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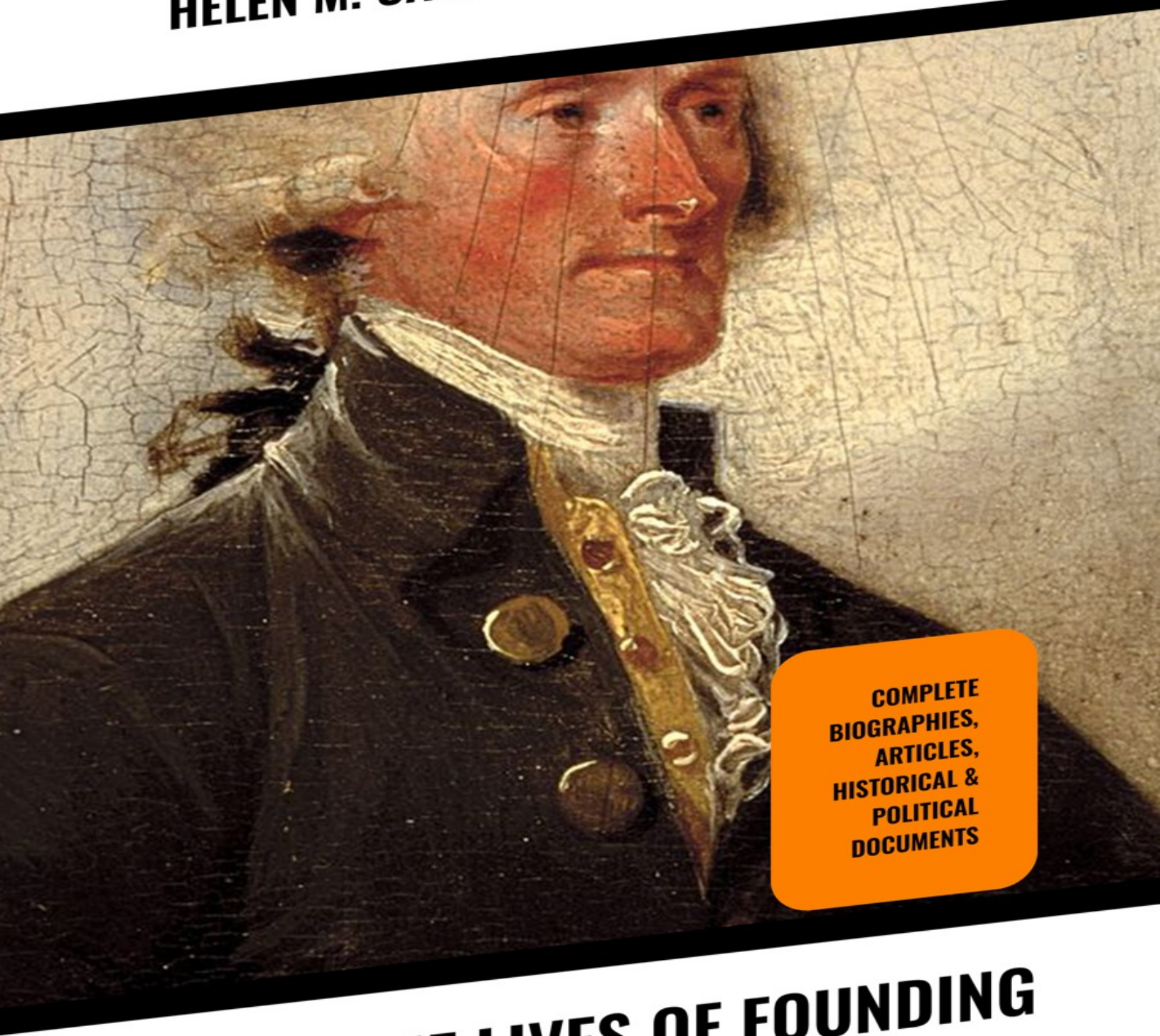

COMPLETE BIOGRAPHIES, ARTICLES, HISTORICAL & POLITICAL DOCUMENTS

THE LIVES OF FOUNDING FATHERS

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The Lives of Founding Fathers

Complete Biographies, Articles, Historical & Political Documents

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Founding Fathers of the United States

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Founding Fathers, a phrase first introduced by Warren Harding, marks ideological and factual leaders in the American Thirteen Colonies, that led a rebellion against the British Crown and contributed to the establishment of the United States of America. There are seven crucial figures recognized by American history who have contributed immensely to the American independence: John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and George Washington. Washington contributed to American cause as the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army and the President of the Constitutional Convention. Ultimately, he was elected to be the First President of the United States of America. Adams, Jefferson, and Franklin have worked on the Declaration of Independence, the statement which announced that the thirteen American colonies regarded themselves as independent and sovereign states which are no longer a part of the British Empire. Hamilton, Madison, and Jay have wrote the Federalist Papers, a collection of 85 articles and essays aimed to promote the ratification of the United States Constitution. Finally, Jay, Adams and Franklin negotiated the Treaty of Paris successfully, which ended the American Revolutionary War. The following chapters are dedicated to these outstanding men to whom America owes its freedom.

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John Adams

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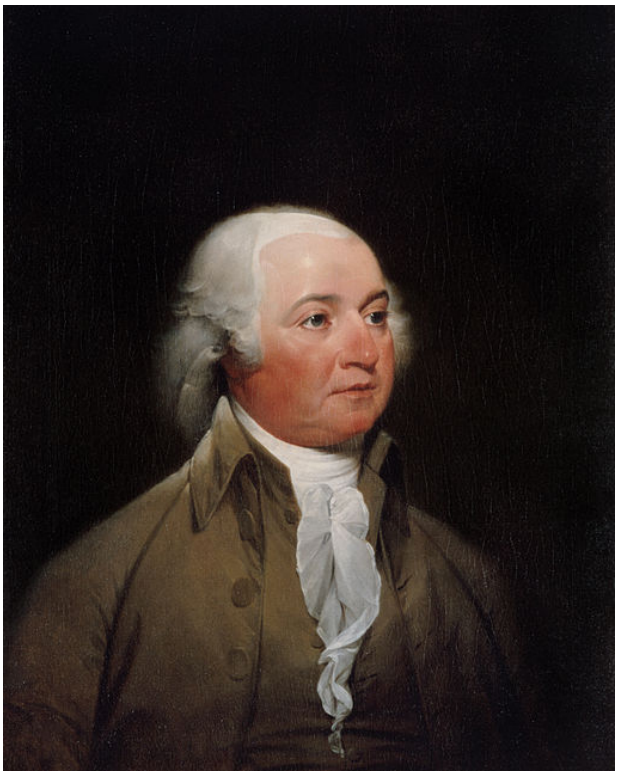

Genuine moral courage is a sterling quality that ennobles and dignifies the man. It invigorates the mind like an impregning cloud — shedding its gentle dews on the flowers of spring. It is a heavenly spark, animating the immortal soul with the fire of divinity that illuminates the path of rectitude. It is an attribute that opposes all wrong and propels its subject right onward to the fearless performance of all right. It is based upon virtue and equity, and spurns vice in all its borrowed and delusive forms. It courts no servile favours — it fears no earthly scrutiny. No flattery can seduce it, no eclat can allure it, no bribe can purchase it, no tyrant can awe it, no misfortune can bend it, no intrigue can corrupt it, no adversity can quench it, no tortures can subdue it. Its motto is — “*Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum*.” [Let

justice be done though the heavens should fall.] Without it, fame is ephemeral and renown transient. It is the saline basis of a good name that gives richness to its memory. It is a pillar of light to revolving thought, and the polar star that points to duty and leads to merit. It is the soul of reason, the essence of wisdom, and the crowning glory of mental power. It was this that influenced the signers of the declaration of independence and nerved them for the conflict.

No one among them was more fully imbued with it than John Adams. He was a native of Quincy, Massachusetts, and born on the 19th of October (O.S.) 1735. He was the fourth in descent from Henry Adams, whose tomb bears this singular inscription — “He took his flight from the dragon persecution, in Devonshire, England, and alighted, with eight sons, near Mount Wollaston.” In childhood the career of John Adams was marked with a rapid developement of strong intellectual powers, which were skilfully cultivated by Mr. Marsh, at Braintree, a celebrated and successful teacher. At the age of sixteen years he entered Harvard College, at Cambridge, where he became a finished scholar and graduated at the age of twenty. He gained a high reputation for frankness, honesty and untiring industry, and was greatly esteemed by the professors and his classmates.

From college he proceeded to Worcester, commenced the study of law under Mr. Putnam, and finished with Mr. Gridley, supporting himself in the mean time by teaching a grammar class. At that early age he possessed wisdom to perceive right, and moral courage to pursue it. In view of the past and present, he made a philosophic grasp at the future, as will appear from the following extract from a letter written by him on the 12th of October, 1755, shortly after he took up his residence at Worcester.

“Soon after the reformation a few people came over into this new world for conscience sake. Perhaps this apparently trivial incident may transfer the great seat of empire into America. It looks likely to me, if we can remove the

turbulent Gallics, our people, according to the exactest computations, will, in another century, become more numerous than England herself. Should this be the case, since we have, I may say, all the naval stores of the nation in our hands, it will be easy to obtain the mastery of the seas, and then the united force of all Europe will not be able to subdue us. The only way to keep us from setting up for ourselves — is to disunite us. * * * Keep us in distinct colonies, and then some men in each colony, desiring the monarchy of the whole, will destroy each other's influence and keep the country in equilibrio."

This broad and expansive view of the future, conceived by a youth, was very remarkable. He saw the one thing needful to render our nation powerful — the creation of a navy — for which nature has given us all the stores. The paralysis that pervades our government in its naval improvements has long astonished the nations of the old world, and a *few* of our own statesmen. The time *will* arrive when our country will be made to feel most keenly — that "a navy is the right arm of defence."

After pursuing his studies three years, Mr. Adams was admitted to the practice of law. He then commenced his professional career at Braintree. Questions of constitutional right and law had already become the subject of investigation and a root of bitterness between the colonists and the officers of the crown. The latter, that were engaged in the custom-house, claimed unlimited power to search the private dwellings of all persons whom they suspected of having dutiable goods. This suspicion, or pretended suspicion, often arose from personal animosity, without a shadow of evidence or reasonable cause. The right of search was of course resisted as arbitrary, unconstitutional and assumed. This led to an application to the superior court for "writs of assistance," which may be considered as one of the first germs of the revolution. Mr. Gridley, who had led Mr. Adams to the bar, and was then his friend and admirer,

maintained the legality of the proceeding, not upon the ground of constitutional law, but from the necessity of the case in order to protect the revenue. Mr. Adams took a deep interest in the question, which was finally argued before the superior court at Boston, by Mr. Gridley for the crown and Mr. Otis for the people. In listening to the latter gentleman, a fire of patriotism was kindled in the bosom of Mr. Adams, that death alone could extinguish. He asserted in after life, that "Mr. Otis's oration against writs of assistance, breathed into this nation the breath of life. * * * American independence was then and there born. * * * Every man of an immense crowded audience appeared to me to go away, as I did, ready to take up arms against writs of assistance. Then and there was the first scene of the first act of opposition to the arbitrary claims of Great Britain."

The court *publicly* decided against the writs, but *secretly* issued them. That people had their houses searched to satisfy revenge, will appear from the following described incident.

"Mr. Justice Wally had called Mr. Ware, one of the persons in possession of such a writ, before him, by a constable, to answer for a breach of the Sabbath-day acts, or for profane swearing. As soon as he had finished, Mr. Ware asked him if he had done. He replied — yes. Well, then, said Mr. Ware, I will show you a little of *my* power. I command you to permit me to search your house for uncustomed goods — and went on to search his house from garret to cellar — and then served the constable in the same manner."

We can readily imagine the natural consequences of such a procedure, against which Mr. Adams at once took a bold and decided stand. The assembly also interfered in behalf of the people, and in 1762 prepared a bill to prevent these writs from being issued to any but custom-house officers, and to them only upon a specific information on oath — which bill was vetoed by the governor. As a blow at the royal authority this was well aimed, and showed a disposition in

the members to do the will of their constituents. As a retaliative measure they reduced the salary of the judges.

In 1761, Mr. Adams attained the rank of barrister and rose to eminence in his profession. In 1764, he married the accomplished Miss Abigail, the daughter of the Rev. William Smith, who participated with him in the changing scenes of life for fifty-four years. The following extract from a letter written by her to a friend, after the commencement of the revolution, will exhibit the strength of her mind and the patriotic feelings of the ladies at that eventful era.

“Heaven is our witness that we do not rejoice in the effusion of blood or the carnage of the human species — but, having been forced to draw the sword, we are determined never to sheathe it — *slaves to Britain*. Our cause, sir, I trust, is the cause of truth and justice, and will finally prevail, though the combined force of earth and hell should rise against it. To this cause I have sacrificed much of my own personal happiness, by giving up to the councils of America one of my nearest connexions, and living for more than three years in a state of widowhood.”

When the stamp act was passed, the fire of indignation against lawless oppression rose in the bosom of Mr. Adams to a luminous flame. He at once became a public man, and entered into a defence of chartered rights and rational freedom. He published an “Essay on the Canon and Feudal Law,” which placed him on a lofty eminence as an able and vigorous writer. Its raciness penetrated the joints and marrow of royal power as practised, and the parliamentary legislation as assumed. He traced the former law to its original source — the Roman clergy — by them subtlely planned, extensively exercised and acutely managed, to effect their own aggrandizement. He then delineated the servile dogmas of the latter, that made each manor the miniature kingdom of a petty tyrant. He then drew a vivid picture of their powerful but unholy confederacy, by which they spread the mantle of ignorance over the world, drove

virtue from the earth, and commenced the era of mental obscurity. He then explored the labyrinthian mazes of the dark ages, portrayed the first glimmerings of returning light, travelled through the gigantic struggles of the reformation amidst the bloody scenes of cruel persecution, and finally placed his readers upon the granite shores of New England, where, for a century, liberty had shed its happy influence upon the sons and daughters of freemen, unmolested by canons or feuds. That liberty was now invaded, and, unless the tyranny that had already commenced its desolating course was arrested in its bold career, slavery would be the consequence. This is the syllabus of a pamphlet of over forty pages, written in a strong, bold and nervous style.

From that time forward Mr. Adams became a leading whig. He became associated with Samuel Adams, Quincy, Otis and other kindred spirits, all much older men, but not more zealous in the cause than him. The repeal of the odious stamp act and the removal of Mr. Grenville from the ministry was the result of the labours of the patriots in 1765. A delusive calm ensued in parliamentary and ministerial proceedings, openly avowed. Mr. Adams was among those who watched closely the signs of the times. Governor Barnard occasionally showed the cloven foot, and his officers put on airs that were far from being agreeable to the yeomanry of the country. Festering wounds occasionally became irritated, and no balm was found that restored them to perfect soundness.

In 1766 Mr. Adams removed to Boston, and at the end of two years had become so conspicuous and had displayed so much talent that the governor thought him worth purchasing. The lucrative and honourable office of advocate-general in the court of admiralty was offered to him, which was deemed a sufficient bribe to allure him. In this the governor found himself mistaken. Moral courage was the firm basis on which this devoted patriot stood. He spurned

the royal harness, glittering with gold, with as much disdain as the wild horse of the prairie looks upon a moping mule.

In 1769 he was one of the committee appointed by the citizens of Boston to propose instructions for their representatives in the legislative body, which were highly spiced with free principles, and were very unsavoury to the royal governor. Many of his measures were severely censured, particularly that of quartering the mercenary soldiers in the town. He was unbending in his purposes, and the people determined on maintaining their rights. The consequences were tragical. On the fifth of March, 1770, an affray occurred between the military and citizens, in which five of the latter were killed and others wounded. The following description of the scene that ensued is from the pen of Mr. Adams, the present subject of this memoir.

“The people assembled first at Faneuil Hall and adjourned to the old South Church, to the number, as was conjectured, of ten or twelve hundred men, among whom were the most virtuous, substantial, independent, disinterested and intelligent citizens. They formed themselves into a regular deliberative body, chose their moderator and secretary, entered into discussions, deliberations and debates, adopted resolutions and appointed committees. Their resolutions in public were conformable to every man in private who dared express his thoughts or his feelings — ‘that the regular soldiers should be banished from the town at all hazards.’ Jonathan Williams, a very pious, inoffensive and conscientious gentleman, was their moderator. A remonstrance to the governor, or governor and council, was ordained, and a demand that the regular troops should be removed from the town. A committee was appointed to present this remonstrance, of which *Samuel Adams* was chairman.

“This was a delicate and dangerous crisis. The question in the last resort was — whether the town of Boston should become a scene of carnage and desolation or not. Humanity

to the soldiers conspired with a regard for the safety of the town, in suggesting the measure in calling the town together to deliberate, for nothing but the most solemn promises to the people, that the soldiers should, at all hazards, be driven from the town, had preserved its peace. Not only the immense assemblies of the people from day to day, but military arrangements from night to night were necessary to keep the people and the soldiers from getting together by the ears. The life of a red coat would not have been safe in any street or corner of the town; nor would the lives of the inhabitants been much more secure. The whole militia of the city was in requisition, and military watches and guards were every where placed. We were all upon a level; no man was exempted; our military officers were our only superiors. I had the honour to be summoned in my turn and attended at the State-house with my musket and bayonet, my broad sword and cartridge box, under the command of the famous Paddock. I know you will laugh at my military figure; but I believe there was not a more obedient soldier in the regiment, nor one more impartial between the people and the regulars. In this character I was upon duty all night in my turn. No man appeared more anxious or more deeply impressed with a sense of danger on all sides than our commander Paddock. He called me, common soldier as I was, frequently to his councils. I had a great deal of conversation with him, and no man appeared more apprehensive of a fatal calamity to the town, or more zealous by every prudent measure to prevent it."[1]

Order was finally restored and the civil authorities again assumed their functions. Captain Preston was arrested and brought before the court, charged with giving the order to the regulars to fire upon the citizens; and also the soldiers who committed the outrage. As is uniformly the case, each party was charged with blame by the respective friends of the other. Some inconsiderate citizens had thrown snowballs

at the king’s troops, who returned the change in blue pills. The former were imprudent, the latter were revengeful.

Mr. Adams was employed by the accused to defend them. Some of his friends were fearful that it might injure his popularity with the people, whose excitement was still very great. But so ingeniously and eloquently did he manage the case, that Captain Preston and all the soldiers but two were acquitted, and those two were only convicted of manslaughter, and Mr. Adams stood approved and applauded by the citizens, having performed his professional duty to his clients, and at the same time vindicated the rights of the people; the result of being guided entirely by the polar star of moral courage.

The same year he was elected to the legislative body, then called the “General Court,” and was a bold opposer of the arbitrary measures of Lieutenant-governor Hutchinson, who undisguisedly followed the directions of the ministry in violation of the charter of the colony, in all things that were necessary to carry out the plans of the British cabinet, pleading his instructions as an excuse.

Mr. Adams was one of the committee that prepared an address to him, the style of which induces me to think it was penned by him. From the following extract the reader may judge. After vividly portraying the violations of right complained of, the address concludes, “These and other grievances and cruelties, too many to be here enumerated, and too melancholy to *be much longer borne* by this injured people, we have seen brought upon us by the devices of ministers of state. And we have, of late, seen and heard of *instructions* to governors which threaten to destroy all the remaining privileges of our charter. Should these struggles of the house prove unfortunate and ineffectual, this province will submit, with pious resignation, to the will of *Providence*; but it would be a kind of suicide, of which we have the utmost abhorrence, to be instrumental in our own servitude.” A blind obstinacy on the part of the ministers

increased the opposition of the people and operated upon them with all the power of centrifugal force, inducing them to refuse obedience to the king’s officers. Alarmed at the boldness of the people of Boston, Governor Barnard had ordered the general court to convene at Cambridge. This was contrary to the charter which fixed its place of meeting at the former place. The members convened but refused to proceed to business unless they were permitted to adjourn to the proper place, to which Lieutenant-governor Hutchinson, who had succeeded Governor Barnard, refused his assent. A war of words and paper ensued, in which the patriots were uniformly victorious. Mr. Adams was a leader of the sharp-shooters and made great havoc among the officers of the crown. They induced the senior member of their council, Mr. Brattle, to enter the field against him with pen in hand. The conflict was short, Mr. Adams put him *hors de combat*, and showed the people the fallacy of every pretext set up by the hirelings of the ministry. In 1771, Mr. Hutchinson was appointed governor, and the next year consented to the return of the legislative body to Boston as a balm for the wounds he had inflicted. But in this he gained no popularity — it was deemed an involuntary act forced upon him by the popular will, or a mere stratagem to quiet the public mind. There were other sources of complaint. The troops in the castle, that were under the pay and control of the province, had been dismissed and their place supplied by fresh regulars from the mother country: the governor and judges received their salaries from England instead of from the colony, as had always been the usage, thus aiming to render the military, executive and judiciary independent of the people whom they governed, which operated as a talisman to destroy all confidence and affection for these officers on the part of the citizens. The tax on tea was another source of grief that touched more tender chords. Woe unto the ruler that rouses the indignation of the better part of creation. He had better tempt the fury of Mars, or try

his speed with Atalanta. Tea soon became forbidden fruit, and several vessel loads were sacrificed to Neptune as an oblation for the sins of ministers and an oblectation for the fishes of Boston harbour. Royal authority increased in insolence, and the patriots increased in boldness. At the commencement of the session of the general court in 1773, Governor Hutchinson sustained the odious doctrine of supremacy of the parliament in his message, which was promptly replied to and denied by the members of that body. A reply was as promptly returned by his excellency, which was prepared with more than usual ability. Mr. Adams, although not a member at that time, was employed to write a rejoinder, which was adopted without any amendment. It paralyzed the pen and closed the mouth of the governor. It was an exposition of British wrongs and American rights so clearly exhibited, that no sophistry could impugn it or logic confront it. So highly was it appreciated by Dr. Franklin, that he had it republished in England and freely circulated. It was a luminary to the patriots and confusion to their opponents.

Shortly after, Mr. Adams was elected to the general court and placed on the list of committees. So vindictive was governor Hutchinson, that he erased his name — an act that recoiled upon himself with redoubled force and aided to hasten the termination of his power in the colony. In less than a year from that time he was succeeded by governor Gage, who was still better calculated to hasten on the revolutionary crisis — because more authoritative and ministerial than his predecessor. With the commencement of his limited administration in 1774, the Boston port bill took effect. The consequences that followed are familiar to the reader. Governor Gage embraced the first opportunity to pay a marked attention to John Adams. His name was placed on the council list at the first session of the legislature, after his excellency assumed the helm of government, who at once placed his indignant cross upon it. He also removed the assembly to Salem. The members

proceeded to the preliminary business of the session, and among other things requested the governor to fix a day for general humiliation and prayer, which he peremptorily refused to do. Here again tender chords were touched. The people *en masse* venerated religion, and an insult upon that or an interruption of its usual and ancient usages, was like adding pitch to a fire already vivid and flaming. The house then proceeded to consider the project of a general Congress, and in spite of an attempt by the governor to dissolve it, the door was locked against his secretary, patriotic resolutions were passed, and five delegates appointed to meet a national convention, one of which was John Adams. So bold had been his course that some of his warmest friends and most ardent admirers advised him to decline his appointment, as the adherents of the crown had already hinted that he evidently aimed at establishing an independent government, which they considered endangered the peace of the country and his life, as the British could and would enforce every measure they chose to adopt. But John Adams had weighed well the subject of rights and wrongs and took his stand within the citadel of MORAL COURAGE, against which the gates of hell can never prevail. He had resolved to nobly perish in defending the liberty of his country, or plant the standard of freedom on the ruins of tyranny.

At the appointed time he repaired to the city of Philadelphia and took his seat in that assemblage of sages whose wisdom has been sung by the ablest poets, applauded by the most eloquent orators, and admired by the most sagacious statesmen of the two hemispheres. On reading the proceedings of the American Congress of 1774, Lord Chatham remarked, “that he had studied and admired the free states of antiquity, the master spirits of the world — but that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity and wisdom of conclusion, no body of men could stand in preference to this congress.”

Mr. Adams, for whom his friends felt so much anxiety for fear his ardour might lead him to rashness, was as calm as a summer morning, but firm as the granite shores of his birth place. With all his ardent zeal he was discreet, prudent and politic. He was the last man to violate constitutional law, and the last man to submit to its violation. He kept his helm hard up and ran close to the wind, but understood well when to luff and when to take the larboard tack, and when to take in sail. His soundings were deep and his calculations relative to future storms were truly prophetic. He was one of the few that believed the ministry would induce the king and parliament of the mother country to remain incorrigible, and that petitions would be vain, addresses futile, and remonstrances unavailing. That this Congress adopted the proper course to pursue, he was fully aware — that dignity might grace the cause of the people and justice be honoured. The following extract from a letter written by him at a subsequent period, shows his, and the conclusions of others at that time.

“When Congress had finished their business as they thought, in the autumn of 1774, I had with Mr. Henry before we took leave of each other some familiar conversation, in which I expressed a full conviction that our resolves, declarations of rights, enumeration of wrongs, petitions, remonstrances, addresses, associations and non-importation agreements, however they might be accepted in America and however necessary to cement the union of the colonies, would be waste water in England. Mr. Henry said, they might make some impression among the *people* of England, but agreed with me that they would be totally lost upon the *government*. I had just received a short and hasty letter, written to me by Major Joseph Hawley of Northampton, containing ‘a few broken hints,’ as he called them, of what he thought was proper to be done, and concluding with these words, ‘*after all we must fight*.’ This letter I read to Mr. Henry, who listened with great attention,

and as soon as I had pronounced the words: — ‘*after all we must fight*’ — he raised his hand and with an energy and vehemence that I can never forget, broke out with — ‘by G — d I am of that man’s mind.’ * * * * *

The other delegates from Virginia returned to their state in full confidence that all our grievances would be redressed. The last words that Mr. Richard Henry Lee said to me when we parted, were ‘we shall infallibly carry all our points. You will be completely relieved — all the offensive acts will be repealed, the army and fleet will be recalled and Britain will give up her foolish project.’ Washington only was in doubt. He never spoke in public. In private he joined with those who advocated a non-exportation, as well as a non-importation agreement. With *both* he thought we should prevail — with either he thought it doubtful. Henry was clear in one opinion, Richard Henry Lee in an opposite opinion, and Washington doubted between the two.”

Here is exhibited a striking picture of the minds of these four great men, which appears to have escaped the notice of the several writers that I have consulted. Adams and Henry, drawing their conclusions from the past, the present and the future, diving into the depths of human nature and grasping, at one bold view, all the multiform circumstances that hung over the two nations, concluded truly, “*after all we must fight*.” They concluded that the confidence inspired in the ministers by the overwhelming physical force of Great Britain, would prevent them from relaxing the cords of oppression, and that the independent spirit of the hardy sons of Columbia would not be subdued without a struggle. Lee, naturally bouyant, his own mind readily impressed by reason and eloquence, did not reflect that inflated power, when deluded by obstinacy and avarice, is callous to all the refined feelings of the heart, is deaf to wisdom and blind to justice. He was as determined to maintain chartered rights as them, but did not scan human nature as closely. Washington, deep in reflection and investigation, his soul

overflowing with the milk of human kindness, did not arrive as rapidly at conclusions. In weighing the causes of difference between the two countries, reason, justice and hope on the one side, power, corruption, and avarice on the other, held his mind, for a time, in equilibrio. He plainly perceived and pursued the right, and fondly but faintly hoped that England would see and pursue it too. He was as prompt to defend liberty as either of the others.

On his return, Mr. Adams was congratulated by his anxious friends upon the prudent course he had pursued, and was re-elected a member of the ensuing Congress. During the interim his pen was again usefully employed. Mr. Sewall, the king's attorney-general, had written a series of elaborate and ingenious essays, maintaining the supremacy of parliament and censuring, in no measured terms, the proceedings of the whigs. Under the name of "Novanglus," Mr. Adams stripped the gay ornaments and gaudy apparel from the high-varnished picture that Mr. Sewall had presented to the public, and when he had finished his work, a mere skeleton of visible deformity was left to gaze upon.

The attorney-general was made to tremble before the keen cuts of the falchion quill of this devoted patriot. So deep was his reasoning, so learned were his expositions, and so lucid and conclusive were his demonstrations, that his antagonist exclaimed, as he retired hissing from the conflict, "he strives to hide his inconsistencies under a huge pile of learning." The pile proved too huge for royal power, and was sufficiently large to supply the people with an abundance of light. The supremacy of parliament was an unfortunate issue for ministers. It left the sages of liberty in a position to hurl their arrows freely at *them*, without denying the allegiance of the colonists to the *king*. The British cabinet worked out its own destruction, if not with fear and trembling, it was with blindness and disgrace — a disgrace arising from the grossest impolicy and injustice, if not to say ignorance and infatuation. They were entirely

mistaken in the people of America — they awoke the wrong passengers.

In May, 1775, Mr. Adams again took his seat in Congress. The members convened under quite different feelings from those that pervaded their bosoms the previous autumn. Revolution was now rolling fearfully upon their bleeding country, hope of redress was expiring like the last flickerings of an exhausted taper, dark and portentous clouds were accumulating, the ministerial ermine was already steeped in blood, the chains of servitude were clanking in their ears, the dying groans of their fellow citizens and the mournful lamentations of widows and orphans were resounding through the land, and the prophetic conclusion of Adams and Henry, drawn at the previous session, began to force itself upon the minds of members, that "*after all we must fight*." As a preliminary measure, it was necessary to appoint a commander of the military forces to be raised. To fix upon the *best* man was of vital importance. Many were yet chanting the song of peace and thought it premature to make such an appointment, lest it should widen the breach which they still hoped might be repaired. The New England delegates were not of this class. When the purple current was wantonly diverted from its original channel upon the heights of Lexington, they hung their syren harps upon the weeping willows that shaded the tombs of their murdered brethren. They were convinced that war was inevitable. All soon became satisfied that prudence dictated a preparation for such an event. A suitable man to lead the armies and direct their course was a desideratum. The southern members were willing to submit to any nomination made by the eastern delegates. General Artemas Ward of Massachusetts was fixed upon by most of them, except John Adams. In George Washington he had discovered the commingling qualities of a philanthropist, a philosopher, a statesman and a hero. He was prompted by the force of moral courage to at once urge his colleagues to sanction his

choice. They were all opposed to it, as were also the other members of the northern and eastern delegation. Mr. Adams was firm in his purpose, and met every objection with conclusive arguments. These discussions were all private, not a word was uttered on the floor of Congress as to who should be the man. At last Samuel Adams became convinced that his junior colleague was right. The work was soon accomplished. Satisfied that his measure would be supported by a majority, John Adams rose in Congress and proposed that a commander of the American armies should be appointed. When this resolution was passed, he proceeded to portray the requisite qualities necessary to fit a man for this important station, and emphatically remarked "*such a man is within these walls*." But few knew who he was about to nominate, and could not imagine who among their own number was possessed of all these noble attainments. A transient pause ensued. A breathless anxiety produced a painful suspense. The next moment the name of COLONEL GEORGE WASHINGTON of Virginia, was announced, at which the colonel was more astonished than any other member of the house. He had not received an intimation of the intended honour from any person. He was nominated by John Adams about the middle of June, the nomination was seconded by Samuel Adams, the next day the vote was taken and was unanimous in his favour. This appointment originated entirely with Mr. Adams; a high encomium upon his deep penetration and discernment of human intellect, a clear demonstration of his moral courage manifested in persevering in his choice although opposed at the threshold by the entire New England delegation. So judicious and felicitous was this selection, that the revered La Fayette remarked, "it was the consequence of providential inspiration." Be it so; Mr. Adams was the happy medium through which it was communicated to the Continental Congress, thereby placing at the head of the American armies just such a man as the crisis required — prudent,

dignified, bold, sagacious, patient, persevering, and universally esteemed by the patriots, and admired even by the most violent adherents of the crown.

After Mr. Adams had accomplished this important act, he remained apparently quiescent during the residue of the session, viewing, analyzing and scanning public feeling and public acts.

In the spring of 1776, he took his seat a third time in the National Assembly. The period had then arrived for more decisive action. Massachusetts had been declared out of the king's protection by parliament. England had hired legions of soldiers from German princes to subdue the rebels in America, the last note of peace had died upon the voice of echo, every ray of hope in favour of an amicable settlement was banished, and every member became convinced that the dilemma was, *resistance or slavery*; but there were many who shrunk back with astonishment when independence was named to them.

At this juncture Mr. Adams marked out a bold course and had moral courage to pursue it. On the sixth of May he offered a resolution in Congress proposing that the colonies should organize governments independent of the mother country. On the tenth of the same month its substance was adopted in a modified form, recommending the formation of such government by the colonies "as might be conducive to the happiness and safety of their constituents in particular and America in general."

This startling measure was at first ably opposed by many of the patriots as premature, admitting its justice, and, but for the weakness of the colonies, its propriety and necessity. But Mr. Adams knew no middle course. He had succeeded in obtaining the adoption of the preface to his broad and expanding folio of an independent compact, and he proceeded to put the main matter to press. He rose like a giant and commenced the mighty work of political regeneration. Each succeeding day brought him new aid.

From the legislature of his own state he received full permission to strike for independence. North Carolina had declared first, Virginia followed, and on the seventh of June, Richard Henry Lee became the organ to lay the proposition fairly before Congress. A most animated discussion ensued. Then it was that the powers of Mr. Adams were fully developed. Mr. Jefferson said of him when alluding to his able support of the declaration of independence, “John Adams was the pillar of its support on the floor of Congress; its ablest advocate and defender against the multifarious assaults it encountered. He was our Colossus on the floor; not graceful, not elegant, not always fluent in his public addresses; yet he came out with a power, both of thought and of expression, that moved us from our seats.” Another writer remarks, I think Mr. Trumbull, “The eloquence of Mr. Adams resembled his general character. It was bold, manly and energetic, such as the crisis required.” The noblest powers of the soul of John Adams were raised to the zenith of their strength to accomplish the mighty work before him. Although on the committee to prepare the manifesto of eternal separation, he confided its preparation to his colleagues and bent his whole force, eloquence and energy upon the opponents to the measure. Most manfully did he contend, most gloriously did he triumph. He bore down upon his adversaries like a mountain torrent, a sweeping avalanche, prostrating their arguments and answering their objections in a manner that left no trace behind. He hurled the arrows of conviction so thick and fast, that every heart was pierced and a majority subdued. At length the time arrived when the momentous subject must be decided. The fourth of July, 1776, dawned upon the patriots; they assembled, the past, the present and the prospective future rushed upon their minds; moments flew, hearts beat quicker, the question was put, independence was declared, America was free, liberty was honoured, freedom was proclaimed and a nation redeemed.

The following copy of a letter written by Mr. Adams to his wife on the 5th of July, will show the feelings of his mind on that occasion:

“Yesterday the greatest question was decided that was ever debated in America, and greater, perhaps, never was or will be decided among men. A resolution passed without one dissenting colony — ‘that these United States are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states.’ The day is passed. The fourth of July, 1776, will be a memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe it will be celebrated by succeeding generations, as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomps, shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations, from one end of the continent to the other, from this time forward and for ever. You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil, and blood, and treasure, that it will cost to maintain this declaration and support and defend these states; yet, through all the gloom, I can see the rays of light and glory. I can see that the end is worth more than all the means, and that posterity will triumph, although you and I may rue, which I hope we shall not.”

Early in the winter of 1776, Mr. Adams sketched a form of government to be adopted by each colony, which was substantially the same as the constitutions of the present time. It was in a letter to Richard Henry Lee, by whom it was, by permission, published without a name, and may be considered as the model of the constitutions now in force in the different states. After the form he remarks, “A constitution founded on these principles, introduces knowledge among the people and inspires them with a conscious dignity becoming freemen. A general emulation takes place which causes good humour, sociability, good manners and good morals to be general. That elevation of sentiment inspired by such a government, makes the

common people brave and enterprising. That ambition which is inspired by it makes them sober, industrious and frugal. You will find among them some elegance perhaps, but more solidity; a little pleasure but a great deal of business; some politeness but more civility. If you compare such a country with the regions of domination, whether monarchial or aristocratical, you will fancy yourself in Arcadia or Elysium."

Here, upon the canvass of truth, is a complete picture, exhibiting the blessings derived from a government like our own in its *principles* — that these principles are not strictly adhered to by all politicians, is a fact too fully and fearfully demonstrated. Among all the great men of the last century of increasing intellectual light, no one appears to have taken a more comprehensive and at the same time minute view of human nature and of human government, than John Adams. He traced causes and effects through all their labyrinthian meanderings, and drew conclusions as if by inspiration. Many of his predictions of the future bear the impress of prophecy, and show how deeply he investigated and the clearness of his perception.

On his return from Congress at the close of the session, he was chosen a member of the council of Massachusetts under the new constitution, and aided to organize a free government on a basis purely republican. He was also appointed chief justice, but declined serving.

In 1777, Mr. Adams resumed his seat in Congress, and engaged in a course of labour unparalleled in the history of legislation. He was an acting member of ninety committees, chairman of twenty-five, chairman of the board of war and of appeals, discharged all those multifarious duties promptly, besides participating in the debates of the house upon all important questions. In December of that year he was appointed a commissioner to France, and embarked on board of the frigate Boston in February following, from his native town at the foot of Mount Wollaston. During the

voyage a British armed ship was discovered, and, by the consent of Mr. Adams, Captain Tucker gave chase, strictly enjoining the commissioner to keep out of danger. No sooner had the action commenced than Mr. Adams seized a musket and gave the enemy a well directed shot. The captain discovering him in his exposed situation, said to him, “I am commanded by the Continental Congress to carry you in safety to Europe, and I will do it,” and very pleasantly removed him and placed him out of danger.

On his arrival at France he had the satisfaction to learn that Dr. Franklin and his colleagues had succeeded in concluding a treaty of alliance with the French nation. He continued in Europe a little more than a year and then returned home. Soon after his arrival he was elected to a convention of his native state convened for the purpose of perfecting a constitution for the more complete organization of its government. He was upon the committee to prepare this document, and was selected to make the draught. He produced an instrument similar to that sketched for Richard Henry Lee in January 1776, which was sanctioned and adopted. Before his duties had terminated in this convention he was appointed by Congress “a minister plenipotentiary for negotiating a treaty of peace and a treaty of commerce with Great Britain.”

In October, 1779, he embarked from Boston for Europe, and after a long and tedious passage, he arrived at Paris in February following. The British ministry were not yet sufficiently humbled to do right, and Mr. Adams had too much sagacity to be ensnared, and too much moral courage to consent to any thing wrong. Anxious to benefit his country, on hearing that Mr. Laurens, the American commissioner to Holland, had been captured, he immediately repaired to that kingdom, and in August received a commission from Congress to negotiate a loan and to conclude a treaty of amity and commerce with the States General of Holland, with instructions to accede to any

treaty of neutral rights that might arise from regulations to be made by a congress of the European states, then in contemplation. In a few months he was completely overwhelmed with diplomatic powers. He was minister plenipotentiary to Great Britain — to the States General — to the prince of Orange — to all the European states for pledging the faith of the United States to the armed neutrality, with letters of credit to the Russian, Swedish and Danish envoys in Holland, and a commissioner to negotiate a loan of ten millions of dollars for the support of the home department and foreign embassies. The duties thus devolving upon him, all of which he discharged with approbation, will give the reader some idea of the gigantic mental powers of John Adams. He had the same kind of intrigue to encounter as that alluded to in the biography of Franklin, which he met at the threshold and crushed whilst in embryo.

In July, 1781, he received a summons from the court of France to repair immediately to Versailles to deliberate upon a plan of peace with England. On his arrival he had occasion for the exercise of that moral courage that sustained him in every dilemma. The terms offered did not fully recognise the rights of the United States as an independent sovereign nation — peace was anxiously desired and ardently urged by the Duke de Vergennes, who stood at the head of the French cabinet — Mr. Adams desired it too, but only upon honourable and dignified terms. The duke, who had uniformly showed a disposition to make the United States at least *feel* deeply a dependence upon France, undertook to dictate to Mr. Adams, and placed him in the position of a subordinate agent. In this project he was greatly mistaken. Mr. Adams recognised no dictator but the Continental Congress and his own keen and penetrating judgment. So chagrined was the French duke at the independence of the American minister, that he wrote to the chevalier de la Luzerne, then minister from France in America, to lay a

formal complaint against Mr. Adams before Congress. This he did in a very ingenious manner, but without success. As a matter of deference to their new and important ally, the members of Congress very partially modified the instructions to their minister, but did not place him under the control of the duke as requested. They knew the spirit of John Adams would never compromise the dignity of the American name, and they reposed entire confidence in his ability to perceive the right, and in his moral courage to pursue it. It became evident that the motives of the French court in giving assistance to the United States were based entirely on self. Her objects were to humble her inveterate foe, and when that was accomplished, to secure her own aggrandizement and that of Spain at the expense of America. I speak of the *court* of France, and not of the good Lafayette and French patriots like him.

Finding that his presence could be of no service at Versailles, Mr. Adams returned to Amsterdam. Soon after this, so powerfully did the French minister operate upon Congress, taking the advantage of the reverses of the American arms, that he induced that body to add to the commission of Mr. Adams, Dr. Franklin, Messrs. Jefferson, Jay and Laurens, with the humiliating direction, “that they should govern themselves by the advice and opinion of the ministers of the king of France.” The duke de Vergennes now exulted in his power, having been made by Congress virtually the sovereign minister of the United States to Great Britain. But his exultation was delusive. Nothing could bend Mr. Adams or Franklin, and the other commissioners became convinced of the propriety of the bold stand assumed. Mr. Adams wrote to Congress and exposed the plans of the duke and his coadjutors, and was the bold medium of communication that opened the eyes of its members to see and permit the commissioner to maintain their true dignity, which enabled them to finally obtain an honourable peace. He also succeeded, after surmounting many Alpine barriers,

in negotiating a loan in Holland of eight millions of guilders, in September, 1782. The benefits of this loan were two-fold — it enabled the United States to prosecute the war with more vigour, and had a direct influence upon England, inducing her to make proposals of peace soon after this was known to lord Shelburne, then at the head of the British administration, which secured to the United States the great privileges insisted on by Mr. Adams. A provisional treaty was signed at Paris on the thirtieth of November, 1782, and a definitive treaty was signed on the third of September, 1783. This step was taken without consulting the duke de Vergennes, and completely thwarted his golden schemes of finesse. He addressed a letter of reproach to the American commissioners, because they dared to proceed without his approbation, which they did not condescend to answer. The three grand points in the plan of the court of France were — in securing to themselves the trade and fisheries of the Unites States, and for Spain — the sole right of navigating the Mississippi river.

After the important work of concluding peace with England was accomplished, Mr. Adams returned to Holland, where he remained a part of the year 1784, when he returned to France and assumed the duties of a commission, at the head of which he was placed, having Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jefferson associated with him, forming a trio of combined, various and exalted talent, never surpassed if ever equalled. They were empowered to negotiate commercial treaties with all foreign nations that desired such an arrangement with the United States.

In 1785, Mr. Adams was appointed the first minister to Great Britain after the acknowledgement of the independence of the United States by that kingdom. He was received with marked attention and courtesy, so far as courtly etiquette and ceremony were concerned, but found the ministry morose and bitter in their feelings towards the new republic. They were unwilling to enter into a