NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Calendar of Letters from
John Adams to Francis Adrian Van der Kemp, 1783-1825,
in The Historical Society of Pennsylvania

The following letters of John Adams are bound in a folio volume labeled AM006. The letters are all quarto in size; they are followed in the same volume by a collection of John Quincy Adams' letters. This calendar has been prepared in order to give a sort of index of their contents, for with a few—less than half a dozen—exceptions, they have not been published or consulted before.

The last twenty-five years of Adams' life, when he lived in retirement at Quincy, furnish a rewarding study to the scholar. Through his unrestrained correspondence with a few intimate friends poured all of Adams' surprisingly extensive learning, his characteristically strong opinions, his infinite variety of interests in religious, scientific, governmental and international affairs. His correspondents were not many: Jefferson, Dr. Rush and his son Richard, his own family, Judge Van der Kemp, a few others; enough of his letters of this period have been published already to indicate the spirit and tone of these that follow. Sometime, when all are brought together in a definitive edition of his letters, we may be able fully to appreciate James Madison's remark, that letters from Quincy had the flavor of rich old wine.

Judge Francis Adrian Van der Kemp was a friend Adams made in Holland. Suffering from the political unrest of the times, he, like Jean Luzac, sought more congenial surroundings, which he, unlike the unfortunate Luzac, found, through Adams' agency. Settling in New York, he fulfilled his promise of research and writing in many fields, for he was an ordained minister, a natural scientist of considerable achievement, and learned in the law. The latter accomplishment was recognized when he was appointed a judge of the circuit court in New York.

A biography in the form of a memoir was written in 1903 by Helen L. Fairchild, entitled Francis Adrian VanderKemp, 1752-
With the exception of six letters previously published elsewhere, all of John Adams' letters in this volume have been included in this calendar. Unless otherwise noted, the letters were addressed by Adams to Van der Kemp.

Regarding chaplains in American naval vessels. Van der Kemp's writings in the great cause of liberty and humanity. What course will Holland adopt now? It is among the yeomanry of every country that supporters of liberty are found.

News of Yorktown. May Britain ever send to America only such brave, able and active commanders as Cornwallis and Burgoyne, who will lose an army of 15,000 men every campaign without destroying half the number of Americans annually wasted by camp distempers. Defense of Ft. Griswold at New London by militia a more determined proof of the spirit of freemen than the surrender of Burgoyne or Cornwallis.

Introducing President Wheelock. Is impatient to return to Holland.

Van der Kemp's questions regarding emigrating. Adams has always been reluctant to advise strangers to emigrate to America. Difficulties and dangers. Van der Kemp can live in America on the sum he mentions, but only frugally and as a farmer. Number of friendly farmers emigrating together would assist each other. Offers introductions.

Rejoices Van der Kemp is out of danger. Encloses introductory letters to American friends. Living now cheaper there. Warns against partisan feeling among Dutch people of New York respecting their religious principles. "...in Pensilvania you cannot fail...," but New York best place to settle. Bon voyage.

Van der Kemp's approbation of Adams' "Defense of the Constitutions" especially agreeable. Adams undertook the laborious work not to obtain fame as author but because people of America were running wild as the result of works of Paine, Mrs. Macaulay, Burgh, Turgot. These writings excellent in
some respects but extremely mistaken in the true construction of a free
government.


Van der Kemp’s criticisms of the “Defense.” Leading men in Revolution
reluctant to face independence, until hostilities commenced. Then no future
connection with Britain practicable. Hereditary senate and hereditary presi-
dency, though they would diminish prerogatives of the president and liberties
of the people, would if controlled by independent representatives of the people
prevent corrupt, turbulent and bloody elections, which cannot be avoided by
populous, opulent and commercial nations. Has not life enough left to write
history of federative republics or of American Revolution. Date of Vindiciae
contra Tyrannos. Adams’ “Defense” pursues the notion that equilibrium of
three branches only can achieve lasting stability in state, farther than any other
work in the language. Human passions are insatiable. They will move and
increase until they are resisted or checked. This quality in men explains all the
phenomena in government. Compliments on the book received from Europe;
but there it will not be much read, because it offends the ruling passions. “I
will never cease to preach my favourite Doctrine, untill I die.”


French Revolution will, he hopes, produce world-wide effects of liberty,
equality and humanity, but form of government adopted only a transitory experi-
ment. “Defense” not translated into French, despite need for every light and
aid there; the demagogues want only one house, without independent balance
of parts. Our revolutionary experience corresponds to that of all ages and
nations. Excitement in every state during election of governor tends rapidly
to civil war. Intrigues during elections; no remedy but another convention, to
prolong senators’ terms to life, or propose hereditary senate. This, and
hereditary president, only hopes of posterity.

9. April 19, 1790. New York. 3 pp. [Addressed to Dr. Price
Hackney.]

Diderot, Voltaire, D’Alembert, Rousseau, encyclopedists and economists
have contributed more to French Revolution than English writers or even than
the American Revolution. Does not know what to make of a republic of 30
million atheists. Our new government is an attempt to divide a sovereignty, a
fresh essay at “Imperium in imperii”; it cannot therefore be expected to be
very stable or firm. It will prevent us for a time from warring with each other,
but when it will do that no longer, we must call a new convention. Only a
few in any nation comprehend any system of a constitution or administration.
These cannot be united. “I am a sincere enquirer after truth, but I find very
few who discover the same truths.”

“But I sincerely wish and devoutly pray that a hundred years of civil wars
may not be the portion of all Europe for want of a little attention to the true
elements of the science of government.”

Feels no resentment against Clinton personally, but regrets influences dominating him, a faction whose notions of government would produce nothing but anarchy if they were not so weak they could not win. Machiavelli a mixture of wisdom and wickedness. French have adopted his maxim regarding destruction of large nobility to establish free government. They will regret it. "Discourses of Davila" advocate same principle as the "Defense." Based on principle of emulation, universal in man. French Revolution daily furnishing new examples of necessity of checks and balances. No greater wickedness than to attempt to govern by single assembly. No personal obligation to Louis XVI; on the contrary, he suffered his name to be used by Vergennes and "his base flatterer Franklin" to Adams' disadvantage. But cannot forget his friendship to America. French convention's message to president contains satire on Franklin and panegyric on Adams.


All integrity and wisdom of U. S. required to avoid entanglement in European calamities; therefore critical foreign situation should quiet domestic unrest and faction. Fears French people, exhausted and irritated, will end in a military government for defense of persons and property against one another, and of their territory against foreigners. Algerine depredations; injustice of French, English and Spaniards.


Reads everything about bloody war and party passion in France. Eighteenth century which has been pride and boast of mankind for its humanity is to end with horrors greater than the proscriptions of Sylla or massacres of Charles IX. Reason has no effect on earthquakes and tornadoes. Believes America will avoid war for the present. We must keep out of the vortex. "Enthusiasm is as Contagious as Mesmerism alias Animal Magnetism."


Van der Kemp's appointment as a judge. Discourses of Davila forgotten except by Van der Kemp. Three years more of excesses will destroy all liberty in France.


Acknowledging congratulations.


Condorcet is insincere and incompetent when writing of something he knows nothing of. A man of more sense, more learning, more benevolence is friend Luzac. Letter from John Quincy Adams brings news of Luzac's ouster from University of Leyden; Thomas B. Adams explains political motives of his dismissal and censorship of the Gazette de Leyde.

"Defense of Constitutions" written in haste; but Adams not conscious of errors in it. For twelve years it has been attacked in partisan spirit. Adams has never vindicated it. Gerry says Tom Paine writing an answer to it in Paris. Van der Kemp is planning vindication of Adams.


Intriguing individuals will join in eulogizing Adams when he is dead in order to defame his successor. The "Defense" would have been shorter had time been longer. It has done no good that Adams knows of. Mankind has found more amusement in shedding blood than in reading. Has been lucky so far. Men write not upon government with impunity. Sydney was beheaded, Harington died in prison, Montesquieu banished. Adams has no reason to complain.


Recollections of Capellen de Poll, noble, frank, manly, generous. Memories of Boston massacre, of conferences with Howe in 1776, are like long-forgotten reveries now. Letters difficult to find. "I never had a home, till now: and my Papers are not arranged." Charles Lee at Monmouth. Duration of Bonaparte's Consulate most uncertain of things. Natural history of mythological giant creatures. Journals of certain navigators. For forty years has been too busy in public service for natural history enquiries.


Van der Kemp's papers on the generation of shellfish. Adams' comments on the nautilus.


Conjectures about reproduction in shellfish. Anecdote of shellfish observed on one of his voyages.


Speculation regarding the mammoth, its habits and extinction. Creator's reasons for extinguishing species. Intends to use more circumspection in correspondence in the future.


Van der Kemp's sketch of Achaean Republic. Adams urges use of footnotes. "Moderns have no right to say anything concerning the Ancients without Book." Triumph of right principles in Massachusetts of no consequence as long as Pennsylvania and New York remain under domination of bad principles. These two states and South Carolina have much guilt to answer for. Intrigues first and arms afterwards have always settled all things in government. Virtue and good sense of Americans has become a byword.

Newspaper writers suffer no check, yet they can make or unmake characters, constitutions or administrations at will. America liberally supplied with members of the "black regiment" of hired hack writers who deceive the people. They are the real masters of the country.


Occupied with farming. Knows no printers or booksellers in Boston. "You speak of the Number of Washingtons Admirers increasing! That Number ought to be the Number of People in America, and incapable of increase or decrease." Anecdote of Paris in 1784. Portrait by Stuart. Rejoices in son's defeat in Congressional election. He could do no good in these times.


Writings on government not to American taste. Luzac's fate. Anecdote of Queen Caroline. "The Doctrine that 'the first Magistrate ought not to think or act for himself,' totally destroys our Constitution. A President is not elected to rule by his own fancy it is true: But he is or ought to be elected to rule According to his own Judgment and Conscience: however difficult it may be when he happens to be opposed by his own Ministers in concert with a Party in the Senate aided by influential Characters out of doors."


Has read Van der Kemp's memoir on use of copper among the Greeks. Jefferson and Buffon are not held in much veneration among New England philosophers. Question of style.


American explorations. Rembrandt Peale's skeleton of a mammoth. But liberty and morals of nation are at hazard, cannot think of natural history at such a time.


Museum of shellfish at The Hague. Origin and history of the name of Mount Wollaston. Morton and Merry Mount at Mount Wollaston. Oldest settled region in this part of Massachusetts. Too old and preoccupied to think much of lyric poetry. "Horace is quite enough of the kind for me."

29. February 20, 1806. Quincy. 3 pp.

Volcanic eruptions; "Africanus" in classical writers; death of Sir Francis Drake. "Democracy will infallibly destroy all Civilization, and leave no men alive but the haters of Pen and Ink, who must live by hunting and become Savages. In Jack Cades Code of Laws, reading and writing were high Treason: and the fugitive from Justice on our Frontiers, had rather meet a Panther or an Indian than a Man who can read." All things tend to democracy in Europe; only cure is a despot and an Emperor. Destruction of privileged orders in Europe is taking away all limitations on despotism. France
without nobility will be a Turkey or a Morocco. If Bonaparte is wounded, his magic charm is destroyed. England will give us trouble. She has always seen this country through a mist. Our government moves with moderation.


America will not be saved by precept or example. Only a balanced government can save a nation from tyranny of the many, the few or the one. England preserved hers longer than any. Distinction in nature between authority and power. Where sovereignty resides in the present French government. "You ask me Whether there is in human nature simple benevolence, or an affection for the good of others? I answer there is. This is my Opinion, settled to my satisfaction fifty years ago and never once doubted since." Arguments to the contrary. Tristram Shandy proves innate benevolence. Arguments for. Calvinists' arguments of original sin. Adams does not believe in depravity of man. Shakespeare and Dr. Johnson. The Order of Cincinnatus. "The American people cannot refrain from giving titles."


32. August 23, 1806. Quincy. 3 pp.

Federalists have done their cause injury by making Washington their military, political, religious and even moral Pope and attributing everything to him. Several other more influential characters than Washington. James Otis, Chancellor Livingston. New York political intrigues. Hamilton at the bottom of it all. Want of unity and virtue. John Quincy Adams' place in American literature. King Jerome in America.

33. January 8, 1806 [1807?] Quincy. 4 pp.

Natural wonders are nonsense which Adams refuses to believe. His botanical researches. The mad spirit of democracy in Europe. Sends a "bagatelle" which may be called the fourth volume of his defense of the American constitutions against the attacks of M. Turgot. Has accepted membership in Society of Science at Haarlem, though usually opposed to foreign connections. "My resolution has always been to stand on American ground, without courting any aid from France or England. This ground has been found too weak to support me. This Nation, by my Example have taught their Sons a Lesson, to depend upon foreign Influence, which will one day cost us very dear."


Failing sight. Greatness of James Otis. Beaumarchais and American

36. April 25, 1808. Quincy. 3 pp.
Possibility of an invasion of America. Need for ships. Present administration has taught people the error of their ways.

Mix-up in the post. Anecdote of Peace of 1783. "It has been my perverse Destiny, never to be able to do much good to my Friends, though my Life has been spent in conferring immense Benefits on my Enemies." Character of Luzac. Fears no danger from England or France.


Sermon on love of country, heard on Thanksgiving day. Thank God for the Atlantic Ocean most of all. Does not agree that Bonaparte is oppressing pitiable England. Two such warring nations are equally scourges of mankind. Our job is to defend ourselves. Sketch of Luzac. John Quincy Adams' lectures on rhetoric. Britain's advantages over France.

40. February 20, 1811. Quincy. 3 pp.
Writings of John Quincy Adams. Feudal customs of Britain. Despotism and balance of parts in government. Soon we shall have a balance of bankers and land jobbers. The revolutionary spirit of the late eighteenth century.

41. April 4, 1811. Quincy. 2 pp.
Appointments by Madison. He has committed no more sins than Washington, Adams or Jefferson. America's policy of neutrality. War with England preferable to war with France.

42. April 9, 1811. Quincy. 2 pp.
Olden Barneveldt. Natural wonders. Adams enumerates his notion of the causes of the revolutionary spirit in America. Invites Van der Kemp to visit.

43. September 4, 1811. Quincy. 1 p.
Membership for Van der Kemp in Massachusetts Academy. Natural wonders. America completes twenty-eight years of peace.

44. December 19, 1811. Quincy. 2 pp.
Van der Kemp's contemplated work on the revolutionary age in Europe and America. Importance of New York, compared with Virginia. The coming war will not hurt the United States.
Adams suggests titles for Van der Kemp's work on revolutionary age. Omissions from the work.

46. April 14, 1812. Quincy. 2 pp.
Oceans of blood have been shed, and oceans of ink cannot prevent it. Anecdote of a painting of Calvin in Spain.

47. April 20, 1812. Quincy. 3 pp.
Manlius, Plato, Condorcet. Comments on Van der Kemp's work on revolutionary age.

"Can you give me any news of the Millenium?" All the studies listed which Adams wishes he could live long enough to pursue. Calvin, Luther, the Deists.

More ignorant at 77 than when he was in college, and more eager to study. Van der Kemp's work on Calvin. Tolerance and intolerance. The Quakers never had any sovereign powers, except as clubs or self-created societies, and these they have exercised as arbitrarily as any other sect. Adams' name recorded "in the Register of the General Assembly, (or Meeting I believe they call it,) of the Quakers of Pensilvania in 1775, as a Monument of their mean sneaking spirit of Intollerance." Baptists likewise not excepted from intolerance. The Greeks excelled the Dutch in nothing but taste.

50. September 1, 1812. Quincy. 3 pp.
Reading list. Adams advises Van der Kemp to "read less, think less, work less." Calvin. Anecdote of Puritanism in New England. Van der Kemp's intellectual interests broader and deeper than Adams'. Story of Adams' persecution by the Quakers in 1774 and 1775. Recur to the principle, trust no man. Quakers were as arbitrary and as selfish as any majority has ever been in history. Their tyranny over Pennsylvania broken by the Revolution.


Reading list. Is a Christian, but not a churchman. The classical writers and Christian doctrine. Adams asserts divine right and sacred duty of individual judgment in matters of faith. The church and the worshipper. Philosophy, morality and polity of the Old Testament are Adams' religion.
53. February 5, 1813. Quincy. 3 pp.


54. March 18, 1813. Quincy. 4 pp.

Sovereignty in ecclesiastical bodies. Discusses incidents at time of First Congress in 1774 of Quaker quizzing and persecution of Massachusetts delegation. Pemberton's demand that established church of Massachusetts be abolished. Attempts to divide sects and alienate them from the revolutionary cause. Controversy between Adams and Pemberton in the meeting. Quakers have hated the name of Adams ever since.


Van der Kemp's power of stimulating ideas. Writing memoir of Adams' diplomatic activities at London, Paris and The Hague. Adams discourages him. Machiavelli, Voltaire, Priestley, Bonaparte; when shall we see an end to these men of "great souls and vast Views?" His eyesight failing.

57. August 9, 1813. Quincy. 3 pp.

Illness of wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law, his own near-blindness. Machiavelli: never clear whether he is in jest or in earnest. The human understanding, dealing in the philosophy of the divines, is one of friend Rush's distempers of the intellect.


Van der Kemp's visit to Boston. Adams' view of the future. Course of the war. Americans insensible of their situation and the part they ought to act.


Death of Van der Kemp's son, from "intemperance in study." The Hebrews in Egypt. Alexandrine library. Hymn of Cleanthes.

60. December 1, 1813. Quincy. 2 pp.

Van der Kemp's popularity. Adams is a poor correspondent. Sources of maritime law. International law of the sea.
61. December 26, 1813. Quincy. 3 pp.


Writings of the prophet Enoch. Asks for enlightenment on point of doctrine.

The doctrinal importance of evil, of hell and demons. Sends volume of Condorcet. Next presidential election. Clinton will be elected. New England spinning.


Enfield's "History of Philosophy." Origin of western philosophic thought. Van der Kemp's vast plan of history of revolutions printed in 8th number of the General Repository. Adams' early writings. The world is the bedlam of the universe, where the insane of other planets are sent.

Problems of theological doctrine. Van der Kemp's plan for a history of the revolutions. His oration on independence of Holland.

68. May 29, 1814. Quincy. 3 pp.
Spends from five a.m. to eight p.m. in the garden. Membership in New York Historical Society. John Taylor's attack on his "Defense of the Constitutions." Van der Kemp's able "Sketches of Calvin and Servetus" too able for the times, and country. Most important moment in Adams' career was the impeachment of judges in Massachusetts; second was ministry in Holland, 1780-1782; two others were controversy between legislature and Governor Hutchinson concerning parliamentary power over colonies, and appointment of Washington commander-in-chief. Advises Van der Kemp to abandon biography of John Adams. Pain of writing.

His low state of health. John Taylor of Caroline's book. Adams' high opinion of the writer. Anecdote of Burke's reading of Adams' "Defense of the Constitutions." It changed Burke's mind and formulated his opinions of the

70. September 23, 1814. Quincy. Fragments.
   Festival. Prices during the war. "I love old Wine, old Cheese, old Tobacco and old Woman. How is it with you?"

71. October 18, 1814. Quincy. 2 pp.
   Deaths in Van der Kemp's family. Banishment of Napoleon. Antecedents of Mr. DeWindt.

   Verse in imitation of Horace. Reading of Epictetus. Mentions "that unprincipled Trollop, Lady Mary Wortley Montague." Stoicism. Van der Kemp's learned conundrums. Adams has lived almost 16 times 5 years, "And this, to me, is very wonderful and unaccountable." The number of the Gospels. Rousseau on Epictetus. Marriages in his family.

73. February 22, 1815. Quincy. 1 p.

74. February 23, 1815. Quincy. 3 pp.

75. April 3, 1815. Quincy. 1 p.
   If Franklin was guilty of plagiarism it was a trifle compared with his other crimes. Freedom of Holland and Belgium. The question of Poland. "If I were to write as many Essays, and in as dogmatical a tone and as flippant a style, as Fisher Ames did, I might only demonstrate my Ignorance as grossly as he did."

76. April 8, 1815. Quincy. 3 pp.
   Character of Mme. de Staël. Adams' horror of learned ladies. How he learned French at forty. Necker's popularity, influence and power. Vergennes' jealousy. Never met Mme. de Staël, though well acquainted with the Baron her husband, the handsomest man in Europe. The vanity of fame. "I have had some Experience of Popularity. Hutchinson Franklin Washington and Neckar were the four most popular Men and Names that I have known. Neckar I believed deserved it most."

77. May 20, 1815, June 11, 1815. Quincy. 2 pp.
   Asks of D'Argens' works. Stoicism and resignation. All wars of last 50 years but a continuation of wars of the Reformation. Pinckney's treaty;
Jefferson's manly rejection of it. This war no more horrible than wars of the Reformation.


Had circumstances not driven Adams to politics, war, metaphysics and theology, his favorite amusement would have been chemical, physical and mathematical studies. Scientific studies as a boy. Interest in astronomy. "Can it be supposed that I do not admire this Universe? and adore its Author? its Ruler? its Father? its Master? Its suprem, almighty, all wise, and all benevolent Judge?" There are no rewards from political life. To think too much on domestic separations will cause madness. Death of De Gyselaer. Recollections must be modified with stoicism.


Has read Van der Kemp's travels in the wilderness, at the hazard of his failing eyesight. De Grimm traces French Revolution to its principles and motives.

82. July 16, 1816. Quincy. 3 pp.


What are the uses of grief? Tucker's "Search" the most outstanding romance he ever read. Contemplates essay on grief. Pain of writing: cannot form a letter without using both hands. His biography not worth writing. Politics and faction tarnish all characters. Blessings of affliction. Envies Van der Kemp's ability to drink Madeira, which he cannot touch.

84. September 16, 1816. Quincy. 3 pp.

Tucker an oddity. Does not know or care to know Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy." His letter to Worcester. Will not address a farewell message to his countrymen, but will surrender them to Providence. De Lolme and Blackstone indebted to Earl of Abingdon. Council of Nicaea a secret conclave, like our first Congresses. The Trinity.
85. October 23, 1816. Quincy. 3 pp.
Nature of the Trinity. Sacerdotal impostures must be exposed. Work of M. DuPuis the most learned of modern times. Asks information concerning him.

Will have to turn Van der Kemp over to Jefferson for discussion of the nature of the Trinity. Jefferson's ability. Ladies' fashions. Death of friends and family. No more satisfied with French philosophers than with Greek, Roman or oriental. Advises reading of DuPuis. "Universal Toleration is my universal Conclusion! Sett free the human Mind."

Describes villa of the Duc de Rohan at Auteil which he rented while in Paris.

Pain in writing. Debt of Greece to India and Egypt.

89. October 1, 1817. Quincy. 2 pp.

Van der Kemp's travels in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and that world of itself the state of New York, while "I am fixed like a plant, to one peculiar Spot, To draw nutrition for a few days and then rot." Has not been from Montezillo for over 16 years, and as for company of men of science and literature, he is lucky to get an hour of the parson's company on Sunday noon. Asiatic researches opening vast field for reflection.

James Otis' advice. That old fellow understood humanity. Lawfulness of marrying wife's sister. Question purely academic as far as Adams is concerned; Abigail hasn't any sisters, and they wouldn't have him anyway. American Academy of Arts and Sciences too much subdivided and too political.


His failing health. Persecution of Quakers. Comparison of American and Dutch revolutions. Ours seems the less by the comparison. Natural history problems. Dutch achievement in propagating letters, science, navigation, commerce, patriotism, liberality, and toleration.
94. October 2, 1818. Quincy. 1 p.

His ancestor Thomas Adams.

96. April 16, 1819. Quincy. 1 p.
Unable to read or write. But remembers that Franklin, Newton, and Sam Adams before his age were weeping, bed-ridden, helpless imbeciles.


Inflammation of his eyes. His admiration of Van der Kemp.

Afflictions multiplied. "You have many friends whom you justly celebrate. I have a few to whom I never can do Justice. You have no Enemies. I have many, and have had more, among the most mean insidious and dastardly of whom have been some of your confidential Friends and Correspondents." Asks information of General Floyd, the signer.

100. September 25, 1819. Montezillo. 2 pp.
His sorrowful household at Quincy. Overwhelmed with impertinent correspondence of strangers. The poverty of his family. Management of his farm. Is older than Voltaire was when he died, and worn out with cares and labor.

General satisfaction given by John Quincy Adams is gratifying. Inoculation practised in Boston as early as 1720 by Dr. Z. Boyleston; his sufferings from public opposition; his relationship to Adams. Van der Kemp's work in Dutch Records of New York.

Death of Mr. Elliot. His great wealth, his complaisance and industry, his indifference to American independence, his bequest to Van der Kemp. Parties in New York; alarming aspect of Missouri slavery question. Health and weather.

Wrote earlier this day. Congratulates Van der Kemp on his appointment by the state of New York to translate the Dutch Records. Slavery never sanctioned in Massachusetts by legislature. Early attempts at revolution in South America.


A new theme: the death of the Duke of Kent and George III— "The former a kind of friend to my Son, the latter an old acquaintance of mine. Though the Demise of the old Monarch can be no loss to him or to any body else—yet I cannot help feeling some disagreeable sensations when I recollect a series of three years of his good humoured Chit, Chat interspersed with a number of wise and useful observations— I know not what Character will be given to this Prince by Historians— but his private Character, his domestic Character from all that has appeared was amiable and exemplary— I hope his reign will not be ultimum Britainorum but there Constitution seemes to be tottering to its Base." Has determined nothing external shall disturb his intellectual tranquility. Is as old as Cato, and thinks himself as wise!


Approaching ninety. His private papers are only personal correspondence with Van der Kemp, Jefferson, Dr. Rush, and a few others. Weakness prevented his joining in public celebrations on the 4th.


Van der Kemp's visit, with honorary degree from Harvard. Europe like a region of smoldering volcanoes. Hopes America will remain aloof from Europe's wars.


Attendance on convention produced a fever. Southey's life of Wesley, most remarkable character ever produced by enthusiasm, fanaticism, and superstition. European troubles. Nothing can be done for good of mankind except by blood and carnage. This he detests as much as any peace society. Boston peace society will have to excommunicate their most illustrious member, the Emperor of Russia. All this is fustian; a real service to mankind is Van der Kemp's remedy for corns. Will he please send it?


His feebleness. John Quincy Adams' report a model of patience and industry. The Elliots' prosperity too great for them; wealth a wonderful slackener of the nerve. Sees national and civil wars ahead for Europe; hopes not in America.


Visit of Judge Smith. Feeble health. Electioneering the least of his concerns. The Elliots' wealth. The new New York constitution. Universal suffrage only makes elections more difficult for rich to control.
Struggle between parties perpetual in elective governments, as that between northern and southern states the last 47 years, in which New York holds the balance. Governor Clinton will probably be the next president, because of this balance. Great object at present is election of president in 1824. Electioneering to that end. Growth of our navy. Now could give Britain a battle. Perkins’ gift to the Athenaeum.

American attitude toward Dutch friendship inadequate. Dutch support turned the tide of independence. Friendship for Van der Kemp of “John of the little Hill.”

America’s debt to Holland. His seal struck after treaty of 1783, represents fisheries and western lands. Letters to Dr. Price on French Revolution. Asks copy of Manilius.

Thanks Van der Kemp for presentation of Manilius. Negotiation of 1783. Franklin so great a man, Adams wishes he could forget his faults and follies. His memories of ancient facts and conversations should be committed to paper, but he has not the strength.

His letters to Dr. Price enclosed. They caused him to be reviled and despised, destroyed all his hopes in this world, yet he recollects no other act with as much cordial and conscientious satisfaction and delight.

[A five-line verse precedes.] His 88th birthday. Resignation the only source of happiness at such an age as his. The Quincy family. John Quincy Adams has no ardent desire to be president. European affairs; Greek revolt. Lafayette calls Faneuil Hall the cradle of universal liberty.

Death in Van der Kemp’s family. Is not ardent for John Quincy to be president. The nation never saw such political skirmishing before. Decline of liberality in Europe. Great promise of James Fenimore Cooper.

117. February 24, 1825. Quincy. 1 p.
Events of the month [election of J. Q. Adams to the presidency by the House of Representatives] almost too much for a man of ninety to bear. Van der Kemp’s congratulations. His health; the epidemic cold, like that which carried off his father in 1761.

Iowa State College

J. H. Powell