Trouble than I have for Some years Passd haveing in a great measure got Rid of the Gout & Some of my bulk tho' but little of the latter nor am I Cured of the former nor do I Expect I ever shall.

Samuel Huntington

John Mathews to Nathaniel Peabody, Philadelphia, 3 October 1780

You ask me what is done about a P[residen]t I think of all the men of ambition I have ever met with in the course of my peregrinations (which have not been confined within a very narrow compass) S. H. bears away the prize in triumph. So far from his manifesting the least disposition to quit, he seemed to be highly pleased with the opinions of his (you may fill the space as you please) “that he had a right to set there for life.” This is true Republican doctrine. Ay! you may laugh, or get into a passion about it—but I tell you it must be so, because the Greatest Republican [Samuel Adams?] in America said so. Damnation seize such Sycophants! Who will sell their consciences to the Devil for the sake of carrying a favourite point? After four hours hard struggle, all we could obtain was, that all future P[residen]ts, should be for elected for one year only, but maugre every exertion, they obruded their favourite upon us for another year.

John Witherspoon to Samuel Huntington, Philadelphia, 29 August 1781

I beg leave to congratulate you on your safe return to your friends, of which I have been made acquainted from various quarters. With great satisfaction I observe by the public papers the joyful and honorable reception you met with on your arrival, so expressive of that affection and approbation, which to you, will be the most grateful tribute of praise your country can bestow, and, next to a consciousness of having laboured hard to establish the liberties of America, will be the greatest happiness you can enjoy.