

THE WORKS OF



JOHN ADAMS

VOL. 8: LETTERS AND
STATE PAPERS

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The Works of John Adams

Volume 8

JOHN ADAMS

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PUBLIC PAPERS. CONTINUED.

TO SECRETARY LIVINGSTON.

Paris, 8 November, 1782

Sir,—

In one of your letters you suppose, that I have an open, avowed contempt of all rank. Give me leave to say, you are much mistaken in my sentiments. There are times, and I have often seen such, when a man's duty to his country demands of him the sacrifice of his rank, as well as his fortune and life; but this must be an epoch, and for an object worthy of the sacrifice. In ordinary times, the same duty to his country obliges him to contend for his rank, as the only means indeed, sometimes, by which he can do service; and the sacrifice would injure his country more than himself. When the world see a man reduced to the necessity of giving up his rank, merely to serve the public, they will respect him, and his opinions will have the more weight for it; but when the same world see a man yield his rank for the sake of holding a place, he becomes ridiculous. This, you may depend upon it, will not be my case.

Ranks, titles, and etiquettes, and every species of punctilios, even down to the visits of cards, are of infinitely more importance in Europe than in America, and therefore congress cannot be too tender of disgracing their ministers abroad in any of these things, nor too determined not to disgrace themselves. Congress will, sooner or later, find it necessary to adjust the rank of all their servants, with relation to one another, as well as to the magistrates and officers of the separate governments.

For example, if, when congress abolished my commission to the King of Great Britain, and my commission for peace,

and issued a new commission for peace, in which they associated four other gentlemen with me, they had placed any other at the head of the commission, they would have thrown a disgrace and ridicule upon me in Europe, that I could not have withstood. It would have injured me in the minds of friends and enemies, the French and Dutch, as well as the English.

It is the same thing with States. If Mr. Jay and I had yielded the punctilio of rank, and taken the advice of the Count de Vergennes and Dr. Franklin, by treating with the English or Spaniards, before we were put upon the equal footing that our rank demanded, we should have sunk in the minds of the English, French, Spaniards, Dutch, and all the neutral powers. The Count de Vergennes certainly knows this; if he does not, he is not even a European statesman; if he does know it, what inference can we draw, but that he means to keep us down if he can; to keep his hand under our chin to prevent us from drowning, but not to lift our heads out of water?

The injunctions upon us to communicate, and to follow the advice that is given us, seem to be too strong and too universal. Understood with reasonable limitations and restrictions, they may do very well. For example, I wrote a speculation, and caused it to be printed in the *Courier du Bas Rhin*, showing the interest, policy, and humanity of the neutral confederation's acknowledging American independence, and admitting the United States to subscribe to the principles of their marine treaty. This was reprinted in the *Gazette of Leyden*, the *Politique Hollandais*, the *Courier de l'Europe*, and all the Dutch gazettes. At the same time I caused to be transmitted to England some pieces on the same subject, and further showing the probability that the neutral powers might adopt this measure, and the impolicy of Great Britain, in permitting all the powers of Europe to get the start of her, and having more merit with America than she, by

acknowledging her independence first. These pieces were printed in the English papers, in the form of letters to the Earl of Shelburne, and can never be controverted, because they are in writing and in print with their dates. These fears thus excited, added to our refusal to treat on an unequal footing, probably produced his lordship's resolution, to advise the King to issue the commission, under the great seal, to Mr. Oswald, by which Great Britain has got the start, and gone to the windward of the other European powers. No man living, but myself, knew that all these speculations, in various parts of Europe, came from me. Would it do for me to communicate all this to the French ministers? Is it possible for me to communicate all these things to congress? Believe me, it is not; and give me leave to say, it will not do to communicate them to my friend the Chevalier de la Luzerne, nor my friend M. Marbois. If they should be, long letters will lay all open to the Count de Vergennes, who, I assure you, I do not believe will assist me or anybody else in such measures of serving our country. When the French ministers in America or Europe communicate every thing to us, we may venture to be equally communicative with them. But when every thing is concealed from us more cautiously than it is from England, we shall do ourselves injustice if we are not upon our guard.

If we conduct ourselves with caution, prudence, moderation, and firmness, we shall succeed in every great point; but if congress or their ministers abroad suffer themselves to be intimidated by threats, slanders, or insinuations, we shall be duped out of the fishery, the Mississippi, much of the western lands, compensation to the tories, and Penobscot at least, if not Kennebec. This is my solemn opinion, and I will never be answerable to my country, posterity, or my own mind, for the consequences that might happen from concealing it.

It is for the determinate purpose of carrying these points, that one man, who is submission itself, is puffed up to the top of Jacob's ladder in the clouds, and every other man depressed to the bottom of it in the dust. This is my opinion. If it is a crime to hold this opinion, let me be punished for it, for assuredly I am guilty.

With great respect, &c.

John Adams.

TO SECRETARY LIVINGSTON.

Paris, 11 November, 1782

Sir,—

On my first arrival at Paris, I found my colleagues engaged in conferences with Mr. Oswald. They had been before chiefly conducted by Mr. Jay, Dr. Franklin having been mostly confined for three months by a long and painful illness. At this time, however, he was so much better, although still weak and lame, as to join us in most of the subsequent conferences, and we were so constantly engaged, forenoon, afternoon, and evening, that I had not been out to Versailles nor anywhere else.

On Saturday last, the Marquis de Lafayette called upon me, and told me he had been to Versailles, and the Count de Vergennes had said to him, that he had been informed by the returns of the police that I was in Paris, but not officially, and he should take it well if I would come to see him. I went out to dine with Dr. Franklin the same day, who had just returned from delivering his memorial, and repeated to me the same message. I said to both, I would go the next morning; and accordingly on Sunday, the 9th, I went to make my court to his Excellency.

He received me politely, and asked me questions about our progress. I answered him, that the English minister appeared to me to divide with us upon ostensible points; that I still doubted his intentions to make a universal

peace; that the cry of the nation was for something to be done or said with the American ministers, and to satisfy this, the King of Great Britain had been advised to be the third power in Europe to acknowledge our independence. As this was a royal act under the great seal of his kingdom, it could never be denied or revoked; but still it did not render the nation unanimous, and to avoid finally disgusting any great party, the minister would still pursue his usual studied obscurity of policy. Points must be conceded to the Americans, before a complete agreement could be made with them, even on terms to be inserted in the universal peace, which would open the full cry of a powerful party upon him, among which were the refugees. It could not be supposed, that the refugees and Penobscot were such points with the nation or minister, that they would continue the war for them only, if they were ready to strike with France, Spain, and Holland.

The Count then asked me some questions respecting Sagadahoc, which I answered by showing him the records which I had in my pocket, particularly that of Governor Pownall's solemn act of possession in 1759, the grants and settlements of Mount Desert, Machias, and all the other townships east of Penobscot River, the original grant of James I. to Sir William Alexander of Nova Scotia, in which it is bounded on St. Croix River (this grant I had in Latin, French, and English), the dissertations of Governor Shirley and Governor Hutchinson, and the authority of Governor Bernard, all showing the right of Massachusetts to this tract to be incontestable. I added, that I did not think any British minister would ever put his hand to a written claim of that tract of land, their own national acts were so numerous and so clear against them. The Count said, Mr. Fitzherbert had told him that it was for the masts that a point was made of that tract; but the Count said, Canada was an immense resource for masts. I said, there were so few masts there that this could not be the motive; that the

refugees were still at the bottom of this; several of them had pretensions to lands in Sagadahoc, and the rest hoped for grants there.

The Count said, it was not at all surprising that the British ministry should insist upon compensation to the tories, for that all the precedents were in their favor; in the case of the United Provinces with Spain, all were restored to their possessions; and that there never had been an example of such an affair terminated by treaty, but all were restored. He said it was a point well settled by precedents. I begged his Excellency's pardon for this, and thought there was no precedent in point. A restitution of an estate not alienated, although confiscated to a crown or state, could not be a precedent in point, because, in our case, these estates had not only been confiscated, but alienated by the state, so that it was no longer in the power of the state to restore them. And when you come to the question of compensation, there is every argument of national honor, dignity of the state, public and private justice and humanity, for us to insist upon a compensation for all the plate, negroes, rice, and tobacco stolen, and houses and substance consumed, as there is for them to demand compensation to the tories; and this was so much the stronger in our favor, as our sufferers were innocent people, and theirs guilty ones.

M. Rayneval, who was present, said something about the King and nation being bound to support their adherents. I answered, that I could not comprehend this doctrine. Here was a set of people whose bad faith and misrepresentations had deceived the King and deluded the nation to follow their all-devouring ambition, until they had totally failed of their object, had brought an indelible reproach on the British name, and almost irretrievable ruin on the nation, and yet that nation is bound to support their deceivers and ruiners! If the national honor was bound at all, it was bound still to follow their ambition, to conquer

America, and plant the refugees there in pomp and power, and in such case, we all know whose estates would be confiscated, and what compensation would be obtained. All this M. Rayneval said was very true.

The Count asked me to dine, which I accepted, and was treated with more attention and complaisance than ever, both by him and the Countess.

As it is our duty to penetrate, if we can, the motives and views of our allies, as well as our enemies, it is worth while for congress to consider what may be the true motives of these intimations in favor of the tories. History shows that nations have generally had as much difficulty to arrange their affairs with their allies as with their enemies. France has had as much, this war, with Spain as with England. Holland and England, whenever they have been allies, have always found many difficulties, and from the nature of things it must ever be an intricate task to reconcile the notions, prejudices, principles, &c., of two nations in one concert of counsels and operations.

We may well think, that the French would be very glad to have the Americans join with them in a future war. Suppose, for example, they should think the tories men of monarchical principles, or men of more ambition than principle, or men corrupted and of no principle, and should, therefore, think them more easily seduced to their purposes than virtuous republicans, is it not easy to see the policy of a French minister in wishing them amnesty and compensation? Suppose that a French minister foresees that the presence of the tories in America will keep up perpetually two parties, a French and an English party, and that this will compel the patriotic and independent men to join the French side, is it not natural for him to wish them restored? Is it not easy too to see that a French minister cannot wish to have the English and Americans perfectly agreed upon all points, before they themselves, the Spanish, and the Dutch, are agreed too? Can they be sorry

then to see us split upon such a point as the tories? What can be their motives to become the advocates of the tories? It seems the French minister at Philadelphia has made some representations to congress in favor of a compensation to the royalists, and that the Count de Vergennes's conversation with me was much in favor of it. The Count probably knows, that we are instructed against it, and that congress are instructed against it, or rather have not a constitutional authority to make it; that we can only write about it to congress, and they to the States, who may, and probably will, deliberate upon it a year or eighteen months before they all decide, and then every one of them will determine against it. In this way there is an insuperable obstacle to any agreement between the English and Americans, even upon terms to be inserted in the general peace, before all are ready, and indeed after. It has been upon former occasions the constant practice of the French to have some of their subjects in London, and the English some of theirs in Paris, during conferences for peace, in order to propagate such sentiments as they wished to prevail. I doubt not such are there now. M. Rayneval has certainly been there. It is reported, I know not how truly, that M. Gerard has been there, and probably others are there, who can easily prompt the tories to clamor, and to cry that the King's dignity and the nation's honor are compromised to support their demands.

America has been long enough involved in the wars of Europe. She has been a football between contending nations from the beginning, and it is easy to foresee, that France and England both will endeavor to involve us in their future wars. It is our interest and duty to avoid them as much as possible, and to be completely independent, and to have nothing to do with either of them, but in commerce. My poor thoughts and feeble efforts have been from the beginning constantly employed to arrange all our European connections to this end, and will continue to be

so employed, whether they succeed or not. My hopes of success are stronger now than they ever have been, because I find Mr. Jay precisely in the same sentiments, after all the observations and reflections he has made in Europe, and Dr. Franklin, at last, at least appears to coincide with us. We are all three perfectly united in the affair of the tories and of Sagadahoc, the only points in which the British minister pretends to differ from us.

The inclosed papers will show congress the substance of the negotiation. The treaty, as first projected between Mr. Oswald on one side, and Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jay on the other, before my arrival; the treaty as projected after my arrival, between Mr. Oswald and the three American ministers, my Lord Shelburne having disagreed to the first; Mr. Oswald's letter and our answer; Mr. Strachey's letter and our answer. Mr. Strachey has gone to London with the whole, and we are waiting his return, or the arrival of some other, with further instructions.

If congress should wish to know my conjecture, it is, that the ministry will still insist upon compensation to the tories, and thus involve the nation every month of the war in an expense sufficient to make a full compensation to all the tories in question. They would not do this, however, if they were ready with France and Spain. *Endnote 002*

I have the honor to be, &c.

John Adams.

HENRY LAURENS TO JOHN ADAMS.

London, 12 November, 1782

Dear Sir,—

An untoward circumstance had hurried me from Bath, where I had been about a month in the progress of health; I was waiting the determination of this Court, whether I might, upon terms consistent with my honor, return and continue in the same pursuit during the winter months, or

be obliged at all hazards to withdraw immediately from the kingdom. In this dilemma, I had this afternoon the honor of receiving your letter of the 6th instant, accompanied by an act of congress of the 17th September.

My country enjoins, and condescends to desire; I must, therefore, also, at all hazards to myself, obey and comply. Diffident as I am of my own abilities, I shall as speedily as possible proceed and join my colleagues.

For the rest, the wound is deep, but I apply to myself the consolation which I administered to the father of the brave Colonel Parker:—"Thank God, I had a son who dared to die in defence of his country."

My dear friend, adieu,
Henry Laurens.

TO SECRETARY LIVINGSTON.

Paris, 18 November, 1782

The instruction from congress, which directs us to pay so strict an attention to the French ministry, and to follow their advice, is conceived in terms so universal and unlimited, as to give a great deal of anxiety to my mind.

There is no man more impressed with the obligation of obedience to instructions; but, in ordinary cases, the principal is so near the deputy as to be able to attend to the whole progress of the business, and to be informed of every new fact and every sudden thought. Ambassadors in Europe can send expresses to their Courts, and give and receive intelligence in a few days with the utmost certainty. In such cases there is no room for mistake, misunderstanding, or surprise. But, in our case, it is very different. We are at an immense distance. Despatches are liable to foul play, and vessels are subject to accidents. New scenes open, the time presses, various nations are in suspense, and necessity forces us to act.

What can we do? If a French minister advises us to cede to the Spaniards the whole river of the Mississippi and five hundred miles of territory to the eastward of it, are we bound by our instruction to put our signature to the cession, when the English themselves are willing we should extend to the river, and enjoy our natural right to its navigation? If we should be counselled to relinquish our right to the fishery on the Grand Bank of Newfoundland, when the British ministry are ready by treaty to acknowledge our right to it, are we obliged to relinquish it? If we are advised to restore and compensate the tories, are we to comply? If we know, or have reason to believe, that things which will have weight upon the minds of the British ministry against us upon some points, will be communicated to them in some way or other, secret or open, if we communicate them to this Court, are we bound to do it?

I cannot think that a construction so literal and severe was ever intended to be put upon it; and, therefore, I see no way of doing my duty to congress, but to interpret the instruction, as we do all general precepts and maxims, by such restrictions and limitations, as reason, necessity, and the nature of things demand.

It may sometimes be known to a deputy, that an instruction from his principal was given upon information of mistaken facts. What is he to do? When he knows, that if the truth had been known, his principal would have given a directly contrary order, is he to follow that which issued upon mistake? When he knows, or has only good reason to believe, that, if his principal were on the spot, and fully informed of the present state of facts, he would give contrary directions, is he bound by such as were given before? It cannot be denied that instructions are binding, that it is a duty to obey them, and that a departure from them cannot be justified; but I think it cannot be denied, on the other hand, that, in our peculiar situation, cases may

happen, in which it might become our duty to depend upon being excused (or, if you will, pardoned) for presuming, that if congress were upon the spot, they would judge as we do.

I presume not to dictate, nor to advise, but I may venture to give my opinion, as I do freely, and with much real concern for the public, that it would be better, if every instruction in being were totally repealed, which enjoins upon any American minister to follow, or ask the advice, or even to communicate with any French or other minister or ambassador in the world. It is an inextricable embarrassment everywhere. Advice would not be more seldom asked, nor communication less frequent. It would be more freely given. A communication of information, or a request of counsel, would then be received as a compliment and a mark of respect; it is now considered as a duty and a right. Your ministers would have more weight, and be the more respected through the world. Congress cannot do too much to give weight to their own ministers, for, they may depend upon it, great and unjustifiable pains are taken to prevent them from acquiring reputation, and even to prevent an idea taking root in any part of Europe, that any thing has been or can be done by them. And there is nothing that humbles and depresses, nothing that shackles and confines, in short, nothing that renders totally useless all your ministers in Europe, so much as these positive instructions to consult and communicate with French ministers upon all occasions, and to follow their advice. And I really think it would be better to constitute the Count de Vergennes our sole minister, and give him full powers to make peace and treat with all Europe, than to continue any of us in the service under the instructions in being, if they are to be understood in that unlimited sense which some persons contend for.

I hope that nothing indecent has escaped me upon this occasion. If any expressions appear too strong, the great

importance of the subject, and the deep impression it has made on my mind and heart, must be my apology.

With great respect and esteem, &c.

John Adams.

TO MESSRS. WILLINK AND OTHERS.

Paris, 19 November, 1782

Gentlemen,—

Your favor of 15th instant is this moment come to hand. M. le Couteulx and Mr. Grand called upon me last evening upon the same subject. I told them both what I now repeat to you:—"That I have no right, power, or authority, whatsoever, to give any orders, directions, or advice in this matter, Mr. Morris alone having the authority of congress to dispose of the money. But if my opinion as a man and a private citizen would give them any satisfaction, it was that M. le Couteulx should draw upon you at present only for one million of florins, and leave the rest, after Mr. Grand shall have drawn out the four hundred thousand livres for the interest of the money borrowed by the King of France in Holland, to pay the drafts of Mr. Morris as they may arrive, or to be paid hereafter to M. le Couteulx or Mr. Grand, according as necessities may appear.

There was no copy of Mr. Morris's letter inclosed in yours to me. I should be glad if Mr. Dumas would hasten in all the accounts of repairs to the house, and let them be paid off.

I know not when the obstructions to trade will all be removed by a peace. But if the nations of the armed neutrality should all follow the example of the King of Great Britain, in acknowledging our independence, and protect their own ships in going and coming to and from our ports, I think the impediments to trade between Holland and America would be lessened.

I have the honor to be, &c.

John Adams.

TO SECRETARY LIVINGSTON.

Paris, 21 November, 1782

Sir,—

We live in critical moments. Parliament is to meet, and the King's speech will be delivered, on the 26th. If the speech announces Mr. Oswald's commission, and the two houses in their answers thank him for issuing it, and there should be no change in the ministry, the prospect of peace will be flattering. Or if there should be a change in the ministry, and the Duke of Portland, with Mr. Fox and Mr. Burke, should come in, it will be still more so. But if Richmond, Camden, Keppel, and Townshend, should retire, and my Lord North and company come in, with or without the Earl of Shelburne, the appearances of peace will be very unpromising. My Lord North, indeed, cannot revoke the acknowledgment of our independence, and would not probably renounce the negotiations for peace, but ill-will to us is so habitual to him and his master, that he would fall in earnestly with the wing-clipping system; join in attempts to deprive us of the fisheries and the Mississippi, and to fasten upon us the tories; and in every other measure to cramp, stint, impoverish, and enfeeble us. Shelburne is not so orthodox as he should be, but North is a much greater heretic in American politics.

It deserves much consideration what course we should take, in case the old ministry should come in, wholly, or in part. It is certain, at present, that to be obnoxious to the Americans and their ministers is a very formidable popular cry against any minister or candidate for the ministry in England, for the nation is more generally for recovering the good-will of the Americans than they ever have been. Nothing would strike such a blow to any ministry as to break off the negotiations for peace; if the old ministry

come in, they will demand terms of us at first, probably, that we can never agree to.

It is now eleven or twelve days since the last result of our conferences was laid before the ministry in London. Mr. Vaughan went off on Sunday noon, the 17th. So that he is, no doubt, before this time, with my Lord Shelburne. He is possessed of an ample budget of arguments to convince his Lordship that he ought to give up all the remaining points between us. *Endnote 003* Mr. Oswald's letters will suggest the same arguments in a different light, and Mr. Strachey, if he is disposed to do it, is able to enlarge upon them all in conversation.

The fundamental point of the sovereignty of the United States being settled in England, the only question now is, whether they shall pursue a contracted or a liberal, a good-natured or an ill-natured plan towards us. If they are generous, and allow us all we ask, it will be the better for them; if stingy, the worse. That France does not wish them to be very noble to us may be true. But we should be dupes indeed, if we did not make use of every argument with them, to show them that it is their interest to be so. And they will be the greatest bubbles of all, if they should suffer themselves to be deceived by their passions or by any arts to adopt an opposite tenor of conduct.

I have the honor to be, &c.

John Adams.

TO BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

Paris, 3 December, 1782

Sir,—

The moments we live in are critical, and may be improved perhaps to advantage; for which purpose I beg leave to propose to your consideration, whether it is not proper for us to write to Mr. Dana, at Petersburg, acquaint him with the signatures of the preliminaries, inclose to him an

authentic copy of them, and advise him to communicate it to the ministers of the Empress and to all the ministers of the neutral powers at her Court, together with a copy of his commission to subscribe to the principles of the armed neutrality. The present seems to me the most proper time for this step.

The United States are as much interested in the marine treaty as any power; and, if we take this step, we may with propriety propose, if not insist, upon an article in the definitive treaty, respecting this matter, which will be as agreeable to France and Spain as to the United Provinces.

I have heretofore mentioned to Mr. Jay a similar proposal; who approved, and I will propose it again to-day to him and Mr. Laurens. If you approve the measure, you will be so good as to order an authentic copy to be made of the preliminary treaty, that we may prepare a letter the first time we meet.

I have the honor to be, &c. &c.

John Adams.

TO SECRETARY LIVINGSTON.

Paris, 4 December, 1782

Sir,—

It is with much pleasure that I transmit you the preliminary treaty between the King of Great Britain and the United States of America. The Mississippi, the Western lands, Sagadahoc, and the fisheries are secured as well as we could, and I hope what is done for the refugees will be pardoned. *Endnote 004*

As the objects for which I ever consented to leave my family and country are thus far accomplished, I now beg leave to resign all my employments in Europe. They are soon enumerated,—the first is the commission to borrow money in Holland; and the second is my credence to their High Mightinesses. These two should be filled up

immediately; and as Mr. Laurens was originally designed to that country, and my mission there was merely owing to his misfortune, I hope that congress will send him a full power for that Court.

The commission for peace I hope will be fully executed before this reaches you. But, if it should not, as the terms are fixed, I should not choose to stay in Europe merely for the honor of affixing my signature to the definitive treaty, and I see no necessity of filling up my place; but if congress should think otherwise, I hope they will think Mr. Dana the best entitled to it.

With great esteem, I have the honor to be, &c.

John Adams.

TO FRANCIS DANA.

Paris, 6 December, 1783

Dear Sir,—

You may easily guess from your own feelings what mine may be in communicating to you the intelligence that the preliminary treaty, to be inserted in the definitive treaty, was signed the 30th November by the plenipotentiaries on each side. We have tolerable satisfaction in the Mississippi, the boundaries, and the fisheries, and I hope not much to regret with regard to the tories or any thing else.

Mr. F., Mr. J., and Mr. Laurens, as well as myself, are of opinion that this is the proper time for you to communicate to the ministry, where you are, your mission. But I believe we shall write you a joint letter upon this subject.

Meantime, I have the honor to be, &c.

John Adams.

THE COMMISSIONERS TO FRANCIS DANA.

Paris, 12 December, 1782

Sir,—

We have the honor to congratulate you on the signature of the preliminary treaty of peace between his Britannic Majesty and the United States of America, to be inserted in the definitive treaty when France and Britain shall have agreed upon their terms. The articles, of which we do ourselves the honor to inclose you a copy, were completed on the 30th of last month.

To us, at this distance, the present opportunity appears to be the most favorable for you to communicate your mission to the ministers of the Empress of Russia, and to the ministers of all the other neutral powers residing at her Court; and, if you have no objections, we presume you will wish to be furnished with the inclosed paper to communicate at the same time.

We heartily wish you success, and, if you should inform us of a fair prospect of it, we shall propose an article in the definitive treaty, to secure the freedom of navigation according to the principles of the late marine treaty of the neutral powers.

We have the honor to be, &c. &c.

John Adams.

B. Franklin.

**THE COMMISSIONERS TO SECRETARY
LIVINGSTON. *Endnote 005***

Paris, 14 December, 1782

Sir,—

We have the honor to congratulate congress on the signature of the preliminaries of a peace between the Crown of Great Britain and the United States of America, to be inserted in a definitive treaty so soon as the terms between the Crowns of France and Great Britain shall be agreed on. A copy of the articles is here inclosed, and we cannot but flatter ourselves that they will appear to congress, as they do to all of us, to be consistent with the

honor and interest of the United States, and we are persuaded congress would be more fully of that opinion, if they were apprised of all the circumstances and reasons which have influenced the negotiation. Although it is impossible for us to go into that detail, we think it necessary, nevertheless, to make a few remarks on such of the articles as appear most to require elucidation.

Remarks on Article 2d, relative to Boundaries.

The Court of Great Britain insisted on retaining all the territories comprehended within the Province of Quebec, by the act of parliament respecting it. They contended that Nova Scotia should extend to the River Kennebec; and they claimed not only all the lands in the western country and on the Mississippi, which were not expressly included in our charters and governments, but also such lands within them as remained ungranted by the King of Great Britain. It would be endless to enumerate all the discussions and arguments on the subject.

We knew this Court and Spain to be against our claims to the western country, and having no reason to think that lines more favorable could ever have been obtained, we finally agreed to those described in this article; indeed, they appear to leave us little to complain of, and not much to desire. Congress will observe, that although our northern line is in a certain part below the latitude of forty-five, yet in others it extends above it, divides the Lake Superior, and gives us access to its western and southern waters, from which a line in that latitude would have excluded us.

Remarks on Article 4th, respecting Creditors.

We had been informed that some of the States had confiscated British debts; but although each State has a right to bind its own citizens, yet, in our opinion, it appertains solely to congress, in whom exclusively are

vested the rights of making war and peace, to pass acts against the subjects of a power with which the confederacy may be at war. It therefore only remained for us to consider, whether this article is founded in justice and good policy.

In our opinion, no acts of government could dissolve the obligations of good faith resulting from lawful contracts between individuals of the two countries, prior to the war. We knew that some of the British creditors were making common cause with the refugees and other adversaries of our independence; besides, sacrificing private justice to reasons of state and political convenience, is always an odious measure; and the purity of our reputation in this respect, in all foreign commercial countries, is of infinitely more importance to us than all the sums in question. It may also be remarked, that American and British creditors are placed on an equal footing.

Remarks on Articles 5th and 6th, respecting Refugees.

These articles were among the first discussed and the last agreed to. And had not the conclusion of this business at the time of its date been particularly important to the British administration, the respect, which both in London and Versailles, is supposed to be due to the honor, dignity, and interest of royalty, would probably have forever prevented our bringing this article so near to the views of congress and the sovereign rights of the States as it now stands. When it is considered that it was utterly impossible to render this article perfectly consistent, both with American and British ideas of honor, we presume that the middle line adopted by this article, is as little unfavorable to the former as any that could in reason be expected.

As to the separate article, we beg leave to observe, that it was our policy to render the navigation of the River Mississippi so important to Britain as that their views might correspond with ours on that subject. Their possessing the country on the river north of the line from the Lake of the Woods affords a foundation for their claiming such navigation. And as the importance of West Florida to Britain was for the same reason rather to be strengthened than otherwise, we thought it advisable to allow them the extent contained in the separate article, especially as before the war it had been annexed by Britain to West Florida, and would operate as an additional inducement to their joining with us in agreeing that the navigation of the river should forever remain open to both. The map used in the course of our negotiations was Mitchell's.

As we had reason to imagine that the articles respecting the boundaries, the refugees, and fisheries, did not correspond with the policy of this Court, we did not communicate the preliminaries to the minister until after they were signed; (and not even then the separate article). We hope that these considerations will excuse our having so far deviated from the spirit of our instructions. The Count de Vergennes, on perusing the articles appeared surprised, (but not displeased), *Endnote 006* at their being so favorable to us.

We beg leave to add our advice, that copies be sent us of the accounts directed to be taken by the different States, of the unnecessary devastations and sufferings sustained by them from the enemy in the course of the war. Should they arrive before the signature of the definitive treaty, they might possibly answer very good purposes.

With great respect, we have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient and most humble servants,

John Adams.

B. Franklin.

John Jay.
Henry Laurens.

J. G. HOLTZHEY TO JOHN ADAMS.

Amsterdam, 23 Decembre, 1782

Monsieur,—

Je me trouve honoré de la vôtre du 2e du passé; sensible aux louanges que vous me faites de mon travail, ils m'ont engagé d'en faire une autre médaille, que je prends la liberté de vous envoyer ci-jointe, dans la ferme attente qu'elle ne vous fera pas moins de satisfaction que la précédente. Au reste, monsieur, comme né dans cette ville, dans laquelle demeurent tant de braves gens qui ont vivement désiré l'union de vos États avec les nôtres, j'ai été inspiré à la faire connoître par la postérité. *Endnote 007*

Au reste, monsieur, je recommande les médailles à votre bonté pour l'Amérique quand l'occasion se présentera, et je suis, &c. &c.

Jean George Holtzhey.

M. DUMAS TO JOHN ADAMS.

La Haie, 26 Decembre, 1782

Monsieur,—

Nos amis vous prient d'appuyer de tous vos bons offices possibles la négociation de messieurs les plénipotentiaires de cette république, surtout quant aux dédommagemens qu'ils demandent, ainsi que pour la liberté parfaite et illimitée de leur navigation; afin que ces messieurs aient lieu de faire mention dans leurs dépêches ici de ces bons offices, et que nos amis puissent s'en prévaloir non seulement pour confondre les Anglomanes, mais pour exalter à leurs peuples respectifs les effets de l'amitié fraternelle des Américains pour cette nation. Un petit mot de réponse là-dessus que je puisse leur répéter de la part

de votre excellence, leur fera grand plaisir. En attendant je suis chargé de vous présenter leurs respects.

M. Holtzhey m'a envoyé une seconde médaille pour vous, charmante. Je vous l'enverrai, monsieur, par première occasion. En attendant, voici sa lettre et description. L'emblème du coq m'a rappelé un trait, si je ne me trompe, des mémoires de Vargas. L'ambassadeur de France au concile de Trente parlant d'une manière qui déplaisait au ministre du pape, celui-ci l'interrompit en criant, Gallus cantat. L'ambassadeur, sans se déconcerter, répliqua, Utinam Petrus fleret.

Je suis, &c.

Dumas.

TO M. DUMAS.

Paris, 1 January, 1783

Dear Sir,—

Returning this evening from Versailles, where I had been to make the compliments of the season, I found your favors of the 26th and 27th of December. The letters inclosed shall be forwarded, as you desire.

The Dutch ministers here have no occasion for my assistance. Non tali auxilio, &c. I have the honor to be more particularly acquainted with M. Brantzen, who is certainly a very able man, and universally acknowledged to be so by all who know him. The arguments, which I know he has used with the British minister, are such as can never be answered, both upon the liberty of navigation, and the compensation for damages. He is an entire master of his subject, and has urged it with a degree of perspicuity and eloquence, that I know has much struck his antagonists.

Unnecessary, however, as any exertions of mine have been, I have not omitted any opportunity of throwing in any friendly suggestions in my power, where there was a possibility of doing any good to our good friends, the

Dutch. I have made such suggestions to Mr. Fitzherbert. But with Mr. Oswald I have had several very serious conversations upon the subject. So I have also with Mr. Vaughan and Mr. Whitefoord. To Mr. Oswald I urged the necessity of Great Britain's agreeing with the Dutch upon the unlimited freedom of navigation, from a variety of topics, some of which I may explain to you more particularly hereafter. Thus much I may say at present, that I told him it was impossible for Great Britain to avoid it; it would probably be insisted upon by all the other powers. France and Spain, as well as Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, the Emperor, and Portugal, as well as Holland, had already signed the armed neutrality. The United States of America had declared themselves ready to sign, and were ready. The combination being thus powerful, Great Britain could not resist it. But if she should refuse to agree to it with Holland, and the other powers should acquiesce, and Holland should make peace without it (which would never, however, be the case), yet all would be ineffectual, for Holland would forever be able to make use of other neutral bottoms, and would thus enjoy the benefit of this liberty in reality, though denied it by treaty, and in appearance. It would, therefore, be more for the honor and interest of Great Britain to agree to it with a good grace, in the treaty with Holland. Nay, the wisest part she could act would be to set on foot a negotiation immediately for signing herself the treaty of armed neutrality, and then admitting it into the treaty with Holland would be a thing of course. At one of these conversations Dr. Franklin was present, who supported me with all his weight; at another, Mr. Jay seconded me with all his abilities and ingenuity. Mr. Oswald has several times assured me that he had written these arguments and his own opinion in conformity with them, to the King's ministers in London, and I doubt not they will be adopted.

With respect to the compensation for damages, it is impossible to add any thing to the arguments M. Brantzen has urged to show the justice of it; and if Britain is really wise, she will think it her policy to do every thing in her power to soften the resentment of the Dutch, and regain their good will and good humor.

The rage of Great Britain, however, has carried her to such extravagant lengths, in a cause unjust from beginning to end, that she is scarcely able to repair the injuries she has done. America has a just claim to compensation for all her burnt towns and plundered property, and, indeed, for all her slaughtered sons, if that were possible. I shall continue to embrace every opportunity that presents, of doing all the little service in my power to our good friends the Dutch, whose friendship for us I shall not soon forget. This must be communicated with great discretion, if at all.

My best respects to all, &c.

John Adams.

TO J. G. HOLTZHEY.

Paris, 2 January, 1783

Sir,—

I have received the letter which you did me the honor to write me on the 23d December, together with the explication of your new medal, in commemoration of the signature of the treaty of commerce, which is equally ingenious with that which celebrates the acknowledgment of American independence. These events are worthy of your ingenuity, sir, and deserve to be remembered by posterity, not only for the blessings which will be derived to the two nations, but by the influence they have had in accelerating the disposition of Great Britain for a general peace. For whether such a peace shall take place this year or not, there is great reason to believe it will happen some

years the sooner for those events which you are laboring to immortalize.

Please to accept of my thanks for this fresh instance of your obliging attention to me, and believe me to be,

With great respect, &c.

John Adams.

M. DUMAS TO JOHN ADAMS.

La Haie, 14 Janvier, 1783

Monsieur,—

L'incluse pour Philadelphie vous mettra au fait du courant ici. L'honorée vôtre du 1er Janvier est pour moi une vraie et précieuse étrenne de nouvel an. J'ai fait confidence verbale du contenu à Messieurs de Gyselaer, Van Berckel, et Visscher sous le sceau du secret, et à personne autre. Ils en ont été charmés. Du reste, ils étoient bien sûrs d'avance de vos bonnes dispositions, et de celles de messieurs vos collègues, pour cette république. Ce qui leur tient à cœur, c'est que, comme M. Brantzen écrit constamment dans ses dépêches ici, de la part de M. le Comte de Vergennes, le soin qu'il a des intérêts de la république, vous l'autorisassiez de même ministériellement à apprendre à L. H. P. que vous les avez également à cœur. Ces messieurs ici s'appliquent à cet égard le vers de l'école.

"Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter."

En un mot, ils souhaiteroient que les dites dépêches rendissent ici la justice qui est due à chacun.

M. de Gyselaer a écrit à M. Brantzen pour qu'il pressât de sa part M. le Baron de Linden (ci-devant envoyé de la république en Suede) de revenir au plutôt de Paris où il est depuis quelques mois. Mais il n'a pas fait ouverture à M. Brantzen de son plan, parcequ'il ne voudroit pas que celui-ci en communiquât quelque chose prématurément à quelque relation en ce pays. M. G. vous prie donc,

monsieur, d'avoir un entretien avec M. de Linden, et de lui confier de sa part, sous le secret, que son plan est de faire en sorte que M. de Linden soit nommé ministre de cette république auprès des États Unis; et que, pour cet effet, il faut qu'il revienne incessamment ici, pour battre ensemble le fer pendant qu'il est chaud. M. Van Berckel de son côté n'a rien contre ce plan.

La poste, qui va partir, ne me laisse que le moment de finir, avec mon respectueux attachement, &c.

Dumas.

TO M. DUMAS.

Paris, 19 January, 1783

Sir,—

I have yet to acknowledge the receipt of your favors of the 26th, 27th, 30th, and 31st of December, and 2d of January. Your despatches are sent along as you desire. I hope you are quite recovered from your indisposition.

I can give you no information concerning peace. It is given out that the point will be decided here to-day or to-morrow. Others say that the Duke de la Vauguyon is to make the peace at the Hague.

Inclosed is a copy of our preliminaries, but I must entreat you not to permit them to be published or copied without further information from me. You may communicate them in confidence to our friends, but it is thought best to let the British ministry lay them first before parliament and take their own time for it.

The great points of independence, the fisheries, the Mississippi, and the boundaries, are settled to our satisfaction. But in point of compensation for damages, we must put our hands in our own pockets.

With great regard, &c.

John Adams.

TO SECRETARY LIVINGSTON.