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## THE LIFE OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE ANCESTRY, BIRTH, AND CHILDHOOD, OF JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

THE Puritan Pilgrims of the May-Flower landed on Plymouth Rock, and founded the Colony of Massachusetts, on the 21st day of December, 1620.

HENRY ADAMS, the founder of the Adams family in America, fled from ecclesiastical oppression in England, and joined the Colony at a very early period, but at what precise time is not recorded. He erected his humble dwelling at a place within the present town of QUINCY, then known as MOUNT WOLLASTON, and is believed to have been an inhabitant when the first Christian Church was gathered there in 1639. On the organization of the town of Braintree, which comprised the place of his residence, he was elected Clerk of the Town. He died on the eighth day of October, 1646. His memory is preserved by a plain granite monument, erected in the burial-ground at Quincy,

by JOHN ADAMS, President of the United States, and bearing this inscription:—

*In Memory*

or

HENRY ADAMS,

Who took his flight from the Dragon Persecution in Devonshire, in England, and alighted with eight sons, near Mount Wollaston.

One of the sons returned to England, and after taking time to explore the country, four removed to Medfield and the neighboring towns; two to Chelmsford. One only, Joseph, who lies here at his left hand, remained here, who was an original proprietor in the Township of Braintree, incorporated in the year 1639.

This stone, and several others, have been placed in this yard, by a great-great-grandson, from a veneration of the piety, humility, simplicity, prudence, patience, temperance, frugality, industry, and perseverance of his ancestors, in hopes of recommending an imitation of their virtues to their posterity.

Joseph Adams, the son of Henry Adams mentioned in the above inscription, died on the sixth of December, 1694, aged sixty-eight years. Joseph, the next in succession, died February 12th, 1736, at the age of eighty-four years. His son John Adams, was a Deacon of the Church at Quincy, and died May 25th, 1761, aged seventy years. This John Adams was the father of him who was destined to give not only undying fame to his ancient family, but a new and powerful impulse to the cause of Human Freedom throughout the world.

JOHN ADAMS, son of John Adams and Susannah

Boylston Adams, was born at Quincy on the nineteenth day of October (old style), 1735. He received the honors of Harvard University in 1755, and then, in pursuance of a good old New England custom, which made those who had enjoyed the benefits of a public education, in turn impart those benefits to the public, he was occupied for a time in teaching.

It ought to encourage all young men in straitened circumstances, desirous of obtaining a profession and of rising to eminence, to know that John Adams, who became so illustrious by talents and achievement as to lend renown to the office of President of the United States, pursued the study of the law under the inconveniences resulting from his occupation as an instructor in a Grammar School.

John Adams was an eminent and successful lawyer, but it was not the design of his existence that his talents should be wasted in the contentions of the courts.

The British Parliament, as soon as the Colonies had attracted their notice, commenced a system of legislation known as the Colonial System, the object of which was to secure to the mother country a monopoly of their trade, and to prevent their rising to a condition of strength and independence. The effect of this system was to prevent all manufactures in the Colonies, and all trade with foreign countries, and even with the adjacent plantations.

The Colonies remonstrated in vain against this policy, but owing to popular dissatisfaction, the regula-

tions were not rigidly enforced. At length an Order in Council was passed, which directed the officers of the customs in Massachusetts Bay, to execute the acts of trade. A question arose in the Supreme Court of that province in 1761, upon the constitutional right of the British Parliament to bind the Colonies. The trial produced great excitement. The cause was argued for the Crown by the King's Attorney-General, and against the laws by James Otis.

It will be seen that the question thus involved was the very one that was finally submitted to the arbitration of arms in the American Revolution. The speech of Otis on the occasion, was an effort of surpassing ability. John Adams was a witness, and he recorded his opinion of it, and his opinion of the magnitude of the question, thus:

"Otis was a flame of fire! With a promptitude of classical allusion, a depth of research, a rapid summary of historical events and dates, a profusion of legal authorities, a prophetic glance of his eyes into futurity, a rapid torrent of impetuous eloquence, he hurried away all before him. AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE was then and there born. Every man of an unusually crowded audience, appeared to me to go away ready to take up arms against Writs of Assistance."

Speaking on the same subject, on another occasion, John Adams said that "James Otis then and there breathed into this nation the breath of life."

From that day John Adams was an enthusiast for the independence of his country.

In 1764 he married Abigail, daughter of the Reverend William Smith, of Weymouth. The mother of John Quincy Adams was a woman of great beauty and high intellectual endowments, and she combined, with the proper accomplishments of her sex, a sweetness of disposition, and a generous sympathy with the patriotic devotion of her illustrious husband.

In 1765, the British Parliament, in contempt of the discontent of the Colonies, presumptuously passed the Stamp Act; a law which directed taxed stamped paper to be used in all legal instruments in the Colonies. The validity of the law was denied; and while Patrick Henry was denouncing it in Virginia, James Otis and John Adams argued against it before the Governor and Council of Massachusetts.

The occasion called forth from John Adams a "Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Laws,"—a work, which although it was of a general character in regard to government, yet manifested democratic sentiments unusual in those times, and indicated that republican institutions were the proper institutions for the American People.

The resistance to the stamp act throughout the Colonies procured its repeal in 1766. But the British Government accompanied the repeal with an ungracious declaratory act, by which they asserted "that the Parliament had, and of right ought to have, power

to bind the Colonies, in all cases whatsoever." In the next year a law was passed, which imposed duties in the Colonies, on glass, paper, paints, and tea. The spirit of insubordination manifested itself throughout the Colonies, and, inasmuch as it radiated from Boston, British ships of war were stationed in its harbor, and two regiments of British troops were thrown in the town, to compel obedience. John Adams had now become known as the most intrepid, zealous, and indefatigable opposer of British usurpation. The Crown tried upon him in vain the royal arts so successful on the other side of the Atlantic. The Governor and Council offered him the place of Advocate General in the Court of Admiralty, an office of great value; he declined it, "decidedly, peremptorily, but respectfully."

At this interesting crisis, JOHN QUINCY ADAMS was born, at Quincy, on the 11th of July, 1767. A lesson, full of instruction concerning the mingled influences of piety and patriotism in New England, at that time, is furnished to us by the education of the younger Adams. Nor can we fail to notice that each of those virtues retained its relative power over him, throughout his long and eventful life. He was brought into the church and baptized on the day after that on which he was born.

John Quincy Adams, in one of his letters, thus mentions the circumstances of his baptism:

"The house at Mount Wollaston has a peculiar in-

terest to me, as the dwelling of my great-grandfather, whose name I bear. The incident which gave rise to this circumstance is not without its moral to my heart. He was dying, when I was baptized; and his daughter, my grandmother, present at my birth, requested that I might receive his name. The fact, recorded by my father at the time, has connected with that portion of my name, a charm of mingled sensibility and devotion. It was filial tenderness that gave the name. It was the name of one passing from earth to immortality. These have been among the strongest links of my attachment to the name of Quincy, and have been to me, through life, a perpetual admonition to do nothing unworthy of it."

It cannot be doubted that the character of the person from whom, in such affecting circumstances, he derived an honorable patronymic, was an object of emulation. John Quincy was a gentleman of wealth, education, and influence. He was for a long time Speaker of the House of Representatives in Massachusetts, and during many years one of His Majesty's Provincial Council. He was a faithful representative, and throughout his public services, a vigorous defender of the rights and liberties of the Colony. Exemplary in private life, and earnest in piety, he enjoyed the public confidence, through a civil career of forty years' duration.

The American Revolution was rapidly hurrying on during the infancy of John Quincy Adams. In 1769,

the citizens of Boston held a meeting in which they instructed their representatives in the Provincial Legislature to resist the usurpations of the British Government. John Adams was chairman of the committee that prepared these instructions, and his associates were Richard Dana and Joseph Warren, the same distinguished patriot who gave up his life as one of the earliest sacrifices to freedom, in the battle of Bunker Hill.

Those instructions were expressed in the bold and decided tone of John Adams, and they increased the public excitement in the province, by the earnestness with which they insisted on the removal of the British troops from Boston.

The popular irritation increased, until on the 5th of March, 1770, a collision occurred between the troops and some of the inhabitants of Boston, in which five citizens were killed, and many wounded. This was called the Bloody Massacre. The exasperated inhabitants were with difficulty restrained from retaliating this severity by an extermination of all the British troops. A public meeting was held, and a committee, of which SAMUEL ADAMS was chairman, was appointed to address the Governor (Gage), and demand that the troops should be withdrawn. John Adams described the excitement, on a later occasion, in these words:

"Not only the immense assemblies of the people from day to day, but military arrangements from night to night, were necessary to keep the people and the

soldiers from getting together by the ears. The life of a red-coat would not have been safe in any street or corner of the town. Nor would the lives of the inhabitants have been much more secure. The whole militia of the city was in requisition, and military watches and guards were everywhere placed. We were all upon a level. No man was exempted: our military officers were our only superiors. I had the honor to be summoned in my turn, and attended at the State House with my musket and bayonet, my broadsword and cartridge-box, under the command of the famous Paddock."

The Governor withdrew the troops and sent them to the castle: the commanding officer and some of the soldiers were arrested, and brought to trial for murder.

John Adams, the advocate and leader of the exasperated people, was solicited by the Government to act as counsel for the accused. The people, in the heat of passion, would naturally identify the lawyer with his clients, and both with the odious cause in which they served. John Adams did not hesitate. His principle was fidelity to duty in *all* the relations of life. Adams, together with Josiah Quincy, defended the accused with ability and firmness, and the result crowned not only the advocates, but the jury and the people of Boston with honor. Distinguishing between the Government, upon whom the responsibility rested, and the troops who were its agents, the jury acquitted the accused. The people sustained the verdict; affording

to Great Britain and to the world a noble proof, that they had been well prepared by education for the trust of self-government.

The controversy between the Province of Massachusetts and the British Government continued, and the exasperation of the Colonies became more intense, until the destruction of the imported tea in the harbor, in December, 1773, incensed the Ministry so highly, that they procured an act closing the port of Boston. This act was followed by the convention of the first American Congress at Philadelphia, on the 5th of September, 1774. As John Adams had been the master spirit in the agitation in Massachusetts, he was appointed one of the Delegates to the General Congress. After his election, his friend Sewall, the King's Attorney General, labored earnestly to dissuade him from accepting the appointment.

The Attorney General told the delegate that Great Britain was determined on her system, that her power was irresistible, and that he, and those with him who should persist in their designs of resistance, would be involved in ruin.

John Adams replied, "I know Great Britain has determined on her system, and that very determination determines me on mine. You know I have been constant and uniform in opposition to her measures. The die is now cast. I have passed the Rubicon. Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish with my country is my unalterable determination."

It was these energetic and resolute expressions which Daniel Webster wrought into so magnificent an imaginary speech, in his glowing Eulogy on John Adams and Thomas Jefferson.

John Adams continued in Congress throughout the sessions of 1775 and 1776, and on all occasions was an intrepid and earnest advocate for Independence. On his motion, George Washington was appointed Commander in Chief of the Army.

John Adams was the mover of Independence in the Congress. On the 6th of May, 1776, he brought the subject before that body, by a resolution expressed as follows:—

"Whereas it appears perfectly irreconcilable to reason and good conscience, for the people of these Colonies now to take the oaths and affirmations necessary for the support of any government under the crown of Great Britain, and it is necessary that the exercise of every kind of authority under the said crown should be totally suppressed, and all the powers of government exerted under the authority of the people of the Colonies for the preservation of internal peace, virtue, and good order, as well as for the defence of their lives, liberties, and properties, against the hostile invasion, and cruel depredations of their enemies:—Therefore, it is recommended to the Colonies to adopt such a government as will, in the opinion of the representatives of the people, best conduce to

the happiness and safety of their constituents, and of America."

This resolution was adopted, and was followed by the appointment of a committee, on the motion of Richard Henry Lee, seconded by John Adams, to prepare a Declaration. This committee consisted of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston. Jefferson and Adams were a sub-committee, and the former prepared the Declaration, at the urgent request of the latter.

Jefferson bore this testimony to the ability and power of John Adams.—"The great pillar of support to the Declaration of Independence, and its ablest advocate and champion on the floor of the House, was John Adams."

On the day after the Declaration of Independence was adopted, he wrote the memorable letter in which he said with prophetic unction,—"Yesterday the greatest question was decided that ever was debated in America; and greater, perhaps, never was or will be decided among men. A resolution was passed without one dissenting Colony, 'That the United States are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.' The day is passed. The fourth day of July, 1776, will be a memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as a great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn

acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomps, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward, forever. You may think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure, that it will cost to maintain this Declaration, and support and defend these States: yet through all the gloom, I can see that the end is worth all the means; and that posterity will triumph, although you and I may rue, which I hope we shall not."

From this time, until November 1777, John Adams was incessantly employed in public duties in Congress, during the session of that body; and during its recess, as a member of the State Council in Massachusetts. During this period, John Quincy was instructed at home, by her who, in long after years, he was accustomed to call his almost adored mother, who was aided by a law-student in the office of his father. EDWARD EVERETT, in his Eulogy upon John Quincy Adams, made the very striking and just remark, that there seemed to be in his life no such stage as that of boyhood. While yet but nine years old, he wrote to his father the following letter:

*Braintree, June 2nd, 1777.*

DEAR SIR,

I love to receive letters very well; much better than I love to write them. I make but a poor figure at composition. My head is much too fickle. My thoughts are running after bird's eggs, play and trifles, till I get vexed with myself. Mamma has a troublesome