

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,

dated Aug. 20, 1795, in which the following language occurs:—

“Your son must not think of retiring from the path he is now in. His prospects, if he pursues it, are fair; and I shall be much mistaken if, in as short a time as can well be expected, he is not found at the head of the Diplomatic Corps, be the government administered by whomsoever the people may choose.”

This approbation of his proceedings thus far, and encouragement as to future success, from so high a source, undoubtedly induced the younger Adams to forego his inclination to withdraw from the field of diplomacy. He continued in Holland until near the close of Washington's administration. That he was not an inattentive observer of the momentous events then transpiring in Europe, but was watchful and faithful in all that pertained to the welfare of his country, is abundantly proved by his official correspondence with the government at home. His communications were esteemed by Washington, as of the highest value, affording him, as they did, a luminous description of the movement of continental affairs, upon which he could place the most implicit reliance.

The following extract of a letter from John Adams, will show the interest he naturally took in the welfare of his son while abroad, and also afford a brief glance at the political movements of that day. It is dated Philadelphia, Jan. 23, 1796:—

“We have been very unfortunate in the delays which have attended the dispatches of our ambassadors. Very lucky, Mr. John

Quincy Adams, that you are not liable to criticism on this occasion! This demurrage would have been charged doubly, both to your account and that of your father. It would have been a scheme, a trick, a design, a contrivance, from hatred to France, attachment to England, monarchical manœuvres, and aristocratical cunning! Oh! how eloquent they would have been!

“The southern gentry are playing, at present, a very artful game, which I may develop to you in confidence hereafter, under the seal of secrecy. Both in conversation and in letters, they are representing the Vice-President [John Adams,] as a man of moderation. Although rather inclined to limited monarchy, and somewhat attached to the English, he is much less so than Jay or Hamilton. For their part, for the sake of conciliation, they should be very willing he should be continued as Vice-President, provided the northern gentlemen would consent that Jefferson should be President. I most humbly thank you for your kind condescension, Messieurs Transchesapeake.

“Witness my hand,
“JOHN ADAMS.”

Another allusion to his son while abroad, is made by the elder Adams, in a letter dated Philadelphia, March 25, 1796.

“The President told me he had that day received three or four letters from his new Minister in London, one of them as late as the 29th of December. Mr. Pickering informs me that Mr. Adams* modestly declined a presentation at court, but it was insisted on by Lord Grenville; and, accordingly, he was presented to the King, and I think the Queen, and made his harangues and received his answers. By the papers I find that Mr. Pinckney appeared at court on the 28th of January, after which, I presume, Mr. Adams had nothing to do but return to Holland.”

During his residence as Minister at the Hague, Mr. Adams had occasion to visit London, to exchange the ratifications of the treaty recently formed with Great

* John Quincy Adams.

Britain, and to take measures for carrying its provisions into effect. (Alluded to in the above letter from John Adams.) It was at this time that he formed an acquaintance with Miss LOUISA CATHARINE JOHNSON, daughter of Joshua Johnson, Esq., of Maryland, Consular Agent of the United States at London, and niece of Governor Johnson of Maryland, a Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States, and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The friendship they formed for each other, soon ripened into a mutual attachment and an engagement. They were married on the 26th of July, 1797. It was a happy union. For more than half a century they shared each other's joys and sorrows. The venerable matron who for this long period accompanied him in all the vicissitudes of his eventful life, still survives, to deplore the loss of him who had ever proved a faithful protector and the kindest of husbands.

In the meantime, the elder Adams had been elected President of the United States, in 1796. The curious reader may have a desire to know something of the views, feelings and anticipations of those elevated to places of the highest distinction, and of the amount of enjoyment they reap from the honors conferred upon them. A glance behind the scenes is furnished in the following correspondence between John Adams and his wife, which took place at his election to the Presidency.*

* Letters of John Adams, v. ii. pp. 242, 243. Mrs. Adams' Letters, p. 373.

MR. ADAMS TO HIS WIFE.

Philadelphia, 4th of Feb., 1797.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"I hope you will not communicate to anybody the hints I give you about our prospects; but they appear every day worse and worse. House rent at twenty-seven hundred dollars a year, fifteen hundred dollars for a carriage, one thousand for one pair of horses, all the glasses, ornaments, kitchen furniture, the best chairs, settees, plateaus, &c., all to purchase; all the china, delph or wedgewood, glass and crockery of every sort to purchase, and not a farthing probably will the House of Representatives allow, though the Senate have voted a small addition. All the linen besides. I shall not pretend to keep more than one pair of horses for a carriage, and one for a saddle. Secretaries, servants, wood, charities, which are demanded as rights, and the million *dilloes*, present such a prospect as is enough to disgust any one. Yet not one word must we say. We cannot go back. We must stand our ground as long as we can. Dispose of our places with the help of our friend Dr. Tufts, as well as you can. We are impatient for news, but that is always so at this season.

I am tenderly your J. A."

THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Philadelphia, 9th Feb., 1797.

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"The die is cast,* and you must prepare yourself for honorable trials. I must wait to know whether Congress will do anything or not to furnish my house. If they do not, I will have no house before next fall, and then a very moderate one, with very moderate furniture. The prisoners from Algiers† arrived yesterday in this city, in good health, and looking very well. Captain Stevens is among them. One woman rushed into the crowd and picked out her husband, whom she had not seen for fourteen years.

"I am, and ever shall be, yours, and no other's, J. A."

* Mr. Adams had, the day previous, been announced President elect of the United States.

† American citizens who had long been in captivity among the Algerines.

MRS. JOHN ADAMS TO HER HUSBAND.

Quincy, 8th Feb., 1797.

"The sun is dressed in brightest beams,
To give thy honors to the day."

"And may it prove an auspicious prelude to each ensuing season. You have this day to declare yourself head of a nation. 'And now, O Lord, my God, thou hast made thy servant ruler over the people. Give unto him an understanding heart, that he may know how to go out and come in before this great people; that he may discern between good and bad. For who is able to judge this thy so great a people?' were the words of a royal sovereign; and not less applicable to him who is invested with the Chief Magistracy of a nation, though he wear not a crown, nor the robes of royalty.

"My thoughts and my meditations are with you, though personally absent; and my petitions to Heaven are, that 'the things which make for peace may not be hidden from your eyes.' My feelings are not those of pride or ostentation, upon the occasion. They are solemnized by a sense of the obligations, the important trusts, and numerous duties connected with it. That you may be enabled to discharge them with honor to yourself, with justice and impartiality to your country, and with satisfaction to this great people, shall be the daily prayer of your
A. A."

MR. ADAMS TO HIS WIFE.

Philadelphia, 5th March, 1797.

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"Your dearest friend never had a more trying day than yesterday.* A solemn scene it was indeed; and it was made more affecting to me by the presence of the General, [Washington,] whose countenance was as serene and unclouded as the day. He seemed to me to enjoy a triumph over me. Methought I heard him say 'Ay! I am fairly out, and you fairly in! See which of us will be happiest.' When the ceremony was over, he came and made me a visit, and cordially congratulated me, and wished my administration might be happy, successful, and honorable.

* The day of his inauguration as President.

"It is now settled that I am to go into his house. It is whispered that he intends to take French leave to-morrow. I shall write you as fast as we proceed. My chariot is finished, and I made my first appearance in it yesterday. It is simple, but elegant enough. My horses are young, but clever.

"In the chamber of the House of Representatives, was a multitude as great as the space could contain, and I believe scarcely a dry eye but Washington's. The sight of the sun setting full orb'd, and another rising, though less splendid, was a novelty. Chief Justice Ellsworth administered the oath, and with great energy. Judges Cushing, Wilson, and Iredell, were present. Many ladies. I had not slept well the night before, and did not sleep well the night after. I was unwell, and did not know whether I should get through or not. I did, however. How the business was received, I know not; only I have been told that Mason, the treaty publisher, said we should lose nothing by the change, for he never heard such a speech in public in his life.

"All agree that, taken altogether, it was the sublimest thing ever exhibited in America.

"I am, my dearest friend, most affectionately and kindly yours,
"JOHN ADAMS."

On entering upon the duties of the Presidency, John Adams was greatly embarrassed in regard to the line he should adopt toward his son. True, the younger Adams had been entrusted by Washington with an important embassy abroad, and had acquitted himself with great credit in his responsible station; but the father, with a delicacy highly honorable, hesitated continuing him in office, lest he might be charged with unworthy favoritism, and a disposition to promote the interest of his family at the expense of public good. In this exigency, not daring to trust his own judgment, lest its decisions might be warped by parental solicitude, he resorted to the wisdom and experience of

Washington. Writing him for advice on this subject, he received the following reply:—

“Monday, Feb. 20, 1797.

DEAR SIR,

“I thank you for giving me a perusal of the enclosed. The sentiments do honor to the head and the heart of the writer; and if my wishes would be of any avail, they should go to you in a strong *tope*, that you will not withhold merited promotion from John Q. Adams, because he is your son. For without intending to compliment the father or the mother, or to censure any others, I give it as my decided opinion, that Mr. Adams is the most valuable public character we have abroad; and that there remains no doubt in my mind, that he will prove himself to be the ablest of all our diplomatic corps. If he was now to be brought into that line, or into any other public walk, I could not, upon the principle which has regulated my own conduct, disapprove of the caution which is hinted at in the letter. But he is already entered; the public, more and more, as he is known, are appreciating his talents and worth; and his country would sustain a loss, if these were to be checked by over delicacy on your part.

“With sincere esteem, and affectionate regard,

“I am ever yours,

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

This letter is characteristic of the discernment and nobleness of Washington. Appreciating at a glance the perplexed position of Mr. Adams, and wisely discriminating between the bringing forward of his son for the first time into public service, and the continuing him where he had already been placed by others, and shown himself worthy of all trust and confidence, he frankly advised him to overcome his scruples, and permit his son to remain in a career so full of promise to himself and his country. President Adams, in

agreement with this counsel, determined to allow his son to continue in Europe in the public capacity to which he had been promoted by Washington.

Shortly previous to the close of Washington's administration, he transferred the younger Adams from the Hague, by an appointment as Minister Plenipotentiary to Portugal, but before proceeding to Lisbon, his father, in the meantime having become President, changed his destination to Berlin. He arrived in that city in the autumn of 1797, and immediately entered upon the discharge of his duties as Minister of the United States. In 1798, while retaining his office at Berlin, he was commissioned to form a commercial treaty with Sweden.

During his residence at Berlin, Mr. Adams, while attending with unsleeping diligence to his public duties, did not forego the more congenial pursuits of literature. He cultivated the acquaintance of many eminent German scholars and poets, and manifested a friendly sympathy in their pursuits. In a letter to the late Dr. Follen, he writes of that day as follows:—

“At this time, Wieland was there the most popular of the German poets. And although there was in his genius neither the originality nor the deep pathos of Goethe, Klopstock, or Schiller, there was something in the playfulness of his imagination, in the tenderness of his sensibility, in the sunny cheerfulness of his philosophy, and in the harmony of his versification, which delighted me.”

To perfect his knowledge of the German language, Mr. Adams made a metrical translation of Wieland's

Oberon into the English language. The publication of this work, which at one time was designed, was superseded by the appearance of a similar translation by Sotheby.

In the summer of 1800, Mr. Adams made a tour through Silesia. He was charmed with the inhabitants of that region, their condition and habits. In many respects he found them bearing a great similarity to the people of his own native New England. He communicated his impressions during this excursion, in a series of letters to a younger brother in Philadelphia. These letters were interesting, and were considered of great value at that time, in consequence of many important facts they contained in regard to the manufacturing establishments of Silesia. They were published, without Mr. Adams's knowledge, in the *Port Folio*, a weekly paper edited by Joseph Dennie, at Philadelphia. The series was afterwards collected and published in a volume, in London, and has been translated into German and French, and extensively circulated on the continent.

Among other labors while at Berlin, Mr. Adams succeeded in forming a treaty of amity and commerce with the Prussian government. The protracted correspondence with the Prussian commissioners, which resulted in this treaty, involving as it did the rights of neutral commerce, was conducted with consummate ability on the part of Mr. Adams, and received the fullest sanction of the government at home.

Mr. Adams' missions at the Hague and at Berlin, constituted his first step in the intricate paths of diplomacy. They were accomplished amid the momentous events which convulsed all Europe, at the close of the eighteenth century. Republican France, exasperated at the machinations of the Allied Sovereigns to destroy its liberties, so recently obtained, was pushing its armies abroad, determined, in self-defence, to kindle the flames of revolution in every kingdom on the continent. Great Britain, combined with Austria and other European powers, was using every effort to crush the French democracy, and remove from before the eyes of down-trodden millions, an example so dangerous to monarchical institutions. The star of Napoleon had commenced its ascent, with a suddenness and brightness which startled the imbecile occupants of old thrones. His legions had rushed down from the Alps upon the sunny plains of Italy, and with the swoop of an eagle, had demolished towns, cities, kingdoms.

Amid this conflict of nations, the commerce and navigation of the United States, a neutral power, were made a common object of prey to all. Great Britain and France especially, did not hesitate to make depredations, at once the most injurious and irritating. Our ships were captured, our rights disregarded. In the midst of these scenes, surrounded by difficulties and embarrassments on every hand, the youthful ambassador was compelled to come into collision with the veteran and wily politicians of the old world. How well

he maintained the dignity and honor of his government—how sleepless the vigilance with which he watched the movements on the vast field of political strife—how prompt to protest against all encroachments—how skilful in conducting negotiations—and how active to promote the interests of the Union, wherever his influence could be felt—the archives of our country will abundantly testify. It was a fitting and promising commencement of a long public career which has been full of usefulness and of honor.

The administration of John Adams, as President of the United States, was characterized by great prudence and moderation, considering the excited state of the times. There cannot be a doubt he was anxious to copy the worthy example of his illustrious predecessor, in administering the government on principles of strict impartiality, for the good of the whole people, without respect to conflicting parties. Immediately on his inauguration, he had an interview with Mr. Jefferson, then Vice-President, and proposed the adoption of steps that would have a tendency to quell the spirit of faction which pervaded the country. That Mr. Jefferson, on his part, cherished a profound respect for Mr. Adams, his old co-laborer in the cause of American freedom, is evident from his letters and speeches of that day. In his speech on taking the chair of the Senate, as Vice-President, he expressed himself in the following terms :—

“ I might here proceed, and with the greatest truth, to declare my zealous attachment to the Constitution of the United States ; that I consider the union of these States as the first of blessings ; and as the first of duties the preservation of that Constitution which secures it ; but I suppose these declarations not pertinent to the occasion of entering into an office, whose primary business is merely to preside over the forms of this House ; and no one more sincerely prays that no accident may call me to the higher and more important functions, which the Constitution eventually devolves on this office. These have been justly confided to the eminent character which has preceded me here, whose talents and integrity have been known and revered by me, through a long course of years ; have been the foundation of a cordial and uninterrupted friendship between us ; and I devoutly pray he may be long preserved for the government, the happiness and the prosperity of our common country.”

The sincere attempts of President Adams to produce harmony of political action among the American people, were unavailing. The extraordinary events transpiring in Europe, exerted an influence on domestic politics, which could not be neutralized. “ The enemies of France”—“ the friends of England,” or *vice versa*, were cries which convulsed the nation to its centre. The entire population was sundered into contending parties.

John Adams was a true republican. His political opponents charged him with monarchical tendencies and aspirations, but charged him most falsely. His life, devoted unreservedly to the service of his country, through all its dark and perilous journey to the achievement of its independence—his public speeches and documents—his private letters, written to his bosom companion, with no expectation that the eye of any

other would ever rest upon them—all testify his ardent devotion to the principles of republicanism. At the breaking out of the French Revolution, he yielded it his hearty support, and did not withdraw his countenance, until compelled, by the scenes of anarchy and of carnage which soon ensued, to turn away with horror and raise his voice against proceedings of savage ferocity. But while condemning the excesses of the French revolutionists, he was no friend of Great Britain. This is made evident by a multitude of facts. Read, for instance, the following extract from a letter, not written for public effect, addressed to his wife, dated Philadelphia, April 9, 1796:—

“I have read ‘the minister’s’ dispatches from London. The King could not help discovering his old ill humor. The mad idiot will never recover. Blunderer by nature, accidents are all against him. Every measure of his reign has been wrong. It seems they don’t like Pinckney. They think he is no friend to that country, and too much of a French Jacobin. They wanted to work up some idea or other of introducing another in his place, but our young politician* saw into them too deeply to be duped. At his last visit to Court, the King passed him without speaking to him, which, you know, will be remarked by courtiers of all nations. I am glad of it; for I would not have my son go so far as Mr. Jay, and affirm the friendly disposition of that country to this. I know better. I know their jealousy, envy, hatred, and revenge, covered under pretended contempt.”

While President Adams cherished no partialities for Great Britain, and had no desire to promote her especial interest, he was compelled by the force of circum-

* J. Q. Adams.

stances, during his administration, to assume a hostile attitude towards France. The French Directory, chagrined at the failure of all attempts to induce the government of the United States to abandon its neutrality and take up arms in their behalf against the Allied Sovereigns, and deeply incensed at the treaty recently concluded between England and the United States, resorted to retaliatory measures. They adopted commercial regulations designed to cripple and destroy our foreign trade. They passed an ordinance authorizing, in certain cases, the seizure and confiscation of American vessels and cargoes. They refused to receive Mr. Pinckney, the American minister, and ordered him peremptorily to leave France.

Mr. Adams convened Congress, by proclamation, on the 15th of June, 1797, and in his message laid before that body a lucid statement of the aggressions of the French Directory. Congress made advances, with a view to a reconciliation with France. But failing in this attempt, immediate and vigorous measures were adopted to place the country in a condition for war. A small standing army was authorized. The command was tendered to Gen. Washington, who accepted of it with alacrity, sanctioning as he did these defensive measures of the government. Steps were taken for a naval armament, and the capture of French vessels authorized. These energetic demonstrations produced their desired effect. The war proceeded no farther

than a few collisions at sea. The French Directory became alarmed, and made overtures of peace.

Washington did not survive to witness the restoration of amicable relations with France. On the 14th of December, 1799, after a brief illness, he departed this life, at Mount Vernon, aged sixty-eight years. On receiving this mournful intelligence, Congress, then in session at Philadelphia, passed the following resolution:—

“Resolved, That the Speaker’s chair should be shrouded in black; that the members should wear black during the session, and that a joint committee, from the Senate and the House, be appointed to devise the most suitable manner of paying honor to the memory of the Man, first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”

Testimonials of sorrow were exhibited, and funeral orations and eulogies were delivered, throughout the United States. The Father of his Country slept in death, and an entire people mourned his departure!

On assuming the duties of the Presidency, the elder Adams found the finances of the country in a condition of the most deplorable prostration. To sustain the government in this department, it was deemed indispensable to establish a system of direct taxation, by internal duties. This produced great dissatisfaction throughout the Union. An “alien law” was passed, which empowered the President to banish from the United States, any foreigner whom he should consider dangerous to the peace and safety of the country. And a “sedition law,” imposing fine and imprisonment

for “any false, scandalous, and malicious writing against the government of the United States, or either house of Congress, or the President.”

These measures are not justly chargeable to John Adams. They were not recommended nor desired by him; but were brought forward and urged by Gen. Hamilton and his friends. Nevertheless upon Mr. Adams was heaped the odium they excited. The leading measures of his administration—the demonstration against France; the standing army; the direct taxation; the alien and sedition laws—all tended to injure his popularity with the mass of the people, and to destroy his prospects of a re-election to the presidency. The perplexities he was compelled to encounter during his administration, may be conceived on perusal of his language in a letter dated March 17, 1797:—

“From the situation where I now am, I see a scene of ambition beyond all my former suspicions or imaginations; an emulation which will turn our government topsy-turvy. Jealousies and rivalries have been my theme, and checks and balances as their antidotes, till I am ashamed to repeat the words; but they never stared me in the face in such horrid forms as at present. I see how the thing is going. At the next election England will set up Jay or Hamilton, and France Jefferson, and all the corruption of Poland will be introduced; unless the American spirit should rise and say, we will have neither John Bull nor Louis Baboon.”

In 1800, the seat of government was removed to Washington. In taking possession of the President’s house, Mr. Adams bestowed a benediction on it, which must ever meet with a response from all American

hearts—"Before I end my letter, I pray heaven to bestow the best of blessings on this house, and on all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof!" A description of the house and the city, at that time, is furnished in a letter from Mrs. Adams to her daughter, written in November, 1800:—

"I arrived here on Sunday last, and without meeting any accident worth noticing, except losing ourselves when we left Baltimore, and going eight or nine miles on the Frederick road, by which means we were obliged to go the other eight through the woods, where we wandered two hours without finding a guide or the path. Fortunately, a straggling black came up with us, and we engaged him as a guide to extricate us out of our difficulty; but woods are all you see, from Baltimore, until you reach *the city*, which is only so in name. Here and there is a small cot, without a glass window, interspersed among the forests, through which you travel miles without seeing any human being. ***** The house is made habitable, but there is not a single apartment finished, and all withinside, except the plastering, has been done since Briesler came. We have not the least fence, yard, or other convenience without, and the great unfinished audience-room I make a drying-room of, to hang up the clothes in. The principal stairs are not up, and will not be this winter. Six chambers are made comfortable; two are occupied by the President and Mr. Shaw; two lower rooms, one for a common parlor, and one for a levee room. Up stairs there is the oval room, which is designed for the drawing-room, and has the crimson furniture in it. It is a very handsome room now; but when completed, it will be beautiful."

The presidential contest in 1800, was urged with a warmth and bitterness, by both parties, which has not been equalled in any election since that period. It was the first time two candidates ever presented themselves to the people as rival aspirants for the highest

honor in their gift. Both were good men and true—both were worthy of the confidence of the country. But Mr. Adams, weighed down by the unpopularity of acts adopted during his administration, and suffering under the charge of being an enemy to revolutionary France, and a friend of monarchical England, was distanced and defeated by his competitor. Mr. Jefferson was elected the third President of the Republic, and was inaugurated on the 4th of March, 1801. One of the last acts of John Adams, before retiring from the Presidency, was to recall his son from Berlin, that Mr. Jefferson might have no embarrassment in that direction.