

ney, Hampden, and Milton, its republican patriots; for Shakspeare, Dryden, and Pope, its immortal poets; and for Addison and Johnson, its moralists; here he learned from Wilberforce the principles of political philanthropy, as well as the patience and perseverance to defend them, and studied eloquence by the living models of Pitt, Fox, Erskine, Burke, and Sheridan.

This, indeed, was a fitting conclusion to a precocious education by the patriots and philosophers of his own country, with practical observations in the courts of Spain and the Netherlands, of the weak but amiable Louis XVI., and the accomplished, but depraved, Catharine II.

John Quincy Adams now became fearful that the duties of manhood would devolve upon him without his having completed the necessary academic studies. He therefore obtained leave to return home in 1785, at the age of eighteen years, and entered Cambridge University, at an advanced standing, in 1786. He graduated in 1788 with deserved honors.

CHAPTER II.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS STUDIES LAW—HIS PRACTICE—ENGAGES
IN PUBLIC LIFE—APPOINTED MINISTER TO THE HAGUE.

AFTER leaving the University, young Adams entered the office of Theophilus Parsons, who was then in the practice of law at Newburyport, and who afterwards for so many years filled with dignity and ability the office of Chief Justice of Massachusetts.

Adams completed the usual term of professional study, and then commenced the practice of the law in Boston. It may encourage some who are oppressed by the difficulties attending initiation in the profession, to know, that during the first and only four years of John Quincy Adams' practice, he had occasion for despondency.

"I had long and lingering anxieties, (he afterwards said,) in looking forward, doubtful even of my prospects of comfortable subsistence, but acquiring more and more the means of it, till in the last of the four years, the business of my profession yielded me an income more than equal to my expenditures."

But the country and the age had claims on John Quincy Adams, as well as on his father, for higher

duties than "making writs," and "haranguing juries," and "being happy."

The American Revolution, which had been brought to a successful close, had inspired, throughout Europe, a desire to renovate the institutions of government. The officers and citizens of France who had mingled in the contest, had carried home the seeds of freedom, and had scattered them abroad upon soil quick to receive them. The flame of Liberty, kindled on the shores of the Western Continent, was reflected back upon the Old World. France beheld its beams, and hailed them as a beacon-light, which should lead the nations out from the bondage of ages. Inspired by the success attending the struggle in the British colonies, the French people, long crushed beneath a grinding despotism, resolved to burst their shackles and strike for Freedom. It was a noble resolution, but consummated, alas! amid devastation and the wildest anarchy. The French Revolution filled the world with horror. It was the work of a blind giant, urged to fury by the remembrance of wrongs endured for generations. The Altar of Liberty was reared amid seas of blood, and stained with the gore of innocent victims.

The measurable failure of this struggle in France, teaches the necessity of due preparation before a people can advance to the permanent possession and enjoyment of their rights. The American colonists had been trained to rational conceptions of freedom, by

lessons of wisdom and sagacity read them by their Puritan fathers, and by the experience in self-government, afforded during a century and a half of enjoyment of a large share of political privileges, granted by the mother country. They were thus prepared to lay deep and strong the foundations of an enlightened government, which, equally removed from the extremes of despotism on the one hand, and anarchy on the other, and granting its subjects the exercise of their right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," shall endure through ages to come. But the people of France, shut up in darkness during centuries of misrule, passed at a step from abject servitude to unlimited freedom. They were unprepared for this violent transition. Their conceptions of liberty were of the most extravagant description. What wonder that they became dizzy at their sudden elevation! What wonder that blood flowed in rivers!—that dissension and faction rent them asunder—that a fearful anarchy soon reigned triumphant—or that the confused and troubled drama closed in the iron rule of a military conqueror—the Man of Destiny! Let not this lesson be lost upon the world. Let a people who would enjoy freedom, learn to merit the boon by the study of its principles, and a preparation to exercise its privileges, under those salutary restraints which man can never throw off and be happy!

The odium excited throughout Europe by the excesses of the French Revolution, was heaped without

measure upon the American people. They were charged with the origin of the misrule which convulsed France, and filled the eastern hemisphere with alarm: and were tauntingly pointed to the crude theories promulgated by French democracy, and the failure of their phrenzied efforts to establish an enlightened and permanent Republic, as conclusive evidence that self-government, among any people, was a mere Utopian dream, which could never be realized.

The establishment of a republican government in America, had not been relished by the monarchies of Europe. They looked upon it with distrust, as a precedent dangerous to them in the highest degree. The succor which Louis XVI. had rendered the revolting colonists, was not from a love of democratic institutions: it was his hope to cripple Great Britain, his ancient enemy, and to find some opportunity, perhaps, to win back his Canadian provinces, which had so recently been rent from his possession. When the pent-up flames of revolution burst forth at the very doors of the governments of the old world—when the French throne had been robbed of its king, and that king of his life—when a Republic had been proclaimed in their midst, and signal-notes of freedom were ringing in their borders—they became seriously alarmed. The growing evil must be checked immediately. Led on by England, the continental powers combined to exterminate at a blow, if possible, every vestige of Republicanism in France. Then commenced

the long series of bloody wars, which, with little intermission, convulsed Europe for nearly a quarter of a century, and ceased only when the rock of St. Helena received its lonely exile.

In the meantime affairs at home had attained to a critical juncture. The Constitution had been adopted. The new government had been set in operation under the supervision of Washington, as the first President of the Republic. The people, influenced by certain "elective affinities," had become sundered into two great political parties—*Conservative* and *Progressive*, or Federal and Democratic. Both were distrustful of the Constitution. The former believed it too weak to consolidate a government capable of protecting its subjects in the peaceful enjoyment of their rights, from discord within, and attacks from without. The latter apprehended that it might easily be transformed, by some ambitious Napoleon, into an instrument of oppression, more fearful even than the limited monarchy from which they had but recently escaped, at an expense of so much blood and treasure. Each of these parties are entitled to the credit of equal sincerity and honesty of purpose.

Washington, with a loftiness of purpose truly characteristic of a great and good mind, refused to identify himself with either party. In forming his first cabinet, moved with a desire to heal the dissensions which distracted the country, he selected its members equally from the adverse factions. Hamilton and Knox rep-

resented the Federal party, and Jefferson and Randolph the opposite. During his entire administration, "the Father of his country" steadily aimed to keep himself clear from all party entanglements. He was emphatically the President of the whole people, and not of a faction. His magnanimous spirit would not stoop to party favoritism, nor allow him to exercise the power entrusted him, to promote the interests of any political clique. In all his measures his great object was to advance the welfare of the nation, without regard to their influence on conflicting parties. In these things he left behind him a pure and noble example, richly worthy the imitation of his successors in that high station.

The Revolution in France, and the measures adopted by the Allied Sovereigns to arrest its progress, excited the liveliest interest among the people of the United States. But their sympathies ran in different channels, and very naturally took the hue of their party predilections. The Democrats, believing the French Revolution to be the up-springing of the same principles which had triumphed here—a lawful attempt of an oppressed people to secure the exercise of inalienable rights—although shuddering at the excesses which had been perpetrated, still felt it to be our own cause, and insisted that we were in honor and duty bound to render all the assistance in our power, even to a resort to arms, if need be. The Federalists, on the other hand, were alarmed at the anarchical tendencies in

France. They were fearful that law, order, government, and society itself, would be utterly and speedily swept away, unless the revolutionary movement was arrested. Cherishing these apprehensions, they were disposed to favor the views of Great Britain and other European powers, and were anxious that the government of the United States should adopt some active measures to assist in checking what they could not but view as rapid strides to political and social anarchy. However the two parties differed as to the measures proper to be adopted in this crisis, they were united in the conviction that our government should take *some* part as a belligerent, in these European struggles; and exerted each its influence to bring about such an interference as would be in accordance with their conflicting views of duty and expediency.

There was residing, at this period, in Boston, a young and nearly briefless lawyer, whose views on these important matters differed materially from those entertained by both parties. It was John Quincy Adams. While he could not countenance the attempts of the Allied Powers to destroy the French Republic, and re-establish a monarchy, he was equally far from favoring the turn which affairs were clearly taking in that unhappy country. He evidently foresaw the French Revolution would prove a failure; and that it was engendering an influence which, unchecked, would be deeply injurious to American liberty and order. To counteract this tendency, he published in the Boston

Centinel, in 1791, a series of articles, signed "Publicola," in which he discussed with great ability, the wild vagaries engendered among political writers in France, and which had been caught up by many in our own country. These articles attracted much attention, both at home and abroad. They were re-published in England, as an answer to several points in Paine's "Rights of Man." So profound was the political sagacity they displayed, and so great the familiarity with public affairs, that they were, by general consent, attributed to the elder Adams. On this subject, John Adams writes his wife as follows, from Philadelphia, on the 5th December, 1793:—

"The Viscount Noailles called on me. * * * * He seemed very critical in his inquiries concerning the letters printed as mine in England. I told him candidly that I did not write them, and as frankly, in confidence, who did. He says they made a great impression upon the people of England; that he heard Mr. Windham and Mr. Fox speak of them as the best thing that had been written, and as one of the best pieces of reasoning and style they had ever read."

The younger Adams, in surveying the condition of the country at this critical period, became convinced it would be a fatal step for the new government to take sides with either of the great parties in Europe, who were engaged in the settlement of their difficulties by the arbitrement of arms. However strongly our sympathies were elicited in behalf of the French Republic—however we may have been bound in gratitude for the assistance rendered us during our Revolution-

ary struggle, to co-operate with France in her defence of popular institutions—still, self-preservation is the first law of nature. Mr. Adams saw, that to throw ourselves into the melee of European conflicts, would prostrate the interests of the country, and peril the very existence of the government.

These views he embodied in a series of articles, which he published in the Boston Centinel, in 1793, under the signature of "Marcellus." He insisted it was alike the dictate of duty and policy, that the United States should remain strictly neutral between France and her enemies. These papers attracted general attention throughout the Union, and made a marked impression on the public mind. They were read by Washington, with expressions of the highest satisfaction; and he made particular inquiries respecting the author.

The position of Mr. Adams on neutrality was new, and in opposition to the opinions of the great mass of the country. To him, it is believed, belongs the honor of first publicly advocating this line of policy, which afterwards became a settled principle of the American government. Non-interference with foreign affairs, is a principle to which the Union has rigidly adhered to the present hour. In these articles too, Mr. Adams developed the political creed which governed him through life in regard to two great principles—union at home, and independence of all foreign alliances or entanglements

—independence not only politically, but in manufactures and in commerce.

On the 25th of April, 1793, Washington issued a proclamation, announcing the neutrality of the United States between the belligerent nations of Europe. This proclamation was not issued until after Mr. Adams' articles urging this course had been before the public for some time. It is an honorable testimony to the sagacity of his views, that Washington, and the eminent men composing his cabinet, adopted a policy which coincided so perfectly with opinions he had formed purely from the strength of his own convictions. The proclamation pleased neither of the belligerent nations in Europe. It aroused the enmity of both; and laid open our commerce to the depredations of all parties, on the plea that the American government was inimical to their interests.

While in the practice of law in Boston, Mr. Adams was not well satisfied with his condition or prospects. That he was laudably ambitious to arise to distinction in some honorable line is quite certain. But, singular as it may appear at this day, in view of his early life, and his acknowledged talents, he was not looking for, nor expecting, political preferment. These facts appear in the following passages from his diary, written at that time; and which, moreover, will be found to contain certain rules of action for life, which the young men of our country should studiously seek to imitate.

“Wednesday, May 16th, 1792. I am not satisfied with the manner in which I employ my time. It is calculated to keep me forever fixed in that state of useless and disgraceful insignificance, which has been my lot for some years past. At an age bearing close upon twenty-five, when many of the characters who were born for the benefit of their fellow-creatures have rendered themselves conspicuous among their cotemporaries, and founded a reputation upon which their memory remains, and will continue to the latest posterity—at that period, I still find myself as obscure, as unknown to the world, as the most indolent, or the most stupid of human beings. In the walks of active life I have done nothing. Fortune, indeed, who claims to herself a large proportion of the merit which exhibits to public view the talents of professional men, at an early period of their lives, has not hitherto been peculiarly indulgent to me. But if to my own mind I inquire whether I should, at this time, be qualified to receive and derive any benefit from an opportunity which it may be in her power to procure for me, my own mind would shrink from the investigation. My heart is not conscious of an unworthy ambition; nor of a desire to establish either fame or fortune upon any other foundation than that of desert. But it is conscious, and the consideration is equally painful and humiliating, it is conscious that the ambition is constant and unceasing, while the exertions to acquire the talents which ought alone to secure the reward of ambition, are feeble, indolent, frequently interrupted, and never pursued with an ardor equivalent to its purposes. My future fortunes in life are, therefore, the objects of my present speculation, and it may be proper for me to reflect further upon the same subject, and if possible, to adopt some resolutions which may enable me, as uncle Toby Shandy said of his miniature sieges, to answer the great ends of my existence.

“First, then, I begin with establishing as a fundamental principle upon which all my subsequent pursuits and regulations are to be established, that the acquisition, at least, of a respectable reputation is (subject to the overruling power and wisdom of Providence,) within my own power; and that on my part nothing is wanting, but a constant and persevering determination to tread in the steps which naturally lead to honor. And, at the same time, I am equally convinced, that I never shall attain that credit in the world, which my nature directs me to wish, without such a steady, patient, and per-

severing pursuit of the means adapted to the end I have in view, as has often been the subject of my speculation, but never of my practice.

'Labor and toil stand stern before the throne,
And guard—so Jove commands—the sacred place.'

"The mode of life adopted almost universally by my cotemporaries and equals is by no means calculated to secure the object of my ambition. My emulation is seldom stimulated by observing the industry and application of those whom my situation in life gives me for companions. The pernicious and childish opinion that extraordinary genius cannot brook the slavery of plodding over the rubbish of antiquity (a cant so common among the heedless votaries of indolence), dulls the edge of all industry, and is one of the most powerful ingredients in the Circean potion which transforms many of the most promising young men into the beastly forms which, in sluggish idleness, feed upon the labors of others. The degenerate sentiment, I hope, will never obtain admission in my mind; and, if my mind should be loitered away in stupid laziness, it will be under the full conviction of my conscience that I am basely bartering the greatest benefits with which human beings can be indulged, for the miserable gratifications which are hardly worthy of contributing to the enjoyments of the brute creation.

"And as I have grounded myself upon the principle, that my character is, under the smiles of heaven, to be the work of my own hands, it becomes necessary for me to determine upon what part of active or of speculative life I mean to rest my pretensions to eminence. My own situation and that of my country equally prohibit me from seeking to derive any present expectations from a public career. My disposition is not military; and, happily, the warlike talents are not those which open the most pleasing or the most reputable avenue to fame. I have had some transient thoughts of undertaking some useful literary performance, but the pursuit would militate too much at present with that of the profession upon which I am to depend, not only for my reputation, but for my subsistence.

"I have, therefore, concluded that the most proper object of my present attention is that *profession itself*. And in acquiring the faculty to discharge the duties of it, in a manner suitable to my own wishes and the expectations of my friends, I find ample room for close and attentive application; for frequent and considerate obser-

vation; and for such benefits of practical experience as occasional opportunities may throw in the way."

The following letter from John Adams, at this time Vice President of the United States, written to his wife at Quincy, will be interesting, as showing, among other things, his anxiety that his sons should make some start in life, which would give promise of future usefulness. He was far from believing that sons should repose in idleness on the reputation or wealth of parents.

"Philadelphia, 2 March, 1793.

"MY DEAR,

"Your letter from your sick chamber, if not from your sick bed, has made me so uneasy, that I must get away as soon as possible. Monday morning, at six, I am to set off in the stage; but how many days it will take to get home, will depend on the roads or the winds. I don't believe Abby [his daughter,] will go with me. Her husband [Col. William S. Smith,] is so proud of his wealth, that he would not let her go, I suppose, without a coach-and-four; and such monarchical trumpery I will in future have nothing to do with. I will never travel but by stage, nor live at the seat of government but at lodgings, while they give me so despicable an allowance. Shiver my jib and start my planks if I do!

"I will stay but one night in New York. Smith says that my books are upon the table of every member of the Committee for framing a constitution of government for France, except Tom Paine, and he is so conceited as to disdain to have anything to do with books. Although I abused Smith a little above, he is very clever and agreeable; but I have been obliged to caution him against his disposition to boasting. Tell not of your prosperity, because it will make two men *mad* to one *glad*; nor of your adversity, for it will make two men *glad* to one *sad*. He boasts too much of having made his fortune, and placed himself at ease, above all favors of government. This is a weakness, and betrays too little knowledge of the world; too little penetration; too little discretion. I wish,

however, that my boys had a little more of his activity. I must soon treat them as the pigeons treat their squabs—push them off the limb, and make them put out their wings or fall. Young pigeons will never fly till this is done. Smith has acquired the confidence of the French ministry, and the better sort of the members of the National Convention. But the Executive is too changeable in that country to be depended on, without the utmost caution.

“Adieu, adieu, tendrement, J. A.”

One of the sons of the noble patriot, soon “put out his wings,” and soared, ultimately, to a pinnacle of honor and renown attained by few among men. In the winter of 1793 and 1794, the public mind had become highly excited from the inflammatory appeals in behalf of France, by Citizen Genet, the French Minister to the United States. A large portion of the anti-Federal party took sides with Mr. Genet, against the neutral position of our Government, and seemed determined to plunge the Union into the European contest, in aid of the French Republic. Some idea may be obtained of the excitement which prevailed at this time, and of the perilous condition of the country, by an extract or two from letters of Vice-President John Adams. In a letter dated Philadelphia, Dec. 5, 1793, he writes as follows:—

“It will require all the address, all the temper, and all the firmness of Congress and the States, to keep this people out of the war; or rather, to avoid a declaration of war against us, from some mischievous power or other. It is but little that I can do, either by the functions which the Constitution has entrusted to me, or by my personal influence; but that little shall be industriously employed, until it is put beyond a doubt that it will be fruitless; and then, I shall be as ready to meet unavoidable calamities, as any other citizen.”

Under date of Jan. 9, 1794, he says:—

“The prospects of this country are gloomy, but the situation of all Europe is calamitous beyond all former examples. At what time, and in what manner, and by what means, the disasters which are come, and seem to be coming on mankind, may be averted, I know not. Our own people have been imprudent, as I think, and are now smarting under the effects of their indiscretion; but this, instead of a consolation, is an aggravation of our misfortune. Mr. Genet has been abusive on the President [Washington] and all his ministers, beyond all measure of decency or obligations of truth, and in other respects, not yet publicly investigated, his conduct has been such as to make it difficult to know what to do with him. * * * * * The news of this evening is, that the Queen of France is no more.* When will savages be satiated with blood? No prospect of peace in Europe, and therefore none of internal harmony in America. We cannot well be in a more disagreeable situation than we are with all Europe, with all Indians, and with all Barbary rovers. Nearly one half of the Continent is in constant opposition to the other, and the President’s situation, which is highly responsible, is very distressing.”

It taxed the wisdom and skill of Mr Jefferson, then Secretary of State, to counteract the influence of the French Minister, and prevent citizens of the United States from committing overt acts against the Allied Sovereigns, and embroiling the Union in a foreign war. In this endeavor he was greatly assisted by the pen of Mr. J. Q. Adams. This gentleman wrote a series of essays for the public prints, under the signature of “Columbus,” reviewing the course of Mr. Genet. In these articles, he pointed out, with great clearness, the principles of the law of nations applicable to the situ-

* Marie Antoinette was beheaded in Paris, on the 16th of October, 1793.

ation of the country in the neutral line of policy which had been wisely adopted.

In reference to this topic, John Adams writes his wife, as follows, under date of Dec. 19, 1793 :—

“The President has considered the conduct of Genet very nearly in the same light with ‘Columbus,’ and has given him a bolt of thunder. We shall see how this is supported by the two Houses. There are who gnash their teeth with rage which they dare not own as yet. We shall soon see whether we have any government or not in this country.”

The political writings of the younger Adams had now brought him prominently before the public. They attracted the especial attention of Mr. Jefferson, who saw in them a vastness of comprehension, a maturity of judgment and critical discrimination, which gave large promise of future usefulness and eminence. Before his retirement from the State Department, he commended the youthful statesman to the favorable regard of President Washington, as one pre-eminently fitted for public service.

General Washington, although a soldier by profession, was a lover of peace. His policy during his administration of the government, was pre-eminently pacific. Convinced that, in the infant state of the Union, war with a foreign nation could result only in evil and ruin, he was anxious to cultivate the most friendly relations with foreign governments, and to carry out, both in letter and spirit, the strict neutrality he had proclaimed. To declare and maintain these

principles abroad, and to form political and commercial relations with European powers, Washington looked anxiously around for one fitted for a mission so important. His attention soon became fixed on John Quincy Adams. He saw in him qualities not only of deep political sagacity, and views of policy at unity with his own, but a familiarity with the languages and customs of foreign courts, which marked him as one every way calculated to represent our government with credit in the old world. He accordingly, in May, 1794, appointed Mr. Adams Minister of the United States at the Hague.

That this prominent appointment was as flattering to Mr. Adams as it was unexpected, is naturally true. It was the more to his credit in consideration of the fact, that in those days elevation to offices of this importance was the award of merit and talent, and not the result of importunity, or the payment of party services. Mr. Adams was at this time in the twenty-seventh year of his age—a younger man, undoubtedly, than has since ever been selected by our Government to fulfil a trust so important. But the ability and discretion of the young diplomatist, and the success which attended his negotiations in Europe, so creditable to himself and his country, fully justified the wisdom of Washington in selecting him for this important duty.

Although the father of Mr. Adams was then Vice President of the United States, yet it is well known his appointment on a foreign mission was obtained without

the influence or even the request of his parent. It is not strictly correct, however, as stated by several biographers, that he was selected for the mission to Holland without any previous intimation of the President's intentions to his father. This is made evident by the following extract of a letter from John Adams to his wife, dated Philadelphia, 27th May, 1794, conveying intelligence which must have made a mother's heart swell with honest pride and satisfaction:—

"It is proper that I should apprise you, that the President has it in contemplation to send your son to Holland, that you may recollect yourself and prepare for the event. I make this communication to you in confidence, at the desire of the President, communicated to me yesterday by the Secretary of State. You must keep it an entire secret until it shall be announced to the public in the journal of the Senate. But our son must hold himself in readiness to come to Philadelphia, to converse with the President, Secretary of State, Secretary of the Treasury, &c., and receive his commissions and instructions, without loss of time. He will go to Providence in the stage, and thence to New York by water, and thence to Philadelphia in the stage. He will not set out, however, until he is informed of his appointment."

"Your son!" is the phrase by which the father meant to convey his own sense of how large a part the mother had in training that son; and to enhance the compliment, it is communicated to her at the desire of President Washington.

CHAPTER III.

MR. ADAMS TRANSFERRED TO BERLIN—HIS MARRIAGE—LITERARY PURSUITS—TRAVELS IN SILESIA—NEGOTIATES TREATIES WITH SWEDEN AND PRUSSIA—RECALLED TO THE UNITED STATES.

MR. ADAMS presented himself at the Hague, as Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States, in the summer or fall of 1794. Ten years before, he was there with his father—a lad, attending school—at which time the father wrote: "They give him a good character wherever he has been, and I hope he will make a good man." How abundantly that hope was likely to be fulfilled, the elevated and responsible position occupied by the son at the expiration of the first ten years after it was expressed, gave a promising and true indication.

On his arrival in Holland, Mr. Adams found the affairs of that country in great confusion, in consequence of the French invasion. So difficult was it to prosecute any permanent measures for the benefit of the United States, owing to the existing wars and the unsettled state of things in Europe, that after a few months he thought seriously of returning home. A report of this nature having reached President Washington, drew from him a letter to Vice President John Adams,