

THE WORKS OF



JOHN ADAMS

VOL. 7: LETTERS AND
STATE PAPERS

1777 - 1782

The Works of John Adams

Volume 7

JOHN ADAMS

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CONTENTS:

Contents:

Official Letters, Messages, And Public Papers.

Introductory Note.

Public Papers.

Twenty-Six Letters Upon Interesting Subjects Respecting
The Revolution Of America, Written In Holland, In The
Year Mdcclxxx

Appendix.

Endnotes:

**OFFICIAL LETTERS, MESSAGES, AND PUBLIC
PAPERS.**

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The official papers of Mr. Adams are so voluminous as altogether to forbid the idea of embracing the whole within the limits of the present work. At the outset, it was supposed that the fact of the publication by government of a large portion of them, in a permanent form, would render the work of reproduction to any great extent superfluous. But a close investigation showed that a selection was absolutely necessary, in order to do justice to the career of the writer as a statesman. Ten critical years in the foreign relations of the country, in the course of which its position as an independent state was first recognized in Europe, could not but produce memorials essential to the history of those who acted any part in the scene. To Mr. Adams these are most important, as developing the substantial unity of his system of policy, from first to last, a feature which has not been hitherto pointed out so clearly as justice to him would seem to demand.

The necessity of making a selection from these papers having for this reason been assumed, the next thing was to look for some principle of publication adapted to answer the purpose intended. After due reflection, it was, first of all, thought best to place the selected letters by themselves, not even connecting with them any private correspondence of the same date, that might lay open the secret springs of the movements described. This will find its proper place in the general collection relating to public events, which immediately follows these official papers. By the arrangement, in chronological series, reference can be made at pleasure by the curious reader to any period of time, without incurring the hazard of breaking the continuous record of the author's public action. Secondly, the rule of publication was made to apply, first, to the magnitude of the events described; next, to the manner in which they are treated; thirdly, to the influence exercised upon them, directly or incidentally, by the writer; lastly, to

the effect upon his own position. To one or other of these reasons the presence of each of the papers contained in this part of the work must be referred.

Many letters have been admitted, signed by the members of the Commission to France; none, however, which are not believed to have been drawn up by Mr. Adams, and which do not tend to show the place occupied by him in that unfortunate association, and the efforts which he made to change its character, or to effect its dissolution. This portion of the collection is a mere continuation of the series in the Diary, and derives much light from the explanations therein given.

The public letters of distinguished persons which either occasioned, or are in reply to, those of Mr. Adams, are furnished in all cases where they are deemed necessary to promote the end designed. Many of them have never been published before. Some, though printed in other forms, are not found in the great repository of these papers,—the Diplomatic Correspondence of the Revolution,—a valuable work, but unfortunately disfigured by numerous typographical errors, especially in proper names, and wanting in that most indispensable part to every useful publication of an extended and complex nature, a thorough index.

The letters of Mr. Adams, when drawn from his copy books, will, in many cases, be found to vary more or less from the ultimate forms as they may yet exist elsewhere. This is to be ascribed to the fact, that the former were often in the nature of rough drafts, altered or improved, when transcribed to be sent away, and not to any design of the editor. He ventures upon no liberties with the text, excepting such as are requisite to correct obvious errors of haste, or marked imperfections of language.

Many letters from French and other correspondents will be found in the language in which they were written. This has been thought better than to take the responsibility of

translating them. Variations of phrase, which in themselves appear trifling, do yet, in many cases, materially change the character of a style. And that is the particular which, in official papers, it seems most important to preserve intact. Neither is it presumed, that the occasional introduction of a language so generally made part of the system of education in America, as the French, can present such an obstacle to the understanding of the text as may not readily be surmounted.

In the year 1809, a series of papers was addressed by Mr. Adams to the publishers of the Boston Patriot, embracing extracts from many of his letters which had not at that time been published in any form, and such comments and elucidations as he deemed expedient to add, in order to explain his public course. These papers were afterwards collected and published in Boston, in a volume entitled Correspondence of the late President Adams. Recourse has been freely had to this volume, wherever it furnishes the materials for illustrating the same letters as now presented in a more extended form, and with a better chronological arrangement than was in that case practicable.

PUBLIC PAPERS.

THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS TO JOHN ADAMS.

Yorktown, Pennsylvania,
28 November, 1777

Sir,—

I have the honor of conveying under this cover, an extract *Endnote 002* from the minutes of congress of the present date, which certifies your election to be a commissioner at the Court of France. Had congress given direction, or if I were acquainted with precedents, a commission should have accompanied this notification. In the mean time, permit me, sir, to congratulate with the friends of America upon this judicious appointment, and to wish you every kind of success and happiness.

I have the honor to be, with very great respect and esteem, sir,

Your humble servant,

Henry Laurens, President of Congress.

THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS TO JOHN ADAMS.

Yorktown,
3 December, 1777

Sir,—

The 28th ultimo I had the honor of writing to you by the messenger, Frederick Weare, and of transmitting a vote of congress by which you are appointed a commissioner at the Court of France. Inclosed under this cover you will find a commission executed agreeable to the order of congress.

You have no doubt heard, or will hear before this can reach you, of the little affair which happened last week in Jersey,—the attack by the Marquis de la Fayette, at the head of about four hundred militia and a detachment from Morgan's rifles, on a piquet of three hundred Hessians twice reinforced by British,—in which our troops were successful, killed about twenty, wounded more, took fourteen prisoners, and chased the enemy about half a mile. We learned that General Greene, under whom the Marquis had acted, had been recalled from Jersey, but it is probable, from an account received this morning in a private letter from Major Clarke, something more must have been done before he recrossed Delaware.

The Major writes that, from different and corroborating accounts, Lord Cornwallis was killed or wounded; that, in an attack made at Gloucester, the enemy were beaten, left thirty dead on the field, &c., crossed the water, after having set fire to that pretty little town, by which the whole was consumed; *Endnote 003* that the English officers, greatly enraged against the French nation, openly declare they would gladly forgive America for the exchange of drubbing the French; that General Howe had billeted his soldiers on the inhabitants of Philadelphia, two in each house, and had taken many of their blankets for the use of his light horse, which had occasioned universal discontent and murmuring among the citizens; that a ship and brig, richly laden, attempting to come up the river, had been lost among the chevaux de frise.

I beg, Sir, you will do me the favor to present my respectful compliments to Mr. S. Adams, and to accept the repeated good wishes of, Sir,

Your most obedient and most humble servant,
Henry Laurens, President of Congress.

THE COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO JOHN ADAMS.

York, in Pennsylvania,
3 December, 1777

Dear Sir,—

With great pleasure to ourselves we discharge our duty, by inclosing to you your commission for representing these United States at the Court of France. We are by no means willing to admit a thought of your declining this important service, and, therefore, we send duplicates of the commission, and the late resolves, in order that you may take one set with you, and send the other by another vessel.

These are important papers, and, therefore, we wish they may be put into the hands of a particular and careful person, with directions to deliver them himself into the hands of the commissioners. Mr. Hancock, before he left this place, said that he intended to send a gentleman to France on some particular business. Cannot we prevail to get this gentleman to undertake the delivery of our packet to the commissioners, they paying the expense of travel to Paris and back again to his place of business?

It is unnecessary to mention the propriety of directing these despatches to be bagged with weight proper for sinking them, on any immediate prospect of their otherwise falling into the enemy's hands.

We sincerely wish you a quick and pleasant voyage, being truly your affectionate friends,

R. H. Lee.

TO HENRY LAURENS, PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

Braintree,
23 December, 1777

Sir,—

Having been absent on a journey, I had not the honor of receiving your letters until yesterday, when one, of the 28th of November inclosing a resolution of congress of the same day, and another of the 3d of December, inclosing a commission for Dr. Franklin, Dr. Lee, and myself, to represent the United States at the Court of France, were delivered to me in Boston.

As I am deeply penetrated with a sense of the high honor which has been done me in this appointment, I cannot but wish I were better qualified for the important trust; but as congress are perfectly acquainted with all my deficiencies, I conclude it is their determination to make the necessary allowances; in the humble hope of which, I shall submit my own judgment to theirs, and devote all the faculties I have, and all that I can acquire, to their service.

You will be pleased to accept of my sincere thanks, for the polite manner in which you have communicated to me the commands of congress, and believe me to be, with the most perfect respect and esteem, &c.

John Adams.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

Braintree,
24 December, 1777

Gentlemen,—

Having been absent from this State, I had not the honor of your favor of December 3d, until the 22d, when it was delivered to me with its inclosures, namely,—a letter from the President to the Navy Board at Boston, and a private letter of December 8th, from Mr. Lovell. At the same time, I received a packet directed to Benjamin Franklin, Arthur

Lee, and John Adams, Commissioners of the United States of America, in France, under seal. I also received a packet unsealed, containing,—

1. Copy of a letter dated the 2d of December, from the Committee of Foreign Affairs to the Commissioners. *Endnote 004*

2. A duplicate of a commission of the 27th of November, to the Commissioners.

3. A duplicate of a resolve of December 3d; duplicates of resolves of November 20th and 21st, and duplicates of resolves of November 10th and 22d.

4. Two letters unsealed, to Silas Deane, Paris.

5. Two printed handbills,—one containing messages, &c., between the Generals Burgoyne and Gates; the other, a copy of a letter, &c., from Mr. Strickland. The packet under seal, I shall do myself the honor to forward by the first conveyance, and the other shall be conveyed, God willing, with my own hand.

I have the honor to be, with the greatest esteem, &c.

John Adams.

BARON DE KALB TO JOHN ADAMS.

At Valley Forge Camp,
27 December, 1777

Sir,—

As you are going to France in a public character from the United States, will you give me leave to present you a letter of introduction for M. le Comte de Broglie, one for M. Moreau, the first Secretary to Count de Vergennes, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, and two for my lady, who will be glad to see you, and to get news from me by your means?

I wish you a good passage, a safe arrival, health and success in all your enterprises, no one being with more

regard and esteem, sir,
Your most obedient and very humble servant,
Baron de Kalb.

(Inclosed with the foregoing.)
BARON DE KALB TO THE COMTE DE BROGLIE.

Au Camp de Valley Forge, le
27 Décembre, 1777

Monsieur le Comte,—

Vous prenez tant d'intérêt au succès de la cause Américaine, que je vais oser vous recommander M. John Adams, l'un des membres du congrès, qui va en France, pour y traiter à la cour les affaires de Politique comme M. Deane y sera chargé des affaires de Commerce. M. Adams est un homme de mérite, généralement estimé dans ce pays ci, et auquel nous avons, M. Delessert de Valfort et moi, quelque obligation relativement à nos bagages. Votre crédit lui seroit d'une grande utilité, si vous vouliez daigner le lui accorder. J'ai eu l'honneur de vous écrire une longue lettre il y a deux jours, j'espère qu'elle vous parviendra. La poste pour Boston me presse, sans quoi j'eus aussi joint ici une copie. Je suis avec le plus respectueux dévouement, &c.

Le Baron de Kalb.

BARON DE KALB TO M. MOREAU.

Au Camp de l'Armée Américaine, le
27 Décembre, 1777

L'amitié dont vous m'avez toujours honoré, Monsieur, me fait prendre la liberté de vous recommander M. John Adams, l'un des membres du congrès, qui est chargé de Commission pour la France. Comme il aura certainement

des demandes à faire à M. le Comte de Vergennes, et des affaires à traiter dans votre département, je vous supplie de lui accorder vos bons offices, persuadé que tout ce que le roi accordera aux États Unis de l'Amérique ne peut tendre qu'au bien et à l'avantage de son royaume.

Je serai fort aise de pouvoir vous être utile dans ce pays ci pendant le séjour que j'y ferai, ainsi que d'y exécuter les ordres de M. le Comte de Vergennes, s'il en avoit à me donner.

J'ai l'honneur d'être, avec le plus parfait et le plus sincère attachement, Monsieur, &c. &c.

Le Baron de Kalb,
Major-Général de l'Armée Américaine.

THE MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE TO JOHN ADAMS.

Head Quarters,
9 January, 1778

Sir,—

As General Knox will have the pleasure to see you before your going to France, I take the liberty of intrusting him with the inclosed letter for you, which you will find very importune, *Endnote 005* but I hope you will excuse, on account of my being very desirous to let my friends hear from me by every opportunity. Such a distance, so many enemies are between me and every relation, every acquaintance of mine, that I will not reproach myself with any neglect in my entertaining with them the best correspondence I can. However, to avoid troubling you with too large a parcel of letters, I will send my despatches by two ways, as one other occasion is offered to me in this very moment. I must beg your pardon, sir, for making myself free enough to recommend you to some friends of mine in France; but as I do not believe you have many acquaintances in that

country, I thought it would not be disagreeable to you, if I would desire Madame de la Fayette and the Prince de Poix to whom I write to introduce you to some of my other friends. Before indulging myself in that liberty, I asked the General Knox's opinion, who told me that he did not find any thing amiss in it, although I had not the honor of your particular acquaintance.

I told General Knox some particular advices which I believed not to be disagreeable to you. I hope you will hear good news from here, and send very good ones from there. Such is the desire of a friend to your country and the noble cause we are fighting for. I wish you a pleasant and safe voyage, and with the highest esteem and greatest affection for a man to whom the hearts of every lover of liberty will be indebted forever, I have the honor to be, sir,

Your most obedient servant,
The Marquis de la Fayette.

THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS TO JOHN ADAMS.

Yorktown,
22 January, 1778

Sir,—

On the 19th instant I had the honor of receiving and presenting to congress, your favor of the 23d ultimo, the contents of which afforded great satisfaction to the house. It is now the wish of every friend to American independence to learn speedily of your safe arrival at the Court of Versailles, where your sagacity, vigilance, integrity, and knowledge of American affairs, are extremely wanted for promoting the interest of these infant States. You are so well acquainted with our present representation in that part of Europe, and with the delays and misfortunes under which we have suffered, as renders it unnecessary to attempt particular intimations.

Inclosed you will find an act of the 8th instant for suspending the embarkation of General Burgoyne and his troops. Mr. Lovell has very fully advised you on that subject by the present opportunity; permit me to add, that I have it exceedingly at heart, from a persuasion of the rectitude and justifiableness of the measures, to be in the van of the British ministry and their emissaries at every court of Europe.

Baron Holzendorff presents his best compliments, and requests your care of the inclosed letter, directed to his lady. If I can possibly redeem time enough for writing to my family and friends in England, I will take the liberty by the next messenger to trouble you with a small packet; hitherto, all private considerations have been overruled by a constant attention to business of more importance; I mean since the first of November.

I have the honor to be, with great regard and esteem, sir,
Your most obedient and most humble servant,
Henry Laurens, President of Congress.

TO THE MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE.

Braintree,
3 February, 1778

Sir,—

I had yesterday the honor of receiving from the hand of my worthy friend, General Knox, your kind letter to me, together with five others, which, with submission to the fortune of war, shall be conveyed and delivered as you desire. I am happy in this opportunity to convey intelligence from you to your friends, and think myself greatly honored and obliged by your politeness and attention to me; a favor which makes me regret the more my misfortune, in not having had the honor heretofore of a more particular acquaintance with a nobleman who has

endeared his name and character to every honest American and every sensible friend of mankind, by his efforts in favor of the rights of both, as unexampled as they were generous. I thank you, sir, for the kind advice communicated by General Knox, *Endnote 006* to which I shall carefully and constantly attend. Shall at all times be happy to hear of your welfare, and to have an opportunity of rendering you any service in my power.

I have the honor to be,
With the greatest respect and esteem, sir,
Your most obedient and obliged humble servant,
John Adams.

THE COMMISSIONERS TO M. DE SARTINE. *Endnote 007*

Passy,
14 May, 1778

Sir,—

In the several cruises made by Captains Wickes, Johnston, Cunningham, and others of our armed vessels, on the coast of Great Britain, it is computed that between four and five hundred prisoners have been made and set at liberty, either on their landing in France, or at sea, because it was understood that we could not keep them confined in France. When Captain Wickes brought in at one time near a hundred, we proposed to Lord Stormont an exchange for as many of ours confined in England; but all treaty on the subject was rudely refused, and our people are still detained there, notwithstanding the liberal discharges made of theirs, as above-mentioned. We hear that Captain Jones has now brought into Brest near two hundred, whom we should be glad to exchange for our seamen, who might be of use in expeditions from hence; but as an opinion

prevails, that prisoners of a nation with which France is not at war, and brought into France by another power, cannot be retained by the captors, but are free as soon as they arrive, we are apprehensive that these prisoners may also be set at liberty, return to England, and serve to man a frigate against us, while our brave seamen, with a number of our friends of this nation, whom we are anxious to set free, continue useless and languishing in their jails.

In a treatise of one of your law writers, entitled *Traité des Prises qui se font sur Mer*, printed 1763, we find the above opinion controverted, p. 129, § 30, in the following words:—"Hence it seems that it is not true, as some pretend, that from the time a prisoner escapes, or otherwise reaches the shore of a neutral power, he is absolutely free. It is true, he cannot be retaken without the consent of that power, but such a power would violate the laws of neutrality if it should refuse its consent. This is a consequence of the asylum of the ship in which the prisoner or hostage was contained."

We know not of what authority this writer may be, and, therefore, pray a moment of your Excellency's attention to this matter, requesting your advice upon it, that, if it be possible, some means may be devised to retain these prisoners, till as many of ours can be obtained in exchange for them.

We have the honor to be, &c.

B. Franklin,
Arthur Lee,
John Adams.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF COMMERCE.

Passy,
24 May, 1778

Gentlemen,—

I find that the American affairs on this side of the Atlantic are in a state of disorder, very much resembling that which is so much to be regretted on the other, and arising, as I suppose, from the same general causes, the novelty of the scenes, the inexperience of the actors, and the rapidity with which great events have succeeded each other. Our resources are very inadequate to the demands made upon us, which are perhaps unnecessarily increased by several irregularities of proceeding.

We have in some places two or three persons, who claim the character of American agent, agent for commercial affairs, and continental agent, for they are called by all these different appellations. In one quarter, one gentleman claims the character from the appointment of Mr. William Lee; another claims it from the appointment of the Commissioners at Passy; and a third from the appointment of the Commercial Committee of Congress. This introduces a triple expense, and much confusion and delay. These evils have been accidental, I believe, and unavoidable, but they are evils still, and ought to be removed.

One person at Bordeaux, another at Nantes, and a third perhaps at Havre de Grace or Dunkirk, would be amply sufficient for all public purposes, and to these persons all orders from congress, or the commercial committee, or the commissioners at Paris, ought to be addressed. To the same persons all public ships of war, and all other ships belonging to the United States, and their prizes, ought to be addressed; and all orders for the supplies of provisions, clothing, repairs of vessels, &c., as well as all orders for shipping of merchandises, or warlike stores for the United States, ought to go through their hands. We have such abuses and irregularities every day occurring as are very alarming. Agents of various sorts are drawing bills upon us, and the commanders of vessels of war are drawing upon us for expenses and supplies which we never ordered, so that

our resources will soon fail, if a speedy stop is not put to this career.

And we find it so difficult to obtain accounts from agents of the expenditure of moneys, and of the goods and merchandises shipped by them, that we can never know either the true state of our finances, or when and in what degree we have executed the orders of congress for sending them arms, clothes, medicines, or other things.

In order to correct some of these abuses, and to bring our affairs into a little better order, I have constantly given my voice against paying for things we never ordered, against paying persons who have never been authorized, and against throwing our affairs into a multiplicity of hands in the same place. But the consequence has been so many refusals of demands and requests, that I expect much discontent will arise from it, and many clamors. Whether the appointment by congress of one or more consuls for this kingdom would remedy these inconveniences, I must submit to their wisdom.

I have the honor to be, &c.

John Adams.

M. DE SARTINE TO THE COMMISSIONERS.

Marly, le

6 Juin, 1778

Je suis informé, Messieurs, que le sieur Bersolle, après avoir fait des avances assez considérables au Capitaine Jones, commandant la frégate des États Unis de l'Amérique, le Ranger, s'est fait donner par ce capitaine une lettre de change dont vous avez refusé de faire acquitter le montant. Comme le Sieur Bersolle se trouve par là dans l'embarras, et que vous sentirez sans doute qu'il est intéressant pour la conservation de votre crédit qu'il en soit tiré promptement, je suis persuadé que vous ne

différererez pas de faire payer non seulement la lettre de change dont il s'agit, mais encore ce qui est dû par le Capitaine Jones, à la caisse de la marine à Brest, tant pour les effets qui lui ont été délivrés des magasins du roi, que pour sa subsistance personnelle et celle de son équipage. Sur ce qu'il a représenté que les gens de son équipage avoient pillé du navire, le Chatham, beaucoup d'effets, dont une partie, consistant en argenterie, avoit été vendue à un Juif, il a été pris des informations au moyen desquelles l'argenterie et d'autres effets ont été retrouvés; mais le tout a été en dépôt pour y rester, jusqu'à ce que le capitaine soit en état de rembourser ce qui a été payé pour ces effets.

Je pense, au surplus, qu'il est à propos que vous soyez informés que ce capitaine, qui s'est brouillé avec son état major et avec tout son équipage, a fait mettre en prison le Sieur Simpson, son second. Vous jugerez, peut-être, à propos de vous procurer les éclaircissemens nécessaires pour savoir si ce principal officier s'est mis dans le cas de subir une pareille punition.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec la plus parfaite considération, messieurs, votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,
De Sartine.

THE COMMISSIONERS TO M. DE SARTINE.

Passy,
15 June, 1778

Sir,—

We beg leave to inform your Excellency, in answer to the complaint of M. Bersolle, that he had formerly taken the liberty himself to draw on our banker for advances made to Captain Jones before his last cruise, and was much displeased that his draught was refused payment. We acquainted him then with the reason of this refusal, namely,

—that he had sent us no accounts of his disbursements or advances, by which we might judge whether his draft was well founded; and he had never any permission to draw on our banker. However, afterwards, when we had seen his accounts, payment was made to him.

In the present case, it is said, he has advanced to Captain Jones a thousand louis, immediately on his arrival, for which the Captain has drawn on us in M. Bersolle's favor. But as Captain Jones had not previously satisfied us of the necessity for this advance, nor had our permission for the draft, his bill was also refused payment. And as Captain Jones writes us, that, upon the news of our refusal, he was reduced to necessity, not knowing where to get victuals for his people, we conclude that the advance was not actually made, as it is impossible he should, in so short a time, have spent so large a sum. And we think it extremely irregular in merchants to draw bills before they send their accounts, and in captains of ships of war to draw for any sums they please without previous notice and express permission. And our captains have the less excuse for it, as we have ever been ready to furnish them with all the necessaries they desired, and Captain Jones in particular has had of us near a hundred thousand livres for such purposes, of which twelve thousand was to be distributed among his people to relieve their necessities, the only purpose mentioned to us for which this draft was made, and which we thought sufficient. If this liberty assumed of drawing on us, without our knowledge or consent, is not checked, and we are obliged to pay such drafts, it will be impossible for us to regulate our own contracts and engagements so as to fulfil them with punctuality, and we might in a little time become bankrupts ourselves. If, therefore, M. Bersolle has brought himself into any embarrassment, it is not our fault, but his. We are ready to discharge all debts we contract; but we must not permit other people to run us in debt without our

leave; and we do not conceive it can hurt our credit if we refuse payment of such debts.

Whatever is due for necessaries furnished to Captain Jones by the Caisse de la Marine, at Brest, either from the magazine, or for the subsistence of his people, we shall also readily and thankfully pay as soon as we have seen and approve of the accounts; but we conceive that, regularly, the communication of accounts should always precede demands of payment.

We are much obliged by the care that has been taken to recover the goods pillaged from the Chatham, and we think the charges that have arisen in that transaction ought to be paid, and we suppose will be paid, out of the produce of the sales of that ship and her cargo.

We understand Lieutenant Simpson is confined by his captain for breach of orders; he has desired a trial, which cannot be had here, and, therefore, at his request, we have directed that he should be sent to America for that purpose.

We shall be obliged to your Excellency for your orders to permit the immediate sale of the Chatham and other prizes; that the part belonging to the captors may be paid them, as they are very uneasy at the delay, being distressed for want of their money to purchase clothing, &c., and we wish to have the part belonging to the Congress, out of which to defray the charges accruing on the ships. The difficulties our people have heretofore met with in the sale of prizes, have occasioned them to be sold, often for less than half their value. And these difficulties not being yet quite removed, are so discouraging, that we apprehend it will be thought advisable to keep our vessels of war in America, and send no more to cruise on the coast of England.

We are not acquainted with the character of Captain Batson; but if your Excellency should have occasion for a pilot on the coast of America, and this person, on examination, should appear qualified, we shall be glad that

he may be found useful in that quality; and we are thankful to the Consul at Nice for his readiness to serve our countrymen.

With the greatest respect and esteem, we have the honor to be, your Excellency's, &c.

B. Franklin,
Arthur Lee,
John Adams.

**THE COMMISSIONERS TO THE PRESIDENT OF
CONGRESS.**

Passy,
20 July, 1778

Sir,—

We have the honor to inform congress, that the Spy, Captain Niles, has arrived at Brest, and brought us a ratification of the treaties with His Most Christian Majesty, which has given much satisfaction to this court and nation. On the seventeenth instant we had the honor of exchanging ratifications with his Excellency, the Count de Vergennes. The treaties ratified, signed by his Majesty, and under the great seal of France, are now in our possession, where, perhaps, considering the dangers of enemies at sea, it will be safest to let them remain at present. Copies of them we shall have the honor to transmit to congress by this opportunity.

War is not yet declared between France and England, by either nation, but hostilities at sea have been already commenced by both; and as the French fleet from Brest, under the command of the Count d'Orvilliers, and the British fleet, under Admiral Keppel, are both at sea, we are in hourly expectation of a rencontre between them. The Jamaica fleet, the Windward Island fleet, and a small fleet from the Mediterranean, have arrived at London, which has

enabled them to obtain, by means of a violent impress, perhaps a thousand or fifteen hundred seamen, who will man two or three ships more, in the whole, making Admiral Keppel's fleet somewhat nearer to an equality with the French. In the mean time, the Spanish flotilla has arrived, but the councils of that court are kept in a secrecy so profound, that we presume not to say with confidence what are her real intentions. We continue, however, to receive from various quarters encouraging assurances; and, from the situation of the powers of Europe, it seems highly probable that Spain will join France in case of war.

A war in Germany between the Emperor and King of Prussia seems to be inevitable, and it is affirmed that the latter has marched his army into Bohemia, so that we apprehend that America has at present nothing to fear from Germany. We are doing all in our power to obtain a loan of money, and have a prospect of procuring some in Amsterdam, but not in such quantities as will be wanted. We are constrained to request congress to be as sparing as possible in their drafts upon us. The drafts already made, together with the great expense arising from the frigates which have been sent here, and the expenses of the commissioners, the maintenance of your ministers for Vienna and Tuscany, *Endnote 008* and of prisoners who have made their escape, and the amount of clothes and munitions of war already sent to America, are such, that we are under great apprehensions that our funds will not be sufficient to answer the drafts which we daily expect for the interest of loan office certificates, as well as those from Mr. Bringham.

We have the honor to inclose a copy of a letter from M. de Sartine, the Minister of Marine, and to request the attention of congress to the subject of it.

We are told in several letters from the honorable committee for foreign affairs, that we shall receive

instructions and authority for giving up, on our part, the whole of the eleventh article of the treaty, proposing it as a condition to the Court of France, that they on their part should give up the whole of the twelfth. But, unfortunately, these instructions and that authority were omitted to be sent with the letters, and we have not yet received them. At the time of the exchange of the ratifications, we mentioned this subject to the Count de Vergennes, and gave him an extract of the committee's letter. His answer to us was, that the alteration would be readily agreed to; and he ordered his secretary not to register the ratification till it was done. We therefore request that we may be honored with the instructions and authority of congress to set aside the two articles as soon as possible, and while the subject is fresh in memory.

The letter to M. Dumas is forwarded, and in answer to the committee's inquiry, what is proper for congress to do for that gentleman, we beg leave to say, that his extreme activity and diligence in negotiating our affairs, and his punctuality in his correspondence with congress, as well as with us, and his usefulness to our cause in several other ways, not at present proper to be explained, give him, in our opinion, a good title to two hundred pounds sterling a year at least.

The other things mentioned in the committee's letter to us shall be attended to as soon as possible. We have received also the resolution of congress of the ninth of February, and the letter of the committee of the same date, empowering us to appoint one or more suitable persons to be commercial agents, for conducting the commercial business of the United States in France and other parts of Europe. But as this power was given us before congress received the treaty, and we have never received it but with the ratification of the treaty, and as by the treaty congress is empowered to appoint consults in the ports of France, perhaps it may be expected of us that we should wait for

the appointment of consuls. At present, Mr. John Bondfield of Bordeaux, and Mr. J. D. Schweighauser at Nantes, both by the appointment of Mr. William Lee, are the only persons authorized as commercial agents. If we should find it expedient to give appointments to any other persons, before we hear from congress, we will send information of it by the first opportunity. If congress should think proper to appoint consuls, we are humbly of opinion, that the choice will fall most justly, as well as naturally, on Americans, who are, in our opinion, better qualified for this business than any others; and the reputation of such an office, together with a moderate commission on the business they may transact, and the advantages to be derived from trade, will be a sufficient inducement to undertake it, and a sufficient reward for discharging the duties of it.

We have the honor to be, &c.

B. Franklin,
Arthur Lee,
John Adams.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS.

Passy,
27 July, 1778

I thank you, my dear sir, for your kind congratulations on the favorable appearances in our American concerns, and for so politely particularizing one of the most inconsiderable of them, my safe arrival in France, which was after a very inconvenient passage of forty-five days.

Your letter to Mr. Izard I had the pleasure to send to him immediately in Paris, where he resides, the Court of Tuscany being so connected with that of Vienna, as to discourage hitherto his departure for Italy. He did me the

honor of a visit yesterday, when we had much sweet communion, as the phrase is, upon American affairs.

Your other letter to your daughter-in-law, I have forwarded by a safe opportunity. You may depend upon my conveying your letters to any of your friends by the best opportunities, and with despatch. The more of your commands you send me, the more pleasure you will give me.

War is not declared, that is, no manifesto has been published, but each nation is daily manufacturing materials for the other's manifesto, by open hostilities. In short, sir, the two nations have been at war ever since the recall of the ambassadors. The King of France has given orders to all his ships to attack the English, and has given vast encouragement to privateers.

The King of Great Britain and his council have determined to send instructions to their commissioners in America to offer us independency, provided we will make peace with them, separate from France. This appears to me to be the last effort to seduce, deceive, and divide. They know that every man of honor in America must receive this proposition with indignation. But they think they can get the men of no honor to join them by such a proposal, and they think the men of honor are not a majority. What has America done to give occasion to that King and council to think so unworthily of her?

The proposition is, in other words, this:—"America, you have fought me until I despair of beating you. You have made an alliance with the first power of Europe, which is a great honor to your country and a great stability to your cause; so great, that it has excited my highest resentment, and has determined me to go to war with France. Do you break your faith with that power, and forfeit her confidence, as well as that of all the rest of mankind forever, and join me to beat her, or stand by neuter, and see me do it, and for all this I will acknowledge your

independency, because I think in that case you cannot maintain it, but will be an easy prey to me afterwards, who am determined to break my faith with you, as I wish you to do yours with France."

My dear countrymen, I hope, will not be allured upon the rocks by the syren song of peace. They are now playing a sure game. They have run all hazards; but now they hazard nothing.

I know your application is incessant, and your moments are precious, and, therefore, that I ask a great favor in requesting your correspondence; but the interests of the public, as well as private friendship, induce me to do it.

I am, &c.

John Adams.

THE COMMISSIONERS TO THE COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

Passy,
29 July, 1778

Gentlemen,—

We have the honor of your letters of May 14th and 15th. We congratulate you on the general good appearance of our affairs, and we are happy in your assurances, that it is your fixed determination to admit no terms of peace, but such as are consistent with the spirit and intention of our alliance with France, especially as the present politics of the British cabinet aim at seducing you from that alliance, by an offer of independence, upon condition you will renounce it; a measure that will injure the reputation of our States with all the world, and destroy its confidence in our honor.

No authority from congress to make an alteration in the treaty, by withdrawing the eleventh and twelfth articles, has yet reached us. But we gave an extract of your letter to

the Count de Vergennes, when we exchanged ratifications, who expressed an entire willingness to agree to it. We wish for the powers by the first opportunity. We have not yet seen M. Beaumarchais, but the important concern with him shall be attended to as soon as may be.

We have the honor to be, &c.

B. Franklin,
Arthur Lee,
John Adams.

M. DE SARTINE TO THE COMMISSIONERS.
(Translation.) *Endnote 009*

Versailles,
29 July, 1778

Gentlemen,—

I have received the letter which you did me the honor to transmit on the 16th instant. His Majesty relies greatly on the succors of provisions which the government of Massachusetts Bay may furnish the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon.

The difficulties which the privateers of the United States have experienced till now in the ports of France, either as to the sale of their prizes, or to secure their prisoners, must cease, from the change of circumstances. I make no doubt, on the other hand, but that the United States will grant the same facilities to French privateers. To accomplish this double object, I have drafted a plan of regulations, which I hasten to submit to you. I beg you to examine it, and to signify to me what you think of it; or else to point out other means to attain the same end, in order that I may take thereon his Majesty's orders.

I have the honor to be, &c.

De Sartine.

THE COMMISSIONERS TO M. DE SARTINE.

Passy,
13 August, 1778

Sir,—

Your Excellency's letter of the 29th of July, inclosing a plan for a system of regulations for prizes and prisoners, we had the honor of receiving in due time, and are very sorry it has remained so long unanswered.

In general, we are of opinion, that the regulations are very good; but we beg leave to lay before your Excellency the following observations:—

Upon the second article we observe, that the extensive jurisdictions of the judges of admiralty in America, which, considering the local and other circumstances of that country, cannot easily be contracted, will probably render this regulation impracticable in America. In France, it will, as far as we are able to judge of it, be very practicable, and consequently beneficial. But we submit to your Excellency's consideration, whether it would not be better in America after the words "les dits Juges" *Endnote 010* to add,—or the register of the court of admiralty, or some other person authorized by the judge. The jurisdictions of the courts of admiralty in America, extending for some hundreds of miles, this regulation would be subject to great delays and other inconveniences, if it was confined to the judge.

The fourth article seems to be subject to the same inconveniences, and, therefore, to require the same amendment.

Upon the fourteenth article, we beg leave to submit to your Excellency's consideration, whether the heavy duties upon British merchandise and manufactures, if these are to