

required a liberal indulgence for a portion of human infirmity and error. The revolutionary wars of Europe, commencing precisely at the moment when the Government of the United States first went into operation under the constitution, excited collisions of sentiments, and of sympathies, which kindled all the passions and embittered the conflict of parties, till the nation was involved in war, and the Union was shaken to its centre. This time of trial embraced a period of five-and-twenty years, during which the policy of the Union in its relations with Europe constituted the principal basis of our own political divisions, and the most arduous part of action of the Federal Government. With the catastrophe in which the wars of the French Revolution terminated, and our own subsequent peace with Great Britain, this baneful weed of party strife was uprooted. From that time no difference of principle, connected with the theory of government, or with our intercourse with foreign nations, has existed or been called forth in force sufficient to sustain a continued combination of parties, or given more than wholesome animation to public sentiment or legislative debate. Our political creed, without a dissenting voice that can be heard, is that the will of the people is the source, and the happiness of the people is the end, of all legitimate government upon earth—that the best security for the beneficence, and the best guaranty against the abuse of power, consists in the freedom, the purity, and the frequency of popular elections. That the General Government of the Union, and the separate Governments of the States, are all sovereignties of legitimate powers; fellow servants of the same masters, uncontrolled within their respective spheres—uncontrollable by encroachments on each other. If there have been those who doubted whether a confederated representative democracy was a government competent to the wise and orderly management of the common concerns of a mighty nation, those doubts have been dispelled. If there have been projects of partial confederacies to be erected upon the ruins of the Union, they have been scattered to the winds. If there have been dangerous attachments to one foreign nation, and antipathies against another, they have been extinguished. Ten years of peace at home and abroad have assuaged the animosities of political contention and blended into harmony the most discordant elements of public opinion. There still remains one effort of magnanimity, one sacrifice of prejudice and passion, to be made by

the individuals throughout the nation who have heretofore followed the standards of political party. It is that of discarding every remnant of rancor against each other, of embracing, as countrymen and friends, and of yielding to talents and virtue alone that confidence which, in times of contention for principle, was bestowed only upon those who bore the badge of party communion.

During the administration of John Quincy Adams, he was really the Chief Magistrate. He submitted neither his reason nor his conscience to the control of any partisan cabal. No man was appointed to office in obedience to political dictation, and no faithful public servant was proscribed. The result rewarded his magnanimity. Faction ceased to exist. When South Carolina, a few years afterward, assumed the very ground that the ancient republican party had indicated as lawful and constitutional, and claimed the right and power to set aside, within her own limits, acts of Congress which she pronounced void, because they transcended the Federal authority, she called on the republican party throughout the Union in vain. The dangerous heresy had been renounced forever. Since that time there has been no serious project of a combination to resist the laws of the Union, much less of a conspiracy to subvert the Union itself.

What though the elements of political strife remain? They are necessary for the life of free States. What though there still are parties, and the din and turmoil of their contests are ceaselessly heard? They are founded now on questions of mere administration, or on the more ephemeral questions of personal merit.

Such parties are dangerous only in the decline, not in the vigor of Republics. Rome was no longer fit for freedom, and needed a Dictator and a Sovereign, when Pompey and Cæsar divided the citizens. What though the magnanimity of Adams was not appreciated, and his contemporaries preferred his military competitor in the subsequent election? The sword gathers none but ripe fruits, and the masses of any people will sometimes prefer them to the long maturing harvest, which the statesmen of the living generations sow, to be reaped by their successors. For all this Adams cared not. He had extinguished the factions which for forty years had endangered the State. He had left on the records of history instructions and an example teaching how faction could be overthrown, and his country might resort to them when danger should recur. For himself he knew well, none knew better, that

“He who ascends to mountain-tops shall find  
The loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow.  
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,  
Must look down on the hate of those below.  
Though high *above* the sun of glory glow,  
And far *beneath* the earth and ocean spread,  
*Round* him are icy rocks, and loudly blow  
Contending tempests on his naked head,  
And thus reward the toils which to their summits led.”

The federal authority had so long been factiously opposed, that the popular respect for its laws needed to be renewed. The State of Georgia presented the fit occasion. She insisted on expelling, forcibly, rem-

nants of Indian tribes, within her limits, in virtue of a treaty which was impeached for fraud, and came for revision before the Supreme Court and the Senate. The President met the emergency with boldness and decision. The demonstration thus given that good faith should be practised, and the law have its way, no matter how unequal the litigating parties, operated favorably toward restoring the moral influence of the Government. That influence, although sometimes checked, has recently increased in strength, until the federal authority is universally regarded as final, and liberty again walks confidently hand in hand with law.

John Quincy Adams “loved peace and ensued it.” He loved peace as a Christian, because war was at enmity with the spirit and precepts of a religion which he held to be divine. As a statesman and magistrate, he loved peace, because war was not merely injurious to national prosperity, but because, whether successful or adverse, it was subversive of liberty. Democracies are prone to war, and war consumes them. He favored, therefore, all the philanthropic efforts of the age to cultivate the spirit of peace, and looked forward with benevolent hope to the ultimate institution of a General Congress of nations for the adjustment of their controversies. But he was no visionary and no enthusiast. He knew that as yet war was often inevitable—that pusillanimity provoked it, and that national honor was national property of the highest value; because it was the best national defence. He admitted only de

fensive war—but he did not narrowly define it. He held *that* to be a defensive war, which was waged to sustain what could not be surrendered or relinquished without compromising the independence, the just influence, or even the proper dignity of the State. Thus he had supported the war with Great Britain—thus in later years he sustained President Jackson in his bold demonstration against France, when that power wantonly refused to perform the stipulations it had made in a treaty of indemnity; and thus he yielded his support to what was thought a warlike measure of the present administration in the diplomatic controversy with Great Britain concerning the Territory of Oregon. The living and the dead have mutual rights, and therefore it must be added that he considered the present war with Mexico as unnecessary, unjust, and criminal. His opinion on this exciting question is among those on which he referred himself to that future age which he so often constituted the umpire between himself and his contemporaries.

With such principles on the subject of war, he regarded the establishment of a system of national defence as a necessary policy for consolidating the Republic. He prosecuted, therefore, on a large scale, the work of fortification, and defended against popular opposition the institution for the cultivation of military science, which has so recently vindicated that early favor through the learning, valor, patriotism and humanity exhibited by its pupils on the fields of Mexico.

But with that jealousy of the military spirit which never forsakes the wise republican statesman, he cooperated in reducing the army to the lowest scale commensurate with its necessary efficiency:

It was a vain and dangerous delusion (he said) to believe that in the present or any probable condition of the world, a commerce so extensive as ours could exist without the continual support of a military marine—the only arm by which the power of a confederacy could be estimated or felt by foreign nations, and the only standing force which could never be dangerous to our own liberties.

The enlargement of our navy, under the influence of these opinions, is among the measures of national consolidation we owe to him; and the institution for naval education we enjoy, is a recent result of his early suggestions.

But John Quincy Adams relied for national security and peace mainly on an enlightened and broad system of civil policy. He looked through the future combinations of States, and studied the accidents to which they were exposed, that he might seasonably remove causes of future conflict. His genius, when exercised in this lofty duty, played in its native element. He had cordially approved the measures by which Washington had secured the free navigation of the Mississippi. He approved the acquisition of Louisiana, although with Jefferson he insisted on a preliminary amendment of the constitution for that purpose. He had no narrow bigotry, concerning the soil to which the institutions of our fathers should be confined, and

no local prejudice against their extension in any direction required by the public security, if the extension should be made with justice, honor, and humanity.

The acquisition of Louisiana had only given us additional territory, fruitful in new commerce, to be exposed to dangers which remain to be overcome. Spain still possessed, beside the Island of Cuba, the Peninsula of the Floridas, and thus held the keys of the Mississippi. The real independence, the commercial and the moral independence, of the United States, remained to be effected at the close of the European wars, and of our own war with England. Our political independence had been confirmed, and that was all. John Quincy Adams addressed himself, as Secretary of State, to the subversion of what remained of the colonial system. He commenced by an auspicious purchase of the Floridas, which gave us important maritime advantages on the Gulf of Mexico, while it continued our Atlantic sea-board unbroken from the Bay of Fundy to the Sabine.

The ever-advancing American Revolution was at the same time opening the way to complete disenthralment. The Spanish-American Provinces revolted, and seven new Republics, with constitutions not widely differing from our own—Buenos Ayres, Guatemala, Colombia, Mexico, Chili, Central America, and Peru—suddenly claimed audience and admission among the nations of the earth. The people of those countries were but doubtfully prepared to maintain their

contest for independence, or to support republican institutions. But on the other side Spain was enervated and declining. She applied to the Holy League of Europe for their aid, and the new Republics applied to the United States for that recognition which could not fail to impart strength. The question was momentous. The ancient colonial system was at stake. All Europe was interested in maintaining it. The Holy League held Europe fast bound to the rock of despotism, and were at liberty to engage the United States in a war for the subversion of their independence, if they should dare to extend their aid or protection to the rebellious Colonies in South America.

Such a war would be a war of the two continents—an universal war. Who could foretell its termination, or its dread results? But the emancipation of Spanish America was necessary for our own larger freedom, and our own complete security. That freedom and that security required that the nations of Europe should relax their grasp on the American Continent. The question was long and anxiously debated. The American people hesitated to hazard, for speculative advantages, the measures of independence already obtained. Monroe and Adams waited calmly and firmly. The impassioned voice of Henry Clay rose from the Chamber of Representatives. It rang through the continent like the notes of the clarion, inspiring South America with new resolution, and North America with the confidence the critical occasion demanded. That

noble appeal was answered. South America stood firm, and North America was ready. Then it was that John Quincy Adams, with those generous impulses which the impatient blood of his revolutionary sire always prompted, and with that enlightened sagacity which never misapprehended the interests of his country, nor mistook the time nor the means to secure them, obtained from the administration and from Congress the acknowledgment of the independence of the young American nations. To give decisive effect to this great measure, Monroe, in 1823, solemnly declared to the world, that thenceforth any attempt by any foreign power to establish the colonial system in any part of this continent, already emancipated, would be resisted as an aggression against the independence of the United States. On the accession of Adams to the administration of the Government, the vast American continental possessions of Brazil separated themselves from the crown of Portugal and became an independent State. Adams improved these propitious and sublime events by negotiating treaties of reciprocal trade with the youthful nations; and, concurring with Monroe, accepted, in behalf of the United States, their invitation to a General Congress of American States to be held at Panama, to cement relations of amity among themselves, and to consider, if it should become necessary, the proper means to repel the apprehended interference of the Holy League of Europe.

The last measure transcended the confidence of a

large and respectable portion of the American people. But its moral effect was needed to secure the stability of the South American Republics. Adams persevered, and, in defending his course, gave notice to the powers of Europe, by this bold declaration, that the determination of the United States was inflexible:—

“If it be asked, whether this meeting, and the principles which may be adjusted and settled by it, as rules of intercourse between American nations, may not give umbrage to European powers, or offence to Spain, it is deemed a sufficient answer, that our attendance at Panama can give no just cause of umbrage or offence to either, and that the United States will stipulate nothing there, which can give such cause. Here the right of inquiry into our purposes and measures must stop. The Holy League of Europe, itself, was formed without inquiring of the United States, whether it would or would not give umbrage to them. The fear of giving umbrage to the Holy League of Europe was urged as a motive for denying to the American nations the acknowledgment of their independence. The Congress and the administration of that day consulted their rights and their duties, not their fears. The United States must still, as heretofore, take counsel from their duties, rather than their fears.”

Contrast, fellow-citizens, this declaration of John Quincy Adams, President of the United States in 1825, with the proclamation of neutrality, between the belligerents of Europe, made by Washington in 1793, with the querrulous complaints of your Ministers against the French Directory and the British Ministry at the close of the last century, and with the acts of embargo and non-intercourse at the beginning of the present century, destroying our own commerce to conquer forbearance from the intolerant European powers.

Learn from this contrast, the epoch of the consolidation of the Republic. Thus instructed, do honor to the statesman and magistrate by whom, not forgetting the meed due to his illustrious compeers, the colonial system was overthrown throughout Spanish America, and the independence of the United States was completely and finally consummated.

The intrepid and unwearied statesman now directed his attention to the remnants of the colonial system still preserved in the Canadas and West Indies. Great Britain, by parliamentary measures, had undermined our manufactures, and, receiving only our raw materials, repaid us with fabrics manufactured from them, while she excluded us altogether from the carrying trade with her colonial possessions. John Quincy Adams sought to counteract this injurious legislation, by a revenue system, which should restore the manufacturing industry of the country, while he offered reciprocal trade as a compromise. His administration ended during a beneficial trial of this vigorous policy. But it taxed too severely the patriotism of some of the States, and was relinquished by his successors.

Indolence begets degeneracy, and immobility is the first stage of dissolution. John Quincy Adams sought not merely to consolidate the Republic, but to perpetuate it. For this purpose he bent vast efforts, with success, to such a policy of internal improvement as would increase the facilities of communication and intercourse between the States, and bring into being that

great internal trade which must ever constitute the strongest bond of federal union. Wherever a lighthouse has been erected, on our sea-coast, on our lakes, or on our rivers—wherever a mole or pier has been constructed or begun—wherever a channel obstructed by shoals or sawyers has been opened, or begun to be opened—wherever a canal or railroad, adapted to national uses, has been made or projected—there the engineers of the United States, during the administration of John Quincy Adams, made explorations, and opened the way for a diligent prosecution of his designs by his successors. This policy, apparently so stupendous, was connected with a system of fiscal economy so rigorous, that the treasury augmented its stores, while the work of improvement went on; the public debt, contracted in past wars, dissolved away, and the nation flourished in unexampled prosperity. John Quincy Adams administered the Federal Government, while De Witt Clinton was presiding in the State of New York. It is refreshing to recall the noble emulation of these illustrious benefactors—an emulation that shows how inseparable sound philosophy is from true patriotism.

If [said Adams, in his first annual message to the Congress of the United States,] the powers enumerated may be effectually brought into action by laws promoting the improvement of agriculture, commerce and manufactures, the cultivation and encouragement of the mechanic arts, and of the elegant arts, the advancement of literature, and the progress of the sciences, ornamental and profound, to refrain from exercising them for the benefit of the

people would be to hide in the earth the talent committed to our charge, would be treachery to the most sacred of trusts. The spirit of improvement is abroad upon the earth. It stimulates the hearts, and sharpens the faculties, not of our fellow-citizens alone, but of the nations of Europe, and of their rulers. While dwelling with pleasing satisfaction upon the superior excellence of our political institutions, let us not be unmindful that liberty is power, that the nation blessed with the largest portion of liberty, must in proportion to its numbers be the most powerful nation upon earth, and that the tenure of power by man is, in the moral purposes of his Creator, upon condition that it shall be exercised to ends of beneficence, to improve the condition of himself, and his fellow men. While foreign nations, less blessed with that freedom which is power than ourselves, are advancing with gigantic strides in the career of public improvement, were we to slumber in indolence, or fold our arms and proclaim to the world that we are palsied by the will of our constituents, would it not be to cast away the bounties of Providence and doom ourselves to perpetual inferiority? In the course of the year now drawing to its close, we have beheld, under the auspices, and at the expense of one State of this Union, a new university unfolding its portals to the sons of science, and holding up the torch of human improvement to eyes that seek the light.\* We have seen, under the persevering and enlightened enterprise of another State, the waters of our Western lakes mingle with those of the ocean. If undertakings like these have been accomplished in the compass of a few years, by the authority of single members of our confederacy, can we, the representative authorities of the whole Union, fall behind our fellow servants in the exercise of the trust committed to us for the benefit of our common sovereign, by the accomplishment of works important to the whole and to which neither the authority nor the resources of any one State can be adequate?

The disastrous career of many of the States, and the absolute inaction of others, since the responsibilities of internal improvement have been cast off by the

\* The University of Virginia.

federal authorities, and devolved upon the States, without other sources of revenue than direct taxation, and with no other motives to stimulate them than their own local interests, are a fitting commentary on the error of that departure from the policy of John Quincy Adams. If other comment were necessary, it would be found in the fact that States have revised and amended their constitutions, so as to abridge the power of their Legislatures to prosecute the beneficent enterprises which the Federal Government has devolved upon them. The Smithsonian Institute, at the seat of Government, founded by the liberality of a cosmopolite, is that same university so earnestly recommended by Adams for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men. The exploration of the globe, for purposes of geographical and political knowledge, which has so recently been made under the authority of the Union, and with such noble results, was an enterprize conceived and suggested by the same statesman. The National Observatory at the capital, which is piercing the regions nearest to the throne of the eternal Author of the universe, is an emanation of the same comprehensive wisdom.

Such was the administration of John Quincy Adams. Surely it exhibits enough done for duty and for fame—if the ancient philosopher said truly, that the duty of a statesman was to make the citizens happy, to make them firm in power, rich in wealth, splendid in glory,

and eminent in virtue, and that such achievements were the greatest and best of all works among men.

But the measure of duty was not yet fulfilled. The Republic thought it no longer had need of the services of Adams, and he bowed to its command. Two years elapsed, and lo! the priest was seen again beside the deserted altar, and a brighter, purer, and more lasting flame arose out of the extinguished embers.

“He looked in years. But in his years were seen  
A youthful vigor, an autumnal green.”

The Republic had been extended and consolidated; but human slavery, which had been incorporated in it, was extended and consolidated also, and was spreading, so as to impair the strength of the great fabric on which the hopes of the nations were suspended. Slavery therefore must be restrained, and, without violence or injustice, must be abolished. The difficult task of removing it had been postponed by the statesmen of the Revolution, and had been delayed and forgotten by their successors. There were now resolute hearts and willing hands to undertake it, but who was strong enough, and bold enough to lead? Who had patience to bear with enthusiasm that overleaped its mark, and with intolerance that defeated its own generous purposes? Slaveholders had power, nay, the national power; and strange to say, they had it with the nation's consent and sympathy. Who was bold enough to provoke them, and bring the execration of the nation

down upon his own head? Who would do this, when even abolitionists themselves, rendered implacable by the manifestation of those sentiments of justice and moderation, without which the most humane cause, depending on a change of public opinion, cannot be conducted safely to a prosperous end, were ready to betray their own champion into the hands of the avenger? That leader was found in the person of John Quincy Adams. He took his seat in the House of Representatives in 1831, without assumption or ostentation. Abolitionists placed in his hand petitions for the suppression of slavery in the District of Columbia, the seat of the federal authorities. He offered them to the House of Representatives, and they were rejected with contumely and scorn. Suddenly the alarm went forth, that the aged and venerable servant was retaliating upon his country by instigating a servile war, that such a war must be avoided, even at the cost of sacrificing the freedom of petition and the freedom of debate, and that if the free States would not consent to make that sacrifice, then the Union should be dissolved. This alarm had its desired effect. The House of Representatives, in 1837, adopted a rule of discipline, equivalent to an act, ordaining that no petition relating to slavery, nearly or remotely, should be read, debated or considered. The Senate adopted a like edict. The State authorities approved. Slavery was not less strongly entrenched behind the bulwark of precedents in the courts of law than in the fixed



habits of thought and action among the people. The people even in the free States denounced the discussion of slavery, and suppressed it by unlawful force. John Quincy Adams stood unmoved amid the storm. He knew that the only danger incident to political reform, was the danger of delaying it too long. The French Revolution had made this an axiom of political science. If, indeed, the discussion of slavery was so hazardous as was pretended, it had been deferred too long already. The advocates of slavery had committed a fatal error. They had abolished freedom of speech and freedom of petition to save an obnoxious institution. As soon as the panic should subside, the people would demand the restoration of those precious rights, and would scrutinize with fearless fidelity the cause for which they had been suppressed. He offered petition after petition, each bolder and more importunate than the last. He debated questions, kindred to those which were forbidden, with the firmness and fervor of his noble nature. For age

Had not quenched the open truth  
And fiery vehemence of youth.

Soon he gained upon his adversaries. District after district sent champions to his side. States reconsidered, and resolved in his behalf. He saw the tide was turning, and then struck one bold blow, not now for freedom of petition and debate, but a stroke of bold and retaliating warfare. He offered a resolution de-

claring that the following amendments of the constitution of the United States be submitted to the people of the several States for their adoption :

From and after the fourth day of July, 1842, there shall be, throughout the United States, NO HEREDITARY SLAVERY, but on and after that day every child born within the United States shall be FREE.

With the exception of the Territory of Florida, there shall, henceforth, never be admitted into this Union, any STATE the constitution of which shall tolerate within the same the existence of SLAVERY.

In 1845, the obnoxious rule of the House of Representatives was rescinded. The freedom of debate and petition was restored, and the unrestrained and irrepressible discussion of slavery by the press and political parties began. For the rest, the work of emancipation abides the action, whether it be slow or fast, of the moral sense of the American people. It depends not on the zeal and firmness only of the reformers, but on their wisdom and moderation also. Stoicism, that had no charity for error, never converted any human society to virtue; Christianity, that remembers the true nature of man, has encompassed a large portion of the globe. How long emancipation may be delayed, is among the things concealed from our knowledge, but not so the certain result. The perils of the enterprize are already passed—its difficulties have already been removed—when it shall have been accomplished it will be justly regarded as the last noble effort which rendered the Republic imperishable.

Then the merit of the great achievement will be awarded to John Quincy Adams; and by none more gratefully than by the communities on whom the institution of slavery has brought the calamity of premature and consumptive decline, in the midst of free, vigorous, and expanding States.

If this great transaction could be surpassed in dramatic sublimity, it was surpassed when the same impassioned advocate of humanity appeared, at the age of seventy-four, with all the glorious associations that now clustered upon him, at the bar of the Supreme Court of the United States, and pleaded, without solicitation or reward, the cause of Cinque and thirty other Africans, who had been stolen by a Spanish slaver from their native coast, had slain the master and crew of the pirate vessel, floated into the waters of the United States, and there been claimed by the President, in behalf of the authorities of Spain. He pleaded this great cause with such happy effect, that the captives were set at liberty. Conveyed by the charity of the humane to their native shores, they bore the pleasing intelligence to Africa, that justice was at last claiming its way among civilized and Christian men!

The recital of heroic actions loses its chief value, if we cannot discover the principles in which they were born. The text of John Quincy Adams, from which he deduced the duties of citizens, and of the republic, was the address of the Continental Congress to the people of the United States, on the occasion of the

successful close of the American Revolution. He dwelt often and emphatically on the words:

Let it be remembered, that it has ever been the pride and the boast of America, that the rights for which she contended were the rights of human nature. By the blessing of the Author of those rights, they have prevailed over all opposition, and form the basis of thirteen independent States. No instance has heretofore occurred, nor can any instance be expected hereafter to occur, in which the unadulterated forms of republican government can pretend to so fair an opportunity of justifying themselves by their fruits. In this view, the citizens of the United States are responsible for the greatest trust ever confided to a political society. If JUSTICE, GOOD FAITH, HONOR, GRATITUDE, and all the other qualities which ennoble the character of a nation and fulfil the ends of government, be the fruits of our establishments, the cause of liberty will acquire a dignity and lustre which it has never yet enjoyed, and an example will be set which cannot but have the most favorable influence on mankind. If, on the other side, our Governments should be unfortunately blotted with the reverse of these cardinal virtues, the great cause which we have engaged to vindicate will be dishonored and betrayed; the last and fairest experiment in favor of the rights of human nature will be turned against them, and their patrons and friends exposed to the insults, and silenced by the votaries of tyranny and usurpation.

Senators and Representatives of the People of the State of New York: I had turned my steps away from your honored halls, long since, as I thought forever. I come back to them by your command, to fulfil a higher duty and more honorable service than ever before devolved upon me. I repay your generous confidence, by offering to you this exposition of the duties of the magistrate and of the citizen. It is the same which John Quincy Adams gave to the Congress