

SOME UNPUBLISHED CORRESPONDENCE OF JOHN ADAMS AND RICHARD RUSH,

1811-1816

By 1809 or 1810 the somewhat truculent attitude toward public affairs which had characterized John Adams in the first decade of his retirement began to disappear. Defeated in the great populist revolution which swept Jefferson into the White House, repudiated because of his political independence by a sizable wing of his own party, he had faced a lonely future as he left Washington in 1801. He still retained the confidence and admiration of Federalist Massachusetts, but gradually, with the shifting of party lines and the rise of new leaders and new issues, he felt himself pushed farther and farther into the background, "as unpopular in Massachusetts," he remarked, "as M^r Madison or M^r Jefferson: and that even in the Village where we were born and where our Ancestors have lived for almost two hundred Years."

In 1809, however, Jefferson quitted the Presidency, and no longer appeared in the rôle of Adams' victorious successor. The efforts of Dr. Benjamin Rush to effect a reconciliation between the two were rewarded with the beginning of that long and lively correspondence, a source of delight to both men in the last seventeen years of their lives, which contributes so much to our knowledge of their minds and characters.¹ Mutual good feeling obliterated the acerbities of the two previous decades; even the publication, a score of years after its composition, of a private letter Adams had written in 1801, at the nadir of his despondency, criticizing in sharply embittered language Jefferson, Pickering, and many other of his contemporaries, failed to renew the breach between "Montezillo" and "Monticello." Jefferson properly treated the stale strictures as items in a forgotten controversy in which he also had cast many stones, but Colonel Pickering published an excited denunciation and defense. That the sage of Quincy had left the habit of controversy behind him was revealed by his placid refusal to reply.

Other incidents brought Adams once more on to the national stage,

¹ Paul Wiltach, ed., *Correspondence of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson*.

although in the capacity of a private citizen. It was a time when party alignments were clouding; they altered violently on the matter of war with England. The disregard of blanket creeds, the sturdy individualism in opinions, the vigorous trenchancy which Adams had always exhibited were more acceptable at such a moment than they had been when parties were forming and creeds were being written. "The most realistic statesman of his generation in America," he remained "to the end of his days . . . as much of an *enfant terrible* as Clemenceau,"² but as the war of 1812 drew nearer circumstances made such an attitude more healthy for the nation at large, and brought Adams closer to the contemporary ideals of "sound policy" than many, even among the Federalists, had conceded him to be in earlier days. It seemed a sign of grace, a recognition, also, when Madison almost immediately upon taking office appointed John Quincy Adams American Minister to Russia.

The result was that Adams played the part of elder statesman more generously, for having the major antipathies of his life softened, and for receiving what might well have been considered a sort of vindication of the things he had stood for at the turn of the century. His outlook was freer, because it was less colored by the personal divisor, and it was broader, because above political differences among the factions in the country rose the great war issue which agitated all parties and all groups.

The years 1811-1816 were among the most critical of any this nation has ever faced. Patriots of the revolution who were still living had watched with alternate applause and anxiety the revolutionary movement and the rise of Napoleon in France. Many considered the Empire to have destroyed the principles and accomplishments of the earlier National and Constituent Assemblies; others, among them Adams, looked beyond the military aspects of Napoleon's career to the great civil ends which he attempted to achieve. It is a little surprising to discover Adams pointing out what is so clear to us in the retrospect of a hundred years, that the victory of the continental alliance over the Corsican would be the victory of the forces of reaction and despotism, and would place in jeopardy the salutary reorganization of and the infusion of new elements in society, which Napoleon represented. From some of what follows it may be seen that Adams'

² Gilbert Chinard, *Honest John Adams* (Boston, 1933). Preface.

greatest fear was that these reactionary forces in the old world would sweep across the Atlantic to conquer the new. In entering the Napoleonic Wars on the side of the French, America was, in the opinion of men who thought like Adams, fighting not so much against Britain over the matter of the freedom of the seas, and not for the possession of Canada, but rather continuing the struggle for liberty and liberal principles which she had begun in 1763.³ The real enemy was not the English navy, but a Europe where all men were "ready to throw Firebrands Arrows and Death at the bidding of George Prince of Wales"; the real struggle was not between two battle squadrons, but between two ways of living. That in a large sense Adams was right no one would dispute. Certainly by engaging at all, however feebly, in the lists against England, and shunning, as we did, an alliance with France, this nation definitely dissociated itself both politically and spiritually from the wave of Toryism which submerged Europe after Waterloo.

At the outset of this critical five year period Adams began a correspondence with Richard Rush, who was at this time in his thirty-first year, just entering office as Attorney-General of Pennsylvania. One with a brilliant future still ahead of him, the other with a long record of intelligent public administration behind him, these two curious cronies, with little in common except a true desire for the national well being, wrote long letters back and forth with considerable regularity. The originals of the Adams letters herewith reproduced lie in the fertile autograph collection of the late Simon Gratz, now in the possession of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The interest attaching to any writing of John Adams is obvious; it is especially enlightening to follow his reactions to the great national crisis of these years. Two points may be noted in introduction: first, both Adams and Rush turned to history for standards of judgment and for guidance. They compared Wilkinson, Hampton, and others with commanders of the Revolutionary War; measured Napoleon by the great leaders of antiquity. The history of ideas, also, occupied the same important place in Adams' thinking that it had in 1765 and after.

Second, it is notable that both statesmen were speaking in tones of aggressive nationalism. Adams' greatest biographer has said he be-

³ Vid. letters, 16 February, 1814, 25 June, 1814, 23 August, 1815, *infra*.

longed more to New England than to America.⁴ In 1812, however, the country was at war; Adams essentially disagreed with the dominant attitude in New England toward that war; he no longer was embroiled in the battles of political parties; he looked upon our fight against England as a struggle for great liberal principles. His thoughts turned away from his characteristic parochialism, if such it were, and he was caught up in the wave of national pride and national altruism which swept up and down the country. It is not often enough pointed out that the war of 1812 figured largely in the development of an America self-conscious in things of the mind as well as in matters of the pocketbook. It was to be assumed that Adams, never unaffected by the currents of thought moving about him, should strongly express the viewpoint of a country united north and south and in the new west in a defense against the armies and the cultures of the old world. To this attitude he gave full rein in his letters to Rush. There was in his reflections on the war something of the same idealism expressed by those who considered America's mission in a later war "to make the world safe for democracy"; there was something also of the nationalism which chauvinists of a century poorer in language and possibly less cosmopolitan have chosen to epitomize in the terse phrase, "buy American."

Iowa City

J. H. POWELL

I

Sir

Encouraged by the very flattering permission you have given me, I am venturing to say to you in the form of a letter, (a liberty which I hope you will pardon,) that I have read the "review of the works of Fisher Ames." And I must be allowed to say, that I have read it with the pleasure naturally belonging to the perusal of so able a performance. Although I carefully treasure up every thing that comes from the same pen, yet it had been my misfortune to miss this piece; which however I ought not now to regret, as it has turned out a double gratification to me to have obtained it through your condescending kindness in transmitting it to my father on my account. Its genius and its spirit are well supported by its sound sense, its eloquence, and its erudition. It holds up to deserved reprobation doctrines, which, to my

⁴ Chinard, *op. cit.*, *supra*.

mind at least, are alike weak and vicious; whilst those which it inculcates are founded upon the enlarged views of a patriot and statesman. The just censure, mixed with the poignant satire, which it inflicts upon a set of opinions so hostile to every thing American, is combined with a masterly defence of the principles of our government and the character of our country. The style is raised to the highest tone of elegance and vigour, uniting fancy and taste to a train of reasoning energetick and unanswerable. I have read it three times over, and could wish that it had a place in every house in the United States, and that its principles pervaded every American bosom. Although indeed a short work, from the rich mind of the author, yet I think that as well its matter as its manner conspire to class it among the standard productions of our country and our language. As a composition it cannot be read without pleasure, and it has done, and will do, good.

I cannot let go this opportunity without adding that, as one of the circle of my fathers fire-side, it is allowed to me to share in seeing the letters which your valued correspondence occasionally brings to him. Brought up in sentiments of hereditary veneration for the source whence they come, to me they are rich repasts of instruction and delight. But I must say, that I prize the last more than any, since it is under the shield of it that I have claimed the honour to address you in this way.

Permit me, Sir, to offer my most respectful wishes for the continuance of your health, and that your illustrious life may long be spared to your country and your friends.

Richard Rush.

Philadelphia

Jan 4th. 1811.

Quincy January 15. 1811

Dear Sir

In the middle of a Letter to Petersbourg⁵ this Morning M^r Adams came in and invited me to take a ride, in the beautiful Sleighing We have at this moment, to last perhaps two days like two such opportunities as We have had before this Winter and then be melted away; we took the Post office in our Course, and there I found your beautiful Letter of the 4th of this month. On my return I continued my Letter

⁵ John Quincy Adams had been at his Russian post since October, 1809.

to my Son, and extracted your Elogium upon his Pamphlet,⁶ without mentioning your Name, and concluded with Advising him, if he should ever write or read Lectures upon Oratory again, never more to doubt of the Talents of Americans at Panegyrick, This Work as you observe "is raised," in its style "to the highest Tone of Elegance, and so are several others of his prosaick Compositions. In his Lectures he found his advantage in it: for never were Lectures attended with more Unanimity or heard with more perfect Attention or applauded with more Admiration or Enthusiasm. He once indulged in this style, I thought, beyond what was judicious; I mean in his Report to the Senate of the U. S. concerning John Smith the Preacher and Senator and Friend of Coll Burr.⁷ State Papers should be in a more simple strain. I have ever thought that M^r Burkes Articles of Impeachment against Warren Hastings were much too eloquent and oratorical.

M^r Adams's Speeches in the Senate of this Commonwealth and in the Senate of The United States as well as at the Bar, have always been in a Strain of cool Reasoning without any Affectation of ornament or Effort at any uncommon Elegance. Simplicity, Perspecuity and Precision are the predominant Characteristicks of his Style in Conversation as well as in all his extemporaneous Discourses in Public. His public orations have been raised, a little and from his ardent Love of Poetry I have often wondered that more of it has not appeared in his Speeches. His head is full of the Poets.⁸ I never knew a Man more universally read and studied in the English Poets. There is scarcely one in the Language that he has not attentively read. He is too much of a Poet himself, for a Statesman. It has cost him some Pains to restrain his Propensity for the Muses: and yet he has spent too much time in their Company. Oberon of Wieland has been translated by him from the German into English, and I have compared many Parts of it with Sotheby's, and Although Sotheby is unquestionably one of the best English Versifyers I am at a loss to determine which Translation

⁶ In 1810 two volumes of lectures he had delivered in his chair of rhetoric and oratory at Harvard were published. J. Q. Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*, 1810.

⁷ J. Q. Adams' report on Senator John Smith and his connection with the Burr conspiracy was one of the many incidents in which he exhibited the same sort of lack of party allegiance which had always characterized his father, and which eventually made it possible for Senator Pickering to force his resignation.

⁸ Cf. his volume, *Poems of Religion and Society*, which appeared in 1848.

is the best [*sic*].⁹ His Translation of some Parts of Juvenal are fully equal and in some Books Superiour to Giffords.¹⁰ I hope you will not think him too much of a Schollar for a Statesman.

You, and all the World will suspect me, as I suspect myself of parental Partiality. But though I have endeavoured to divest myself of every bias and every Prejudice, I cannot see otherwise.

Cicero in this Case wanted not a Cicero to do Justice to his Eloquence for the Style of your Letter is fully equal to that of the Subject of it.

My Letters to your Father are fit to be seen only by him and his Fire Side as friendly as him.¹¹

They are the momentary and Spontaneous Effusions of good humour and ill humour and idle humour just as it happens. I dare say I should be very much ashamed of them if I should ever read them.

I wish you every Blessing and shall be much obliged to you for your Correspondence. I wish there may be as long a Friendship between you and my son as there has been between the Fathers; and that you may be able to bring Pensilvania and Massachusetts nearer together in sentiment and affection than they have been for twenty years past. They were not always at variance. Present my respectful Compliments to your Parents and your Lady¹² and believe me your

Sincere Friend

John Adams

Richard Rush Esq.

Philadelphia January 27th. 1811.

I was more gratified Sir, than I can express at the letter which you did me the honor to write to me. The very evening before it came to hand I had finished reading, in course, the last of the lectures upon

⁹ Christoph Martin Wieland's romantic epic *Oberon*, published in 1780, was his greatest poetic achievement, the climax of his middle life. William Sotheby translated it into English first in 1798; in a second edition in 1805. He also wrote a blank-verse masque based upon it, *Oberon or Huon of Bordeaux*. John Quincy Adams translated the epic, beginning in the fall of 1797, while he was living at Berlin as American Minister to Prussia.

¹⁰ William Gifford's *Juvenal* appeared in 1802.

¹¹ Fourteen letters from John Adams to Benjamin Rush were published in *The Works of John Adams* (Charles Francis Adams, ed.), Volumes I, IX, and X.

¹² Richard Rush was married to Catherine E. Murray on 29 August, 1809.

rhetoric and oratory, which for several weeks had occasionally yielded me great delight during the intervals of a busy profession. The just and often original reflections which they contain; their stores of well-arranged learning; above all, the high moral tone upon which they are set make them, I think, the best present which has yet been given to American literature. The youth of Massachusetts, as well as those of Pennsylvania, will, I hope, study them as models of scholarship and taste; while the incidental praise which they bestow upon our own institutions will serve as well to engender patriotism, as the classical spirit which marks them throughout cannot fail to awaken, wherever they are studied, a relish for letters. I cannot Sir, adopt the sentiment that the author is too much of a poet for a statesman. The poets are the finest writers. They are the best philosophers too, for theirs is the philosophy of nature and the mind. Their very art is eloquence. If they are not practical statesmen they at least know how, by their precepts, to form them. I believe it is Johnson who says, that the *Iliad* is the first production of the human mind, and we may ask where is the prose composition that has lived so long, or in all ages ranked so high. But Sir, to prove that [the] two characters are compatible I will not longer forbear to seize the most apposite illustration by taking the instance before me, where my only hesitation is whether to place the scholar before the statesman, or the statesman before the scholar.

Burke's articles of impeachment are, as you observe, too oratorical for the subject. Such style in state papers, is what physicians term erro[illegible]lvir. Perhaps the same remark may be haz[ard]ed as to his orations, which may be regarded rather as splendid compositions, than as speeches suited to avail much in their application to the immediate objects and business of a nation. They are, indeed, monuments of genius and skill solid as well as glittering; but perhaps too universal in their matter, too abstracted from the trains of common thought, too ornate, too ethical, and often too wise to have worked much, at the hour of delivery, upon a house of commons. The bold, downright, palpable, mind of Chatham wielded that body better.

If any thing could draw together more closely the cords of our union it ought to be the sentiments expressed under this head in the Review of Mr Ames's works. But greatly do I fear that Mr Quincy, and others of that stamp, have not a full veneration for such sentiments. To you Sir, your country would look for admonitions upon this

subject should it, unhappily, too soon have to need them; and permit me to add that the power which flows from wisdom never ceases to have its force. Your kind letters to my father are considered and treated, as the treasures of friendship.

I can still remember with pleasure the days when, as a boy, I was sometimes honoured with Mrs Adams's notice. On this footing I will close my page by asking permission to make my most respectful compliments to her, and to yourself I renew the offerings of my utmost respect.

Richard Rush.

The Hon: John Adams.

Quincy February 3^d. 1811

I have read, my dear sir, with great pleasure your elegant Eulogium, in your favour of the 27th of January on the Lectures and Character of our Minister in Russia. The Reviewers in our Boston Anthology and in the Portfolio of Philadelphia, wanting your Partiality in favour of the Man and his political Principles, have been more avaricious of their Praise, and more liberal in minute Criticisms. Not a few indeed of their Observations are just and are acknowledged by him to be so: but I think they have been very stingy in their applauses of the beauties of the work, and very niggardly in their Allowances for a work produced in so short a time, and amidst avocations of Business publick and private which necessarily occupied more than half his *Time*

It is not likely they will ever be printed in England or sent over by any Friend to be reviewed in London or Edinbourg. They may be sent by an Enemy, and if they should be, I expect sneers and sarcasms and coarse Jokes in abundance: though I would answer for it with my Life that neither their Blair¹³ nor their Ward¹⁴ are worth so much.

It is remarkable that Nothing of his has been published, without producing snarling abuse. His Travels in Silesia,¹⁵ were treated by the Scotts, with much Levity and with all their natural, characteristick,

¹³ Hugh Blair, 1718-1800, first regius professor of rhetoric and belles lettres at Edinburgh. His *Lectures*, in five volumes, published from 1783 to 1801, went through their tenth edition in 1806.

¹⁴ John Ward, 1679-1755, professor of rhetoric at Gresham college, author of two standard works: *Four Essays upon the English Language* (London, 1758); and *A System of Oratory*, two volumes, 1759.

¹⁵ John Quincy Adams, *Letters on Silesia* (London, 1804), trans. J. Dupuy (Paris, 1807).

fastidious Antipathy to every Thing out of Scotland and especially to every Thing American.

Those Travels have been translated into German and into French; and reviewed and abused in both those Languages, as much nearly as they have been in English and Scottish. There is a disposition in all Europe to vilify every Thing American, which originates at bottom from a Jealousy and Envy of this happy growing Country.

Having all my Lifetime been delighted with Poetry, tho' no Poet, I cannot but esteem you the more, for your congenial Feelings and Taste. But in what sense is Johnsons, off hand dictum of the Iliad, true? It is like Humes, that The oration of Demosthenes for the Crown, is the most perfect of all human Compositions. Are the works of Homer, taken all together, before the works of Aristotle or Cicero, or Sir Isaac Newton or even Mr. Lock? Are they before The Art of Navigation in all its Branches? Are they before Euclids Elements? We should recollect too that the works of Homer as we have them are not the Production of one Mind. Lycurgus made one Collection of the scattered Rhapsodies of Homer; Solon made another; and Pysistratus, who though a Tyrant, was also a Louis or a Napoleon for the Encouragement of Litterature made a third, and a more solem Compilation of Homer. He assembled all the most learned Men in Greece; who had before them the Collections of Solon Lycurgus and all others, and they arranged them in their own way and probably left out what they pleased and added what they chose, corrected and amended according to the Taste the Manners and Religion of the Times. It was to become the Sacred Book; the Standard of Religion for the Greeks. The Illiad therefore is not the Effort of one Mind, like Miltons Paradise Lost. And should you or I dare to say that the Iliad even as we have it is a more perfect production of Mind that [*sic*] Milton?

I agree however that Homer is a Magazine of Arts, Science and Letters and a Nursery of Heroes and Statesmen, as well as of Philosophers and Moralists.

Your Observations on Burke and Chatham, are made with great Judgement and nice Discrimination. Burke never carried a Point, and Chatham, though vastly inferiour in knowledge and rather a national Minister than a wise one, Seldom failed, and even when he failed he always made a vast Impression.

Our Union is, or ought to be held a Sacred Thing. Upon this Prin-

ciple I rejoiced in the Purchase of Louisiana, and thought it one of the wisest, though the boldest Measures of Mr Jeffersons Administration. The Union could not have been preserved without it. The Transmontanes would have joined the English or the Spaniards or Set up an Independence, without it, for the Navigation of the Mississippi, was as essential to their Welfare, as the Fisheries and Navigation in general to New England. In the Union I comprehended the Southern and Western States as much as the Northern and Eastern, and middle or intermediate States. It was and is the Duty of the President and Congress to cherrish equally the Interest of all. I confess however, that I had doubts whether the constitution had made Provisions sufficiently explicit to embrace the object and approved of my Sons Proposition to refer it to the States, who would then I doubt not have Sanctioned it.

M^r Quincy is very confident that the Convention had no Idea of Admitting into the Union any Countries without the Limits of the then thirteen States.¹⁶ I am not. That they had not a glimps of Foresight of the Purchase of Louisiana or a moments contemplation of erecting new States beyond the Mississippi, I fully believe. But that they had no Eye to the Floridas, or to Canada and Nova Scotia, I am not so clear. M^r Quincy is too young to have a distant Recollection of the State of Things in 1787. Our affairs with England were deeply embroiled; neither Party had fullfilled the Treaty of Peace. The English held a Chain of Forts and Garrisons all along our Frontier clearly within our Territory. The Negroes were not returned nor paid for. The old British Debts were not paid, and positive Laws existed in almost all the States against their Recovery. A War with England was apprehended on both sides. It was therefore scarcely possible that the Convention should not have thought of Canada and Nova Scotia. But if they really meant to give Power to receive such states they ought to have been more explicit, and to have inserted more detailed Limitations and Restrictions.

¹⁶ Senator Josiah Quincy had given a speech in Congress, 14 Jan., 1811, opposing the admission of Louisiana as a state by majority vote of the Congress, saying, unless unanimous consent of the original states could be secured, "I am compelled to declare it as my deliberate opinion that . . . the bonds of this Union are virtually dissolved; that the States which compose it are free from their moral obligations; and that as it will be the right of all, so it will be the duty of some to prepare definitely for a separation—amicably, if they can; violently if they must." (*Italics omitted.*) It was this speech to which Adams referred. Professor Morison's sketch of President Quincy in the *D. A. B.*, XV, beginning at p. 308, should be consulted.

M^r Quincy is one of the fairest Characters, and most respectable Men in this Commonwealth. His Connections, his Fortune his Education and his Talents, may compare with the proudest Son of North America, without suffering very much. He speaks the Sense of his Constituents and is a faithful Representative. But his Constituents are the Town of Boston, once the very Nursery of Patriotism, but now I think deceived into too great a Partiality for England and too great a Fear of France.

In the Ardour of his Vis Rhetorica, I think he ventured beyond the Line of Prudence, in some of his Expressions; but the Freedom of Debate is as Sacred as the Union: and though I think M^r Poindexters answer to him a very able one,¹⁷ he did neither Justice to his Cause nor to M^r Quincy by his Uncourtly and unparliamentary Personalities against M^r Quincy and his Constituents. I have Scarcely room to Subscribe the Name of your Friend

John Adams

R. Rush E^q.

M^{rs}. A. desires me to say that She recollects you and your Brothers and Sisters with great Pleasure and with the Sentiments of uninterrupted Friendship for Six or Seven and thirty years, for the whole Family, to whom in all the Branches she wishes every Blessing

Philadelphia April 8th. 1811.

A day or two before I had the pleasure to receive your last valued favor of the 3rd of February, the governor of this state was pleased to honor me with the commission of attorney general. It so happened that, at that moment our criminal courts here were upon the eve of sitting, which suddenly threw upon me a good deal of publick business. This is the chief cause to which I owe the loss, until now, of the gratification which I must ever feel in being allowed to address a letter to you. This new situation has opened to me a field of interesting and arduous duty, which I meet at present with unfeigned distrust. I am afraid sir, that, with some honorable exceptions, neither the lawyers, the scholars, or the statesmen of our country, study as long or as profoundly as they should. How prodigious, in most instances, was the industry of the antients? and in Europe, their men of literary and pro-

¹⁷ George Poindexter, delegate to Congress from the Mississippi Territory, was the chief opponent of Quincy's disunion doctrines.

fessional eminence are generally formed by intense and long-protracted labor in early life. Here the academick course is commonly as nothing, and then starting in whatever we are to be at twenty one, and sometimes sooner, the opportunities of further advancement in studious researches are too frequently cut short. The men among us whom we proudly compare to the best examples of antient or modern greatness must, I think, be rare instances of resolute diligence and resolute genius. I tremble at the magnitude of the trust committed to my hands, when I recollect how much I have to learn, and how unfriendly to all plans of study are the intrusions [*sic*] of daily and hourly business. As some alleviation, may I be permitted to ask, whether the profession of the law is not a more liberal one, in our country, than in England. It has struck me in looking into the reporters of the different states that our discussions go more upon principles and not so uniformly upon precedent as they are wont to in England. There a law-argument is seldom more than an arrangement, in chronological order, of the cases determined upon the same point. Here I have thought the lawyer ventures more into general reasoning and talks of the nature and ends of jurisprudence. This may possibly arise from his mixed and dissultory education, being a politician as well as a lawyer and, not unfrequently perhaps, having had a share in making the very law of which he seeks to direct the application. Or, may it be that he is less read in the cases?

To you Sir, who once trod the vantage ground of this profession until higher and more useful aims called you from it, its dignity, its importance and its brightest ways are known. To you then may one who has just stepped upon its threshold look up and ask what are some of the great rules that should, in one of these rising republicks, direct the studies, the employment, the obligations, that open to him.—

I partook, largely, of the universal and high satisfaction which flowed from the late appointment to the bench of the supreme court of the United States. May it be the means of restoring him soon to your society, and to the service of his country at home.

With ardent wishes for the continuance of your health, I beg leave to tender to you the homage of my most devoted and respectful attachment.

Richard Rush

The Honorable John Adams.

Quincy. April 14. 1811

Dear Sir

Though your Letters give me great Pleasure, I should regret the Receipt even of your favour of the 8th of this month if I could think it had diverted your Attention a moment from the Duties of your office or even from the practice and profits of your Profession. Your Office is one of the most necessary and important in Society.¹⁸ A public Accusor is the Guardian of the Morals as well as Property Characters and Lives of the People: and Integrity Fortitude and Humanity are no where more indispensable, and appear, no where to greater Advantage

Thirty seven years ago, by the Command of my Country I broke off at once, from a very full practice at the Bar; and as it has appeared since, never to resume it, or any part of it. From a Man in his Sixteenth Lustre, who has been inattentive to the Theory and practice of the Law for thirty seven Years; you cannot reasonably expect any Advice or assistance of much Consequence.

When I began the Study of the Law, in 1755, at Worcester in the office of Col. James Putnam, it was crabbed and discouraging enough. It then appeared the rugged Mountain of Virtue, in comparison with which it now appears the flowing path of Pleasure in the Fable of Prodiens. It was not till 1760 or 1761, two or three years after I had been Admitted and Sworn at the Bar, that Mr Gridley¹⁹ shewed me and lent me Blackstones inaugural oration and Analysis, the first Copy that ever arrived in Boston. Charmed with this I seized the first opportunity to purchase his Law Tracts and Commentaries as soon as they appeared.

I am not competent to determine whether your Observations concerning the Lawyers in this Country or in England are well founded or not.

The most eminent Lawyers in my Youth in Boston were Jeremiah Gridley and Benjamin Prati who was a Pupil of Gridley and James Otis who was also a Pupil of Gridley.

Gridleys Plan of Study was comprehensive. In the common Law

¹⁸ Richard Rush was Attorney General of Pennsylvania from January to November, 1811.

¹⁹ Jeremiah Gridley, 1701/2-1767, lawyer, editor, Masonic leader, teacher, Attorney General of Massachusetts. He argued for the government in the Writs of Assistance case in 1761.

Bracton Britton Fleta Glanville Littleton-Coke, Hale Pemberton, Holt, Fortescue Saunders, &c The Year Books &c Plowdens Commentaries &c

In the Law of Nature and Nations Puffendorf Grotius Barbeyrae Heinecius, Burlamaqui &c and Vattel.

In the Civil Law The Corpus Juris, Domat, Vinnius, Cujacius and a multitude without Number of other Commentators.²⁰ Gridley advised a general Knowledge of the Cannon Law.

In Ethicks and Morals every Thing that was ever written ancient and modern, Sermons and all. It was a favourite saying of Gridley that a Lawyer ought never to be without a Book of Moral Philosophy on his Table.

None of the Masters in my younger Years ever prescribed The Science of Government or the History necessary to acquire it: which I think an essential defect in their Scheme of Education. Acherleys Brittanic Constitution,²¹ Nat. Bacons Discourses were read by some, not many. De Lolme²² was read by a few when that appeared. Bolingbokes political writings were scarcely known: and when Blackstone appeared, that was thought to be enough.

The appearance of Lord Mansfield and the many fine Writers with him and after him have made the Law easier and more agreeable: but I have not been very conversant with any of them.

As far as I have observed, the Profession of the Law is on a more liberal Footing in America than in England; and the Education to it, extends deeper and wider into the Principles in Nature of all Laws

Industry and Labour are indispensable, and these if not pursued to the Injury of Health will overcome all Difficulties

All the Writers on the Crown Law in England are necessary to be studied; though we have a very different Code. The great Law of Treason, requires to be investigated with great Care. Our Constitution has limited it, very much. But the Definition of "Levying War against the United States" is left to be discovered in British Precedents, and these perhaps are not all consistent. What is the Object of Treason?

²⁰ The Catalogue of John Adams' Library published by the Boston Public Library in 1917 may be consulted to determine which editions of these works he used.

²¹ Published in 1727, with a second edition in 1759, written as a defense of the accession of William III and the Hanoverian succession.

²² DeLolme's *Constitution de l'Angleterre* was translated into English in 1772.

To Subvert the Government. What is the Government? the Constitution? or the Administration? Quo Animo? If the Intention be only to get a new administration at the next Election, is that Treason? If the Intention be to get a particular Law only repealed, is that Treason? If a sudden Freak, or turn of Imagination, should direct a Company of Men in Arms, to resist a particular officer or the Execution of a particular Law, without any formal design or general Concert to subvert the Constitution or the Administration, would this be Treason?

High Handed Trespasses and atrocious Rescues may be committed and may be and ought to be punished but not always as Treason. The Idea of Treason comprehends more, and is much more extensive in my Mind than it seems to be in the sense of many others.

Tryals for Treason Shake Governments and Nations to their foundations and should always be managed with infinite Caution. We shall have enough of it, in this Country if We are not upon our Guard. Virginia, Pensilvania and The Massachusetts have already brought Us, so near the Brink, that a very little matter more, might have precipitated Us down the Precipice.

With great and sincere Esteem, I am, Sir, your Friend and Servant

John Adams

Richard Rush Esq^r

Washington July 10th. 1812.

Respected Sir.

I beg you will do me the honor to accept a copy of a discourse I delivered on the 4th of July at this place.

The present crisis of our country, Sir, is most momentous; but it seems greatly to be feared that the powerful and intelligent state of Massachusetts will not yield her zealous cooperation to the nation in its present struggle.

With constant wishes for your health and happiness allow me, Sir, to subscribe myself,

with the utmost respect,
your attached and
obt. Sevt.

Richard Rush.

Hon: John Adams.

Quincy July 31. 1812

Dear Sir

I have received your kind Letter of the 18th of this month with your Oration on the 4th.²³

Your Oration was first read to me, by the oldest Colonel in the continental Army now living; who has commanded Wilkinson²⁴ and Brooks,²⁵ whose blood flowed in the revolutionary War, and whose crippled Limb, tho not lost may be compared to Uncle Toby's. The Veteran exclaimed "This young Gentleman, makes my old blood fly through my Veins as it did when I was young." The Oddity of the Circumstance induces me to note it

I have since read it by myself, with more serious deliberation; and I think it worthy of the orator and his Father; worthy of the Sacred Temple in which it was pronounced, worthy of the August Audience assembled to hear it; and worthy of the great Cause in which We are engaged.

The Anecdotes of Hancock and Gadsden excited more sensibility than you can conceive. Names that I never hear or read but with Tenderness and Reverence. When will the Character of Hancock be understood? Never. I could melt into Tears when I hear his Name. The Property he possessed when his Country called him, would purchase Washington and Franklin both. If Benevolence, Charity, Generosity were ever personified in North America, they were in John Hancock. What shall I say of his Education? his literary Acquisitions, his Travels, his military civil and political services? His sufferings and sacrifices? I dare not say even to you, at this time what I think and what I know.

"The Co operation of the powerful and intelligent State of Massachusetts might have been commanded by the national Government, and may still. A Vote of Congress to build a few Frigates would have had the Effect. And it would, next November. I can say no more. New England has been injured and ill treated; and they have sense and

²³ In November, 1811, Rush had been appointed Comptroller of the Treasury; on Independence Day, 1812, the administration put him forward to defend the war with England. His speech was temperate, argumentative, and closely reasoned, well received by the country at large.

²⁴ General James Wilkinson, 1757-1825, who was in a key position in the northern campaign at this time.

²⁵ John Brooks, 1752-1825, "the last Federalist," adjutant-general of Massachusetts.

Feeling. I am determined to stand or fall with the national Government: but I can see and feel the Wrong, the cruel and unprincipled and unfeeling Wrong, that has been done to this section of the Union.

With the best Wishes for your Success in Life and an high Esteem of your Talents and worth I am your sincere Friend and Ob[edient] Servant

John Adams

Richard Rush Esq^r
Controulr of the Treasury
Washington

Quincy May 5. 1813

My dear Sir

In what terms can I address you? There are none that can express my Sympathy with you and your Family, or my own personal Feelings on the loss of your excellent Father.²⁶ There is not another Person, out of my own Family, who can die, in whom my personal Happiness can be so deeply affected. The World would pronounce me extravagant and no Man would apologize for me if I should say that in the Estimation of unprejudiced Philosophy, he has done more good in this World than Franklin or Washington. . . .

I hope you are, or are soon to be, Secretary of the Treasury. And should be glad to know, who is, in reality at the Head of that important Department.²⁷ . . .

John Adams

Richard Rush Esq^r
Comptrouler of the Treasury
of U S.

Washington June 6th. 1813.

Dear and Respected Sir.

It was only the day before yesterday that Mr Andrew Eliot handed me your letter dated the 5th of May. Although you do not speak of him as being particularly known to you yet the bare circumstance of his bringing a letter to me from your hand was gratifying, and constitutes

²⁶ Dr. Benjamin Rush died 19 April, 1813.

²⁷ Gallatin, beset by criticism and opposition on all sides, seized upon the Czar of Russia's offer of mediation between England and the United States to ask of the President the mission extraordinary to St. Petersburg. He was to spend the next few years in Peace Commissions abroad.

the highest claim to my attention to him. As yet I have seen him but once when he delivered it to me; but in whatever way I can facilitate the business that brought him here it will afford me great pleasure to do so.

Your endearing expressions of my departed father were very cordial to my heart. Out of his own immediate family every member of it well knows that there lived no man in all that related to whom he took so deep, so constant, and so affectionate an interest as yourself. Your illustrious services, your illustrious virtues, and the many other tittles to his ardent and unalterable esteem for you, all the members of his family have had impressed upon them, unalterably too I hope, by his frequent repetitions. It was my peculiar affliction to have been away from him for more than a year before his death; nor, (so rapid was the progress of his disease) could I be in time to receive his dying blessing. I reached his disconsolate house just as the funeral obsequies were over, and the gates of the tomb shut forever upon me.

Mr Jones, the secretary of the Navy, is the acting secretary of the Treasury in the absence of Mr Gallatin; though, in truth, it is merely a nominal power that he will exercise. Few men are so thoroughly men of business as Mr Gallatin; he left nothing in arrears when he went away, and this, with skilful clerks in his office drilled by long practice, and very precise and full instructions for all matters which he left behind, will enable its common business to go on well enough, with Mr Jones's mere signature to give it the official stamp. All the tax bills which it is probable you will soon see reported were drawn up by Mr Gallatin previously to his departure; and so of the late Treasury report and statement sent into Congress under Mr Jones's name as acting secretary. Yet, Mr Gallatin's absence at such a time as the present is considered by many a disadvantage. Should he get back, and with a treaty, as he hoped to do, by Christmas, all may be well. But should he be kept longer it appears to me there may be some embarrassment to the business of his department. With all your kind opinions, Sir, I am by far too great a tyro for its present labours and responsibilities.

You, Sir, who can never cease to think of your country, and who have lent the sanction of your name to the justice of the war it is engaged in, cannot fail to derive satisfaction from the improved posture of our publick affairs and the late successes of our arms. The army is filling up fast, the treasury is well supplied and most probably will

continue to be so, the majority on the side of the government is stronger in congress than on the declaration of war, the state of New York has fallen in with Pennsylvania and Virginia and the prospect of prosecuting the war with vigor and success now apparently as good as I believe the determination so to prosecute it is certainly taken.

With those sentiments of veneration that belong to your character, and at the same time with the most respectful personal attachment, allow me to subscribe myself your youthful friend—

Richard Rush.

Honorable John Adams.

Quincy June 13th 1813

Dear Sir

Your kind Letter of the 6th has interested me more than any one I have received since my last from your Father both by the important information, in it and especially by exciting the tender recollection of that great and good Man, and reviving all my sensibility of his loss. I miss him every day and almost every hour. It is even a consolation to me that I cannot miss him long.

But I must change the subject. To be one of the most indefatigable of Men, both in business and studies, has been an acknowledged Character of M^r Gallatin for the twenty odd years that I have known his name: and while I rejoice that he has left his department in such order, I cannot expect his return by Christmas. Negotiations spin out, and especially those for peace meet with many unforeseen Embarrassments. Forms and Ceremonies, Ettiquette and Feasts and Parties consume time. Such is the World, of which We are and must be a part. As I presume M^r Gallatin cannot return, I wish that you could take his place, as sincerely as I rejoiced at the Appointment of your Brother to the Mint.

The Taxes are now indispensable, and as I lament that they were ever repealed, and that in a great measure by M^r Gallatins influence, I must own you have given me a little sarcastical delight by assuring me that M^r Gallatin has been converted, and convinced of the necessity of reviving them. There is a little vanity, and I fear some resentment in this: but to be serious, without vanity or ill nature, I cordially approve of the restoration of the system. Indeed I have never doubted its Utility or necessity for the Defence, Safety and independence of the Nation.

Though I am happy in the improved Posture of our public affairs, yet I rejoice with trembling. We must expect reverses. I am most anxious for the Lakes. Whether we have Wooden Walls and floating Castles on the Ocean or not, We must have them on the inland Waters, till Canada is Ours. One million afloat on those fresh water seas, will save ten millions in Armies and Militia and Voluntiers. One Life hazarded by Water will save twenty on Land. If We are not sensible of the Utility, CEconomy and Policy of relying on this Arm; our Enemy is fully aware of it, and We shall feel, We shall Smart, and to revive an old, but not forgotten expression, We shall "repent in dust and Ashes" our own improvidence.

It is News to me that New York "has fallen in with Pennsylvania and Virginia." It has been understood here, that N. Y. had returned to New England. I will be very frank with you, "my young friend" as you condescend to call yourself. I have thought for twelve years, that Pensilvania and New York, have been impolitick, in devoting themselves so entirely to Virginia. Yet in the present Posture of Affairs and State of Parties, I cannot but wish that the Union of those States may continue and New England join them.

But I want Explanations. Have the Senators of N. Y. joined with P. and V.? have the Representatives of N. Y. joined with those of P. and V.? Has M^r Clinton joined with Mr Monroe? Is M^r Monroe to be V. P. and M^r Clinton P.? Or is M^r Clinton to be P. and M^r Monroe V. P. How is M^r King disposed of? I care not a farthing how these Puppet [*sic*] are danced, provided the Union be preserved and the Nation defended.

I beg your pardon. I know you cannot and you ought not to answer these questions, without reserve. But you and your Contemporaries ought to be arroused to reflection. This Country is on the brink of a precipice.

The Post has been faithful to me for 12. years. I believe it will be faithful to you. But you may depend on my Confidence. Be reserved! Be cautious! but be faithful. Excuse the impertinence of Age and believe me

your Friend

John Adams

Richard Rush Esq^r
Controulr of the Treasury of
the United States.

Washington June 29. 1813.

Dear Sir.

Your kind letter of the 13th has gratified me very much.

When I spoke of New York having joined in with Pennsylvania and Virginia, I alluded to the issue of the late election for governor there. From a variety of local causes existing in that state, this last election seems to have been the only one they have had since the war began which fairly brought to a test the relative numbers of the war and peace parties. I understand that the election in every county was staked upon that issue, and from governor Tompkins's success I infer that the publick sentiment there is for standing by the nation in this contest, in like manner with that of Pennsylvania and Virginia. Her present representatives in congress, indeed, chosen under the operation of the scisms of the last fall, or before they had healed, and while the anger of the Presidential election was still left, are very hostile, with only a few exceptions. So of her senators. These few are very confident in their opinions that an election now for representatives could not fail to give a very different result from that of the spring. The majority now in and opposed to the war, to be sure say otherwise; but the former seem to be corroborated by governor Tompkins's election.

Nobody, Sir, has so good a right to rejoice in the efficacy of our little navy, and its triumphs, as you, for you led the way to it all. What you say about the lakes is irresistible. To me it is equally strange and lamentable that we have not now the command of them. I know the President to be so convinced upon this subject, that I heard him say last fall if the British built thirty frigates upon them we ought to build forty. Yet we are close upon July and Sir James Yeo is defying us on Ontario, and we dare not look out upon Erie. We must hope this will not long be.

I think with you that Mr Gallatin cannot get back by Christmas although he was very sanguine. Mr King told me a few days ago that Mr Jay began his treaty in June, and yet, although they worked at it constantly, it was not finished until November. May not Mr Gallatin and Mr Adams be as long? Is it sure they will make one at all? The only point is impressment; and as to this the dispute stands upon the same ground it has ever done, with the single exception of the seaman's bill of last winter. Will the English yield, this law having been passed?

A good deal of difficulty has been made in the senate about Mr Gallatins nomination; but the better opinion is he will pass by a small vote. The President still declines to fill the office with a new appointment, retaining Mr Jones as the acting secretary ad interim.

Congress are busily engaged with the tax bills today. These too, Sir, will pass giving another triumph to the policy of 1798. The Massachusetts remonstrance was read yesterday in the senate.

You have a claim, coeval with your life, to know what your country is doing, and many more and much stronger claim upon it than this. To be accepted as your Washington correspondent is a source of great gratification to me. The sight of your hand, too, will serve to keep up the pleasure I so often knew from it in my lamented father's time.

Believe me, venerable Sir, your devoted friend.

Richard Rush.

Hon: John Adams.

Washington August 2. 1813

Dear Sir.

It is no interference with my publick employments to write to you. I can command some portion of almost every day, and the priviledge of using it in this way is most gratifying to me.

Michiavel says war ought to be the only study of a prince. We shall indeed, Sir, be taught, by terrible experience, that it must henceforth be more the study of our republick. One of our Colonels told me not long since that, on the lines last fall, under the proclamation general Smythe, out of broken parts of three regiments conjoined into one, amounting in the whole to about seven hundred, there was not a man fit to make a sergeant or corporal; not one who could serve as bugleman; not a single one who had ever served as a soldier before, or had the least notion of the business; and every officer, he added, from the Colonel (himself) downwards—without a single exception—was as ignorant, and unable to give any just instruction. In no country in the world, perhaps, could a similar fact occur. It was not so at the commencement of our glorious little revolution. At least I imagine it was not. Then, there had been but an interval of about 15 years since the French war, and soldiers I presume, as well as officers, foreign and native who knew something of the business of fighting, were to be found scattered about the colonies, as stragglers if no more. But now

there are none of any sort. With the heartiest desire, I believe, and with every practicable effort, to wage the war with effect, it would seem as if the present government could not. The country has been searched all over, throughout all classes and parties, with the mere view, I am sure, to get the best officers it affords to command our troops. Omissions there may have been in this respect, but I fancy from ignorance only, if any. General North, of New York, was offered a command; Governor Ogden, of New Jersey; Governor Davy, of North Carolina: these all refused. Major Pinckney, of South Carolina, has accepted. Winder was the first federal lawyer of Baltimore, or as good as the first. He had genius, military ambition, had been addicted to military studies, and the best hopes were formed of him. I could name others. Yet, under all, disgrace seems to be our portion; defeat certainly. The troops have now been well recruited; are well fed, well clothed, well paid, and led one after another, sometimes too in sight of a beaten enemy, under the yoke of capitulation! The hint in your letter seems to resolve it all, and I know no other way. By the thirty years of indolent, improvident, peace the art of war has gone from among us. Even now we are the plovers, the pigeons, the very brants, you describe. The error seems to me less a present one, than the total neglect heretofore of all military knowledge and affairs in our country. Mr Madison rides out, and attends to business again. His long sickness has pulled him down a good deal, but I hope he is permanently recovered from this attack.

The publick always sieze with avidity every thing that is supposed to come from the pen of Mr J. Q. Adams now that he is abroad. His communications to you at present must be of peculiar interest. I heard Mr Gallatin drop a hint before he went away (derived, possibly, through Mr Daschkoff, though I know not) that the violent friendship between England and Russia was not to last long. The present events in Europe do not take from the probability of this. The French minister, in whose company I was yesterday, thinks a peace will follow the armistice. But, like the rest of us, I suppose he can only guess as yet.

With respectful and constant devotion, I am yours,

Richard Rush.

Hon: President Adams.

Washington August 5. 1813.

Dear Sir.

I have taken the liberty to copy for your eye the enclosed lines, written by St. George Tucker of Virginia, on being asked why he had ceased to court the inspirations of the muse. They struck me as very touching and beautiful both as to sentiment and manner. If you have not seen them before, perhaps they may afford you a few minutes pleasure; and the hope that they may do so has induced me to copy and send them. I preserved a newspaper of last winter containing them, and laid my hands upon it yesterday. I intended them originally for my father, who I knew would have been pleased with them; but alas, he never saw them. May I also, with my respectful compliments, ask of Mrs Adams to read them.

I hope, Sir, your health keeps good and that all the faculties of your body continue to serve you as do those of your mind. Often have I heard my father express a wish that, while in retirement, you would not forget your country, although your country may perhaps in some things, and for the mere moment, have forgotten you; that you might find leisure to give her some other work upon her publick affairs in addition to those she already has, and which she will prize at a remote age, charged with the further treasures of your knowledge and the still riper reflections of your wisdom. Our country, relative to a nations age, is still a mere infant requiring all its steps to be guided; and although the voice of an oracle itself might chance to be unheeded at the moment it spoke yet wisdom is not of a day. It might be a seed to flourish with good fruit in future times.

But I forbear to say any more, begging only that you will allow me to tender to you my unchangeable devotion and respect.

Richard Rush.

The Honorable John Adams.

Quincy Aug. 11. 1813

Dear Sir

Thanks for your favour of the 2^d. The "Portion of time that you can command every day" affords me very pleasing hopes.

Reading Machiavel, is like conversing with a professed Actor on the Theatre: you can never know when he is in Jest, or when in earnest:

whether he lies or says the Truth. In his Art of War he inculcates a different doctrine, from that which you quote: namely that Princes, and Rulers of Republicks, ought to study Laws and Politicks as well as war. And this is orthodox.

When? Where? and how? did the opinion get into this Country that the Spirit of Republicks is perpetual Peace? All History shews, if I have not read history, upside down, that Republicks have been the most Warlike, of all Governments. Witness Sparta, Rome, Athens, Carthage, Switzerland, Holland. And that as soon as they ceased to be warlike, they ceased to be free, began to decline, and soon became an easy Conquest of foreign Power, or domestic Usurpation. How many hours, was the Temple of Janus shutt, in the immense period of seven hundred Years?

I have no difficulty in believing, the Account your Colonel gave you. His Facts are the natural and inevitable Result of the Policy this Nation has pursued for thirteen Years. I charge it all to the Nation; for the Government has only been its true Representative and trusty Servant. We must obey the Nation and its Government. We must sink or swim, with them, or without them: and it is more benevolent, more Social, more Philanthropic to die, with our Country than in Opposition to it, though, in some imaginable Cases, it might be less glorious.

We had, as you justly observe, in 1775, some Louisburg officers, and soldiers, and some of the Ticonderoga, and Fort William Henry Officers and Soldiers, and one or two of the Monongahela Officers and Soldiers taught by dismal Experience under Braddoc. But the most of the Officers and Soldiers taught in those Schools deserted Us, and went over to the British. The greatest, the best, the most capable and most celebrated left Us. I could not descend to names.

I cannot agree, with you, that "the Country has been searched all over, throughout all Classes and Parties." There are in this State Three Generals, Heath, Brooks and Cobb, who have been totally overlooked and neglected, the two former of whom, have more military Science and Practice, than the whole American Army at this Moment. I have reason to believe, that every one of these would have accepted an Appointment: for the Injustice of the War, was not believed at that time by either. Heath has been uniformly a Republican.

I nominated Brooks for a Major General, and a Federal Senate refused to approve him.

Your enumeration shews, an impartiality, or something like it, in the southern and middle States: but a Jealousy of the Northern. This will not do.

There has not been so total a neglect of military Knowledge. The Error has been Party Spirit and private Interest. But these are incurable diseases. Chronic, obstinate, invincible obstructions. Neither Mercury nor Bark nor Laudanum can remove them.

I am, I know, a singular Being. No Body will agree with me. When I had an Army to create, I would have called for the List of revolutionary Officers, and would have nominated every Survivor according to the Rank he held at the conclusion of the War. Gates, Schuyler, Lincoln Knox, Clintons, Picckneys [*sic*], Sumpters, Muhlenburgs [*sic*]; who you will. But not one of my Ministers, not one Senator, not one Representative, and what was more than all Washington who was Vice Roy over me, nor Hamilton who was Vice Roy over all, would have heard the proposition with Patience. Old Men with Knowledge and Experience are more worthy of Trust than [*sic*] Boys with their Ignorance and Vanity.

I am anxious for M^r Madisons Health, because, much depends upon it. In his Intensions Zeal and Industry I have much confidence: But in Truth I know not, on whom much depends. Time and Nature, i.e Providence must and will determine. A disgraceful Peace will ruin the Men who make it, and last but a very little while.

J. Q. Adams earnestly requested his Friends, before his Embarkation, for Russia to be extreamly cautious of publishing any Thing from his Letters. I enjoined it upon him to write nothing to me, that he was not willing should be printed at the same time in the London and Paris Newspapers. Our Letters have almost all been opened and read in French or English Courts, and afterwards sent to Us. You may conclude there has been no Secrets or Treason in them. I have been determined to have no Secrets entrusted to me. I know not a sentence or a Line that he has written to Government. None of his dispatches have ever been called, for, or communicated to the Legislature or the Public.

Every Line from you will oblige your Friend

Richard Rush Esq^r

John Adams

Washington August 24. 1813

Dear and respected Sir.

Mr St George Tucker is, I believe, a native of one of the West India islands. He was brought to Virginia quite a boy before the revolution, fought with reputation at Camden as a militia Major, was next a lawyer, and has held several civil stations in Virginia, where, as I understand, he has always been greatly esteemed for his virtues and learning. He is now, on the late appointment of President Madison, United states Judge for that district. He was once Professor of law in the college of William and Mary, and has published an edition of Blackstone's commentaries with notes and a full appendix expounding our american constitutions and jurisprudence. Whatever may be thought of this work in other respects, it proves his research and talents as a fine writer. His "Days of my youth" is, indeed, a most beautiful little thing. I thought so when first I read it, and that I had never seen any thing of the same extent so fine. This opinion I will now dare express since your letter, which establishes its correctness. Whenever, Sir, I may have the good fortune to meet with its equal in any antient or modern poet I will again know the pleasure of affording you half an hour's entertainment.

I am quite gratified in having two of your favours by me; that about the poet St George, (a copy of which by the bye I mean some day to use the freedom of sending him), and that of the 11th of this month.

The mortifications and the sufferings we have experienced this war, may indeed be of ultimate service, by forcing some truths upon us in government that perhaps nothing else would. Burke, in his vindication of natural society, says that reasons are like liquors, and there are some that only strong heads will bear. This war may strengthen the heads of our people. In corroboration of your remark, even this remote and infant republick of ours has been at war the half of its short career, and panting for it the other half. Taking in the Indians, with France and Tripoli (and why should we not), how many years of the thirty we are in the habit of speaking of as our reign of peace, would *our* Janus appear to have been shut? scarcely any.

The accounts are that Mr Madisons health continues to improve by exercise, and a partial intermission of his toils. The evening before he set out on his ride I had the pleasure to spend with him. Although

he spoke from no authentick information, yet I found him under the belief that England did not mean to accede to the Russian mediation. As to peace, I do not believe the government will lend itself to a disgraceful one happen what will. If one must be made upon terms other than such as have been held out both before and since the present war, I think it will only be by the people first choosing to put the power of the country in other hands than where it now is.

As to jealousy of the North, and northern generals, shall I say, that the cry here, but especially where I belong, is the reverse! While Pennsylvania, old strong-back'd forgotten Pennsylvania, with all her population and wealth, with all the men and *money* which she has, and will continue I hope, to contribute to the war—cannot, with all her pushing and striving, get a single general of any description, Massachusetts gets three, Gen: Dearborn, Gen: Chandler and Gen: Boyd! the first a Major general, and for the first year of the war, too, Commander in chief! Thus do we talk, Sir, in that quarter. And even the antient dominion, strange to tell, has but one as yet that I recollect! But, for my own part, I would gladly see three more from Massachusetts if they would fight our battles well.

Since writing the preceding last evening, I have observed in a newspaper that you have had the affliction to lose by death a member of your family, an only daughter.²⁸ I have lately had occasion to know how families feel under these dispensations; and for this recent affliction in yours I beg you will permit me to offer to Mrs. Adams and yourself, my respectful sympathy, with my sincere and ardent wishes for your happiness, and health, and tranquility.

Richard Rush.

Hon: President Adams.

Quincy Sept 6. 1813

Dear Sir

If G. B. did not mean to accede to the Russian mediation G. B. has acted the part of a Jocky, or a Gypsy, or a Jitt: for she must have received it from M^r Dashkoff, and She ought to have made her refusal known, instead of giving Passports to M^r Gallatin and M^r Bayard.

I am not apprehensive of a disgraceful peace, at least for four years to come: nor then neither, for Tories, themselves would not dare

²⁸ Death of Abigail Adams Smith, July 14, 1765 d. Aug. 15, 1813. She died of cancer, in her parents' home in Quincy, after a long illness.

to make it. For sordid as our Nation is said to be (*horresio referens*) I know it to be too proud to bear national disgrace. It cannot bear to blush. It is, I almost fear, too proud to repent and confess its faults.

"Northern Generals"! Do you call Dearborne and Hull, and Chandler "Northern Generals"? Boyd,²⁹ I believe to be a general. But how is he a northern General? I never till lately heard that he was born in the North. I appointed him for no such reason: but because I believed him to be a disciplinarian, a tactician, a soldier and an officer of Experience. Such We want.

"Forgotten Pensilvania."! Pensilvania has the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary at War, the Controulor of the Treasury The Secretary of the Navy. The command of the War by sea and land and the command of the Purse, which commands both! Duane is a general, and more than a General. But will you say, Gallatin Armstrong, Duane, are not Pensilvanians? Armstrong³⁰ [*sic*] was born in Pensilvania of one of your most meritorious Fathers. He is more a Pensilvanian than Boyd is a northern man. Gallatin and Duane have been created and preserved and most bountifully rewarded and most sedulously promoted by Pensilvania. It has happened that almost all the really American Part of Pensilvania, have always been Anglo-manes.

Where did Tom Paine, where did Callender, where did Cobbet where did Gallatin, where did Duane, where did Binns, where did Andrew Brown, where did Phillip Freneau, where did twenty others obtain their Patronage? and their Influence?

I know not, what Characters Pensilvania possesses, who are soldiers and merit promotion. She ought to have her share in the Field on the Bench, in foreign Embassies, and in all other Branches of the Government. If she had not, in my time it was not my fault: but that of Hamilton Washington and their Sattellites and Sychophants. I know what I say. I wanted to make Peter Muhlenberg a General and he

²⁹ John Parker Boyd, 1764-1830, rover, filibusterer, adventurer, was serving as a brigadier-general on the Canadian border. He had been born in Massachusetts.

³⁰ Madison's first Secretary of War, William Eustis of Massachusetts, had proved himself incompetent to the tasks of mobilizing against England, and in December, 1812, resigned. Madison wished Monroe, then Secretary of State, to take the war office, but northern jealousy of the Virginia "dynasty" prevented this. Against his better judgment and to his subsequent regret, and indeed with very bad grace, he appointed General John Armstrong of New York, who had been born and lived for thirty-one years in Pennsylvania.

offered his services: but Washington and Hamilton would not suffer it; and if I had nominated him against their Advice, their Idolaters in Senate would have negatived him. Pensilvania has Characters, I doubt not who would have made better Generals than any We have. We want Generals who know how to form an Army, and Such, as yet We have not. We want Generals who can see and feel the Want of Admirals, at least of Ships and Seamen; and who will honestly tell the Government that they will not cross the Lakes till they can command them. And We ought to have had such Generals from the beginning.

I rejoice that M^r Madison Health continues to improve; especially as it confutes an afflicting Report, that he lives by laudanum and could not hold out four months. His Life is of great Importance. The malicious report is contradicted and now understood by the Public, to be false.

Far from flattering myself with hope of Peace, I expect a long and distressing War. Nothing will shorten it so much as naval Energies on the Lakes. There must our first and greatest Exertions be directed. Next, on the Ocean. These land Armies will ruin Us without doing any good: composed as they are of Militia, and twelve months Men commanded by officers, who depend on Patriotism and bravery, and not on discipline order method habit and skill. *Patriotism* and *Valour*, know how to stand still, to refuse to march, to refuse to embark, to fly, to surrender and nothing else: unless it be to burn their own Magazines, Arsenal and Stores.

Reports are propagated here of Vinegar and many other Articles transported from Boston, New York and Philadelphia in Waggon at a great Expence; which might be had cheaper nearer the Scenes of Action; and of Gun Carriages which might be made on or near the Lakes &c &c &c. Men of Experience and candour know how to appreciate these little Calumnies, and presume that Government and its Officers give every Attention that Necessity will permit, to Economy: but the faithful Memories and keen sagacity of Enemies make their own Uses of every idle and malious tale.

I fear you will think me a Grumbletonian.

The Afflictions in my family have been very great for several Years. The loss of my Daughter, has deeply and tenderly affected Us all. But her Life and her Death, in a Stile Superiour to all terrestrial

Prosperity and Adversity is the greatest consolation to Us that Philosophy or Religion can Suggest. I must quit this subject:— I can write no more.

John Adams

Richard Rush Esq^r

Washington September 25. 1813.

Dear Sir.

I must be allowed to offer you my heartiest congratulations upon Commodore Perrys great victory on lake Erie. I know of nobody who will take as much pleasure in it as you. I know of nobody, Sir, who has so just a title to rejoice at our splendid naval trophies as you. The Navy is yours. Hull must have been your officer. Decatur I know was. Bainbridge, Jones, Lawrence, Burrows, all of them—with, I would say the immortal, Perry too, who no doubt, in his turn, must have been your Lieutenant or your midshipman. It is a glorious little family to boast of.

After all, victory will do more than any thing else can, towards reconciling the country to this just war. The glory of a nation is, and must be, the nation's property, not a party's. History, poetry, and the canvass, are of no party. Fifty years hence, twenty years hence, ten years hence, the victories which we have gained, and the greater ones which I trust we will gain, will be celebrated in orations, in histories, in songs, in the epick, with the pencil, neither as democrattick or federal victories, but as American, as national triumphs and the sources of our national glory. Of the thousands in England who can still shout at the names of Cressey, Agincourt, Blenheim, Ramilles, how many are there who recollect, or, if they recollect, care any thing about the causes of the wars in which such names became illustrious in their annals. And yet, no doubt at all each of them had their peace party. I am anticipating the time when the grand children of Henry Clay, and Josiah Quincey, will all be exulting in this war, which their different grand-fathers strove so patriotically the one to bring about, the other to oppose, for I dare say the latter may be as good a patriot as I know the former is.

I am astonished at finding, Sir, how unsuccessful this country was in the old Canada war with all the aid it had of British means, British troops, British money, British skill, British officers, British direction—unless, indeed, you will say all these thwarted instead of advancing it.

Old Massachusetts did her duty nobly; but what a train of blunders and dissasters, if not shameful defeats, it exhibited until Lord Chatham came in. I have lately been turning again to the history of those times. In 1755, *exactly as in 1812*, the campaign was to open at three points 1. at fort du Quesne; 2. at Niagara; 3. on lake Champlain. These were the points of last fall, merely changing Malden for du Quesne. Braddock was to do every thing at the first point; Governor Shirley at the second; and general William Johnson, at the third. All three expeditions failed, Braddocks with more dissaster than Hulls, if with less disgrace.

The ministry now grew vigorous, and the colonial governors holding a meeting at New York resolved that in the campaign of 1756 Canada should be overwhelmed without fail. So, fixing on the same points, an army of *three* thousand was allotted for du Quesne, of *six* thousand for Niagara, and *ten* thousand for crown point, on Champlain. All these failed again, with the *capitulation* of more troops than we have passed under the yoke since last summer. Nor can I make out, that during all this time Montcalm had more troops in Canada, than the British have had against us this war. To be sure he had Indians in abundance, as the English have also had. The campaign of 1757 also proved entirely abortive.

Thus I begin to be half of opinion, Sir, that we have not done quite so badly as I had at first thought. Of the eight land battles of the war, if they can be all so called, viz of Detroit, Queenstown, the river raisin, 40 mile creek, York, Fort George, Fort Meigs, and Lower Sandusky, it is worth observing, that if the British gained the four first, we have more decisively the four last.

The new loan of five millions filled yesterday at about one per cent more favorable to the government than the last. Between 12 and 13 millions were offered. *Rich Pennsylvania* comes in for the largest share again. In answer to this point refered to in your favor of the 6th instant, I must take the liberty to enclose a little slip cut from a newspaper about a year ago, by which it looks that, if she is at last a favourite, it was almost time!

The last accounts from Mr Madison left him perfectly well.

I am, with my constant devotion and respect, your gratified correspondent,

Richard Rush.

Hon: John Adams.

Quincy October. 8. 1813

Dear Sir

I know not, whether Perry's Victory is not the greatest Action in naval History.³¹ His age, the horrible Slaughter, and total Disability of his own Ship, his presence of mind, his cool and prompt transition to another Vessel, his masterly and daring Attack on the Center of the Enemies Line, his Modesty, his humanity are traits of a great Commander, who God willing, will wear well. The Consequences of this Triumph are beyond calculation. We have now the command of all the Waters from the Falls of Niagara to the Lake of the Woods: if our Government ever looses it, they will deserve to be turned Out. The Effect upon all the Indian minds, if they have any, must be immediate. At least it will be as great as it has already been in the Town of BOSTON.

Talbott, Truxton, Decatur, Morris, Prebble Little, who learned in the school of the revolutionary naval War, have taught our present Commanders. We ought to do Justice to our Predecessors as well as to our selves. I read in a Biography of Captain Laurence, that "the Mediterranean was the School of our Navy, and our Officers were formed before Tripoli." Prebble was the Master of The mediterranean School; and who educated Prebble? John Foster Williams, who now has the honour to command a *revenue Cutter* in the Harbour of Boston. Prebble was one of his Midshipmen, and then displayed Intelligence, Intrepidity, Presence of mind in Battles as brave and successful, in proportion as those of our Days. Porty may squint and sneer, and taunt; But Hopkinses, Father and Son, Manly Selman Tucker Barry, Jones, Laundais, Talbot, Trivetton, Decatur, Little were the Schoolmasters of our Navy. Even, the two M^cNeils, though Hector was a clumsy Coward, helped to teach Nautical Science, & Naval Tactics. If Carey and Clark are faithful to their Trust, as I doubt not they will be; they will soon show the Publick, the American naval school.

Pensylvania has not had her due. I am anxious to vindicate or excuse the part I had in this Injustice. But it would require a Volume. M^r M. Kean and D^r Rush, ought not to have been neglected, Nor Judge Peters nor Judge Rush, nor the Mulembergs [*sic*]. But Washington and Hamilton, with all their Understrappers Tools, Satilites and Pup-

³¹ The Battle of Lake Erie had occurred a month before, on 10 September.

pers, were in the Way: all governed by Willings, and Chews and Bingham and Yard. . . . [*sic*] Only Consider my young and confidential Friend; Washington reduced to be an humble dependent on Alexander Hamilton! ! ! And John Adams a Slave of a Senate, twenty to ten, Slaves of Hamilton.

To the War of 1756, you might have added the War of 1775: and you might have subjoined, the Expedition to the Texell of the Duke of York, the Expedition of the Earl of Chatham to Zealand and the Scheld; Bonaparte's to Russia, and all the wonderful Exploits in Spain & Portugal: every one of which is as great a blunder as any We have committed on the Lakes.

Marlborough revealed to Tallard, the whole Mystery of War. "The only difference between you and me is, We have committed an hundred faults and you have committed an hundred and one."

I doubt not We may have millions of millions on loan: and I know as well as M^r Jefferson or M^r Madison, to what all this tends, and I knew it, fourteen years ago, and five and thirty years ago as well as I know it now.

I must now turn to a new Subject. I have received, from I know not whom, or where, 630 printed Pages of a new Work. Author, Printer, Place, are all misteriously concealed. The whole Book, printed but not yet published, is an examination & refutation, as the Author thinks, of my "defence." As far as I have turned over the leaves, I find no personal Scurrility. He treats me, as if I were a man and a Gentleman: but handles the Book with entire freedom. This I like. If my feeble Volumes, constructed in 15 Months Should excite as much speculation and Controversy as Montesquieu's Work of 20 Years, they will do some good. If I could make myself 50 years younger, and should be Duncce enough to do it, I might take these 6 or 700 pages to pieces. If you can get any intelligence of the Author, the Printer, the Book-seller, the time, place or Circumstances of the Composition or publication, you will oblige me. I thank the Author whoever or wherever he is, for his candid and friendly communication of the Work to me, before its publication. In one Point at least, perhaps many more I agree with him, viz, that an Aristocracy of Banks, or a banking Aristocracy is not better, than any other Aristocracy.

I rejoice that M^r Madison is well: may he long continue to live and be well; and to see the good Work of the War prospering in his hands;

for a more necessary War, was never undertaken. It is necessary against England; necessary to convince France, that We are something: and above all necessary to convince ourselves, that We are not, Nothing. Know thyself, was never a more important precept to Man, or Nation. Perry's Triumph, is enough to revive M^r Madison, if he was in the last Stage of a Consumption. But We are not yet, Sufficiently the Masters of the Internal Waters. I would put in Requisition every Ship Carpenter, Caulker, Ropemaker Boatbuilder, Rigger, Blockmaker, and Ship Chandler on the continent: and cutt Oaks Pines Furr, Spruces or any living Trees however green on the Lakes, to secure the unequivocal command of the Lakes. If these Ships would last but Seven Years or but one Year, it ought to be done.

In writing to you I almost forget that I am not writing to your Father.

John Adams

Richard Rush Controulor of the Treasury

(To be continued)