

by the pigmy States of Asia and Africa—by the very banditti of the earth. Sir, the only negotiations, says the President of the United States, that he would encounter, should be at the cannon's mouth!"

The effect produced by this speech was tremendous on all sides; and, for a while, the House was lost in the excitement it afforded. The venerable orator took his seat; and, as he sank into it, the very walls shook with the thundering applause he had awakened.

On the 28th of June, 1836, the venerable ex-President JAMES MADISON, departed life at Montpelier, Va., in the eighty-sixth year of his age. He had filled a prominent place in the history of our Government, from its first organization. As a statesman, he was unsurpassed in critical acumen, in profundity of knowledge, in an understanding of constitutional Government, and its adaptation to the rights and interests of the people. His writings are an invaluable legacy to his countrymen, and will be studied and quoted for ages to come. "His public acts were a noble commentary upon his political principles—his private life an illustration of the purest virtues of the heart."

When a message from the President, announcing the death of Mr. Madison, was received in the House of Representatives, Mr. Adams arose and said:—

"By the general sense of the House, it is with perfect propriety that the delegation from the commonwealth of Virginia have taken the lead in the melancholy duty of proposing the measures suitable to be adopted as testimonials of the veneration due, from the Legis-

lature of the Union, to the memory of the departed patriot and sage, the native of their soil, and the citizen of their community.

"It is not without some hesitation, and some diffidence, that I have risen to offer in my own behalf, and in that of my colleagues upon this floor, and of our common constituents, to join our voice, at once of mourning and exultation, at the event announced to both Houses of Congress, by the message from the President of the United States—of mourning at the bereavement which has befallen our common country, by the decease of one of her most illustrious sons—of exultation at the spectacle afforded to the observation of the civilized world, and for the emulation of after times, by the close of a life of usefulness and of glory, after forty years of service in trusts of the highest dignity and splendor that a confiding country could bestow, succeeded by twenty years of retirement and private life, not inferior, in the estimation of the virtuous and the wise, to the honors of the highest station that ambition can ever attain.

"Of the public life of James Madison what could I say that is not deeply impressed upon the memory and upon the heart of every one within the sound of my voice? Of his private life, what but must meet an echoing shout of applause from every voice within this hall? Is it not in a pre-eminent degree by emanation from his mind, that we are assembled here as the representatives of the people and the States of this Union? Is it not transcendently by his exertions that we all address each other here by the endearing appellation of countrymen and fellow-citizens? Of that band of benefactors of the human race, the founders of the Constitution of the United States, James Madison is the last who has gone to his reward. Their glorious work has survived them all. They have transmitted the precious bond of union to us, now entirely a succeeding generation to them. May it never cease to be a voice of admonition to us, of our duty to transmit the inheritance unimpaired to our children of the rising age.

"Of the personal relations of this great man, which gave rise to the long career of public service in which twenty years of my own life has been engaged, it becomes me not to speak. The fulness of the heart must be silent, even to the suppression of the overflowings of gratitude and affection."

To the year 1835, the career of Mr. Adams in

Congress had been marked by no signal display of characteristics peculiar to himself, other than such as the world had long been familiar with in his previous history. He had succeeded in maintaining his reputation for patriotism, devotion to principle, political sagacity and wisdom, and his fame as a public debater and eloquent speaker. But no new development of qualities unrecognized before had been made. From that year forward, however, he placed himself in a new attitude before the country, and entered upon a career which eclipsed all his former services, and added a lustre to his fame which will glow in unrivalled splendor as long as human freedom is prized on earth. It can hardly be necessary to state that allusion is here made to his advocacy of the Right of Petition, and his determined hostility to slavery. At an age when most men would leave the stormy field of public life, and retire to the quiet seclusion of domestic comfort, these great topics inspirited Mr. Adams with a renewed vigor. With all the ardor and zeal of youth, he placed himself in the front rank of the battle which ensued, plunged into the very midst of the melee, and, with a dauntless courage, that won the plaudits of the world, held aloft the banner of freedom in the Halls of Congress, when other hearts quailed and fell back! He led "the forlorn hope" to the assault of the bulwarks of slavery, when the most sanguine believed his almost superhuman labors would be all in vain. In these contests a spirit blazed out from his noble soul

which electrified the nation with admiration. In his intrepid bearing amid these scenes he fully personified the couplet quoted in one of his orations:—

"Thy spirit, Independence, let me share,
Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye!
Thy steps I follow, with my bosom bare,
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky."

The first act in the career of Mr. Adams as a Member of Congress, was in relation to slavery. On the 12th of December, 1831, it being the second week of the first session of the twenty-second Congress, he presented fifteen petitions, all numerously signed, from sundry inhabitants of Pennsylvania, praying for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade in the District of Columbia. In presenting these petitions, Mr. Adams remarked, that although the petitioners were not of his immediate constituents, yet he did not deem himself at liberty to decline presenting their petitions, the transmission of which to him manifested a confidence in him for which he was bound to be grateful. From a letter which had accompanied the petitions, he inferred that they came from members of the Society of Friends or Quakers; a body of men, he declared, than whom there was no more respectable and worthy class of citizens—none who more strictly made their lives a commentary on their professions; a body of men comprising, in his firm opinion, as much of human virtue, and as little of human infirmity, as any other equal number of men, of any denomination, upon the face of the globe.

The petitions for the abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia, Mr. Adams considered relating to a proper subject for the legislation of Congress. But he did not give his countenance to those which prayed for the abolition of slavery in that District. Not that he would approbate the system of slavery; for he was, and in fact had been through life, its most determined foe. But he believed the time had not then arrived for the discussion of that subject in Congress. It was his settled conviction that a *premature* agitation of slavery in the national councils would greatly retard, rather than facilitate, the abolition of that giant evil—"as the most salutary medicines," he declared in illustration, "unduly administered, were the most deadly of poisons."

The position taken by Mr. Adams, in presenting these petitions, was evidently misunderstood by many, and especially by Abolitionists. They construed it into a disposition on his part to sanction, or at least to succumb unresistingly, to the inhumanity and enormity of the slave institution. In this conclusion they signally erred. Mr. Adams, by birth, education, all the associations of his life, and the fixed principles of his moral and political character, was an opposer of slavery in every form. No man felt more keenly the wretched absurdity of professing to base our Government on the "self-evident truth, that all men are created *equal*, and endowed by their Creator with an unalienable right to life, *liberty*, and the pursuit of happiness"—of pro-

claiming our Union the abode of liberty, the "home of the free," the asylum of the oppressed—while holding in our midst millions of fellow-beings manacled in hopeless bondage! No man was more anxious to correct this disgraceful misnomer, and wipe away its dark stain from our national escutcheon at the earliest practicable moment. But he was a statesman of profound knowledge and far-reaching sagacity. He possessed the rare quality of being able to "bide his time" in all enterprizes. Great as he felt the enormity of American slavery to be, he would not, in seeking to remove it, select a time so unseasonable, and adopt measures so unwise, as would result, Samson-like, in removing the pillars of our great political fabric, and crushing the glorious Union, formed by the wisdom and cemented by the blood of our Revolutionary Fathers, into a mass of ruins.

Believing there was a time to withhold and a time to strike, he would patiently wait until the sentiment of the American people became sufficiently ripened, under the increasing light and liberality of the age, to permit slavery to be lawfully and peaceably removed, while the Union should remain unweakened and untouched—the pride of our hearts, the admiration of the world. Hence, in his early career, he saw no propitious moment for such a work. While discharging the duties of U. S. Senator, Secretary of State, and President, an attempt in that direction would have resulted in an aggravation of the evils of slavery, and

a strengthening of the institution. Nor on first entering Congress did he conceive the time to be fully come to engage in that agitation of the momentous subject, which, when once commenced in earnest, would never cease until either slavery would be abolished, as far as Congress possessed constitutional power, or the Union become rent in twain! But he evidently saw that time was at hand—even at the door—and he prepared himself for the contest.

In 1835, the people of Texas took up arms in open rebellion against the Government of Mexico. That Province had been settled chiefly by emigrants from the Southern and Southwestern States. Many of them had taken their slaves with them. But the Mexican Government, to their enduring honor be it said, abolished slavery throughout that Republic. The ostensible object of the Texian insurrection was to resist certain schemes of usurpation alleged against Santa Anna, at that time President of Mexico. At the present day, however, after having witnessed the entire progress and consummation of the scheme, it is abundantly evident, that from the beginning there was a deliberate and well-digested plan to re-establish slavery in Texas—annex that province to the United States—and thus immensely increase the slave territory and influence in the Union.

At the first blast of the Texian bugle, thousands of volunteers from the slaveholding States rushed to the

standard of "the lone star." Agents were sent to the United States to create an interest in behalf of Texas—the most inflammatory appeals were made to the people of the Union—and armed bodies of American citizens were openly formed in the South, and transported without concealment to the seat of the insurrection. President Jackson reminded the inhabitants of the United States of their obligations to observe neutrality in the contest between Mexico and its rebellious province. At the same time, Gen. Gaines, with a body of U. S. troops, was ordered to take up a position within the borders of Texas. The avowed object of this movement was to protect the people of the Southwestern frontiers from the incursions of Indian tribes in the employment of Mexico. But the presence of such a body of troops could not but exert an influence favorable to the measures and objects of Texas; and besides, it afterwards appeared the Indians had no disposition to take sides with Mexico, or to make any depredations on the territories of the United States. A call was made on Congress for an appropriation of a million of dollars to carry on these military operations, the entire tendency of which was to encourage Texas in its attempt to throw off the Mexican allegiance and re-establish slavery.

The source from whence the authorities of Texas were confidently looking for assistance, and the ulterior object at which they were aiming in their insurrection—viz.: annexation to the United States, and thus add-

ing territory and strength to the institution of slavery—are clearly revealed in the following extracts from a letter addressed by Gen. Houston, commander of the Texian forces, to Gen. Dunlap, of Nashville, Tenn:—

“Near Sabine, July, 2, 1836.

“TO GEN. DUNLAP:

SIR:—Your favor of the 1st of June reached me last evening. I regret so much delay will necessarily result before you can reach us. We will need your aid, and that speedily. The enemy, in large numbers, are reported to be in Texas. * * * * * The army with which they first entered Texas is broken up and dispersed by desertion and other causes. If they get another army of the extent proposed, it must be composed of new recruits, and men pressed into service. They will not possess the mechanical efficiency of discipline which gives the Mexican troops the only advantage they have. They will easily be routed by a very inferior force. *For a portion of that force, we shall be obliged to look to the United States!* It cannot reach us too soon. There is but one feeling in Texas, in my opinion, and that is, to establish the independence of Texas, and *TO BE ATTACHED TO THE UNITED STATES!* * * * * * March as speedily as possible, with all the aid you can bring, and I doubt not but you will be gratified with your reception and situation.”

The whole plan succeeded beyond the anticipation of its most sanguine projectors. Aided by men and means from the United States, Texas established its independence—organized a government—incorporated slavery into its constitution so thoroughly as to guard against the remotest attempt ever to remove it—and by a process unsurpassed in the annals of political intrigue, in due time became annexed to the North American Union. In this accession of a territory from which several large States will eventually be

carved out, the slave power of the United States obtained a signal advantage, of which it will not be backward to avail itself in the time of its need. A faithful history of this entire movement is yet to be written.

Mr. Adams, with his well-known and long-trying sagacity, saw at a glance the whole design of the originators of the Texas insurrection. While most people were averse to the belief that a project was seriously on foot to sever a large and free province from the Mexican Republic and annex it to the Union as slave territory, he read the design in legible characters from the beginning. In a speech made in the House of Representatives, in May, 1836, in reference to the call for a million of dollars, for purposes already stated, Mr. Adams unriddled the Texian project with the vision of a prophet.

“Have we not seen American citizens,” said Mr. Adams, “going from all parts of the country to carry on the war of this province against the united Government of Mexico? Who were those who fell at Alamo? Who are now fighting under the command of the hero* of Texian fame? And have we not been called upon in this House, to recognize Texian independence? It seems that Gen. Gaines considers this a war in defence of ‘our Texians.’”

Mr. Cambreleng explained that the word “neighbors,” had been accidentally omitted in Gen. Gaines’ dispatch.

Mr. Adams continued:—“Was this an intention to conquer Texas,

* General Houston.

to re-establish that slavery which had been abolished by the United Mexican States? If that was the case, and we were to be drawn into an acknowledgment of their independence, and then, by that preliminary act, by that acknowledgment, if we were upon their application to admit Texas to become a part of the United States, then the House ought to be informed of it. I shall be for no such war, nor for making any such addition to our territory. * * * * * I hope Congress will take care to go into no war for the re-establishment of slavery where it has been abolished—that they will go into no war in behalf of ‘our Texians,’ or ‘our Texian neighbors’—and that they will go into no war with a foreign power, without other cause than the acquisition of territory.”

In a speech delivered a few days subsequent to the above, Mr. Adams used the following language:—

“It is said that one of the earliest acts of this administration was a proposal, made at a time when there was already much ill-humor in Mexico against the United States, that she should cede to the United States a very large portion of her territory—large enough to constitute nine States equal in extent to Kentucky. It must be confessed that a device better calculated to produce jealousy, suspicion, ill-will and hatred, could not have been contrived. It is further affirmed that this overture, offensive in itself, was made precisely at the time when a swarm of colonists from these United States, were covering the Mexican border with land-jobbing, and with slaves, introduced in defiance of Mexican laws, by which slavery had been abolished throughout the Republic. The war now raging in Texas is a Mexican civil war, and a war for the re-establishment of slavery where it was abolished. It is not a servile war, but a war between slavery and emancipation, and every possible effort has been made to drive us into the war on the side of slavery.”

“When, in the year 1836, resolutions to recognize the independence of Texas came up in the House of Representatives, Mr. Adams opposed them with great energy and eloquence, and provoked a most ardent and violent debate. Mr. Waddy Thompson, then a Representative in Congress, and subsequently Minister to Mexico, advocated the passage of the resolutions; and, in doing so,

said that Mr. Adams, in negotiating the Florida treaty, actually ceded to Mexico the whole of Texas, a province that was part and parcel of this Union.

“Mr. Adams immediately arrested the speech of Mr. Thompson, and denied the impeachment. Mr. Thompson rejoined, and, to strengthen his position, quoted some remarks Gen. Jackson had made on the subject, confirmatory of the charge of having sacrificed the national domain, in the Florida negotiation.

“Mr. Adams replied with great warmth; and went into a minute and interesting narrative of the whole transaction. Among other things, he said that, before the Florida treaty was signed, he took it to Gen. Jackson, to obtain his opinion of it; and that it was unconditionally approved by him.

“Mr. Thompson was surprised at the announcement of this fact. It weakened his position very materially; and he resumed his seat a defeated antagonist. So said the House of Representatives, with scarcely the exception of a member.

“Mr. Adams continued his defence. ‘At that time,’ said he, ‘General Jackson was in this city, on exciting business connected with the Seminole war; and, after the treaty had been concluded, and only wanted the signatures of the contracting parties, the then President of the United States directed me to call on General Jackson, in my official capacity as Secretary of State, and obtain his opinion in reference to boundaries. I did call. General Jackson, sir, was at that time holding his quarters in the hotel at the other end of the avenue, now kept by Mr. Azariah Fuller, but then under the management of Jonathan McCarty. The day was exceedingly warm, and, on entering General Jackson’s parlor, I found him much exhausted by excitement, and the intensity of the weather. I made known to him the object of my visit; when he replied that I would greatly oblige him if I would excuse him from looking into the matter then. ‘Leave the papers with me, sir, till to-morrow, or the next day, and I will examine them.’ I did leave them, sir; and the next day called for the hero’s opinion and decision. Sir, I recollect the occurrence perfectly well; General Jackson was still unwell; and the papers, with an accompanying map, were spread before him. With his cane, sir, he pointed to the boundaries, as they had been agreed upon by the parties; and, sir, with a very emphatic expression, which I need not repeat, he affirmed them.’

"This debate, whilst yet warm from the hands of the reporters, reached General Jackson; and was at once pressed upon his attention. Its contradiction and refutation were deemed matters of paramount importance. The old soldier did not hesitate long to act in the matter, and speedily there appeared in the *Globe* newspaper a letter, signed Andrew Jackson, denying, in unqualified and unconditional terms, everything that Mr. Adams had uttered. He denied having been in Washington at the time Mr. Adams designated; but afterwards, being convinced that he was in error, in this fact only he corrected himself, but denied most positively that he had seen the Florida treaty, or Mr. Adams, at the time of its negotiation, or that he had had the remotest agency or connection with the transaction.

"Mr. Adams responded, and appealed to his diary, where everything was set forth with the utmost precision and accuracy. The year, day of the month, and of the week, and the very hour of the day, all were faithfully recorded.

"The affair produced much sensation at Washington; and even the most determined advocates of General Jackson believed that he, and not Mr. Adams, was in error. No one would, or could for a moment, believe that Mr. Adams 'had made a false report.'

"Whilst this controversy was pending, I called at the Presidential mansion, one afternoon, when General Jackson, strange to say, happened to be alone. He said that he was very glad to see me, because he would like to hear, from one who had an opportunity of seeing more of the press than he *saw*, what was the exact state of public opinion, in regard to the controversy.

"'As far as I am capable of judging, Mr. President,' I replied, 'the people appear to be unanimous in the opinion that there is a misunderstanding, a misapprehension, between you and Mr. Adams; for no one imagines, for a moment, that either of you would misrepresent facts! Mr. Adams is a man of infinite method; he is generally accurate, and, in this instance, it appears that he is sustained by his diary.'

"'His diary! don't tell me anything more about his diary! Sir, that diary comes up on all occasions—one would think that its pages were as immutable as the laws of the Medes and Persians! Sir, that diary will be the death of me! I wonder if James Monroe kept a *diary*! If he did, it is to be hoped that it will be looked to,

to see if it contains anything about this Adams and Don Onis treaty. Sir, I did not see it; I was *not* consulted about it.'

"The old hero was exceedingly vehement, and was proceeding to descant with especial violence, when he was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Secretary Woodbury, and I never heard another word about the matter. A question of veracity between the parties was raised, and was never adjudicated. Both went down to the grave before any definite light was cast on the subject; but the world had decided that General Jackson was in error.*

* Reminiscences of the late John Quincy Adams, by an Old Colony Man.